NEW DIRECTIONS IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered

On being human

Yusef Waghid

ROUTLEDGE

African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered

Much of the literature on the African philosophy of education juxtaposes two philosophical strands as mutually exclusive entities; traditional ethnophilosophy on the one hand, and scientific African philosophy on the other. While traditional ethnophilosophy is associated with the cultural artefacts, narratives, folklore and music of Africa's people, scientific African philosophy is primarily concerned with the explanations, interpretations and justifications of African thought and practice along the lines of critical and transformative reasoning. These two alternative strands of African philosophy invariably impact understandings of education in different ways: education constituted by cultural action is perceived to be mutually independent from education constituted by reasoned action.

Yusef Waghid argues for an African philosophy of education guided by communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent action in order to bridge the conceptual and practical divide between African ethnophilosophy and scientific African philosophy. Unlike those who argue that African philosophy of education cannot exist because it does not invoke reason, or that reasoned African philosophy of education is just not possible, Waghid suggests an African philosophy of education constituted by reasoned, culture-dependent action.

This book provides an African philosophy aimed at developing a conception of education that can contribute towards imagination, deliberation and responsibility – actions that can help to enhance justice in educative relations, both in Africa and throughout the world. This book will be essential reading for researchers and academics in the field of the philosophy of education, especially those wanting to learn from the African tradition.

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Series editors' preface

In *African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered: On Being Human* Yusef Waghid, professor of philosophy of education at Stellenbosch and the ex-Dean of Faculty, embarks on the task of outlining a philosophy of practice that views African philosophy of education (APOE) in terms of a defence of communitarian thought (Chapter 1) moving on to consider successively understandings of African metaphysics and epistemology (Chapter 2) and the role of religion, ethics and aesthetics in African cultures (Chapter 3). One of his goals is to reinvent the place of Ubuntu in African Education (Chapter 4) and its relations to democratic citizenship education (Chapter 5), human rights and cosmopolitan justice (Chapter 6). He ends with a plea against exclusion (Chapter 7) and a postscript on terrorism. It is a consistent, coherent and timely vision. Professor Waghid himself is no latecomer to this discourse. He is the author of five books and co-editor of two collections including *Education, democracy and citizenship reconsidered: Pedagogical encounters* (2010), and *Conceptions of Islamic education: Pedagogical framings* (2011). His recent work is featured on YouTube[1] where one gets a sense of his presence and also sees him in action, so to speak.[2] He was honoured with the National Research Foundation (NRF) Special Recognition Award for *Champion of Research Capacity Development at South African Higher Education Institutions* for 2011 reported in the *Mail & Guardian* where the following summary statement appears:

> His objective has been to defend both the notion of deliberative democratic theory in education—particularly arguing for the centrality of practical reasoning in education—and to show how 'compassionate imagining', friendship and deliberative (communitarian) democratic theory complement one another in addressing issues of inclusion and/ or exclusion in education with the possibility that students take risks when they engage in deliberation with peers and supervisors.[3]

His book in our new series then is something of an event and the result of a lifetime's intellectual work in this vital area. *African Philosophy of Education Reconsidered: On Being Human* provides a very persuasive argument concerning a 'reasoned, culture-dependent action' conception that transcends (perhaps

even bridges) the standoff between ethnophilosophy and its scientific counterpart. In putting forward this distinctive account Waghid makes central the notion of *ubuntu* that he translates as 'African humaneness and interdependence' that as he argues can lead to transformative political action. The notion of 'Africanization' of knowledge and education looms large and he parses this notion in terms of community of inquiry based on the values, actions and institutions of specific cultures. This account of a tradition of inquiry robust enough to serve as a philosophy of education then is at once 'reasonable, deliberative and moral'. Through these moves Waghid makes the cases for other traditions: Islamic, Chinese and tribal. And he argues that reasonableness (not rationality), moral maturity and deliberative discourse become the overriding values of classroom teaching and learning.

We are very pleased to have Professor Waghid's book in our series as it indicates the future of philosophy of education in specific cultural contexts and provides us with a practical and workable model for teaching and learning. We think it will become the standard in the field.

Michael A. Peters and Gert Biesta

Notes

1 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lo1iMUblHWg
2 See also his posts on http://khutbahbank.org.uk/tag/prof-yusef-waghid/
3 See http://mg.co.za/article/2011-09-02-mainstays-of-research

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I am thankful to Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley, who offered me an opportunity to spend some of my time thinking and writing this book at the Centre for Global Studies in Education, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton (New Zealand). I remain indebted to Michael for encouraging me to author this book as part of the series: New Directions in the Philosophy of Education.

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Introduction

African philosophy of education as a practice

Introduction

Much of the literature about an African philosophy of education seems to juxtapose two strands of African philosophy as mutually exclusive entities, namely traditional ethnophilosophy on the one hand, and scientific African philosophy on the other. Whereas traditional ethnophilosophy is associated with the cultural artefacts, narratives, folklore and music of Africa's peoples, scientific African philosophy is concerned primarily with the explanations, interpretations and justifications of African thought and practice along the lines of critical and transformative reasoning. These two different strands of African philosophy invariably have a different impact on understandings of education: that is education as constituted by cultural action as mutually independent from education constituted by reasoned action. The position I argue for in this text is for an African philosophy of education guided by communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent action in order to bridge the conceptual and practical divide between African ethnophilosophy and scientific African philosophy. Unlike those who argue that African philosophy of education cannot exist because it does not invoke reason, or that reasoned African philosophy of education is just not possible, I argue instead for an African philosophy of education constituted by reasoned, culture-dependent action. Hopefully my argument will take care of criticisms such as claims that African philosophy of education is too constrained by oral traditions and cultural experiences; that it is too culture dependent and cannot be responsive to human problems on the African continent; or that it is anti-scientific and primitive.[1]

In the main, my argument in defence of an African philosophy of education is aimed at developing a conception of education that can contribute towards imagination, deliberation and responsibility – actions that can help towards enhancing justice in educative relations, specifically in relation to African education. By provoking students towards imaginative action and a renewed consciousness of possibility, they learn to acknowledge humanity in themselves and others; by encouraging students to work cooperatively through sharing, engagement and remaining open to the new and unexpected, they contribute towards cultivating learning communities; and by learning to show

outrage at injustices and human violations, students learn to attend to those on the margins (women, children and those who suffer from dictatorships and displacements on the African continent, and elsewhere).

Thus, in my attempt to offer a defence for a plausible conception of African philosophy of education, that is one constituted by both reasoned and culture-dependent action, I draw on a communitarian understanding of the notion of *ubuntu* (African humaneness and interdependence) in order to justify African philosophy of education. In the first place, *ubuntu* offers a medium or vehicle through which African philosophy of education can be enacted and, equally important, through which *ubuntu* can contribute towards achieving democratic justice on the African continent. In other words, *ubuntu* can play a dualistic role, of, on the one hand, contributing towards healing ethnic–political conflict, and on the other, undermining corruption and chauvinistic governance on the African continent. As a humanistic concept, *ubuntu* can engender cooperative and harmonious human relations; as a philosophical concept, *ubuntu* can contribute towards cultivating the respect and care that are required to produce a morally worthwhile African society; and as a politico–ideological concept, *ubuntu* can engender human interdependence for transformed socio-political action.

Sceptics of African philosophy of education have often disagreed with its proponents for re-inventing something that has very little, if any, role to play in contemporary African society. I hold a different view, and proffer arguments in defence of an African philosophy of education that can be enacted through the notion of *ubuntu*. Since the 1960s, African philosophy as an instance of Africanisation has emerged as a 'gathering' notion for philosophical endeavours practised by professional philosophers and intellectuals, either of African descent, including those living in the diaspora, or those of non-African descent but who are devoted to matters pertaining to African and African-descended individuals and communities (Outlaw, 2002: 139). These philosophical endeavours mostly relate to a 'critical analysis and reflective evaluation of the evidence and reasoning' that constitute the beliefs, customs, values, traditions, oral literature (parables, proverbs, poetry, songs and myth), languages and histories of African and African-descended peoples (Hallen, 2004: 105). In this book I analytically explore ideas and practices central to African philosophy, their underlying rationales, and how these forms of philosophical inquiry can potentially engender defensible educative relationships in relation to cosmopolitan justice, non-discriminatory and humane practices that can be inclusive and responsive to the challenges faced by people on the African continent.

African, like most (if not all) communities, are not homogeneous. Africa's people have different and often conflicting traditions – different languages, cultures, customs, ethnicities and religions. Thus, to speak about *the* Africanisation of education and knowledge would be implausible, because so many differences, divisions and conflicts occur among Africans. An Africanisation of education cannot simply be about invoking 'the African voice and identity'

(Odora Hoppers, 2000: 9), because that would imply that there exists a single, homogeneous, monolithic African culture and identity – as correctly pointed out by Horsthemke (2004: 580). However, whereas Horsthemke seems to deplore 'Africanisation' as evoking a 'superficial sense of belonging' which may entail 'further marginalisation and derogation' (Horsthemke, 2004: 571), my argument in defence of Africanisation is linked, first, to the potential contribution Africanisation can make to intellectual inquiry, more specifically African philosophy of education and, second, to the achievement of justice, respect for human rights and reconciliation after years of struggle and conflict on the African continent.

So, what constitutes an Africanisation of education and knowledge? I take my cue from two prominent scholars whose work Horsthemke has seemingly not taken into account. First, Kwasi Wiredu (2005) makes a case for the Africanisation of knowledge. For Wiredu (2005: 20), Africanisation means domesticating knowledge (including science and technology) in African culture – what he refers to as the harmonisation of technological industrialisation with African traditional communalism. In other words, for Wiredu, if knowledge originates from the investigations of, say, some Europeans and is taken up by Africans and used in the interests of Africa, we can speak of the Africanisation of the use of that knowledge. In his words, 'If there is an important truth in the Buddha or Kant or Dewey or Heidegger or Quine, you can take it and add it to the truths that you have obtained from your own African tradition of thought.' What Wiredu argues for is a construction of knowledge that takes into account the traditions of thought of Africans combined with those originating from elsewhere in an effort to Africanise knowledge – in other words, to domesticate knowledge. In agreement with Horsthemke, I disagree with Sipho Seepe (2000: 19) that the Africanisation of knowledge involves 'a process of placing the African world-view at the centre of analysis … [and] the need to foreground African indigenous knowledge systems to address problems and challenges'. What needs to be foregrounded is knowledge that harmonises the universal (say, what comes from Europe) and the particular (traditional thoughts and practices and not, as Seepe suggests, a single African worldview). For instance, finding a medical cure for the HIV and AIDS pandemic cannot be done by relying solely on traditional herbs and plants prescribed by local sages (wise persons). Rather, scientific contributions from other sources on finding a cure for HIV and AIDS should be synthesised with traditional remedies. Similarly, African countries cannot ignore knowledge of how democracies work in the Western world, simply because they prescribe to indigenous ways of governance. Instead of polarising Western and African conceptions of democratic governance, these two notions should be considered as perhaps complementary to the advancement of governance in African states. In this way, Africanisation cannot mean the foregrounding of indigenous knowledge systems, at the cost of marginalising other systems, because this approach would ignore rich contributions from knowledge (say about democratic governance) developed elsewhere.

This brings me to a discussion of traditions of inquiry. The beliefs, images, texts and 'stock of reasons' associated with a socially embodied and historically contingent practice, constitute a tradition (MacIntyre, 1990: 350). Traditions differ from each other on the basis of what reasons are offered to justify their beliefs, practices and established institutions. For example, based on the reasons offered to justify or give an account of a tradition, an Islamic tradition may differ from a Chinese one. So, when reasons are offered to justify why one tradition is what it is, such a practice can be called an inquiry. Thus, one can talk about an Islamic tradition of inquiry as being different from a Western tradition of inquiry – a matter of what justifications (reasons) are given in defence of a particular tradition. And, what makes an Islamic tradition of inquiry different from a Western one is that the practices, beliefs and institutions of the former are socially embodied and historically located in the lives of its people. In a similar way, an African tradition of inquiry involves the beliefs, practices and institutions of a particular African community. Thus, by looking at the beliefs as expressed through customs, rituals, modes of dress, village layout and course of actions of the Zulu community in South Africa, one would get a sense of such an African tradition of inquiry – a matter of how knowledge is constructed and enacted within an African tradition.

Moreover, specifically in the case of Africa, an attempt to Africanise, say, an Islamic tradition of inquiry would be to bring its rational justifications (what people offer as reasons for their beliefs, practices and institutions – their modes of inquiry) into conversation, cooperation and conflict with rival traditions of inquiry of what is considered to be Western, for example. Different traditions of inquiry have their own reasons for claiming why they should be recognised and acknowledged. Muslims in South Africa claim that their mode of inquiry depends on their interpretation of their primary sources (revealed knowledge, that is Qur`an and Prophetic life experiences). So, living a 'morally worthwhile' life would depend on how a Muslim, for instance, implements the teachings of her primary sources. But, adhering to the tenets of her faith based on how she understands what moral action involves often may conflict with the laws of her country – laws contrived by a judiciary. Muslims, for example, might believe in the death penalty as due punishment for murder, which might run contrary to the laws of the state. Similarly, many Africans might be more inclined towards seeking traditional forms of justice, such as the payment of 'blood money' rather than turning to the courts of the state. This is what a practice entails – even if that practice appears to be irreconcilable with the laws of the state.

Following the aforementioned view on Africanisation as a tradition of inquiry (what I would refer to as African philosophy of education), it comes as no surprise that N'Dri Assié-Lumumba (2005) argues for the formation of a new African philosophy of higher education through a process of fusion – combining African educational traditions and practices with various elements of Asian (specifically Japanese) and European thought and practice. Her argument for a redefinition of an African philosophy of education is a significant move towards

Africanising education along the lines of an African ethos, culture and mode of knowledge construction – what can be referred to as an African life-world. Whereas Wiredu and Assié-Lumumba argue for a 'recovery' and construction of an African philosophy of education through 'fusion' with Western and other ideas respectively, Horsthemke and Enslin (2005) bring into question whether the idea of a distinctly and uniquely (South) African philosophy of education can be salvaged. They do this through identifying (philosophically) some major deficiencies in proposals of *ubuntu*, and ideas like communalism and the common good as the purported basis or philosophical foundation of African philosophy. For them, the idea that 'the African viewpoint espouses harmony and collectivity, whilst the Eurocentric point of view emphasises a more individualistic orientation towards life', is a misconception, thus questioning the calls of Wiredu and Assié-Lumumba for a recognition of African communalism. Horsthemke and Enslin argue that an individualistic orientation need not be 'selfish' or 'egoistic', and is 'perfectly compatible with compassion and empathy, a concern with other individuals *as* individuals' (Horsthemke and Enslin, 2005: 55). While I concur with Horsthemke and Enslin that an individualistic orientation is compatible with compassion, I differ with them on their understanding that African philosophy is about renouncing the individual in favour of community. Instead, as I would consistently argue for in this book, African philosophy of education as a communitarian practice does not dismiss the individual per se. In other words, the favouring of community should not necessarily be understood as being at the expense of the individual. Rather, it invokes an understanding of education that considers an individual's aspirations and actions as constitutive, as an extension of the community, and not in conflict with the latter.

In focusing on the main argument of the book that an African philosophy of education as a practice has three constitutive aspects: first, to be reasonable in one's articulations; second, to demonstrate moral maturity; and third, to be attuned to deliberation, I will, in the next section, argue that the efficacy of teaching and learning could be enhanced if framed according to these three aspects of an African philosophy of education.

The philosophical practice of African philosophy of education

The position I wish to explore in this section is that, if one hopes to understand the experiences and conditions of African communities, one first needs to practise a philosophy of education. Philosophy of education is an activity of inquiry (that is, practice) that enables one to understand the situations of communities, albeit Africans' 'lived experiences'. Hence, I argue that it is not implausible to refer to an African philosophy of education, because a philosophy or philosophies of education are activities of methodical inquiry that enable one to understand, explain, explore, question or deconstruct the lived experiences of people. Simply put, an African philosophy of education

explores the lives of African communities and their situations in the same way that an Islamic philosophy of education examines the lived experiences and conditions of Muslim communities. The point I am making is that philosophic activity is not a 'thing' or body of knowledge that is neutral and objective, but rather a mode of intellectual inquiry – reasonable, deliberative and moral.

Any philosophy of education is in some way related to modes of thought and action that make education what it is. In the Aristotelian sense, to educate is a human action that tells us something about how people become knowledgeable – how they develop their capacities to understand, reflect on and attend to achieving 'the good life'. In this way, through (Western) philosophy of education, human beings attempt to make sense of, and strive towards achieving, 'the good life' – they cooperate with one another and find common ways to interact with their environment. Similarly, Islamic philosophy of education involves cultivating in Muslims a sense of cooperativeness in terms of which they relate to one another in the quest to achieve worthwhile ends – most Muslims want to live peacefully and harmoniously with others in their surroundings. Since different philosophies of education aim to nurture in people a sense of cooperativeness in terms of which they interact and share with one another, it would not be unreasonable to assume that an African philosophy of education ought to reflect on, and attend to, what it means for Africans to live a way of life compatible with their experiences on the African continent. In this regard, to avoid talking of an African philosophy of education seems to be undesirable and incongruent with the existence of a multiplicity of philosophies of education that do exist – philosophies of education do take into account the experiences of people relevant to their contexts. In the same way that the Chinese might have a preference for a Chinese philosophy of education, Africans share an African philosophy of education. This brings me to a discussion of some of the features of an African philosophy of education.

First, Wiredu (2004) claims in a paper entitled 'Prolegomena to an African philosophy of education' that an African philosophy of education cannot be spoken of without considering what it means for a person to be educated. This makes sense, because any philosophy of education needs to frame human action in a way that is commensurate with its underlying meanings. Wiredu (2004) argues that an educated person is one who possesses reasonable knowledge of her culture and environment, and demonstrates an ability to construct and articulate defensible arguments. Drawing on his Akan (Ghanaian tribe) experience, Wiredu (2004) points out that an educated person (referred to as *wapo* in the Akan language) is one who is refined, polished, lucid and articulate. Such an educated person is reasonable by virtue of the fact that she demonstrates linguistic understanding, knows how to use appropriate proverbs and demonstrates a willingness to listen carefully to what others have to say. If being reasonable is understood to encompass virtues of articulation and a willingness to listen to the other, then an African philosophy of education accentuates the importance of being reasonable – the ability of people to articulate clear and defensible arguments, on the one hand, and to demonstrate a

willingness to listen carefully to others, on the other. This constitutive view of an African philosophy of education is shared by Hountondji (2002: 139), who acknowledges the importance of criticising the views of others, in the sense that 'higher-level formulation' requires that one does not passively accept the viewpoints of others or 'the questions that others ask themselves or ask us from their own preoccupations' – a practice he refers to as conscious rationality or reasonableness (Hountondji, 2002: 255). In contending that rationality is not given in advance, but needs to be developed 'in a spirit of solidarity and sharing … so that the germs of ignorance and poverty will be eliminated forever from planet earth' (Hountondji, 2002: 258), he asserts that an African philosophy of education is concerned with the quest to achieve reasonableness so that the predicament of the African experience – with reference to ignorance and poverty – can be resolved.

Of course, my potential critic might claim that African philosophy of education also allows scope for an analysis and explanation of myth, folklore and supernaturalism – all aspects of African life that do not always seem to be commensurate with what is reasonable and logical. For instance, some African communities might recount their belief in supernatural spirits, which, in the absence of tangible empirical evidence, might be deemed as irrational by those outside of these communities. In this sense, it might be argued that an African philosophy of education seems to be attracted and framed by what can be perceived to be as unreasonable. While the validity of supernaturalism can be disputed, it does not negate the fact that sometimes African communities offer narratives of their beliefs that make their belief fall prey to the unreasonable, even if this is not true of the evidence they put forward and the arguments they offer to justify its apparent existence. The point I am making is that, although the belief itself might be questionable, this does not detract from the validity of the procedure (lucidity and clarity perhaps) in which the belief can be recounted, or the narrative, which has given formation to the belief itself. An African philosophy of education is not concerned mainly with the validity of the belief or story, but with the procedure according to which the story is narrated – with lucidity and argumentation that will present reasons for one's views. While these reasons might not always appeal to the understanding of those who listen, or listeners might contest the logic of the narrations, the existence and proliferation of these beliefs must be understood within the context of a particular life-world.

As far as reasonableness is concerned, Gyekye (1997: 29) makes the point that African philosophical discourse is embedded in two interrelated processes: rational discourse and the application of a minimalist logic in ordinary conversations without being conversant with its formal rules. Although Gyekye recognises the importance of rationality and logic, he does not go far in explaining what these processes entail, besides claiming that rationality is a culture-dependent concept and that less formal rules are required if people want to engage in conversation (Gyekye 1997: 29). By claiming that rationality is a culture-dependent concept, Gyekye avers that the way rationality

is understood in Western culture, for instance, may not necessarily apply to African cultures. In other words, it would be quite possible, he contends, to find within the African past itself a rational ethos – such as in African traditional folktales – which embody critical thought that might be understood differently to the notion of rationality in Western culture (Gyekye 1997: 236). Gyekye's notion of a culture-dependent rationality can be related to a critical re-evaluation of received ideas and an intellectual pursuit related to the practical problems and concerns of African society. In other words, African rationality is a critical, re-evaluative response to the basic human problems that arise in any African society (Gyekye 1997: 19). By critical re-evaluation, Gyekye (1997: 19, 24) refers to the offering of insights, arguments and conclusions relevant to the African experience by suggesting new or alternative ways of thought and action. If I understand Gyekye correctly, then he also relates the articulation of insights, arguments and conclusions to being critical of political authority and to cultivating self-reflection and an innovative spirit (1997: 25–27). If I consider criticism, self-reflection and innovation (creativity and imagination) as touchstones of rationality, then it follows that the insights, arguments and conclusions one offers cannot be unrelated to being critical, creative and self-reflexive. In essence, then, I would argue that an African philosophy of education advocates a high degree of reasonableness.

Second, an educated person is one who has attained moral maturity and refinement (Wiredu, 2004). Such a person has acquired the virtues of honesty, faithfulness and duty to, and empathy for the well-being of others in her community. This implies that an educated person has developed a sense of responsibility towards her kin and community. Wiredu (2004) makes the claim that an individual who has not achieved a sense of morality – responsibility and empathy towards others – has not achieved personhood or the status of an educated person. This makes an African philosophy of education a highly moral discourse aimed at cultivating honesty, sincerity, responsibility and empathy towards others. Such a view of philosophy of education finds expression in the ideas of Dewey, who argues that the achievement of moral maturity is important in the making of an educated person. What follows from this is that an African philosophy of education demonstrates the potential to promote justice, courage and truthfulness in individuals (that is goods or excellences internal to achieving moral maturity and refinement). In other words, an African philosophy of education aims to contribute to the transformation of educational discourse in Africa, in particular by empowering communities to participate in their own educational development, since the empowerment of communities, as well as their educational development, could be achieved through the use of whatever intellectual skills (rationality) they possess to eliminate the various dimensions of the African predicament (that is the amelioration of the human condition that is a consequence of poverty, hunger, famine, unemployment, political oppression, civil wars, colonialism (imperialism) and economic exploitation) (Oladipo 1992: 24) – a matter of achieving moral goods internal to the life experiences of Africans.

Third, an educated person is given to dialogue (Wiredu, 2004). Hountondji relates an understanding of African philosophy of education to progressive 'structures of dialogue and argument without which no science [that is, African philosophy of education] is possible' (Hountondji, 2002: 73). In my view, these 'structures of dialogue and argument' are constitutive of what an African philosophy of education as a social practice is about. Any discussion that does not address these 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' does not do justice to what constitutes an African philosophy of education. But, before I explore some of the goods internal to consensual dialogue, I first need to take issue with Hountondji, whose call for African philosophy to be connected to 'structures of dialogue and argument' seems to have a paradoxical relationship to his critique of ethnophilosophy.

If one considers that ethnophilosophy (which takes into account the narratives and life experiences of Africans) and 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' invariably involve listening to the voices of others (no matter how ill-informed), then it follows that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' cannot simply dismiss oral tradition and cultural narratives – unless, of course, Hountondji assumes that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' refer only to offering persuasive arguments through a rational articulation of points of view. But then, rational argumentation and persuasion are not necessarily related to eloquence and philosophical justification alone. To my mind, listening to what the other has to say, even though this expression may be unimportant or inarticulate justification, allows the voices of people who would otherwise have been muted or marginalised to come to the fore. For instance, listening to the view of an African sage (*ondudu* in the language of the Ovambu, a tribe in Namibia) or of his followers in conversation should not necessarily imply that, because such a view is perhaps not eloquently expressed, it ought to be dismissed as irrelevant to the dialogue. What makes dialogue a conversation is that people are willing to listen to what they have to say to one another without putting any participants down or dismissing their subjective views as not worthy of consideration. A dialogue becomes a legitimate conversation when points of view are expressed in a way that allows the other to offer his or her rejoinder, no matter how ill-informed. The focus and importance of dialogue, therefore, should be on its content and message, rather than on its eloquence or expression. To this end, Hountondji's critique of ethnophilosophy is problematic in that it reflects the moral standpoints and cultural justifications of people whose exclusion from dialogue would nullify legitimate conversation among people. Hountondji himself values the importance of listening to others as an 'advantage of facilitating dialogue and moderating, on occasion, the excessive passion of the most aggressive opponents' (Hountondji, 2002: 81). This is perhaps why he claims that his critique of ethnophilosophy and rejection of collective thought through dialogue were 'a bit excessive' (Hountondji, 2002: 128).

If one assumes that ethnophilosophy is considered by many African communities as comprising a body of knowledge (myths, folklores, customs,

culture and tradition) that determines how philosophy ought to be practised (which I suspect Hountondji might be doing), then I agree with his rejection of it as African philosophy. This is because ethnophilosophy is treated as some objective, neutral truth that cannot be questioned and undermined, thus making ethnophilosophy some universal 'thing' that should be valorised as scientific inquiry. However, any philosophy of education refers to an activity that uses methods of inquiry such as analysis, synthesis, deconstruction, questioning, examination, exploration and exegeses to investigate a phenomenon – in this case, educational issues related to the African 'lived experiences' on the African continent. This makes African philosophy of education, methodically speaking, a mode of scientific inquiry and not an objective body of truth, as ethnophilosophy seems to be depicted.

In this regard, Higgs (2003) does not depict an African philosophy of education as an activity which involves intellectual inquiry that can contribute to the transformation of educational discourse in South Africa. He claims that an African philosophy of education ought to empower communities to participate in their own educational development, since it 'respects diversity, acknowledges lived experience and challenges the hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge' (Higgs 2003: 16–17). But his articulation of an African philosophy of education seems to ignore the sentiments of Oladipo (1992: 24), on whom he draws largely for his ideas on an African philosophy of education. Oladipo (1992: 24) suggests that the empowerment of communities, as well as their educational development, could be achieved through the use of 'whatever intellectual skills they possess to eliminate the various dimensions of the African predicament (that is, the amelioration of the human condition as a consequence of poverty, hunger, famine, unemployment, political oppression, civil wars, colonialism (imperialism) and economic exploitation)'. The point I am making is that Oladipo views an African philosophy of education as 'intellectual skills' that have to be used methodically in addressing the African predicament – philosophy of education is an activity and not some objective truth that needs to be achieved. Central to Higgs's argument in defence of a form of human activism that could ameliorate the disempowered African condition is the notion of *ubuntu* or humaneness. *Ubuntu* is a form of humanism that could engender 'communal embeddedness and connectedness of a person to other persons' (Higgs 2003: 13). Such an understanding of *ubuntu* could orientate an African philosophy of education towards the cultivation of 'virtues such as kindness, generosity, compassion, benevolence, courtesy and respect and concern for others' (Higgs 2003: 14). What worries me about Higgs's view of an African philosophy of education is his inadequate treatment of philosophy of education as an activity, specifically in his omission of references in his ideas to what constitutes an African philosophy of education which explain the activity as another way of scientific inquiry. While *ubuntu* is certainly an African 'lived experience' which can be analysed and explained or deconstructed methodically – that is using the methods of philosophy of education – it cannot, however, be valorised to the level of philosophic activity – an idea Higgs seems to overlook.

African philosophy of education as a pedagogical practice

African philosophy of education, with its emphasis on achieving reasonableness, would be inclined towards an approach to teaching and learning whereby students, for instance, abandon the expectation that prescribed texts and course readings be considered as master texts – students are regarded instead as reasonable people, which means they become more open to interpreting, analysing and looking beyond texts. They become less likely to insist on final and certain conclusions and are more able to deliberate with other students and teachers. This, of course, requires, first, that teachers develop a well-attuned ear for the responsive capabilities of students – they become reasonable themselves, and second, that they refine their range of communicative capabilities in order to elicit student responses and to nurture them to become self-critical and deliberative. Moreover, when teachers and students reason together, they give to one another an intelligible account of their reasoning, show their ability and their willingness to evaluate the reasons for action advanced to one by others, so that they make themselves accountable for their endorsements of the practical conclusions of others as well as for their own conclusions. As far as teaching educational theory to university students is concerned, university teachers may cultivate in postgraduate education students an understanding of critical pedagogy and reflexivity so that they, in turn, can critically and self-reflectively evaluate such concepts. Students can evaluate university teachers' explication of education concepts by recognising the logical soundness, clarity and coherence of the arguments produced in justification of these concepts and may decide to relate these concepts to their educative practices. The point is that socialising students in education concepts no longer revolves around the decisions that individual university teachers make, but also around the evaluation of teachers by students, who may decide to use concepts such as critical pedagogy and reflexivity in their educative practices. In other words, students may decide to *do* something with these concepts. These students might decide to experience what it would mean if these concepts were to be used in action. For instance, some students might want to experience how other students would engage with them if they questioned and challenged one another's views on, for instance, educational transformation. Dewey (1925: 11) refers to this kind of pedagogical activity as students and teachers engaging in a transaction. Consequently, the action performed by an individual university teacher constitutes part of some whole, so that by their performance the whole is brought into being. University teachers act in the classroom, while at the same time opportunities are created for students to experience the transaction – they are not excluded from pedagogical activity. Dewey explains experience as a (university classroom) practice that leads to 'patterns of action … [which constitute] the basis of organic learning' (Dewey 1938: 38).

Second, as teachers we act together with our students to the extent that we expect to learn with and from them, and we feel less threatened by occasions on which we sometimes need to admit that we do not know or understand

everything. In this way, teaching itself is a form of learning anew with others (students), during which the teacher acts as listener, questioner, instructor, guide and responsible and caring leader – teachers show a sense of moral maturity and refinement. Only then will our students not be hesitant to make mistakes or to offer reasons which might at times appear muddled or confusing. Through our actions we accept as conditional that our classroom practices are meant to explore and construct, and make allowance for erring. In this regard I agree with Burbules (1997: 73), who makes the point that our attitudes as teachers should include accepting as a condition of exploration and discovery the occasional state of being lost, confused and unsettled. Moreover, when students and teachers care, they respect one another. Why is respect a condition for deliberative pedagogical activity? In seeking to achieve respect, for instance in the face of disagreement, we need to attend to the way people hold or express positions. For example, the way in which university teachers should treat each other with regard to policy issues – even when the policy debate ends in legislation and the university takes a position favouring one side of the dispute – needs to be grounded in principles constituting mutual respect. In other words, respect is a form of agreeing to disagree, which of course requires a favourable attitude towards, and constructive interaction with, the persons with whom one disagrees. The point I am making is that respect should not merely be an unconditional acceptance of everything people say or propose – people should agree to disagree. University teachers do not show respect for students by simply accepting everything they say; students do not show respect for university teachers merely by imitating them; and they do not show disrespect when they disagree with their teachers. Respect demands that we hold others to the intellectual and moral standards we apply to ourselves. Excusing others from the demands of intellectual rigour and honesty or moral sensitivity and wisdom on the grounds that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, no matter how ill-informed or ungrounded, is to treat them with contempt. We honour others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully taking into consideration their justifiable criticisms of us. To do so is to take them seriously; to do any less is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect (Fay 1996: 234). Thus, if university teachers, for example, prevent students from exercising critical reflection and imagination regarding educational issues, or if students are unable to give critical evaluations of such matters, their actions should not be regarded as beyond the pale of critical judgement. Respect also does not mean that everything students do is 'fine', such as when they express incoherent and unjustifiable points of view. Respect means that students should be held accountable in supporting and implementing educational issues, for instance critical pedagogy, on the basis of self-reflection. This implies that respect does not simply mean acceptance of everything students do. Respect conceived as mere acceptance of everything students do or say negates the value of the process of deliberation.

Third, deliberative university classroom activity (what Hountondji refers to as 'structures of dialogue and argumentation') provides possibilities that can be used as instruments for making teaching and learning more desirable. Why? In the first instance, deliberation demands that teachers and students do not merely accept given educational problem definitions with pre-determined ends that need to be instrumentally engineered and controlled. Through deliberation, university teachers and students should approach educational problem-solving by offering possibilities as to what is achievable and whether achieving it is desirable (Biesta 2004: 14). It is quite possible to pursue this line of educational problem-solving because deliberation creates possibilities for university teachers and students to come up with alternative possibilities for desirable action. Educational problems are not solved in advance. Rather, through deliberation, possible solutions are imagined, contested and experimented with. For this reason, Ramsden (1992: 19) claims that university education should lead students to the 'imaginative acquisition of knowledge', which would not only encourage them to think critically, but also to stretch their creative capacities in relation to others to the point at which they can change ideas. In other words, solutions to educational problems are imaginatively and deliberatively constructed, and involve the use of both teachers' and students' imaginative powers and creative judgements to come up with ends not previously negotiated. These ends grow out of the deliberative teacher–student pedagogical activity. In essence, our deliberative actions in our teaching–learning encounters should also make us open to the unexpected, the uncertain and the unpredictable. In this way our teaching–learning encounters cultivate a kind of deliberation without any preconceived end-point or finality in mind. This attitude invariably leads to new pathways, new perspectives and new discoveries about what constitutes education and our different understandings of it.

In sum, I have explored three interrelated constitutive elements of an African philosophy of education: reasonableness, moral maturity and deliberative dialogue. These features of African philosophy of education demonstrate its potential to enhance the efficacy of teaching and learning in university classrooms. Hence, there is justification for an African philosophy of education as being a practice.

In order to offer further justification for an African philosophy of education as a practice, I have organised this book into seven interrelated chapters with a postscript. Chapters 1–4 articulate an extended notion of African philosophy of education along the lines of communitarian thought, building on my initial ideas articulated in this introduction. The argument for an African philosophy of education as a practice that can contribute towards addressing the problems encountered by Africa takes on a pragmatic form in relation to an elucidation of *ubuntu* (humaneness). Chapters 5–7 offer ways in which a communitarian notion of African philosophy of education can be used to harness a notion of cosmopolitan justice that can contribute towards enhancing an understanding of democratic citizenship education, as well as disrupting practices associated with human rights abuses, gender inequality, discrimination

and the marginalisation of women on the continent. In turn, I show how a particular understanding of African philosophy of education guides pedagogical actions such as teaching and learning in the African context.

Note

1 African philosophy in the African historical context does have a voluminous, rich, distinctive, original and multicultural heritage without just appealing to the beliefs and practices of ancient Egypt (Hallen, 2009: 22). Its twentieth-century origins can be traced back to the works of Placide Tempels, who argued in *Bantu Philosophy* (1949) that Africans of a Bantu origin were perceived to explain and perceive the world as expressions of 'vital forces' because, according to him, Africans are said to live in a world that is fundamentally *symbolic* and *ritualised* in character (Hallen, 2009: 24). More importantly, the notion of an African philosophy can also be traced back to the seminal works of W.E. Abraham, in *The Mind of Africa* (1962), and John Mbiti, in *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). Abrahams chooses an essentialist interpretation of African culture such as that all cultures are said to share fundamental beliefs and values, and uses Gilbert Ryle's conceptual analysis to advocate a methodologically pluralistic approach to the study of the philosophical in Africa's indigenous cultures (Abraham, 1962: 104–105). Mbiti considers African philosophy as subordinate to African religion and argues that every culture has a 'philosophy of life' or 'worldview' on God, creation and the afterlife, without focusing on technically philosophical problems. His works are best known for the expressed importance of communal life in the African context (Mbiti, 1970: 141). Thus, because of Abraham's social anthropological contribution and Mbiti's bias to religious thought, African philosophy has been characterised as essentially 'traditional' in character – a terms that did not do much for African philosophy as an academic discipline, as the 'traditional' became associated with what is 'prescientific' and 'emotive' (Hallen, 2009: 28).

1 In defence of a communitarian view of African philosophy of education

Introduction

In this chapter I examine what constitutes African philosophy of education, focusing on African thought and practices. Primarily I shall examine how African ethnophilosophy of education differs from a scientific African philosophy of education, before arguing in defence of a communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent view of African philosophy of education. Concomitant with the aforementioned view of philosophy of education, I argue that criticisms of an African philosophy of education should not be taken lightly. Hence, analytically I also address some of the objections to and concerns about the use of the concept that some people might have and show that an African philosophy of education can be considered as a plausible concept, at least in the analytical sense. This brings me to a discussion of African ethnophilosophy of education.

African ethnophilosophy of education

Taking my cue from Burbules and Abowitz (2008: 268), philosophy of education can be considered as a practice, that is 'a socially established, cooperative human activity that has normative standards that govern its activity, and which is adapted to local contexts and innovations over time'. This 'situated' notion of philosophy of education departs from two dominant and dichotomous views: First, the view that embraces a 'commitment to timeless standards of argument and reason, and its recurring attention to fundamental questions of truth, value and meaning that establish continuity across philosophers from before Socrates to the present day'; and second, the radically historicised view that integrates the expression of worldviews within a particular cultural and historical context, always partisan and implicated in social dynamics of power, and merely contingent in its ability to persuade or compel' (Burbules and Abowitz, 2008: 268). Before I make a case for a communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent view of African philosophy of education that can be considered as a 'situated' philosophy of education in order to 'illuminate the significant educational dimensions underlying major philosophical problems' (Burbules and Abowitz, 2008: 273), I shall examine how African ethnophilosophy of education connects with aspects of the afore-mentioned two dominant views.

It seems as if African ethnophilosophy of education is concerned with the history, culture, language and traditions of Africa's peoples, including evidences offered through a reference to indigenous folklore, proverbs, oral narratives, artefacts, wise sayings of sages, and superstitions (Appiah, 2000: 123–124). This approach to African ethnophilosophy conceives philosophy of education as an engagement with 'communal thought … [as] opposed to seeing [and examining it] as a body of logically argued thoughts of individuals' (Bodunrin, 1981: 161). Thus, from the myths, folktales, beliefs, proverbs and languages, ethnophilosophy envisages to (re)construct a quintessential African approach to education (Seller, 1984: 21). A prominent proponent of an African ethnophilosophy of education is Oruka (1990). Although he was emphatic in his earlier manuscripts that African philosophy of education could not be equated with ethnophilosophy of education, he later became more accepting of the concept and concedes that it (that is ethnophilosophy) occupies a significant place in African philosophy of education. While Oruka (2002) distinguishes ethnophilosophy from philosophic sagacity, the thoughts and words of men and women who are considered to be the wise ones within African communities are constitutive of what an ethnophilosophic practice entails. This is because examining cultural artefacts, narratives and the wisdom of age-old beliefs is in fact an activity of an ethnocentric nature – one that occurs through participation, observation and description. Considering that African ethnophilosophy of education is attentive, on the one hand, to truth, culture and the meanings of African people's thoughts and practices and, on the other hand, to the historical and cultural worldviews of often authoritarian persons (such as the sages), African ethnophilosophy of education has an inherent connection with metaphysical value judgements that are invariably couched in the discourse of philosophic activity, albeit in a complex and ambiguous way. For instance, African sages do reflect on and offer reasons for and arguments on the nature of the person, freedom of the will, immortality, and how to live one's life. Yet, at times, sages justify their reasons in relation to authoritarian traditional thought such as an appeal to 'what our ancestors said' or 'to gods and all sorts of spirits' (Appiah, 2000: 127). It is an appellation to superstition that brings African ethnophilosophy of education into conflict with the rigour of reason and argumentation (Wiredu, 1980: 41), that is, the critical and reflective nature of philosophy of education itself. What the latter point reveals is not a rejection of African ethnophilosophy of education per se, as concepts such as life, meaning, person, mind, reality, reason, understanding, truth, good and justice are central to the canon of such a philosophy of education. In fact, the uncritical treatment of African ethnophilosophy of education would undermine the activities of analysis, exposition and critique – all considered as critical to philosophy of education. Therefore, Wiredu (1980) – an Anglophone philosopher from Ghana – and Hountondji (1983) – a francophone philosopher from Benin – have emerged as two vehement critics of an African ethnophilosophy of education. In continuing, I will now offer an analysis of their criticisms.

For Wiredu (1980: ix), African ethnophilosophy of education considers traditional modes of thought as too restrictive in the sense that African ethnophilosophers (I would argue, of education) are too unreflective and unwilling to borrow and refine methods of Western philosophical analysis that can be applied to the conceptual problems of African life. This criticism of African ethnophilosophy of education is corroborated by Kaphagawani (2000: 91), who asserts that 'Ethnophilosophy [of education] has come under a lot of criticism. It has been charged with conflating philosophy, mysticism, and religion, and hence paying lip-service to reason and critical analysis'. I agree with Wiredu (and Kaphagawani, for that matter) to the extent that African ethnophilosophy of education cannot be blind to philosophical methods of reflection and argumentation that have proved to be so successful in Western philosophy. It does not make sense to ignore the ideas of, say, Kant, Hegel, Wittgenstein or Dewey in order to think differently about education on the African continent and to assume that geographic positioning alone can resolve major problems that beset African communities. To have a disdain for Hegelian thought just because Hegel did not live on the African continent and that his ideas therefore might be inappropriate to Africa would be tantamount to depriving ourselves of gaining insights into the ways others not from Africa conceived of the world and its problems, as well as the of ways in which the latter have been addressed, instead of remaining philosophically naïve. In fact, to adopt a disdainful attitude towards the views of those, who are not African, would be undermining of an African philosophy itself – since it would imply that any contribution from the African continent cannot have any bearing beyond Africa. And yet, Africa has the most to gain, since, as Appiah (2000: 118) notes – there is too little written about Africa that is philosophically serious, and refers to such a deliberate rejection of others' views as mere 'carping'. It is for this reason that Wiredu (1980) made a sustained assault on the preservation of traditional thought and practices that are not subjected to critical scrutiny through others' value systems. This does not mean that one must simply project Western philosophical thinking onto indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Rather, for African ethnophilosophy of education to be considered as philosophical, it also must reflect a willingness to engage with the methods and claims of other traditions, albeit of a Western kind. In this regard, Wiredu (1980: 10) posits: '[the concern of] … a contemporary African philosopher's conception of African (ethno)philosophy is whether it enables him to engage fruitfully in the activity of modern (Western) philosophising with an African conscience'.

Hountondji's (1983: 104) objection to African ethnophilosophy of education is premised on the view that such a philosophy not only belongs to entire communities, but that it exists mostly in oral tradition. The fact that such a philosophy is considered the proprietorship of communities makes the issue about negotiating and compromising on beliefs and traditions almost impracticable, as is the case with several indigenous communities failing to relinquish their adherence to superstitious beliefs and their insistence on using mainly traditional herbal remedies, often at the expense of curative Western medicines.

However, what is somewhat disconcerting about Hountondji's assertion in connection with 'orality' being considered as a necessary condition for the existence of philosophy and philosophy of education is the view that the oral tradition does not contribute to African philosophy of education's status as an exact 'science'. According to him, 'African philosophy … [of education is] a set of texts, specifically the set of texts written by Africans themselves and described as philosophical by their authors themselves' (Hountondji, 1983: 33). Of course, written texts afford people an opportunity to systematically engage with the coherent forms of argumentation and they might respond more insightfully and critically to the authored pieces of writing. However, even an existing piece of authorship does not necessarily secure sophisticated articulation or persuasive argumentation, as is often the case with several written journal articles and books on, say, the subject of ethnophilosophy itself. However, texts do offer readers opportunities to engage with the ideas of others through sustained efforts of criticism, reflection and evaluation which might not always be possible if one just listens to the oral narratives of others. And while Hountondji might be right to question African ethnophilosophy of education's abundant reliance on 'orality', to claim that 'orality' is unacceptable and inconsistent with the demands of 'science' is to assume a too radical position. Because if Africa's peoples were to begin to construct solutions for Africa's political, cultural and economic problems on the basis of talking to one another and learning to talk back (instead of just reading and communicating through texts), it might just be the catalyst required by Africans to deliberate in and about a common language of understanding. While I am not dismissive of Hountondji's critique, I find his position somewhat too exuberant and overzealous in the quest to solve major philosophical problems with an educational impetus on the African continent. I now turn my attention to a discussion of scientific African philosophy of education.

Scientific African philosophy of education

A major theoretical statement on what constitutes a scientific African philosophy of education is related to the seminal thoughts of Hountondji (2002: 84) – a vociferous critic of African ethnophilosophy. He considers repetitive stories recounted from generation to generation as unsophisticated constructions of human speech, and hence in contradistinction with the methodology of philosophy itself. He argues that philosophy is a 'strict science' aimed at 'challenging, explaining, interpreting with a view to transforming' (Hountondji, 2002: 91). And, contrary to such a view, he avers that African ethnophilosophy of education is uncreative in that it enables one to indulge 'lazily [in] seeking refuge … behind the thought[s] of the ancestors' (Hountondji, 2002: 128). He warns against 'the temptation of a reductive, unilateral, and overly simplifying reading of cultures, and especially, of the worldviews of the African continent' (Hountondji, 2002: 81). His valorisation of 'science' seeks to situate African philosophy of education as a legitimate form of methodological inquiry with

the same aims as those of any other philosophy in the world, within the geographical context of its authors (Hountondji, 2002: 126). In short, African philosophy of education is that form of methodological inquiry that relies on rational justification and interpretive argumentation with the intent to bring about a critical transformation of African thought and practice. In the main, his task, as he puts it, was to establish the legitimacy of an intellectual project that was both authentically African and authentically philosophical (Appiah in Hountondji, 2002: xiii).

Moreover, Hountondji connects his thesis of a scientific African philosophy of education to progressive 'structures of dialogue and argument without which no science (that is African philosophy of education) is possible' (Hountondji, 2002: 73). It seems as if, for Hountondji, 'structures of dialogue and argument' are constitutive of what a scientific representation of African philosophy of education shows. Conversely any misrecognition or non-commitment to 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' would distort any credible, scientific African philosophy of education. But before I explore how Hountondji's scientific acclaim of African philosophy of education relates to some of the methodological concerns of two of the dominant views of philosophy of education, as alluded to in the beginning of this chapter, I first need to take issue with Hountondji, whose call for a scientific African philosophy of education to be connected to 'structures of dialogue and argument' seems somewhat ambiguous in relation to his critique of African ethnophilosophy of education.

Considering that philosophy takes into account the narratives and life experiences of Africans, whose 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' invariably involve listening to the voices of others (no matter how ill-informed), then it follows that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' cannot simply dismiss oral tradition and cultural narratives – unless Hountondji assumes that 'structures of dialogue and argumentation' relate only to offering persuasive arguments through a rational articulation of points of view. But then rational argumentation and persuasion are not necessarily related to eloquence and philosophical justification alone. To my mind, listening to what the other has to say, albeit unimportant or inarticulate justifications, brings to the fore the voices of people who would otherwise have been muted or marginalised. For instance, the view of an African sage (*ondudu*) or his followers, offered in conversation, should not necessarily be dismissed as irrelevant to the dialogue just because it may possibly not be expressed eloquently. What makes a dialogue a conversation is that people are willing to listen to one another's ideas without putting them down or dismissing their subjective views as being unworthy of consideration. A dialogue becomes a legitimate conversation when points of view are expressed in a way that allows the other to offer his or her rejoinder, no matter how ill-informed. In view of this, Hountondji's critique of African ethnophilosophy of education does not hold water, since it reflects the moral standpoints and cultural justifications of people whose exclusion from dialogue would nullify legitimate conversation among people. Hountondji

himself values the importance of listening to others as an 'advantage of facilitating dialogue and moderating, on occasion, the excessive passion of the most aggressive opponents' (Hountondji, 2002: 81). This perhaps is why he claims that his earlier critique of African ethnophilosophy of education and rejection of collective thought through dialogue were 'a bit excessive' (Hountondji, 2002: 128).

Similarly, listening to the stories of others does not mean that one uncritically accepts everything someone else has to say. Dialogue also means that one challenges and questions the points of view of others, if these points of view might not seem to be valid within the matrix of one's understanding, or if one has not been convinced of the legitimacy of the articulations of the other person. Hountondji (2002: 139) acknowledges the importance of criticising the views of others in the sense that 'higher-level formulation' requires that one does not passively accept the viewpoints of others or 'the questions that others ask themselves or ask us from their own preoccupations' – a practice he refers to as conscious rationality (Hountondji, 2002: 255). His contention is that rationality is not given in advance. Instead, it needs to be developed 'in a spirit of solidarity and sharing … so that the germs of ignorance and poverty will be eliminated forever from planet earth' (Hountondji, 2002: 258). To my mind, Hountondji paradoxically advocates a notion of dialogue and argumentation that does not necessarily have to exclude the stories of others – that is to say, he makes a claim for some of the methodological aspects of African ethnophilosophy that he seemingly finds irrelevant to the discourse of scientific African philosophy of education.

The argument that a scientific African philosophy of education invokes and advocates rational deliberation and argumentation can be connected to the dominant view of philosophy of education as a mode of inquiry, because scientific African philosophy of education wants to retain a sense of distanced objectivity through a commitment to timeless standards of dialogical argument and reason and, of course, its recurring attention to fundamental questions of truth, value and meaning – as if the voices of others in the oral tradition are forms of untruth and of insignificant value and meaning. Perhaps, inherent in Houtondji's depiction of 'higher-level formulation' is a misconceived analogy with sophisticated articulation, and therefore, truthful meaning. Hountondji's obsession with framing scientific African philosophy of education along the constraints of 'dialogue and argumentation' seems to be at variance with the other hegemonic view of philosophy of education as a radically historicised account of philosophy that acknowledges and articulates the worldviews of Africans within their particular cultural and historical contexts. Surely discounting the oral stories of people is tantamount to disconnecting them from their cultural and historical contexts. Therefore it seems as if Hountondji's valorisation of scientific African philosophy of education is actually a recommitment to the view of philosophy as a form of distanced objectivity – a 'view from nowhere' that does not recognise people (with their imperfections and corporeal conditions) to be real, material agents of the practice of philosophy

of education. In this way, it seems as if Hountondji wants to establish and maintain African philosophy of education as a pure and immaterial 'science'. On the contrary, African philosophy of education (like any philosophy of education) cannot be dehistoricised, because, in their attempts to address recurrent human problems and concerns, all practices happen over time, and these practices cannot be divorced from the people who lay claim to them. Likewise, African philosophy of education cannot be disconnected from the cultural beliefs, norms and oral traditions of people, as human concerns, although not transcendental and always universal, are certainly culturally situated. To avoid undermining 'dialogue and argumentation', and because an African philosophy of education cannot be distanced from historically and culturally embedded human activity, I want to suggest an alternative view of African philosophy of education. Such a view draws on both aspects of the dichotomous views of philosophy of education – one that is decidedly not just a form of distanced objectivity, and one that does not overwhelmingly rely on the conventions of people's beliefs and values. Rather, I want to offer a view of African philosophy of education grounded in both reason and culture in order to illuminate the educational dimensions of major philosophical problems on the African continent in a different way. It is to such a discussion that I now turn my attention.

Towards a communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent view of African philosophy of education

An African philosophy of education that is communitarian has in mind two practices: first, that what people do is as a result of engagement, and not just as a result of participating communally, as if acting in community implies that people just meet without any serious sharing of ideas and even taking one another's points of view into systematic controversy. Claiming that an African philosophy of education should have a communitarian affiliation implies that one recognises that such a philosophy creates opportunities for human engagement. Second, to engage with one another in a communitarian spirit requires that one actually recognises the other persons with whom one engages to have a legitimate voice that should be heard. Put differently, communitarianism implies that one has a due regard for what the other has to say and actually listens while the other is talking. By implication, for an African philosophy of education to be communitarian, it has in mind people engaging with one another while simultaneously affording one another the time and communal space to be heard, in the form of listening to what others have to say and to engender talking back. What follows from such a communitarian argument is that conditions would be established for people to be reasonably and culturally engaged. Communitarianism can be traced back to the seminal thoughts of three political philosophers: Michael Sandel (1982), Michael Walzer (1983) and Charles Taylor (1989). Sandel (1982) coined the term 'encumbered selves' to argue that individuals act according to a

complex web of responsibilities to others and convictions imparted through communities – in other words, people rarely act in their own self-interests. Walzer (1983) posits that people have an inclination to establish political identities that arise from historical situations wherein they see themselves as members of tribes and cultures. Taylor (1989) emphasises the dialogical positioning of human selves and argues that humans can enjoy shared, common goods as opposed to goods that are merely convergent individual goods. Together, these three views constitute the basis of communitarian thinking that offers a critique of the abstract, atomistic, and individualist aspirations of people associated with parochial liberalist thought. Thus, ontologically speaking, communitarianism accentuates the communal and/or relational nature of human selves, which, in turn, advocates for a recovery of the primacy of community in social relations among people. Although not denying individualism, communitarianism envisages social relations that can be enhanced through human freedom and autonomy – that is, human actions that are biased towards the cultivation of community and shared, common goods. Following such a communitarian position, I contend that African philosophy of education would be most favourably positioned to be attentive to communal human aspirations that allow space for the enactment of human freedom, autonomy and the cultivation of shared, common goods.

The question arises: how can a communitarian African philosophy of education engender reasonableness? My argument in defence of reasonableness – a word I borrowed from Burbules (1995) – is premised on the idea that an African philosophy of education cannot just

> adhere strictly to the rules of logic and argumentation [according to the metanarrative of 'rationality']. 'Rationality' has often been considered, first, as an 'artefact of patriarchy' that denigrates intuition, affect and situational apperception, which are more salient for how women come to know, come to understand, or come to judge alternative courses of action; and second, as a privileged mode of thought or form of ideological speech that serves as a buttress to relations of domination and oppression, and indeed as a mode of domination and oppression itself, since it discourages and demoralises any point of view or claim that cannot be legitimated within its purview.
>
> (Burbules, 1995: 88)

As aptly stated by Burbules (1995: 89):

> In cultures [like those on the African continent] that have been exploited and victimised by previous impositions of religious, economic, or political systems, the proclamation of rationality as a neutral, universal arbiter of legitimate thought and action is perceived as one more system of control being imposed from without.

In light of the aforementioned criticisms, I want to use reasonableness as a defensible conception of reason that can respond to assumptions that 'rationality' is too absolutistic and intolerant of other views, and in fact disadvantages and excludes potential participants from discussions about what should constitute a good society. In a similar way, I want to offer an account of an African philosophy of education that connects with and advocates a notion of reasonableness. In this way, African philosophy of education would be prevented from running the risk of being considered as an essential or universal guide to all human thought and action.

The central insights of reasonableness as proposed by Burbules (1995: 90) are twofold. First, reasonableness

> relates reasoning to the dispositions and capacities of a certain kind of person, not to formal rules and procedures of thought … [so that a] person who is reasonable wants to make sense, wants to be fair to alternative points of view, wants to be careful and prudent in the adoption of important positions in life, is willing to admit when he or she has made a mistake, and so on; and these qualities are not exhibited simply by following certain formal rules of reasoning. They are enormously more complex than that, because they are manifested in a broad range of situations that are not governed by such formal rules.

And second, reasonableness 'concerns the capacity to enter into the types of communicative relations in which persons together inquire, disagree, adjudicate, explain, or argue their views in the pursuit of a reasonable outcome (i.e., an outcome that reasonable people are satisfied with)'. Hence, reasonableness has both a dispositional and a communicative aspect. The disposition of reasonableness shows itself when people listen to one another caringly and reflectively, whereas the communicative aspect of reasonableness encourages people to work towards an outcome that has not been predetermined and concluded in advance through some kind of logical argumentation. Instead, a reasonable approach to an African philosophy of education, I would argue, is manifested in the thoughts, conversations and choices that the persons involved in the practice of education pursue towards some conclusion (Burbules, 1995: 92). I shall now examine how reasonableness through an African philosophy of education can be achieved.

Once again, following Burbules (1995: 90), to be reasonable implies that one exercises one's disposition and communicative capacity in order to be objective, to be fallible, to be pragmatic and to judge. So, an African philosophy of education ought to be framed along the lines of objectivity, fallibilism, pragmatism and judgement. First, objectivity implies that one has a thoughtful and sympathetic regard for other views in order to realise that each person has something to say, so that one is distanced from the attitude that there is or can be one 'best' way of all. In other words, one acknowledges 'the limits of one's capacity to appreciate fully the viewpoints of others, or caring enough

about others to exert the effort necessary to hear and comprehend what they are saying' (Burbules, 1995: 90). Here, I think specifically of many African elders, sages and men who bluntly refuse to listen to the views of those men and boys they regard as too young and immature to be listened to and those women whose voices are to be silenced. An African philosophy of education cannot be credible if it is buttressed by practices that emphasise the exclusion and marginalisation of the other.

Second, fallibilism is a capacity of one to recognise that one can make mistakes, and admit (to one's self, and possibly to others) that one was wrong. If people are not afraid of making mistakes and experiencing failure, error and disappointment, then the possibility exists for them to be reasonable (Burbules, 1995: 91). An African philosophy of education that is premised on the notion of fallibilism does not aspire to consider people's practices as conclusive without any room for further improvement. Such a philosophy in any case would undermine the very aims of an education that encourage openness, a search for the improbable and, simultaneously, remaining open to the unexpected. A philosophy of education that insists on the conclusive mastery of predetermined outcomes could potentially make students blind to rational reflection and imagination. Solway (1999: 64) posits that outcomes alone might develop in students 'only the feeblest sense of individual obligation for their performance and will not likely grow [that is, students] into autonomous selves capable of reflection, intellectual dignity, and moral answerability for their own accomplishments or even for lack of such'. An African philosophy of education that aims to produce measurable outcomes vindicates its focus on objectification that regards the world as an object detached from the self-understandings of people (Taylor, 1985: 5). With regard to objectification, Gallagher (1992: 174) argues that people consider themselves as disengaged from ties to nature, society and history, and preoccupied with exercising power and control over their environment, nature and others. In this way, specifying outcomes can be associated, without an appeal to rational reflection and imagination, with control and the manipulation of students – a situation that philosophy of education on the African continent cannot afford to let happen, for such a situation would once again colonise and dominate African minds.

Third, pragmatism provokes in people a belief in the importance of practical problems, whether intellectual, moral or political. It is an outlook that is sensitive to the particulars of given contexts and the variety of human needs and purposes (Burbules, 1995: 91). A pragmatic and therefore reasonable person approaches 'the present problems with an open mind, a willingness and capacity to adapt, and persistence in the face of initial failure or confusion'. An African philosophy of education that has in mind to cultivate pragmatic minds not only 'reflects a tolerance for uncertainty, imperfection, and incompleteness as the existential conditions of human thought, value, or action … [but] recognises the need for persistence and flexibility in the face of such difficulties' (Burbules, 1995: 91). Such a pragmatic view of African philosophy of education would afford Africans the opportunities to be willing and open when confronted with

political and moral problems that beset the continent, whether brought about by dictatorships or by a discomfort with ethnic difference. Africans inspired by such a philosophy of education would begin to recognise the urgency to adapt to changing and difficult political, social and economic conditions, and actually brace themselves to deal with the uncertainty and complexity spawned by poverty, famine, hunger, political corruption, authoritarianism, and ethnic intolerance and violence. In the main, Africans would be inspired to find practical and hopefully appropriate solutions for their problems.

Fourth, practising judgement implies that a person exercises 'a capacity to hold competing considerations in balance, to accept tensions and uncertainties as the conditions of serious reflection' (Burbules, 1995: 92). Reasonable persons are judicious about when and how they follow the dictates of argument in the strict sense of the term, and they are receptive to the influence of other kinds of persuasion as well (Burbules, 1995: 92). I now want to concentrate on judgement as the capacity to reflect on arguments, and to be receptive to other kinds of persuasions. Burbules is right when he claims that a capacity to judge implies that one has to be receptive to other kinds of persuasion. However, I differ from him when he argues that judgement involves adhering to the dictates of argumentation in the strict sense of the term. If other kinds of persuasion to which one has to be receptive are not articulated strictly according to the dictates of 'logical' argumentation – that is, what Burbules refers to as attempts to be 'clear, coherent and accurate' (2008: 270), then the need to be open to other kinds of persuasion does not seem to be a valid point. For this reason, I am more inclined to the views of Gyekye (1997), who argues that African philosophical discourse embeds two interrelated processes: 'rational' discourse and the application of a 'minimalist logic' in ordinary conversations without being conversant with formal rules of conversation. Although Gyekye recognises the importance of 'rationality' and 'logic' in argumentation, and, besides claiming that 'rationality' is a culture-dependent concept and that less formal rules are required if people want to engage in conversations (Gyekye, 1997: 29), he does not detail what these processes entail. My own position, following Burbules, has been to move away from 'rationality', which I suspect Gyekye also attempts to do by connecting the metanarrative with 'minimalist logic'. In a way, Gyekye and Burbules concur without the former dropping the term 'rationality'. However, Gyekye's sensitivity towards the use of a 'minimalist logic' implies that he does not want to adhere strictly to 'rationality' in the universalistic sense. Therefore he talks about 'rationality' as a culture-dependent concept, by which he means that the way 'rationality' is understood, for instance in Western culture, may not necessarily apply to African cultures. I agree, hence the use of the notion of reasonableness. African traditional folktale can be reasonable, as it embodies critical thought that might be understood starkly differently from a reasonable concept in a different culture. Gyekye's notion of a 'culture-dependent rationality' can be related to a critical re-evaluation of received ideas and an intellectual pursuit related to the practical problems and concerns of African society – a matter of being

reasonable. For example, Gyekye (1997: 237) relates how the wisdom of the elders (whom he refers to as philosophical sages) could be used meaningfully to cultivate reconciliation in tribal communities in African nation-states. The way these sages resolve conflict is to explain to offenders that peaceful life is natural and willed both by God and human beings. This culture-dependent reasonableness puts the conflicting parties in a situation in which they cannot refuse to reconcile, since refusal would imply that they are against the natural course of events and, ultimately, against the will of God. In other words, African reasonableness is a critical, re-evaluative response to the basic human problems that arise in any African society (Gyekye, 1997: 19). By critical re-evaluation, Gyekye (1997: 19–24) means the offering of insights, arguments and conclusions relevant to the African experience by suggesting new ways or alternative ways of thought and action. If I understand Gyekye (1997: 25–27) correctly, then he also relates the articulation of insights, arguments and conclusions to being critical of political authority, self-reflection and the cultivation of an innovative spirit. If I consider criticism, self-reflection and innovation (creativity and imagination) as virtues of reasonableness, then it follows that the insights, arguments and conclusions one offers cannot be unrelated to being critical, creative and reflexive. If I relate Gyekye's thoughts on reasonableness to an African philosophy of education, then such a philosophy creates space for critically questioning one another's perspectives, allowing for a reflexive re-evaluation of the position one holds in a spirit of openness and non-dogmatism, and re-evaluating one's earlier position in the light of new information in quite an imaginative way. These are important aspects of an African philosophy of education that would go some way to making conversations justifiably persuasive and, hence, reasonable.

Gyekye seems to suggest that, taking into account their history and culture, Africa's people ought to be less formal in argumentative conversations. This implies that people should not strictly apply rules of adhering to the most persuasive argument or following an argument systematically. If my reading of Gyekye is correct, then it means that conversations should not only be confined to articulating points of view in a defensible way through rigorous argumentation and debate in terms of which points of view are challenged and undermined; or, where persuasion and the quest for the better argument become necessary conditions for such forms of inquiry. I agree, since illiteracy and the lack of eloquence of ordinary citizens would exclude them from the conversations. Gyekye (1997: 27) contends that African colonial and postcolonial experience has had enduring effects on the mentality acquired by many Africans to look for answers to Africa's problems outside Africa, more specifically in European culture. It is this same attitude on the part of most of Africa's people that causes them to suppress their own opinions in preference to the wisdom of sages. I do not think that Gyekye would dismiss the wisdom of sagacity in argumentation, since the individual's inclinations, orientations, intuitions and outlooks are important to philosophical inquiry (Gyekye, 1997: 12). However, Gyekye's

view suggests that ways should be found to make the less eloquent, illiterate and seemingly inarticulate person express his or her thoughts. For this reason, his call for the application of less formal rules in conversations seems to be valid. In this regard, I have a suspicion that Gyekye's emphasis on the application of a 'minimalist logic' in conversations (that is, relying less on rules of articulation and coherence of argumentation) has some connection with allowing Africa's people to articulate their oral narratives about their beliefs, values, folktales, drama and cultural traditions, without having to entirely convince others of their cultural orientations. This makes sense for the reason that many of Africa's people do not necessarily know the 'logical' reasons for their beliefs and values, which were bequeathed them by their ancestral past. The idea of asking for a 'minimalist logic' would establish conditions that would include people, rather than exclude them from the conversation and where the force of 'strict' reasons per se is not sufficient to guide our conduct. In fact, including them in the conversation might open up possibilities for them to begin to challenge and question their own positions self-reflexively – a matter of acting reasonably. I agree with Burbules (1995: 92) when he avers:

> In the actual practice of human communication, strict argumentation, even in an elliptical sense, is very rare; alongside that is an enormous range of interlocutory styles, including questions, allusions, unsubstantiated suggestions, metaphors, and other tropes, as well as an even broader range of expressions, gestures, touches, musical sounds, and other kinds of communication. The capacity of all these sorts of utterances to move us is 'extra-rational' only in a very narrow sense of that term.

I think that an African philosophy of education is also concerned with the unsubstantiated suggestions and broader range of expressions, gestures, touches and other kinds of communication of Africa's peoples as they endeavour to interact in their social contexts, mutually explore, and negotiate the pursuit of common understanding.

African philosophy of education as a practice that attends to the educational dimensions of major philosophical problems

For too long philosophers and educationists have been scratching their heads about what constitutes an African philosophy of education. As I have shown, there have been several positions taken up by theoreticians on what should and ought to be considered as African philosophy and philosophy of education. These positions fluctuate from those that assign a privileged status to African ethnophilosophy and ethnophilosophy of education to those notions that accord African philosophy and philosophy of education an exclusive scientific position commensurate with an objectified, universal 'science'. Inasmuch as

proponents of the aforementioned two strands of African philosophy of education insist on retaining exclusiveness and objectivity, my argument has been for a more balanced position that draws both on reasonableness and cultural orientation as determinants of African philosophy of education. And the communitarian position I have argued for straddles equivocally between particular understandings of reason and culture. These understandings rely on elements of objectivity, fallibilism, pragmatism and judgement that can each be explored in ways that do justice to the diversity of human thoughts, values and forms of life on the African continent. These four elements show the potential to be flexible enough to accommodate a range of human processes of communication and engagement. And, in quite an intelligent, committed and caring way, a communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent idea of African philosophy of education shows the promise of identifying some of the educational dimensions of human thought and action that underscore major philosophical problems. The next section is an attempt to show what educational dimensions can be identified in major philosophical problems associated with African thought and practice.

First, a major philosophical problem that prevails on the African continent is what Kochalumchuvattil (2010: 108) refers to as the lack of 'subjective becoming'. For him, 'the self is defined in relation to a larger social or ethnic group which encompasses not only the living but also the dead, the spirits, and the unborn.' Consequently, he argues that the individual remains unliberated because of his or her attachment to the bonds of the ethnic group – that is, the individual's primary responsibility is to the tribe or ethnic clan that stunts the individual's pursuit of self-determination. I agree that self-determination and responsibility can go far in tackling the persistent problems besetting Africa. I do not disagree with the fact that serious humanitarian problems are manifest and widespread in Africa and that periodic occurrences of ethnic cleansing, the persistent conflict, the breakdown of democracy under the rule of dictatorships, the perennial outbreak of ethnic violence, the continuing marginalisation and at times, abuse of women, the widespread growth of HIV and AIDS and the resultant prevalence of homes where children are heads of families, and the overwhelming endemic poverty are examples of human tragedies that continue to plague the African continent. However, what concerns me is the fact that humanitarian problems are attributed to the lack of 'subjective becoming'. If Africa's people have to act as self-determining and responsible persons in addressing the humanitarian tragedies on the continent, they cannot act as isolated or atomistic individuals, as Kochalumchuvattil (2010) wants them to do. I cannot imagine how ethnic cleansing or genocide can be prevented by an individual self without acting in community with others. It also seems inconceivable that tribal, ethnic conflicts and violence towards indigenous communities can be halted by the mere act of individualised activity. Societal violence and conflict are by nature communal and require a communitarian response – one that does not, of course, ignore the subjectivities of individuals. Rather, as I have articulated before, to act in a communitarian way, as an

African philosophy of education suggests, is to do so with an intersubjective human identity that does not dismiss the self-determined (autonomous) and responsible actions of individual persons. They act with their subjective selves in a self-determined and responsible manner towards others – that is, they are in mutual action and interaction with others. I see myself reflected by and through the Other, which makes the Other a mirror that recasts my image to me; this suggests that there is some interconnectedness between the Other and me. In a Cavellian sense (1979: 438), being a mirror image of the Other makes me 'answerable for what happens to them' – in other words, enacts my responsibility towards them. The Other – the actual Other as well as the Other in myself – confronts the self and thus she is reflected upon her own self. The Other, therefore, is not simply the friend, but becomes the teacher and the mentor, the possibility of self-transcendence. It is not surprising to note that Cavell (1979: 440) makes the point that 'the other is like oneself, that whatever one can know about the other one first has to find in oneself and then read into the other … [that is] conceive the other from the other's point of view'. If Hutu militia can see in Tutsis mirror images of themselves as human beings (and not treat them as cockroaches), the possibility for murder, rape and enslavement might be thwarted – a situation that stimulates Hutu aggressors to destabilise and confront themselves with a readiness to depart from their violent behaviour, and in fact to be for the Other (Tutsis) what the Other is for them (human beings). Of course, this is not denying the Cavellian position that some humans (say, Hutus) do not regard other human beings (say, Tutsis) as human at all. Instead, Hutus treat Tutsis indifferently, that is 'monstrously' and 'unforgivably', but do not disregard them as humans. In fact, like Cavell, I acknowledge that Hutu aggression towards Tutsis is an unjust 'human possibility' (Cavell, 1979: 378). And, considering that Cavell (1979: 376) takes issue with certain human beings who consider other human beings as slaves, I too take issue with Hutus who seem to be disconnected from Tutsis, whom they (Hutus) continually humiliate and punish. The point I am making is that the relationship between Hutus and Tutsis, albeit a violent one, is in fact a human relationship, which opens up the possibility for humans to be answerable to the Other – in this case, violent Hutus finding some way to live out their responsibility to Tutsis as humans. This is what an intersubjective community demands in the first place – an acknowledgement of a human encounter that makes the dominant (violent) one answerable to the one against whom violence is perpetrated (the Tutsi).

Moreover, central to one's connection with the Other is the notion that one has to acknowledge humanity in the Other – and the basis for such action lies in oneself: 'I have to acknowledge humanity in the other, and the basis of it seems to lie in me' (Cavell, 1979: 433). Considering the unimagined hatred Hutus have for Tutsis, what Hutus ought to begin to acknowledge would be the humanity in those people whom they seemingly have no regard for as human beings – they fail to acknowledge the humanity in Tutsis, as they fail to acknowledge the humanity in the Congolese women whom they rape.

In doing so, Hutus, in a Cavellian sense, need to proceed from the point of acknowledging their own humanity, that is, their own feelings, emotions and compassion towards those who are vulnerable and whom they only want to harm. Unless their own humanity is brought to the fore, they would inevitably show no remorse when violating the sanctity of others' lives. This is what I think Cavell means when he states that hedging one's acknowledgement of humanity in others is hedging (protecting) one's own humanity (Cavell, 1979: 434). Hedging one's own humanity, without, or in the absence of acknowledging humanity in the Other, actually places a limit on one's humanity, and this is described by Cavell as 'the passage into inhumanity (of which) its signal is horror' (Cavell, 1979: 434). This makes sense, considering the serious restrictions Hutus place on their own humanity, which led to the atrocities and acts of horror perpetrated against hapless Congolese women. These Hutus simply do not consider it important and respectful to recognise the humanity in the Other – that is, they feel that they do not owe others respect simply as human beings – a situation referred to by Cavell as 'the failure of which (humanity within others) reveals the failure of one's own humanity' (Cavell, 1979: 434). The point is that if Hutus consider Congolese women as persons whose dignity needs to be upheld, they need to acknowledge themselves as persons who should consider others as being worthy as persons – a matter of acting through intersubjective community. In other words, to acknowledge others as human beings worthy of respect, one should simultaneously have to acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. This is what I think Cavell has in mind when he claims: 'another may be owed acknowledgement simply on the ground of his humanity, acknowledgement as a human being, for which nothing will do but my revealing myself to him [her] as a human being, unrestrictedly, as his or her sheer other, his or her fellow, his or her *semblable*'. So, intersubjective community does require of a person to treat another person with hospitality, in the sense of not violating the personhood of the other person. The very act of treating another person with hospitality determines the personhood of the Other and simultaneously gives another a passage into one's humanity – that is, seeing one as a human being who merits being treated hospitably. What the aforementioned argument suggests is that 'subjective becoming' is possible only through intersubjectively connecting with the Other. Only then can persons be self-determining and responsible human beings in the sense that they do not just acknowledge humanity in themselves and in others, but that they also become answerable to what happens to them – that by taking account of others, they are essentially taking account of themselves. That is, they enact their responsibility to others in a self-determining way – a matter of acting educationally, as the latter is inextricably connected with being autonomous and responsible.

Second, another major philosophical problem that exists on the African continent can be associated with a lack of morality that is evident in the unforgiving, inhospitable and violent actions among Africa's peoples. How can a communitarian African philosophy of education grounded in reasonableness

and cultural acceptance respond to the claim of a lack of moral grounding on the continent? Drawing on the seminal thoughts of Jacques Derrida (1997) and Hannah Arendt (1969), I shall examine what such moral positions can offer a communitarian African philosophy of education in order to ensure that the practice remains (re)imagined – that is, reasonable and culturally acceptable. First, Derrida (1997: 33) argues for a view of forgiveness that builds on the premise 'that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself … (and that) it can only be possible in doing the impossible'. 'Doing the impossible' implies, for Derrida (1997: 33), forgiving the 'unforgivable'. In his words, 'forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable' – that is, atrocious and monstrous crimes against humanity that might not be conceived of as being possible to forgive (Derrida, 1997: 32). Derrida (1997: 44) explicates forgiveness as 'a gracious gift without exchange and without condition'. Among crimes against humanity, Derrida (1997: 52) includes genocide (say, of Hutus against Tutsis), torture and terrorism. This notion of forgiving the 'unforgivable' is spawned by the view that forgiveness is an act without, and not dependent on finality – that is, the guilty (the one who perpetrates the evil) are considered as being capable of repeating the crime without repentance or promise that he or she will be transformed. And, forgiving the 'unforgivable' takes into consideration that the crime might be repeated, which makes forgiveness an act of (madness) of the impossible (Derrida, 1997: 45). Now, a reasonable conception of forgiveness that makes possible the act of forgiving the 'unforgivable' makes sense, because if Tutsis are not going to venture into forgiving the 'unforgivable' genocidal acts of Hutus, these two different tribal communities might not begin to connect with one another, and a process of inducing transformation in a Congolese or Rwandan society might not begin to take place. Such a Derridian view of forgiveness is grounded in an understanding that 'nothing is impardonable' (Derrida, 1997: 47), and that 'grand beginnings' are often celebrated and redirected through amnesia of the most atrocious happenings. A case in point is South Africa's democracy, which grew out of forgiving those 'unforgivable' racial bigots who committed heinous crimes against those who opposed the racist state.

Third, Derrida (1997: 20) draws on Kant to develop a two-pronged approach to hospitality: every person has a right to universal hospitality without limits, and the right to hospitality is limited to the right of visitation (that is, temporary residence). On the right to universal hospitality, Derrida limits such a right to innocent people (perhaps not guilty of a major crime) who seek refuge or asylum in another country and who want to escape 'bloody vengeance'. Surely, innocent Tutsis who are subjected to Hutu torture, rape and enslavement have the right to seek and be granted asylum in another country. Following Derrida, these Tutsis (asylum seekers) cannot be considered as resident aliens in another country, whose state and people ought to treat them hospitably – that is, without question. Such a situation is possible on the grounds that every person is endowed with a status of 'common possession of the earth' (Derrida, 1997: 20). Moreover, the right of visitation is granted on

the basis that a peaceful treaty between states and their peoples is encouraged. So, for Tutsis to seek asylum in another country ought to be a temporary arrangement on the grounds that Tutsis should have the right of return to the country of their origin. In other words, the possibility should not exist that they could be declared permanent refugees in another country. What follows from such an understanding of hospitality is that reasonable action would take the form of states offering temporary residence rights to people subjected to violence in their own countries, and that these people should not be denied the right to hospitable treatment by another state.

Fourth, following Arendt's (1969) analysis of violence, it can be considered as a phenomenon in terms of which people impose themselves on others, making others the 'instruments' of their will (Arendt, 1969: 56). In other words, violence is an instrumental means of coercion (Arendt, 1969: 44). So, Hutu militia murder, torture, rape and maim Tutsi women and children because they use such instrumental acts to terrorise Tutsis. Reasonable action as a non-violent strategy can counteract violence, because, unlike violence, reasonable action is capable of speech acts – that is, 'violence itself is incapable of speech, and not merely that speech is helpless when confronted with violence' (Arendt, 1963: 19). Unlike violence that is determined by silence (Arendt, 1969: 77), such as the silence of both the victims and perpetrators of torture in Nazi concentration camps, non-violence draws on the authoritative voice of speech. It is here that reasonable action can begin to tackle the genocide of Hutus by Tutsis. While I contend that violence, in some instances, might be required to quell violence, there is, ultimately, as Arendt maintains, no legitimate justification for the flagrant use of violence, and that the use of violence will only result in more violence. Yet, extending the views of Cavell and Arendt, we sometimes require a disruption of existing practices of violence through violence – that is, in exceptional cases, physical violence through war. Is it conceivable that non-violent resistance will always be met with non-terrorisation and peace? I do not imagine so. If Hutu militia were to be resisted non-violently, the only result will be the massacre and submission of Tutsis. Thus, in a Cavellian sense we require a momentary break from non-violence in order to ensure lasting change in the Congo – that is, a condition ought to be set up whereby speech could become dominant in an attempt to resolve conflict. Intrinsic in this argument is that reasonable action, with its insistence on speech acts, can temporarily create conditions for violence to counteract the destructive force of more violence.

What I have argued for is that the notion of reasonable action as a guiding principle of a communitarian African philosophy of education is, in fact, a form of moral imagination that ought to be worked towards. And, such a moral imaginative experience can engender possible changes on the African continent through an emphasis on forgiveness, hospitality and non-violence.

2 Towards a different understanding of African metaphysics and epistemology

Introduction

This section concerns itself with African metaphysics and epistemology, with a specific focus on what it means to be a person in the African context. I also explore the implications of the notion of a person for educational discourse(s) in Africa. Using a poststructuralist understanding of metaphysics, with reference to the work of Derrida, I first frame the notion of African metaphysics. In turn, I adopt a similar approach to the aforementioned to elucidate epistemology. Thereafter, I move on to a discussion of the material person versus immaterial being debate, before offering a poststructuralist, more specifically Derridian, analysis of the individual versus community thesis that has now become so prominent in the discourses in and about African philosophy and philosophy of education. My argument is that African metaphysics and epistemology should look beyond their use of the binary oppositions of material person versus spiritual (immaterial) person, and individual versus community to articulate a notion of human engagement along the Derridian lines of what it means to act *responsibly* in a metaphysical sense and *critically* in an epistemological sense.

Towards a Derridian view of African metaphysics

Metaphysical thinking in Africa, following Teffo and Roux (2000: 137), 'is based on the African perception of reality as determined by a history, geographical circumstances, and such cultural phenomena as religion, thought systems and linguistic conventions entrenched in African world-view'. For them, African metaphysical discourses are constituted by religious beliefs relating to the concept of God and the universe, and their interrelationships with notions such as spirit, causality, person, space and time and reality (Teffo and Roux, 2000: 138). In their words, 'the essence of African metaphysics, then, is the search for meaning and ultimate reality in the complex relationship between the human person and his/her total environment' (Teffo and Roux, 2000: 139). In line with a Derridian analysis of metaphysics, I offer an account of the relationship between the human person and his/her interrelationship with the environment.

Jacques Derrida's notion of deconstruction can be considered as a post-structuralist literary analysis aimed towards the (re)reading of philosophical writings. In one of his attempts to elucidate deconstruction, Derrida in (Caputo 1997: 77) asserts that 'a deconstructive reading [is] able to give an account of itself in scholarly terms and in the sense of responding to something in the text that tends to drop out of view'. Deconstruction, then, attempts to open up a text to several meanings and interpretations and its aim is to disrupt the binary oppositions within a text by arguing that culturally and historically defined oppositions are fluid. In this regard, Williams (2001: 110) depicts deconstruction as an exploration, location and questioning of the linguistic and metaphysical conditions governing the possibility of conceptualisation, together with a consideration of the historicity of meaning and the modes of subjectivity that may support philosophical systems of thought. Unlike a traditional form of textual analysis, deconstruction wants to exceed or go beyond the boundaries that (con)texts occupy. Accordingly, deconstruction claims that there is always more to come – that which resides external to the text, and is not always foreseen – that deconstruction aims to unravel. In other words it focuses on the possibilities and potentialities of a (con)text. In this way, meaning, for Derrida, is never in the present; it emerges from the play of 'differences between the various terms in the (con)text: subject to continuous reframing, within ongoing discursive activity' (Derrida in Caputo, 1997: 42). In other words, everything around deconstruction is organised around what Derrida (in Caputo, 1997: 42) refers to as 'the incoming of the other', the promise of an event to come, the event of the promise of something coming.

My interest in deconstruction is in its critique of binary oppositions. In this sense, deconstruction holds the central argument that, in all the dualities of Western thought, one term is privileged or 'central' over the other. This implies that the structures of binary opposition, essential to the language of logocentrism, are in actual fact hierarchies. In other words, they are not simply defined by the differences between terms, but rather by the privileging of one term at the expense of the other (light/dark, divine/human, speech/writing, presence/absence, man/woman). Put simply, this implies that, in Western metaphysics, it is always the first term that is being privileged over the second. For instance, the terms good and bad form a binary opposition: a pair of contrasted terms, which depend on one another for their meaning. In this regard, light would be privileged over dark, speech over writing and presence over absence, to name but a few. In essence, the first term is classically conceived of as original, authentic and superior (such as white over black), while the second is thought of as secondary, derivative or even parasitic, and often associated with otherness. There are, as I have shown, many of these oppositions, and they are all governed by the distinction either/or (Collins and Mayblin, 2006: 20). This thinking pattern seemingly inhibits Western metaphysical thought and thus establishes a conceptual order. These binary oppositions, according to Collins and Mayblin (2006: 20), classify and organise objects, events and relations to the world. They make a decision possible. And, as I

have shown, they even govern our thinking patterns in our daily lives, 'as well as philosophy, theory and the sciences' (Collins and Mayblin 2006: 20). Lye (in Collins and Mayblin 2006: 3), however, contends that, in deconstruction, these binary pairs or opposites are already united, and in fact, mutually contingent. In other words, they cannot be opposites otherwise they are ultimately the alternating imprint of one another. Consequently, there can be no light without darkness and no darkness without light and, similarly, no presence without absence and no absence without presence. In short, deconstruction is 'looking for a truth [though not final] anxious to question the true according to a tradition of metaphysics … [that sees things beyond binary oppositions]' (Derrida in Biesta and Egéa-Kuehne, 2001: 23).

In consonance with Derrida's position on deconstruction, African metaphysics does not seem to conceive of the relationship between concepts in binary oppositional terms. By this is meant that African metaphysics does not seem to treat the relationship between mind, soul or spirit in a dualist way, neither does it seem to consider the natural world as contradistinctive to the supernatural, or mortal as the opposite of immortal for that matter (Teffo and Roux, 2000: 138, 141). For instance, in some African cultures, living material beings or mortals are not considered as the binary opposite of the deceased and immaterial, immortal ancestors who occupy a different space and higher status. Rather, there is some form of relationship and inter-relationship between the living mortals and the immortal ancestors that is sustained through ritual and the veneration of the ancestors – a practice very common in several African communities across the religious divide. Considering the aforementioned non-oppositional thinking, I shall now attend to a discussion of person in the African sense.

Using non-binary deconstructive analysis, a person cannot be considered as consisting of material qualities separated from his or her spiritual aspects. Of course such a non-binary view of a person immediately raises the concern that the material qualities of a person have spiritual dimensions and, similarly, that a person's spiritual aspects are ingrained with materialism. Such an explanation, however, does not differentiate clearly between a person's material and spiritual qualities, which raises questions about the true nature of the material and the spiritual. I am inclined to agree with More (1996: 153), for whom a non-dualist understanding of the material and spiritual qualities of a person relates to his or her 'tendencies' that allow one to anticipate a person's course of action. In other words, the explanation offered by More is not to equate African cultural life with an inclination towards adhering to forms of 'spiritual', occult and supernatural powers that mysteriously (mis)guide the actions of people. Rather, a person's good actions as opposed to his or her not-as-good actions cannot be attributed to the clandestine operations of supernatural beings, but rather to his or her own actions. Immediately, the claim some African peoples proffer, namely that they are possessed by 'evil spirits' and therefore find it difficult to develop materially (that is, socially and economically) in their communities, is stunted.[1] Instead, such a non-binary view of the material and immaterial

qualities of a person seems to be aimed at stimulating the person to be responsible for his or her own actions. Such a clarification of person and his or her material and immaterial qualities is crucial to understanding the conception of a person's 'destiny' in African thought and practice. Often, in several African communities, an understanding is held that Africa's inadequate socio-political and economic development can be assigned to the fate or destiny that behoves African persons and communities. And often, because of this predestination viewpoint, such persons and communities resign themselves to do little in the way of alleviating their social, political and economic vulnerabilities, whether through curtailing ethnic conflict, contesting authoritarian rule, or alleviating poverty. Such persons simply resign themselves to the 'fate' that apparently has befallen them – leading to a resigned acceptance of their 'fate'. Now, if such unforeseen misfortunes and perhaps calamities have simply been predestined for humans, then the African persons do not have to embark on any efforts to alleviate their vulnerabilities – leading to a further entrenchment of a fatalistic state of existence. I would rather, therefore, concur with the position of the Yoruba ethnic community in western Africa (including Nigeria) that the destiny of a person ought to be considered as both potential and circumstantial, and the actualisation of which depends on a person's human qualities (Gbadegesin, 1991: 360). For Gbadegesin (1991: 360–368), the destiny of an African person is both determined by where he or she is situated circumstantially (that is, their familial or tribal upbringing), as well as the earnestness of such a person in doing something about his or her position of vulnerability that can be as a result of no fault of his or her own. So, the exercise of a person's autonomy, moral respect towards others and respect for the environment, for instance, are human qualities that can assist in the actualisation of a person's destiny. That is, destiny is not something preordained for a person, but rather realised through personal effort and continuous striving in relation with other persons. Therefore, Gbadegesin (1991: 367) is right when he claims that the destiny of people on the African continent depends on the virtues they gain through developing their character and the communal influence on them, and determined by the individual person's commitment to developing his or her morals, freedom and responsibility. This brings me to a discussion of a person in terms of being an individual who should act in community.

In quite a non-binary way, a person in the African sense is an individual who exists in community with other persons. Mbiti (1969: 109), in reference to the person as both individual and in community with others, aptly refers to the common African dictum (to which of course I shall again refer in later chapters): 'I am, because we are; and since we are therefore I am'. Here Mbiti advocates a sociocentric view of the African person in which his belonging is determined by the society that produces him or her. What follows from such a view of persons is that African communalism does not deny the recognition of individual human beings *qua* individuals, but rather positions an individual person as a constitutive member of the collective. In other words, in the African sense, an individual does not act in opposition to the group to which

he belongs, but rather, by virtue of his membership to the group, and as an extension of the group, exercises his or her individuality in the interest of the community of which he or she is a member. What seems to be quite apparent is the individual person's enactment of his or her responsibility towards the community or the group to which he or she belongs. Metaphysically speaking, the African person always acts responsibly as an individual and simultaneously exercises his or her responsibility towards the community.

However, to act concurrently as an individual and as a constitutive member of the group does not mean that one should be held individually responsible for the actions of the group when the group has erred, or that one should hold the group responsible for the individual's misdemeanours. Such scenarios would at once exonerate the individual from being held responsible for his or her erring actions, and at times recuse the group from being held responsible for their collective violations. In a Derridian sense, a person's individual responsibility and the collective responsibility of the group or community are constituted by the interrelations between the individual and the community (Derrida, 1995: 282). And their interrelations happen on the grounds of them being human that, in turn, makes the enactment of responsibility towards them (both individual and group) possible – what Derrida refers to as their acknowledgement of the need and desire for the other or to act vigilantly towards the other (Derrida, 1995: 282). Thus, in a metaphysical sense, the person and the group should always act responsibly towards the other, that is, acknowledging that both have needs and desires that should be attended to vigilantly, because being vigilant always opens up the person to surprise and the unexpected. And, instead of trying to figure out incessantly how different the person is from the group, one should rather evaluate the person's and the group's actions according to the responsibility they should both exercise. The basis of membership to the group, therefore, is determined not by the individuality of the person, but by that person's responsibility to himself and to the group. If this happens, there is no need to be concerned about blaming the individual or the group for irresponsible actions such as ethnic cleansing, genocide or human rights violations, which are in any case unbecoming of what it means to be human. To this end, one can understand why Derrida (1995: 282) equates responsibility with being human, instead of wondering whether the individual or group can enact their responsibility. A person and community, by virtue of being human, should act responsibly and, by viewing their existence in a non-binary fashion, will make responsibility for both (the person and community) even more compelling, so that whatever happens to the individual does not have to happen to the whole group, and *vice versa*.

Non-binary thinking and African epistemology

How African epistemology, and more specifically how Africa's cultural communities understand, explain, experience and justify human action in relation to the environment, occupies a central place in an African philosophy of education. African epistemology has always been informed by the beliefs, concepts

and theories of Africa's people's in relation to medical science, religion, child-rearing, agriculture, psychology and education; accumulated wisdom that has been passed on to the youth in the form of proverbs, revered traditions, myths and folktales; languages of multiple ethnic communities; traditional customs; and accepted authorities, whether people, institutions or texts, in matters of knowledge and belief (Kaphagawani and Malherbe, 2000: 210). Now if one follows the argument that the use of binary oppositions in demarcating knowledge, such as juxtaposing ethnophilosophical thought against scientific African thought, then there is a real possibility that some knowledge, whether in the form of African traditions, folklore, values, customs, history, habits, proverbs, character and thought of indigenous people, will be considered as exclusive and perhaps more favourable by some people in comparison with knowledge of a scientific or perhaps Eurocentric kind. Looking beyond the idea of knowledge that exists on binary opposite sides will bring into play an understanding that using knowledge from different cultural communities can contribute equally or unequally to the improvement of human practices, in particular the problems that have beset the African continent. As has been argued for in the previous chapter, the application of reasonable human action will invariably look at different understandings of knowledge in an objective, fallible, pragmatic or judgemental way. In this way, it might not be required to bring different understandings of knowledge into conflict with each other. Rather, the traditional ways of knowing used by several sages or traditional healers on the African continent might be integrated with other scientific ways of knowing in order to address some of the problems on the African continent. For instance, ancient customs and the beliefs of ancestors do not have to be ridiculed as unscientific and detrimental to the advancement of the lives of Africans. Rather, knowledge of traditional healers could play an important role in helping some Africans to determine their identities in relation to other communities, especially because many such healers possess the natural ability to listen and empathise and are skilled in listening to people's emotional trauma and suffering. I think that what Gyekye (1997) has in mind when urging Africans to look for solutions to Africa's problems through reclaiming their culture, is the art of empathetic listening and responding compassionately to people's often miserable and troubled lives. I agree because, through the sensitivity shown in listening to the views of others, people might develop a heightened sense of responsibility towards improving their own adverse conditions. That is, they have been listened to, and because their need to be listened to has been fulfilled, they feel the need to act more responsibly by drawing on the cultural values they sacredly held on to in the past. Here, I specifically think of the cultural belief held by Kenyan Kikuyus that God dwelled on Mount Kenya, and that rains, clean drinking water, green vegetation and crops had a central place in their lives. Contradicting this belief, some Christian missionaries told the Kikuyus that God lives in heaven and not on Mount Kenya, and that the mountain and forests previously considered as sacred grounds could be encroached upon and that the reverence accorded to them had to be abandoned.

From then on the mountain's ecosystem was destroyed through deforestation, degradation of the environment and exploitation because an important cultural belief had been demonised (Maathai, 2009: 174). A non-binary view of knowledge will create conditions for Africa's people to articulate their oral narratives about their cultural beliefs, values and traditions without having to be ashamed of such practices. In fact, the disdain shown towards people's culture should be discouraged, as not everything, which is not abundantly clear, is satanic or associated with witchcraft, superstition or sorcery. The cultural belief of the Kenyan Kikuyus was associated with environmental conservation, but because such beliefs were demonised, the cultivation of many indigenous foods like millet, sorghum, arrowroots, yams and green vegetables disappeared, resulting in food insecurity, malnutrition, hunger and a reduction in local biodiversity (Maathai, 2009: 175). Thus, arguing for a reclaiming of cultural forms of knowledge, Africa's people might have a real chance to be creative, productive and confident – qualities without which Africans 'lack a foundation to build for the future' (Maathai, 2009: 183). By excluding people's cultural heritage there would be no opportunity to engender self-knowledge and self-identity, and thus little opportunity for self-expression and self-determination. Hence, I agree with Maathai (2009: 171) that 'the challenge for the many parts of Africa that were decultured is to rediscover their cultural heritages, and to use them to both reconnect with the past and help direct them in their political, spiritual, economic, and social development'.

For Wiredu (2005), a non-binary view of knowledge means domesticating knowledge (including science and technology) in African culture – what he refers to as the harmonisation of technological industrialisation with African traditional communalism. In other words, for Wiredu (2005), if knowledge originates from the investigations of, say, some Europeans, and is taken up by Africans and used in the interests of Africa, we can speak of the Africanisation of the use of that knowledge. In his words, 'If there is an important truth in the Buddha or Kant or Dewey or Heidegger or Quine, you can take it and add it to the truths that you have obtained from your own African tradition of thought.' What Wiredu argues for is a construction of an African epistemology that takes into account the insights of traditional knowledge combined with those originating from elsewhere in an effort to Africanise or 'recover' education. I agree with Wiredu and contend that 'traditions of thought' of Africans with those philosophies or patterns of thinking associated with other forms of education, albeit Western or European, should be considered in a non-binary way. In this way, African epistemology can be reconstructed. Such a view of education seems plausible on the basis that any form of education has to take into account the social context in which it unfolds; in other words, the Aristotelian view of education as simply a 'social practice' seems highly implausible. Thus, education is education on the basis of its domestication, or what I would refer to as its 'situatedness' in relation to the social contexts in which it is practised. Hence, talking about the Africanisation of education – which emerges as a central theme in this text – does not seem to be such an impossibility or 'a valorisation of something that cannot be', as some critics may want us to believe.

In consonance with the argument that African epistemology should not be subjected to binary oppositional thinking, and the view that reasonable human action is important for reconstituting the place of African epistemology, it seems worthwhile to draw on Derrida's notion of critique. The value of critique (as an instance of reasonable human action) finds itself rightfully associated with 'thinking' that no longer lets itself be determined by an obsession with privileging one form of knowledge over another, albeit knowledge of techno-science over ancestral beliefs and customs. As for Derrida, as it is for me, critique is a form of dissonance and questioning that is not dominated and intimidated by the power of privilege. 'This thinking must also unmask – an infinite task – all the ruses of end-orienting reason, the paths by which apparently disinterested research can find itself indirectly re-appropriated, reinvested by programs of all sorts' (Derrida, 2004: 148). This is basically always asking: 'What is at stake (in technology, the sciences, production and productivity)?' It is a kind of critique that allows us to take more risks, to deal openly with the radical incommensurability of the language games that constitute our society (including the traditions and customs of Africa's peoples), and invites new possibilities to emerge. Critique is a matter of enhancing the possibility of dissent and diversity of interpretations (Burik, 2009: 301); of complicating what is taken for granted, pointing to what has been overlooked in establishing identities (Burik, 2009: 302); an active opening up of your own thought structures that is necessary for other ways to find an entrance (Burik, 2009: 304). In a different way, it is performing a reasonable human action, because the latter is innately concerned with creating possibilities for dissent and diversity of interpretations, complicating the taken-for-granted and opening up to the other. Perhaps the possibility exists that we might just become critical, or, perhaps less critical, through our engagement with others and others' ways of knowing.

What I have argued for in this chapter is a view of African metaphysics and epistemology that not only places the person at the centre of action in relation to the individual self or the community, but also considers the person as the most important human agent in exercising his or her actions in a responsible and critical way. Responsibility implies that the individual is not only vigilant towards his or her attentiveness to the needs and expectations of the communal group, but also imposes on the group the recognition that the individual is as important to the group as the group is determinant of the individual's aspirations. Similarly, I have argued that different forms of knowledge as understood by the individual and the group to which he or she belongs cannot be privileged over other forms of knowledge, for that would be a denial of the value inherent in different understandings of knowledge. In quite a non-binary way, the role of the person in relation to the community and constructions of knowledge is in agreement with an understanding of African metaphysics and epistemology that is in harmony with the notion of a communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent African philosophy of education – one that that privileges responsible and critical relationships.

Note

1 In several Sotho-speaking communities the belief is widespread that witches (material persons) have supernatural powers that can destroy people's possessions and bring them misfortune, such as illness and death to their families, friends and neighbours. Teffo and Roux (2002: 143) state that, in some African communities like the Sotho peoples in the Northern Province of South Africa, the belief in witchcraft is intense and that people conduct their lives under tension, suspicion and fears of bewitchment.

3 Religion, ethics and aesthetics in African cultures

Rethinking African philosophy of education

Introduction

In this chapter I focus on issues of religion, ethics and aesthetics in relation to African philosophy of education. Here I specifically focus on a communitarian African philosophy of education and the cultural enactments of Africa's peoples through their religious, ethical and aesthetical practices. Taking my cue from Jonas Soltis's (1998: 196) view of philosophy of education, I infer that any discourse of philosophy of education (including an African philosophy of education) is informed by the personal, the public and the professional. To have a personal dimension of African philosophy of education is underscored by a set of personal beliefs about what can be considered good, right and worthwhile to do in education. The individual who practices philosophy of education achieves a 'satisfying sense of personal meaning, purpose, and commitment to guide his or her activities as an educator' (Soltis, 1998: 196). Practising African philosophy of education in a personal manner requires one to be thoughtful and self-directed in order to gain a better understanding of the educational process in general, and of one's own system in particular. Put differently, a personal dimension of philosophy of education pursued from the view of the individual enables him/her to gain more insights into, say, a teaching subject, the curriculum, education policy and management. Different from an understanding of philosophy of education along the personal dimension of guiding individual practice is inquiry in a public dimension. Philosophy of education in the public dimension aims to guide and direct the practice of 'the many', which may include educators, policy analysts, academics, intellectuals, politicians, journalists or philosophers. Soltis (1998: 197) explains philosophy of education according to the public dimension as follows:

> Public philosophy of education is everybody's business and ought to be. The point of being philosophical about education in the public dimension is to articulate public aspirations and educational values, give sense and purpose to the cooperative public enterprise of education, and provide the opportunity for thoughtful participation in the direction of education by all who care seriously about it.

While a public dimension of philosophy of education inquiry has its merits (such as satisfying the utilitarian demands of good practice according to the expectations of the state), it is not substantive enough, however, in seeking a clearer understanding of educational matters. It is in this sense that I agree with Soltis (1998: 199) that the personal and public dimensions of philosophy of education should be integrated with 'professional space'. When engaged in professional analysing, educators are first concerned about the soundness of arguments, explaining the meaning of concepts, constructing reasonable arguments and providing ways to think about educational matters, before devising 'ways to do or solve them'. Soltis (1998: 199) explains that being professional is to

> make the educational enterprise as rationally self-reflective as possible by providing philosophically rigorous examinations, critiques, justifications, analyses and syntheses of aspects of the educators' conceptual and normative domain … [Educationists] are philosophical scholar-educators who do technical philosophical work demanding rigour, precision, and adherence to their own professional canons of scholarship just as sociologists, historians, psychologists, and other academics do in their writing and teaching.

Hence, philosophy of education as an overlapping, three-dimensional (personal, public and professional) approach to educational tasks and problems is more intent on 'providing illumination, understanding, and perspective for educators *to think with*, than on providing programmes and policies for educators *to act* on' (Soltis, 1998: 199). This is not a denial of philosophy of education's concern with action. But rather, 'providing illumination, understanding, and perspective for educators *to think* with' is itself a form of doing action in order to gain clarity about educational thought and practice. What follows from the aforementioned understanding of philosophy of education is the view that such a practice (in this case, African philosophy of education) is guided by at least the personal, public and professional aspects of inquiry. To my mind, the personal has a direct connection with religion for the reason that the latter determines the way many people construct and conduct themselves, both morally and philosophically. So, an examination of religion invariably involves analysing the personal dimension and the public dimensions of philosophy of education on the basis that religion is practised both individually and collectively by people. It is to such a discussion that I now turn.

Religion as a personal and public discourse

Religion in African cultures, and hence in the personal and public discourses of people, was often berated by proponents of Eurocentric origin as being 'fetish' or 'animistic'. That is, Africans were portrayed as pagan people without a religion and their beliefs were considered as 'spiritually inferior to Europeans' (Oladipo, 2004: 335). The European missionaries' task was to 'civilize the

heathen' in Africa (Imbo, 2004: 368). In this regard, Imbo (2004: 368) makes the following claim:

> Western scholars for their part were not, as a rule, really interested in African religions. They came with their minds made up and did not want to be confused by African reality. The missionary, like his anthropologist colleague, had fixed ideas about the proper classification of human societies (i.e. civilised or primitive), and the proper religious doctrines worth propagating, such as the doctrine of a Supreme Being who created the world out of nothing.

Similarly, the view that, for Africans, religion is always an expression of a relationship between individuals and God – the Supreme Being, maker, sustainer and ruler of the world, giver of life who is above all divinities and humankind – is also far from correct, as many Africans do not necessarily worship God in the sense advocated by monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Instead, many Africans also worship divinities or deities perceived to be more accessible to attend to people's immediate problems (Oladipo, 2004: 357). Hence, the structure of African traditional religions includes the following aspects: belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine (Oladipo, 2004: 356). This is not to suggest that all African religions are the same or that some should even be accorded preference over others, but rather that some African religions include some of the aforementioned aspects whereas other African religions do not recognise some of the aspects. For instance, the practice of magic is not recognised by monotheistic religions, but by some religions that focus on the worshipping of divinities. In the main, the purpose of religious life for many Africans is to acquire good morals that can inculcate in them the desire to act with hospitality, selflessness, kindness, humility, abhorrence of wickedness, respect for truth and rectitude, regard for covenants, high regard for honour and respect for old age (Oladipo, 2004: 360). In essence, monotheistic religions are not all-pervasive in African cultures, and African religions are also of a non-revealed kind (Oladipo, 2004: 361). However, what is significant about religions on the continent is that they aim to cultivate a sense of morality in people – those virtues such as respect, kindness, hospitality and dignity that can influence both the personal and public dimensions of African philosophy education.

Ethics and aesthetics in African cultures

In African cultures, the purpose of ethics is the pursuit of a balanced individual (Bewaji, 2004: 396). By this is meant that, in African society, the person has the ethical obligation to cultivate his or her well-being in the interest of community. As aptly stated by Bewaji (2004: 396),

> each person is a representative of himself or herself as well as of his or her family … [which] has the implication that an individual has to consider not only how a course of action contemplated by him will affect him personally, but also how it will affect his family … in terms of the way in which they will be perceived by society.

Thus, ethically speaking, when one pursues one's own goals one undermines the credibility of one's traditions. Likewise, the community does not also reduce its responsibility toward the individual, so that the moral obligation that arises between the individual and the community is 'an interactive one' (Bewaji, 2004: 397). In support of an ethical responsibility of both the individual and society towards one another, Gbadegesin (1991: 66–67) posits the following:

> From this it follows that there need not be any tension between individuality and community since it is possible for an individual to freely give up his/her own perceived interest for the survival of the community. But in giving up one's interests thus, one is also sure that the community will not disown one and that one's well-being will be its concern … For community is founded on notions of an intrinsic and enduring relationship among its members.

The aforementioned type of ethical relationship that an individual has with society is, following Charles Taylor (1991: 4), more enriching and less worrying than the dark side of individualism that centres on 'the [narcissistic] self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, or less concerned with others or society'. Narcissism or individualised atomism is a self-centred culture according to which an individual opts for self-fulfilment without regard for the demands of his or her ties with others. Taylor (1991: 35), in *The Ethics of Authenticity*, cautions that such a self-centred form of self-fulfilment is quite impervious to the considerations of others and may actually be self-defeating, as it destroys the conditions for realising authenticity. Of course, our ties to others can be in conflict with our personal development, for instance, the demands of our career may be incompatible with obligations to our family, or our chosen professions might not lend itself to an accommodation of who we are as individuals. But then, Taylor (1991: 58–59) argues that such fulfilment as just of the self, neglecting or delegitimising the demands that come from beyond our desires or aspirations (albeit from history, tradition, society, nature or God), fosters 'a radical anthropocentrism' – that is, making us take 'an instrumental stance to all facets of our life and surroundings'. In others words, a narcissistic self leaves the individual 'with a sense of untrammelled power and freedom before a world that imposes no standards, ready to enjoy free play, or to indulge in an aesthetics of the self' (Taylor, 1991: 61). The problem with 'free play' is that, as individuals, we would no longer be connected with others and our relations might become permanently subverted, as

the possibility exist that individuals and groups might no longer be accountable to one another for their actions. The latter invariably makes our society vulnerable to disengagement from one another, to despotism, to common action and to compromise.

Moreover, the basis of ethics in African society in relation to situating the self authentically in community with others is human welfare. Following Wiredu (1980: 6), ethics in African cultures is motivated by humanistic considerations:

> It has often been said that our traditional outlook was intensely humanistic. It seems to me that, as far as the basis of the traditional ethic is concerned, this claim is abundantly justified. Traditional thinking about the foundations of morality is refreshingly non-supernaturalistic. Not that one can find traditional sources elaborate theories of humanism. But anyone who reflects on our traditional ways of speaking about morality is bound to be struck by the preoccupation with human welfare: What is morally good is what befits a human being: it is what is decent for man [and woman] – what brings dignity, respect, contentment, prosperity, joy, to man [and woman] and his [her] community. And what is morally bad is what brings misery, misfortune, and disgrace.

What follows from the aforementioned understanding of ethics is that it is not only found in the religious practices of Africans, but motivated by the concern to be in service of, and to humanity in all aspects of human life. In other words, ethics in Africa is strongly humanistic. However, as I shall show in later chapters, we witness so much human catastrophe on the African continent. Taylor (1991: 94) would argue that some Africans have lost contact with themselves – that is, people are driven by an imperative of domination that condemns them to ceaseless battle against nature both within and around them. In short, the human predicaments we witness on the African continent from time to time are instigated by sporadic surges of atomistic individualism that bring a concern for human welfare into conflict with other despotic and patriarchal imperatives, such as to dominate and exclude people from authentic ways of living – that is, peace, stability and prosperity. However, despite the lapses in living ethically, African cultures are still concerned innately with living worthwhile lives, as cogently stated by Wiredu (1980: 6):

> There is an aesthetic strain in our traditional ethical thought that is worthy of special mention in this connection. As noted already, what is good is conceived to be what is fitting … what is fitting is what is beautiful … There are, indeed, aesthetic analogies in the moral language of other cultures. But aesthetic analogies are taken much more seriously and have more extensive moral relevance in pour traditional thought.

What has been expounded on thus far is the fact that, in African cultures, religion, ethics and aesthetics are not only intertwined, but their authenticity is

determined by concerns to advance both morality and human welfare on the continent within a spirit of community. To my mind, African philosophy of education as practical reasoning would engender opportunities for both individuals and groups (whether teachers and students) to advance both morality and human welfare. It is to such a discussion that I now turn.

African philosophy of education as practical reasoning: on the possibility of advancing morality and human welfare

As has been argued above, atomistic individualism differs from possessive individualism in the sense that the latter suggests that what people (individuals) want in life is to maximise their share of social resources and material goods, rather than promote the good of others or their own spiritual well-being (Kymlicka, 1989: 886). For atomists, an individual's capacity for meaningful choice is self-sufficient outside of society and culture (Kymlicka, 1989: 894). And, having drawn upon the thoughts of Taylor (1991), atomistic individual liberalism is defective for two reasons: first, it is primarily concerned with the right of individuals to develop their own form of life, grounded on their own sense of what is really important or of value for themselves (Taylor, 1991: 14). Being concerned with developing their own form of life, individuals aim to achieve a kind of 'self-fulfilment' disengaged from matters of public importance, albeit educational. Such a subjectivist view of liberalism is one in which teachers do as they choose and do not have to decide and act together with students. For example, they teach loads of subject content to students without challenging the critical minds of these students. And because these students are seen as separate to the teaching and learning process, they are mostly required to regurgitate the 'facts' they have acquired in examinations. Hence, the teacher self-imposes the right to pursue his or her own interest and does what he or she individually happens to desire. In other words, subjectivity sees the teacher as ontologically prior to the social, that is, maintains that the teacher's thoughts and actions are free and independent of the society in which they are embedded.

African philosophy of education certainly cannot accommodate a non-communitarian subjectivist understanding of self-fulfilment that is loath to acknowledge the claims of student identities for the reason that education, in the first place, requires collective intervention. Education depends on the conditions of society as a whole, a notion that stands in stark contrast with subjectivist individualism, which reifies the individual over society. In this regard I agree with Taylor (1991: 15) when he states that the subjectivity 'widely espoused today is a profound mistake, even in some respects self-stultifying. It seems true that the culture of self-fulfillment has led many people to lose sight of concerns that transcend them'. Such subjectivist individualism, to use Sandel's expression (1998: 19), defines the self as 'prior to its ends', which accords supreme value to individual autonomy and agency and stands opposed to collectivism.

Second, atomistic individualism also involves what Taylor (1991: 54) refers to as 'the culture of narcissism', that is, the spread of an outlook that makes self-fulfilment the major value in life and that seems to recognise few external moral demands or serious commitment to others. The idea of self-fulfilment, or being true to oneself, appears to challenge the notion of dependency according to which individual teachers are concerned about their own interests and relationships. Teachers feel they are 'called' not to be concerned about others and to avoid active engagement with any form of public discourse, that is, a joint, cooperative form of social action (Bohman, 1996: 54). Taylor (1991: 16) describes self-fulfilment as follows:

> It's not just that people sacrifice their love relationships, and the care of their children, to pursue their careers. Something like this has perhaps always existed. The point is that today many people feel *called* to do this, feel they ought to do this, feel their lives would be somehow wasted or unfulfilled if they didn't do it.

In the changing educational contexts in Africa, teachers certainly cannot only be true to themselves, that is, to their choices, careers and relationships. The fact that education involves the participation of different individuals in critical engagement about the meaning of their past and about possibilities for the future provides a serious challenge to narcissist individualism. Despite individual teachers' desires to be true to themselves, their private concerns in relation to educational life will always affect others. A teacher's desire to use critical pedagogical approaches in the classroom does have an impact on the reconstruction of a particular society. The issue of how students become individuated into the societal rules and norms is an issue ignored by narcissist individualists, in this instance several teachers, due to their individualistic, non-social conception of the person. It is in this regard that I agree with MacIntyre (2002: 9) when he posits that teachers achieve the ends of education when they engage students in the making and sustaining of communal life. In other words, the institution should not be seen as merely preparing students in a self-contained way until they are ready to participate in 'the real thing'. In good institutions, students become 'practitioners of the arts, sciences and games, participants in such activities as reading novels and poetry with both discrimination and intensity, revising new experiments in which their mathematical skills can be put to use, drawing and painting and making music to some purpose'. Hence, the communal life of the institution is in good order when it is recognised not only as a place for uncritical rote learning, but also as a place of genuine cultural achievement in which a variety of practices flourish (MacIntyre, 2002: 9).

In summary, the major problem with atomistic individualism in relation to education is its individualist orientation based on subjectivist, narcissist conceptions of the self. The priority of the individual teacher over the social is linked to an untenable understanding of freedom, which disregards the fact that the

freedom people might have is conditional upon the social structures in which they are embedded. Since Aristotle it has been articulated that human beings ascribe to social practices (Pettit, 1994: 182). This means that an individual is only an individual when she realises her unique individuality and the commonality between her and other persons close to her and surrounding her, in this case, a university teacher in association with students.

Now that I have explored some of the constraints that atomistic (individual) liberalism encounters in order to ensure better educative practices, I shall explore and reflect on practical reasoning as a way of approaching African philosophy of education in order that morality and human welfare can be achieved.

MacIntyre (1999), in *Dependent Rational Animals*, argues for a dependent relationship between the individual and the community, in this instance the teacher and students. His book is an attempt to reconstruct the Aristotelian account of the relationship between the individual and the community. Positively, MacIntyre (1999: 107) sees the individual (teacher) as embracing the pursuit of what he calls 'practical reasoning', or reasoning together with others achieved through people's engagement in social relationships. In other words, MacIntyre's view of practical reasoning does not consist solely of engagement in social relationships or practices. Teachers can engage with students, for instance, but this might not mean that their engagement with them (the students) takes the form of reasoning together. For MacIntyre (1999: 105), in order to sustain one in this quest of reasoning together, that is to give to others an intelligible account of one's reasoning, one needs to show the ability and the willingness to evaluate the reasons for action advanced to one by others, so that one makes oneself accountable for one's endorsements of the practical conclusions of others, as well as for one's own conclusions. This brings me to a discussion of some of the virtues of conversational justice and political reasoning as instances of morality and human welfare respectively, in order to show how an African philosophy of education can engender meaningful educational change.

First, African philosophy of education as a communal practice requires that teachers as practical reasoners will embark on practices that will not only help students to make informed choices, to be imaginative and to re-educate themselves, but also to trust and rely on teachers. This implies that both teachers and students have to engage *justly* in conversation with one another – since inasmuch as the student requires the teacher, the teacher requires the student for the fulfilment of the education process. Following MacIntyre (1999: 111),

> conversational justice requires among other things, first that each of us speaks with candour, not pretending or deceiving or striking attitudes, and second that each takes up no more time than is justified by the importance of the point that she or he has to make and the arguments necessary for making it.

I want to elucidate some touchstones of conversational justice, which I think constitute a MacIntyrean understanding of the concept: 'candour', 'the importance of the point' and 'arguments necessary for making it [the point]' (1999: 111).

Considering these touchstones of conversational justice, it emerges that the concept is both a view of human experience and a moral value that recommends a certain attitude and response to human engagement. On the one hand, as a moral value, conversational justice conceives of the relationship between the self and the other dialectically, that is conversational justice is the basis for engagement based on honesty, openness, sincerity and truthfulness – moral aspects that link strongly with the notion of candour. Candour does not imply that conversations should always be understood as a willing and pleasant exchange, but also as provocations and resistances that involve being honest, open, sincere and truthful so as to evaluate and sometimes to abandon or to alter old ways (Fay, 1996: 233). On the other hand, conversational justice as a view of human experience encourages people to engage their differences and to present arguments to justify 'the importance of the point' in ways that explore possibilities for productive and positive learning from each other. This involves situations in which teachers can learn about students and from students, thereby opening up new possibilities for themselves and for the students in the processes of critical engagement.

I shall now elaborate on this notion of conversational justice as engagement whereby people not only encounter each other's differences, but also improve possibilities for communication through which they can produce arguments to justify their points. First, engagement based on conversational justice refers not only to the capacity to elicit students' regard for you as teachers and your capacity to become invested in the lives of students, but also to an enhanced ability to listen and respond to students; a deepened appreciation of the ways students contribute to your own self-knowledge; and an enlargement of your moral imaginations. Enhancing their ability to listen and respond to students implies that teachers have to be willing to hear and be open to accept what students have to say. They have to interact with students who are different, and they should mutually explore and share with other students' perspectives as a way to develop their own and students' understanding. Put differently, teachers must be ready and able, when their time comes, to deliberate with their fellow students, listen and be listened to, and take responsibility for what students say or do. To be able to listen and respond to students in the first place implies that engagement on the part of university teachers should be unconditional, which increases the possibility for university teachers to become unconditionally engaged *by* students, that is, for them to deliberate on matters without any conditionality attached to their engagement. In this way, suspicion and unnecessary antagonism among teachers and students can be removed, thereby improving the credibility and legitimacy of human engagement and of their decisions by fostering greater cooperation and mutual respect between and among themselves, which would enhance their desire and ability to extend their mutual relationships, being eager to share with one another.

But the unconditional engagement of teachers and students in educative practices would not by itself ensure conversational justice. My contention is that there has to be mutual respect among university teachers and students. In seeking to achieve mutual respect, for instance in the face of disagreement, we need to attend to the way people hold or express positions. For example, the way in which teachers should treat each other with regard to policy issues, even when the policy debate ends in legislation and the university takes a position favouring one side of the dispute, needs to be grounded in principles constituting mutual respect. In other words, mutual respect is a form of agreeing to disagree, which of course requires a favourable attitude towards and constructive interaction with the persons with whom one disagrees. The point I am making is that mutual respect should not merely be an unconditional acceptance of everything people say or propose – people should agree to disagree. Teachers do not show respect for students by simply accepting everything they say; and students do not show respect for teachers through mute agreement, or by imitating them. Mutual respect demands that we hold others to the intellectual and moral standards we apply to ourselves. Excusing others from the demands of intellectual rigor and honesty or moral sensitivity and wisdom, on the grounds that everyone is entitled to his or her opinion no matter how ill-informed or ungrounded, is to treat them with contempt. We honour others by challenging them when we think they are wrong, and by thoughtfully accepting their justifiable criticisms of us. To do so is to take them seriously; to do any less is to dismiss them as unworthy of serious consideration, which is to say, to treat them with disrespect (Fay, 1996: 234).

Second, an African philosophy of education intent on achieving human welfare connects with MacIntyre's account of 'political reasoning'. In seeking the good and exercising political reasoning, each student has to contribute to the shared, rational deliberations of the class in his or her own voice. It is as political reasoners that students engage in practical reasoning, and what cultivates political reasoning is that no one in the classroom should be ignored and excluded from educational deliberation – the welfare of every student is at stake, and should be taken into account. In this MacIntyrean view there is nothing that can limit students from exercising their voices in communal and rational deliberation. According to the virtue of political reasoning, each member of the class is someone from whom we may learn about our common good and our own good, and who may have lessons to teach us about those goods that we will not be able to learn elsewhere. Having a political voice, in short, is a necessary and not merely an optional part of one's independent and communal well-being. But to have a political voice, external goods, such as classroom arrangements and media resources, must make it possible for students first to exercise their critical judgements in respect of shared deliberative reasoning, and second to have someone as a proxy to be his or her 'second self', to speak for him or her (MacIntyre, 1999: 139).

The students' exercise of critical judgement in respect of shared deliberative reasoning implies that students are able to engage with their beliefs, conceptions

and presuppositions only in and through relationships with other students, as well as the teacher. This makes their critical inquiry a shared public discourse as opposed to a private one. But what makes critical inquiry reasoned deliberation? Reasoned deliberation involves being engaged in a clear articulation of issues and attuning oneself to the social world, where possibilities may be contemplated, reflected upon and deepened. Put differently, shared deliberation does not only mean students are part of a whole whose voices should be heard, but what they articulate to others (fellow students and teachers) who may be interested in their perceptions and perspectives should be expressed in a clear, consistent and unambiguous manner as they seek to improve their situations and contexts (Taylor, 1985: 139).

This brings me to a more central point concerning critical inquiry: truthfulness in classroom practices. Truthfulness is based on an understanding that one has to be honest, sincere and willing in one's actions. Students engaging in political reasoning have to be sincere, prepared and willing to listen to each other's, at times, conflicting views and differences, and at times, from different communities or groups of people. By implication, the students should not only be patient and tolerant towards one another in the face of divergent expressions, but should be willing to listen to *what* is being said, rather than being distracted by *who* is speaking. Even in the wake of conflict and severe differences of opinion between students and university teachers in deliberation, the probability of confrontation would be ruled out by the willingness of all participants in shared deliberative reasoning to engage with one other – to advance their arguments. In essence, for teachers and students to exercise critical judgements in respect of shared deliberative reasoning, means that they have to be agents of critical inquiry. In turn, critical inquiry demands that participants are truthful and open in their pursuit of achieving 'a common mind' through political reasoning. The role of the teacher in this instance is critical to creating and sustaining an environment, which facilitates and promotes political reasoning, rather than hindering it. This brings me to the link MacIntyre establishes between political reasoning and the notion of proxy. To have a voice through political reasoning does not simply mean that one has to be physically in the presence of others in order to be heard. For MacIntyre, people who are 'unable to speak', such as students who might not be in a position to make their voices heard, should entrust someone as proxy, that is, someone to be their 'second self', to speak for them even in their absence. MacIntyre (1999: 139) makes the point that a proxy entrusted to care for others who are unable to speak should know and be rooted in relationships with those for whom he or she is entrusted to speak. The point is that the idea of proxy can be used in the classroom (for instance, a classroom comprising 80 students), where one person who represents a group of four to five students articulates the points of view of the group after deliberating about a particular educational issue.

Critics of practical reasoning justifiably ask the following question: is it possible for large and complex classrooms to be governed by deliberative associations through practical reasoning? Now, if one considers that practical

reasoning requires ample time for reflection, listening and discussion, it would seem as if participants who engage in deliberation would require unconstrained time and opportunity to achieve educational outcomes. This is so for the reason that one cannot assume that classroom deliberations would always result in unanimous decisions. The point is, practical reasoning, with its emphasis on the force of the better argument, is time consuming; a high degree of consensus or unanimity on educational issues could only be attained at the cost of silencing dissent and curtailing some students' viewpoints (Benhabib, 1996: 77). My response to this is that, although practical reasoning cannot be instantiated easily, it nevertheless can be approximated sufficiently closely to provide a framework for democratic participation in the classroom, which can address the looming dangers of student exclusion and silencing. Practical reasoning does not in any way demand that discussion and deliberation should continue unrelentingly without reaching some sort of consensus, albeit a temporary one. On the one hand, one of the primary aims of practical reasoning is to achieve consensus among most, if not all, contending parties in the classroom. In the event that consensus is not attained on a particular educational outcome, students can agree to reach a temporary decision to avoid an impasse, subject to the condition that the outcome has to be reviewed and even rescinded (if necessary) in the light of more and better arguments. The point is that practical reasoning strives to attain more informed and better educational outcomes and decisions than any of the systems or procedures associated with the democratic ideal of university classroom practice. On the other hand, reaching consensus among most, or all of the contending parties need not necessarily be the objective of practical reasoning. Indeed, the mere debate of unexplored options or reasoning by and within itself offers scope for unexpected teaching and learning. In this way the ideal of democratic classroom environment is enhanced by the endless possibility and potential of the unknown and unforeseen.

Moreover, the criticism that a high degree of consensus could only be attained at the cost of silencing dissent and curtailing some students' viewpoints does not seem to be fair. The mere fact that practical reasoning appeals to consensus does not mean that dissenting views might be undermined. Consensus, certainly in a deliberative sense, means that a shared compromise has been reached among most, if not all, contending student groups about the most appropriate decision for educational action. Of course, dissenting voices will always challenge this kind of consensus attained, but then the dissenters can once again prepare better arguments after all parties have reflexively analysed (after an agreed upon time) the educational outcome or decision on which consensus was attained. In this way, the claim that dissenting voices will be marginalised through deliberative consensus does not seem valid at all.

By far the most powerful critique against practical reasoning is the argument that the discourse is biased against historically disadvantaged students. Understandably, a discourse that demands the rational articulation and justification of arguments does favour students who possess the skills of eloquence, persuasive speech and rational reflection. In this way, practical reasoning

would seem to privilege those students who possess 'speech that is assertive and confrontational' (Miller, 2000: 146). Thus, it could be argued that practical reasoning does not protect students' basic rights and freedoms, in particular those who have been disadvantaged in terms of education. Benhabib (1996: 78) posits that practical reasoning requires that each individual possesses the same symmetrical rights to various speech acts, to initiate new topics and to ask for reflection about the presuppositions of the conversations. However, students who do not possess such deliberative skills might justifiably claim that practical reasoning is elitist and exclusionary. But then, as I have argued for earlier, practical reasoning also emphasises that a person fulfils the role of 'proxy', as opposed to all students engaging in educational deliberation as complete equals. And again, the role of the teacher in this regard should be one where both the space and assistance are provided to minimise the barriers encountered by students, whether in terms of language or being a part of a minority group. The point I am making is that, although it does seem as if norms of deliberation are loaded against the educationally disadvantaged – who might not always provide coherent arguments in defence of educational points of view, they have the prerogative to appoint someone as 'proxy' who possesses deliberative skills to persuade students and university teachers of the merits of their proposed educational alternatives. Hence, the argument that historically disadvantaged groups are in fact excluded from deliberative classroom practices cannot be used as an argument against practical reasoning.

In summary, virtues that constitute practical reasoning include the exercise of conversational justice and political reasoning to sustain the excellence and development of: first, students' capacities to act reasonably and to imagine alternative possibilities so as to be able to rationally re-educate themselves; second, honesty, openness, sincerity and truthfulness, that is moral aspects which link strongly with the notion of candour, as well as that of engagement through respect, where teachers and students not only encounter one another's differences, but also improve possibilities for communication (that is their human welfare) through which they can produce arguments to justify their points; and third, for students to exercise their voices in communal (shared) and rational deliberation. Thus, I have analysed and explored some constraints of individual liberalism for African philosophy of education. I have shown that conversational justice and political reasoning constitute the notion of practical reasoning. In turn, practical reasoning, as 'reasoning together with others', cannot be seen in isolation from securing the legitimate interests of students in critical classroom activities – the matter of practising an African philosophy of education.

4 Towards a different understanding of African education

Reconstituting the place of *ubuntu*

Introduction

In this chapter I examine a communitarian understanding of *ubuntu* (humanness) and its implications for education on the African continent. I show how communitarian understandings of *ubuntu* (humanness) resonate with dignified humane action, evoking the potentialities of people, and cultivating a 'community of shared fate' – all practices that can contribute to a notion of what ought to constitute African education.

It seems inconceivable for Africa and its educational institutions not to play any significant role in the cultivation of *ubuntu*, especially considering that many African communities in several countries have been responsible for heinous crimes against humanity (for example, the expulsion and rapes perpetrated against women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo); for incessant ethnic conflicts (even after post-colonial democratic elections were held in Kenya and Nigeria); for ethnic cleansing and genocide against some of Africa's peoples (in Uganda on the part of Idi Amin and in Rwanda on the part of Hutus against Tutsis); for political dictatorships and their armed military expeditions (such as those that continue against the communities in the Darfur region of Sudan); and for social instability despite the overthrow of authoritarian rulers (as is witnessed in countries affected by the 'Arab Spring'[1] in many parts of northern Africa). To my mind, African educational institutions are obliged to play important pedagogical roles in the cultivation of *ubuntu* with the hope of preventing some of the atrocities and human rights violations we continue to witness on the African continent. Of course, the history of democratic governance in Africa has been

> nominally democratic; that is, they [countries] hold regular elections, opposition parties compete for elective offices, and a wide range of opinions can be expressed … however, … sub-Saharan Africa reflects a global trend in which political rights and civil liberties have deteriorated in recent years.
>
> (Joseph, 2011: 324)

The decline of freedom and the continued pattern of volatility can be ascribed to three aspects: democratic and autocratic systems of power being in play simultaneously in many African nations; the impact of external forces with vested interests in Africa; and the use of armed struggles in installing long-surviving regimes and shaping their character (Joseph, 2011: 324). First, although some African countries have made democratic advances, the prevalent political system on the continent remains authoritarianism. This is particularly evident in Eritrea, the Republic of Congo, Uganda, Namibia and, most notably, in Angola, where

> the power and authority of the regime rest on decades of armed struggle, enormous oil wealth, a petroleum industry that now competes globally, and the capacity to adjust to criticisms without ceding its extensive control of the state and economy.
>
> (Joseph, 2011: 325)

Second, regimes like Ethiopia, with its minority ethnic base that brutally supresses the opposition and falsifies electoral results not to risk authoritarian control of its people. In alliance with the United States, Ethiopia regularly sends troops to fight Islamist insurgents in Somalia and Sudan and therefore, because of support from external forces, does not see the necessity to retain its democratic character; and third, countries like Senegal, Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe, which retain their resilient and ailing autocrats like Mugabe through support and loyalty from an army that has never really relinquished the armed struggle. Considering the fact that it seems as if democracy constantly succumbs to the dictates of authoritarianism, I want to offer a way to disrupt the configuration of autocracy. I want to suggest having an analytical look at the notion of *ubuntu* (humaneness) and its concomitant link with *ukama* (interdependent relations), and then to offer some insights into how these concepts can guide educational relations in order to enhance a genuine form of African education – a notion that can hopefully disrupt the impregnable levels of autocracy on the African continent.

Reconceptualising *ubuntu*: a communitarian understanding of respect, caring and community

Wiredu (2000: 374) avers that 'decision by consensus was often the order in African deliberations'. He refers to a quote used by Julius Nyerere (a past president of Tanzania) to substantiate his claim that, in traditional African society, human affairs have been conducted through free discussion: 'The elders sit under the big trees, and talk until they agree' (Wiredu, 2000: 374). Although he avers that consensus was regarded as the basis for joint action in interpersonal relations among adults, he acknowledges that, because of frequent conflicts between ethnic groups, consensus was not always attained

(Wiredu, 2000: 374). Nevertheless, he goes on to posit that the 'habit of decision making by consensus in politics was studiously [and somewhat paradoxically] cultivated in some of the most centralised and … warlike ethnic groups of Africa, such as the Zulu and the Ashanti [or Akan]'[2] (Wiredu, 2000: 375). In traditional African society, chiefs who wanted to impose their opinionated views on the council of elders often were deposed because the chiefs were considered as a link between the living population and the departed ancestors:

> The chief [in reference to Ashanti or Akan society] was the symbol of the unity of his kingdom and, in the nominal course of his duties, fulfilled a variety of ceremonial functions. But he was unlike a constitutional monarch in being a member (at least as a lineage personage) of the ruling council and being in a position to exercise legitimate influence on its deliberations by virtue, not by any supposed divine inspiration, but rather of whatever intrinsic persuasiveness his ideas might have.
>
> (Wiredu, 2000: 376)

Hence, collective decision making through consensus was not alien to traditional African society.

If collective decision making and consensus were part of the political and social processes in African society, then it could only have happened on the grounds that the concept of *ubuntu* (humanness) was used ubiquitously in the life experiences of Africans. Nowadays, the concept of *ubuntu* is much in vogue, with almost every African politician, educationist or philosopher giving some account of the concept and how it is envisaged that *ubuntu* can contribute in a transformative way to political, social and economic change on the African continent. So, what does this concept of *ubuntu* entail? I shall now have an analytical look at the concept. To begin with, and taking my cue from Gyekye (1997: 158), *ubuntu* 'is a pervasive and fundamental [humanistic] concept in African socioethical thought generally – a concept that animates other intellectual activities, and forms of behaviour, including religious behaviour, and provides continuity, resilience, nourishment, and meaning of life'. Likewise, Sindane (1994:8) avers that '*ubuntu* inspires us to expose ourselves to others, to encounter the difference of their humanness so as to inform and enrich our own'. My interest in *ubuntu* as a philosophical concept involves its emphasis on dignified and humane actions. In this regard, *ubuntu* encourages respect, caring, community sharing and trust among people (Sigger *et al.*, 2010: 2). Dignified and humane relations among people are encouraged through expressions such as '*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' – that is, 'a person depends on others just as much as others depend on him/her' (Letseka, 2000: 182–183). I shall now examine in further detail the virtues of respect, caring, communal sharing and trust in relation to the notion of *ubuntu*.

Ubuntu *as respect*

In African culture, respect of the institution of authority (such as the customs and traditions of the tribe or ethnic group) is mostly considered as being invested in the authority of the elders. The elders are considered to be the repositories of communal wisdom and have been conceded leadership in the affairs of people. That is, they are believed to offer guidance to the young, as stated by Kanu (2010: 157):

> The importance of respect for elders is seen in the Igbo saying; 'He who listens to an elder is like one who consults an oracle'. The oracles are believed to give the infallible truths, thus the elders are also believed to say the truth and the words and instructions are heeded to for the promotion of good behaviour among the young.

For instance, the moral respect the young should have for elders is contained in the poem of Markwei (1979: 15): 'In our little village when elders are around, boys must not look at girls and girls must not look at boys because the elders say, that is not good'. It does seem to me as if respect for elders takes on a different dimension, and is usually associated with an uncritical adherence to the 'infallible truths' of elders. Respect in the African sense does not simply mean that the elders' word should be taken as an absolute, infallible truth devoid of any critical scrutiny by others. Rather, it appears as if the wisdom of elders should be used as a yardstick to determine and judge human action, as an 'oracle' that offers particular understandings and meanings that cannot be overlooked prior to making decisions about appropriate human action. The authority of the wisdom of the elders serves as criterion for judging human action, rather than adhering blindly to authoritative guidance. Surely people cannot judge inappropriate or improper human conduct if they do not have some kind of reference to what constitutes good action. So, the reference to the elders as 'oracles' of knowledge and wisdom is an insistence on judging behaviour against agreed upon decisions as embedded in the traditions and customs of a people, rather than slavishly endorsing the agreed upon norms of a society. However, one cannot judge unless one is first equally informed. How does one know what is right action if one does not first take into account the intersubjective norms constituted in the wisdom of the elders? Taylor (1985: 34) aptly claims, 'if one suspends these [constitutive] rules … then the whole range of [appropriate societal] behaviour in question … would not be'. In this way, respect does not mean uncritically accepting anything that the elders have to say. Instead, the 'oracle of infallible truths' refers to the guiding framework agreed upon by the society (including the elders) as to what counts as appropriate action. Hence, I agree with Kanu (2010: 156) that

> respect for authority and elders helps to … smoothen social relations in African society … [particularly] in the maintenance of custom and

> tradition. The young are always looking forward to being elders and they are often told that if a child respects an elder, he would be respected by the young when he becomes an elder.

For me, looking forward to assuming the authority of elders implies equipping oneself with the wisdom and guidance constitutive of what makes a society morally good. It does not imply that people should adhere uncritically to the views of elders, as the norms that constitute a society are flexible and always present in the evolving practices of people. The assumption of authority, therefore, should not be one manifested in the physicality of age (an elder), but should be vested in conceptions of wisdom and guidance.

In light of the aforementioned I find Eamonn Callan's (1997) view, namely to approach situations in a belligerent and distressful way, somewhat misplaced and irrelevant – certainly for African society. Callan (1997: 211) posits that people show respect for one another when they do not hesitate to act belligerently in their conversations because they might disturb complacency or provoke doubts about the correctness of their moral beliefs or about the importance of the differences between what they and others believe (a matter of arousing distress). And he suggests that belligerence, as a way of respecting the other, should be accompanied by a rough process of struggle and ethical confrontation, even threats. If this happens, he argues, belligerence and distress eventually give way to moments of ethical conciliation, when the truth and error in rival positions have been made clear and a fitting synthesis of factional viewpoints is achieved (Callan, 1997: 212). It seems as if Callan might be speaking on behalf of a liberal Western community that would not mind provoking or causing distress to others with the intent to open themselves up to views not thought of before, or to stimulate the unexpected. However, in African society, where sensitivity to criticism and harsh treatment might not be conducive attitudes in the quest to encourage belligerent and distressful encounters, the possibility exists that showing disrespect through such actions might discourage people from actually engaging with one another in the first place. It is one thing to argue for respect among people, but quite another to extend respect to an acceptance of belligerent and provocative outbursts. Certainly in Africa, people would feel alienated and even humiliated. Such encounters are in contradiction to the African attitude that, even in articulation and argument, the weak should be shown respect by being assisted by the strong. The Sotho expression, '*moketa ho tsosoa o itsosang*' (assistance will always be there for the weak who are, however, making an effort to help themselves) (Letseka, 2000: 183), is evidence that African communities might not be amenable to being provoked and treated distressfully. Kanu (2010: 156) makes the point that

> in Yoruba land, suicide was an honourable way of doing so [for people who acted without respect], so much was regard for peace, stability and orderliness as political values that the individual life could be sacrificed to maintain the integrity and inviolability of the institution.

In other words, acting with belligerence and provocation would be considered as threats to the sanctity of stability and orderliness within the institution of authority that could potentially have catastrophic effects on the sanctity of human life. It is in this regard that Biko (1978: 41) states the following:

> Ours has always been a man-centred society. Westerners have on many occasions been surprised at the capacity we have for talking to each other not for the sake of arriving at a particular conclusion but merely to enjoy the communication for its own sake. Intimacy is a term not exclusive for particular friends but applying to a whole group of people who find themselves together whether through work or residential requirements.

And, an intimacy based on engaging with one another for its own sake is one that encourages respect among persons – a matter of acting with *ubuntu*. Surely, enjoyment would not be the corollary of belligerence and distress, especially for the one facing the provocation. Thus, *ubuntu* does not mean to treat people with belligerence and provocation, for such actions might not be in consonance with treating someone with humanness and dignity. Rather, when people enjoy one another's company and are stimulated by one another, they are engaged for its own sake. And such a situation might not always be possible through belligerence and distress, especially when the belligerence and distress are experienced by the other.

Now, if people feel that they have been treated without dignity and hence without respect, they might feel that they are looked down upon or even that they have been treated in a humiliating way. Lindner, Hartling and Splathoff, (2012: 386) purport that people who suffer humiliation as a result of undignified dialogue usually feel derided, dehumanised, degraded or even stigmatised. A person who suffers such a humiliation, albeit through belligerence or provocation, usually feels that his or her dignity has been violated. Such a person experiences 'destructive disrespect and humiliation' and feels that his or her human worthiness has been eroded (Lindner *et al*. 2012: 388). Africans, having suffered and endured much humiliation and emotional trauma as a result of colonialism and through human rights violations, are indeed sensitive to being treated belligerently and provocatively. Consequently, *ubuntu*, as an ethic of humanness and dignified respect that one person accords another and *vice versa*, resonates with the practice of treating people with 'equal dignity' – that is, with openness, empathy and authenticity (Lindner *et al*. 2012: 390). This brings me to a discussion of *ubuntu* in relation to caring.

Ubuntu *as caring*

In African culture, a high premium is placed on caring for one another, especially treating the destitute and helpless with care. Okafor (1974: 23) posits that, 'in traditional African culture, the weak and aged, the incurable, the helpless, the sick were affectionately taken care of in the comforting family atmosphere'.

The idea of humanness is clearly evident in the care African peoples are encouraged to exercise towards one another, especially towards the weak and downtrodden. For this reason, Ifemesia (1979: 2) sees humaneness (*ubuntu*) among an African people as a concept that is defined as 'life emphatically centred upon human interests and values; a mode of living evidently characterised by empathy, and by consideration and compassion for human beings'. My interest in *ubuntu* as caring involves not just being empathetic towards others, but also being considerate, that is attentive, to a person. And, being considerate towards someone else does not simply mean that one emotionally understands the feelings of someone else, but that one actually responds to the person by evoking his or her potentialities in order that he or she does something about altering or modifying his or her condition of vulnerability. Here, I draw on Alasdair MacIntyre (1999), for whom caring is not just an empathetic response towards another person, but also the ability of one loosening up the potential of someone else to modify his or her condition of vulnerability, either by becoming more conscious of his or her situation, or becoming open to constructive criticism, or becoming more receptive to taking risks.

About caring, MacIntyre (1999: 83) posits that if one really is to acquire the virtue of caring for others, and not just of being affectionate towards them, one needs to cultivate in others the capacity to reach their own justifiable conclusions for which they are to be held accountable by and to others for those conclusions – that is, caring involves evoking in others an ability to evaluate, modify or reject their own practical judgements. This means that caring cannot be limited to a display of empathy, but that caring also encompasses an honest reflection and guidance towards a greater self-understanding, and hence, self-accountability. To illustrate the practice of caring through *ubuntu*, Africans traditionally considered the cultivation of land for their daily subsistence, and its distribution, as important to economic prosperity. Through caring for others, land was distributed on the basis that landlessness and apathy could be avoided. So land tenure and distribution was used as a stimulant to encourage individual and communal economic prosperity. Following Akinpelu (1983: 38), the allocation of land in African society was not only highly prioritised, but caringly distributed, 'strictly according to the need and ability of the individual to develop'. In other words, caring does not simply mean that people inherited land, but that land was distributed to encourage and stimulate individuals and communities to develop a sense of worth and dignity as they endeavoured to cultivate their land, become self-sufficient, and find practical ways to harness their sense of accountability to their family, neighbours and broader community. Caring does not simply mean that others do something for you only because of their affection. Rather, caring through *ubuntu* also means that others stimulate in one the capacity for practical judgement about improving one's conditions of living. One is then not merely a recipient of others' affectionate action, but also an independent-minded person who finds practical ways to sustain and improve one's living conditions. It is in this regard that I find Letseka's (2000: 183) view about caring in African society quite poignant:

> While traditional African life encouraged an altruistic attitude – concern with the welfare of others – it was far from condoning idleness, laziness or total independence, or encouraging people to rest on their laurels and do nothing to improve their welfare and opportunities in life, secure in the knowledge that their family and the community at large would be there to take care of their individual problems. On the contrary, one had to be seen treating one's welfare and opportunities in life as priorities in order to get the attention of others and receive help.

In essence, *ubuntu* as caring is not only aimed at encouraging others to make appropriate choices (whether intellectual or moral), but also to evoke in others the capacity to be imaginative and to re-educate themselves, and to trust and rely upon those from whom they received care. Caring, then, does not merely involve cultivating in ourselves 'degrees of affection' toward others, but also encouraging others to develop the capacities of empowerment, evaluation and modification, that is what others consider to be sufficiently good reasons for acting, and to imagine alternative possibilities so as to be able to re-educate themselves (MacIntyre, 1999: 83). I shall now address the issue of *ubuntu* as communal sharing.

Ubuntu *as communal sharing and trust*

A popular African proverb that expresses an African sense of community states: 'Go the way that many people go; if you go alone, you will have reason to lament' (Davidson, 1969: 31). Following *ubuntu*, the community is attentive to the individual, hence she equally responds to the community's attentiveness. In other words, an individual's identity is shaped by the community and, in turn, the community's identity is framed by what the individual envisages. Similarly, Steve Biko states:

> We regard our living together not as an unfortunate mishap warranting endless competition among us but as a deliberate act of God to make us a *community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life*. Hence in all we do we always place [wo]man first and hence all our action is usually joint community oriented action rather than the individualism.
>
> (1978: 42, my italics)

Such an African form of community is one of sharing in two ways. First, an individual's obligations are fulfilled by virtue of his or her attentiveness to the community to which he or she belongs. Communal sharing then is determined by individual responsibility towards the group and the group's responsibility towards the individual. Biko (1978: 42) observes the following about an African community bounded together through *ubuntu*:

> Poverty was a foreign concept. This could only be really brought about to the entire community by an adverse climate during a particular season. It never was considered repugnant to ask one's neighbours for help if one was struggling. In almost all instances there was help between individuals, tribe, chief and chief, etc. even in spite of war … [which explains] why the community may have poor people but it may not have beggars [that is, considered as persons who have no hope to survive].

In this sense, communal sharing is considered a moral good that persons in community have towards one another, that is, they exercise an obligation towards one another. This idea of communal sharing is supported by Gyekye (2000: 321), who posits that 'an individual human person cannot develop and achieve the fullness of his/her potential without the concrete act of relating to other individual persons'. This does not mean that the individual has priority over the group, or that the group in turn has priority over the individual, but rather that the individual person cannot live in isolation from other persons – that is, the individual is oriented towards others persons and must have relationships with them. In the words of Gyekye (2000: 326):

> In the communal setting of the African life, an individual's social status is measured in terms of: a person's sense of responsibility, expressed, in turn, through his / her responsiveness and sensitivity to the needs and demands of the group; what a person has been able to achieve through his/her exertions – physical, intellectual, and moral; and the extent to which a person fulfils certain norms, such as having a marital life, and bringing up children.

Thus, in African society, an individual is brought into social relations with the group and, in turn, the group expresses its attentiveness to values of individuality so that the individual and the group are attenuated to one another in 'social commitments as well as to duties of self-attention' (Gyekye (2000: 334). Again, Gyekye (2000: 334) avers:

> Even though in its basic thrust and concerns it gives prominence to duties toward the community and its members, it does not – indeed cannot – do so to the detriment of individual rights whose existence and value it recognises, or should recognise, for a good reason.

What follows from the afore-mentioned argument is that communal sharing cannot be associated narrowly with thinking that it gives expression to a sense of community as taking 'precedence over the realities of the individual life histories, whatever these may be' (Menketi, 1984: 71), and prioritising the group rather than the individuals, that is, focusing 'more on the communion of persons than on their autonomy' (Senghor, 1964: 94). The point is that, if the priority of the group over individual autonomy is what is meant by communal sharing, then the group's aspirations will be brought into conflict with those

of the individual and *vice versa*. Therefore, I concur with Gyekye (2000: 334) that communal sharing implies an appreciation of and commitment to both the community and the individuals who make up the community, without bringing the self and its community into disharmony, hostility and confrontation.

Second, Biko's emphasis on 'a *community of brothers and sisters jointly involved in the quest for a composite answer to the varied problems of life*' (1978: 42, my italics) is constitutive of what communal sharing and trust through *ubuntu* entail. Such an understanding of *ubuntu* introduces an important dimension of the coexistence of people in African society. Not only are they expected to live in harmony and cooperation in mutual interdependence, but, significantly, they also hold membership of a community intent on being responsive to problems in their society. That is, 'they share in the fate of the other, each bearing the other up – a life which provides a viable framework for the fulfilment of the individual's nature or potential … talents or endowments are nevertheless regarded as the assets of the community as such' (Gyekye, 2000: 334). Put differently, communal sharing and trust imply that individuals belonging to the community express a sense of trust and loyalty not only to one another, but also to the norms and principles of the order of community that connects them. This community of sharing and trust in African society in order to respond to problems is what Melissa Williams (2003) would refer to as people's citizenship as membership in a 'community of shared fate' – an idea echoed by Gyekye, as mentioned earlier. Of course, individuals as constitutive of community do not necessarily share the same identity (Xhosas and Zulus in South Africa do not share a similar identity), yet they are entangled with one another in a way that ties their future together – they both consider creating equal opportunities for people as important to the transformation of South African society. People are bound together by relations of interdependence, whether they are in agreement with one another or not, in order to respond collectively to the problems of society (Williams, 2003: 209). In other words, people are interconnected communally, in that they share in one another's common 'fate' of improving their collective, undesirable societal conditions, whether these be as a result of discrimination, marginalisation or exclusion. People bound through *ukama*[3] (interdependent human relations) constitute a 'community of shared fate' because they trust one another to strive together in order that they eradicate the most pressing social, political and economic problems confronting them. Biko's explanation of Black Consciousness depicts what a 'community of shared fate' means for Africans: 'We recognise the existence of one major force in South Africa. This is white racism. It is the one force against which all of us are pitted … [where we] progressively lose ourselves in a world of colourlessness and amorphous common humanity [*ubuntu*]' (Biko, 2000: 361).

Thus far, I have shown how *ubuntu* (humanness) can engender human practices in the African context. I have focused on *ubuntu* as respect, caring and communal sharing and trust, in particular showing how these practices are intertwined and how they guide dignified and humane action, evoke the potentialities of people, and commit to cultivating a community of shared fate

(that is, interdependent human relations or *ukama*). I shall now show how such an understanding of *ubuntu* can frame a notion of African education – that is, one that can contribute towards addressing Africa's moral and political concerns.

An *ubuntu* conception of African education

In the quest to articulate a conception of African education informed by *ubuntu* (humanness), I turn to the seminal thoughts of Seyla Benhabib (2011), who, in her latest book, *Dignity in adversity: Human rights in troubled times*, argues that education cannot ignore the act of treating people justly in the public sphere. For her, to act justly towards people involves educating persons to advocate for both hospitality (a matter of exercising human rights in a world republic) and hostipitality (a matter of evoking a dangerous indeterminacy or mutual suspicion). If people were to establish relationships based on hospitality, then they exercise human rights (without violating such rights) and, equally, if they were to be initiated into practices of hostipitality, they would become mutually suspicious of dystopias such as genocide, totalitarianism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia. To my mind, acting with both hospitality and hostipitality invariably requires that people act with a sense of *ubuntu* – that is, that they act with a dignified humanness towards others and treat them with care; and that they cultivate in themselves and others an antipathy towards dystopias that might confront them.

Benhabib (2011) contends that the establishment of justice can happen through the exercise of democratic iterations, restricted rights practices, and the eradication of socio-economic exploitation. But the exercising of democratic iterations, through which citizens may articulate the specific content of their scheduled rights, continues Benhabib, requires a space in which members of a society can engage in free and unrestrained dialogue about their collective identity in free public spheres. She describes this unrestrained dialogue as being enabled by 'uncoerced democratic iterations' that can only be understood as a continuing conversation, 'which challenges the assumption of completeness of each culture, by making it possible for its members to look at themselves from the perspective of others' (2011: 76). The notion of an incompleteness of culture is an especially significant tool in the cultivation of an individual and, by extension, that individual's culture. An incompleteness of culture, and by implication an incompleteness of the individual, offers two avenues towards an engagement from the perspective of others. First, an incomplete culture and/or individual means that there is always something about that culture and/or individual that is yet to be uncovered or known, not unlike the construction of a narrative, which is continuously unfolding in a dialectical motion. Second, an incompleteness of culture and/or individual necessitates the movement towards a perception of completion – in which the individual moves towards self-understanding and self-reflection, but this can only be done when and if in dialogue with the other. So, the presence of the other is critical to

the individual's, and by extension the culture's, own sense of being and self-knowledge. Stated another way, the individual can only be an individual if there is an other. Likewise, a culture is unique and constructed as a culture if there are other cultures different to it. Had they been the same, there would be no need for a differentiation of cultures. Therefore, when Benhabib (2011) writes about looking at ourselves from the perspective of others, she is in fact calling upon us to challenge what we see in and about ourselves and, in so doing, to realise that we can only be us when we are in conversation with others.

It would be feasible, therefore, to state that the nurturing and development of our capacity to challenge the completeness of our culture can be used as one way of elevating our consciousness in how we articulate our collective identities in the public sphere. I say this because an elevation of consciousness is only possible when the individual has: (1) an awareness of his identity by virtue of how that identity has been shaped – historically, culturally and emotionally; (2) an awareness of how the individual chooses to exercise and participate in that identity, both within the private and public spheres; and (3) an awareness of how that identity, although established and understood, is in uninterrupted interaction with others or with the ideas, perceptions and actions of others. Leading from this, I would argue that, while it is the individual's right to lay claim to his or her identity and how he or she chooses to enact it – because this enactment is always contextualised in relation to others – each enactment can be framed as either a moment of justice or of injustice. Every action or reaction, therefore, can be constructed as just, or deconstructed as unjust. And so the same humanity that binds us as human beings can divide us as unjust moral beings. This means that, when I argue that education should advocate for both hospitality (a matter of exercising human rights in a world republic) and hostipitality (a matter of evoking a dangerous indeterminacy or mutual suspicion), I am arguing for a renewed understanding of what African education ought to do. And what it ought to do is to interrogate the lack of social morality that undermines the conditions under which education should take place; and it ought to shift from its pre-conditioned emphasis on training to a cultivation of the individual as a moral being. Of course, it is the purpose of education institutions to achieve outcomes and to produce the architect, the biochemist, the economist and the teacher. But the purpose of producing educated and trained professionals should not be divorced from producing cultivated and nurtured individuals. So, what is required is a re-articulation of the purpose of African education, which is a restoration of the balance between the technical purposes of education and the cultivation of moral individuals.

This brings me to an examination of how to cultivate an *ubuntu* conception of African education – one that has in mind the achievement of justice in the public sphere through the agency of hospitality and hostipitality. First, one way for educational institutions to realise their social responsibility for cultivating moral beings is through Benhabib's democratic iterations, which she describes as:

> processes of linguistic, legal, cultural, and political repetitions-in-transformation – invocations that are also revocations. Through such iterative acts a democratic people, considering itself bound by certain guiding norms and principles, reappropriates and reinterprets these, thus showing itself to be not only subject to the laws but also their author.
>
> (2011: 80)

Who then participates in these processes of repetitions-in-transformation? All of us – in our incompletion of culture and in our incompletion of being – because for as long as we converse – and for as long as we absorb all that is around us, we are never complete. Every other that we encounter has the potential to bring a new perspective and a changed perception, or what Benhabib (2011) refers to as the 'enlargement of perspectives'. But she cautions that, if the conversation that contributes to democratic iterations is not executed by the most inclusive participation of all those involved, then the iterative process is unfair and illegitimate. This means that it is not enough for education institutions to talk about the rights of others. There has to be a stated and conscious commitment to an establishment of justice, which reverberates through an intolerance of any constructions of exclusion or discrimination, or any moral harm. Of course, we cannot know the hurt of exclusion, or the pain of moral harm, unless we have had these experiences. Minorities in South Africa, for example, might not necessarily comprehend the full devastation of apartheid on the lives of majorities. And so, in terms of Benhabib's 'enlargement of perspectives', she suggests that we 'need to exercise the powers of "enlarged thought" through our moral imagination, in order to understand the perspective of the concrete other' (2011: 193). When one uses one's imagination, then one can realise the utopia of exercising hospitality and one can extend one's sense of caring to the other. When ones uses one's imagination, then it is precisely the unknown utopia of the other that should evoke in one the humane desire to move towards, rather than away – that is, to encounter the other with his or her otherness with the possibility that one or the other can alter his or her moral perspectives; and that one's recognition of human rights, and the restoration of human dignity, might be enhanced. Arguing from the premise that, as a collective moral community, our incompletion of being is always framed by others whom we may or may not encounter but whose right to a social utopia should nevertheless matter to us, the implications for such a deliberative encounter are encapsulated in cultivating and extending an ethics of care. So, while education is designed to produce what Noddings (2006: 339) describes as a uniform product, she also asserts that

> An education worthy of its name will help its students to develop as [moral] persons, to be thoughtful citizens, competent parents, faithful friends, capable workers, generous neighbours and lifelong learners. It will try, too, to develop aesthetic, ethical and spiritual sensitivity.

First, in order to cultivate students who are competent, thoughtful and generous, education requires a teaching that is competent, thought provoking and generous in its cultivation of all its students. A generous cultivation of all students, to my mind, needs to be couched in a particular community of engagement that prefaces a rhetoric devoid of exclusion, intolerance and prejudice. It is a community of engagement in which the expression of otherness is encouraged so that it becomes known and understood, and it is a community in which both teachers and learners learn that the privilege of education is not attained through the acquisition of training only, but that it is lived through the caring recognition and restoration of human dignity for all of humanity. When teachers and students take responsibility for their own human dignity, they will be disinclined to stand by idly when the same human dignity of others is vandalised through the brutality of acts, such as apartheid and genocide. And, if students and teachers learn to sanctify the dignity of all others, then, as moral beings, we can all begin collectively to hold each other accountable for what should be our collective utopia. An *ubuntu* discourse, therefore, is not so much about how well we attach ourselves to the others, but rather to which extent we honour our consciousness by valuing our social imagination.

Second, if Taylor (2007) is right that we no longer all live in societies in which the widespread sense can be maintained that faith in God is central to the ordered life we partially enjoy, and that we live in a pluralist world in which many forms of belief and unbelief jostle and hence fragilise each other, then it would not be inappropriate to argue for a defence of hostipitality through education – a notion that intertwines with an *ubuntu* discourse. This is so for the reason that the fate of beliefs depends on 'powerful intuitions of individuals, radiating out to others' (Taylor, 2007: 531) – those persons (like us) who shape and guide the minds of students. With an increase in fragilisation, and the sense that, for some, this life seems to be empty, flat, devoid of a higher purpose, many young people are following their own spiritual instincts and in fact are looking for greater immediacy, spontaneity and spiritual depth (Taylor, 2007: 506). In my view, education-constituted hostipitality should become more and more the quest to restore our apparent fragile civilisational order. We require an educative restoration of the self and its wholeness – a spirituality that will lift one up and move one to be a better person in relation to others and their otherness. After all, human beings bear an internal relation to all others (Cavell, 1979: 442). In a way, education holds the promise of a fuller human flourishing – one that can rescue people collectively from a deep disorder in their lives.

Notes

1 The 'Arab Spring' refers to the revolutionary wave of demonstrations and protests waged against authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, including the uprisings that erupted in northern African countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Libya and Morocco which have been countenanced by violent responses from the authorities.

2 Before colonisation, the Ashanti or Akan community occupied large parts of Western Africa, including the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Today, they are estimated at 10 million people and modern-day Ashantis include John Kofi Agyekom Kufuor (second president of Ghana and previous leader of the African Union) and Kofi Annan (past UN Secretary General). The Zulu are the largest South African ethnic group, estimated at about 10 million people, and the current president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, is of Zulu origin.
3 *Ukama* is a Shona word used in Zimbabwe to mean relationality or interrelationships. As an ethic it is founded on African humanism (*ubuntu*), in relation to which the Shona would say, *Munhu munhu navanhu* (a person is a person because of other persons) (Ndofirepi, 2012: 317).

5 On enacting *ubuntu*, democratic citizenship education and the enlargement of moral imagination

Learning and teaching in South Africa

Introduction

In the previous chapter I argued in defence of an African conception of education that is constituted by *ubuntu* (humanness) – a conception that can engender dignified and humane action, evoke the potentialities of people, and cultivate a community of shared fate (through interdependent human relations, or *ukama*). I have also shown how hospitality and hostipitality, as practices that connect with *ubuntu* and its emphases on exercising respect, showing care, and harnessing communal sharing and trust, can contribute towards an enlargement of our moral imagination necessary to (re)construct African education. In this chapter I want to show how African education as an enlargement of our moral imagination can, first, harness a culture of humanity and responsibility in schools; and second, contribute towards nurturing 'a politics of humanity' in teacher education – those actions that would hopefully consolidate *ubuntu* in African education. I shall focus on learning and teaching as advanced through education in South Africa because of the country's intent not to secure only African moral education in the public schooling sector, but also to advance a critical understanding of learning and teaching, vis-à-vis pedagogical actions within an African context.

Cultivating a culture of humanity and responsibility

After more than a decade of democratic citizenship education in public schools in South Africa, the Department of Basic Education (DoBE) has still not produced sufficiently plausible ways for how democracy and citizenship ought to be taught in classrooms. I argue that the recent 'practical guide' on how to cultivate 'responsibility and humanity' in public schools is, first, an acknowledgement that democratic citizenship education has not as yet achieved desirable results in schools; second, that the 'practical guide' itself did not adequately address the conceptual slippages regarding democratic citizenship education since the release of the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy in 2001; and third, that an amended version of responsibility and humanity is required in order to enhance their cultivation in public

schools. In this chapter I revisit some of the salient moments in the cultivation of democratic citizenship education in South Africa over the past decade and more (2000–2011). As has been argued for elsewhere (Waghid, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010), democratic citizenship education in South Africa has been informed and guided mainly by three primary considerations: first, to encourage people not to repeat the racist, repressive and authoritarian apartheid past; second, to engender public deliberation to ensure that all people are engaged with, situated in, and connected to the democratic aspirations of others; and third, to recognise the rights and responsibility of all citizens to uphold the rule of law, to develop respect for one another as persons through our human interdependence (*ubuntu*), and to contribute towards building an equitable and just society on the basis of reconciliation with and mutual recognition of the other. So, the question can legitimately be asked: why yet another contribution on democratic citizenship education? I agree. However, considering that the DoBE (2011) has recently produced *Building a Culture of Responsibility and Humanity in our Schools: A Guide for Teachers* (DoBE, 2011), a practical guide for teachers that can hopefully promote the rights and responsibilities of learners as enshrined in the Constitution, it would not be unfair to claim that the democratic citizenship education agenda has as yet not achieved the desired results in many public schools. That is, it can be assumed that the democratic citizenship education agenda in South Africa perhaps only partially succeeded in bringing about meaningful change in public schools. Hence, a 'practical guide' is thought to be apposite to perhaps address some of the difficulties teachers had, in particular in implementing the existing democratic citizenship education agenda. It would not be unreasonable to claim that democratic citizenship education in South Africa has not as yet achieved the expected results, as initially envisaged by policy makers, since the new 'practical guide' actually provides examples of

> how a rights and responsibilities based culture can be built into school and classroom management … [and that it] further gives teachers practical examples across a number of learning areas on how to develop a variety of lessons around rights, responsibilities and values as individuals and as citizens in a democracy.
>
> (DoBE, 2011: iii)

In this chapter I offer an account of how democratic citizenship education has evolved in South Africa over the past decade and what could have been some of the major impediments in curtailing its implementation in public schools. Thereafter I shall examine whether the 'practical guide' for promoting humanity and responsibility in schools will actually work. And, finally, I shall offer an amended version of how to teach responsibility and humanity with the hope of refining the democratic citizenship education agenda in South Africa and, simultaneously, offer ways how it might be implemented in public schools.

Democratic citizenship education since the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy

Currently, the Directorate: Race and Values Education in the DoBE is responsible for the promotion of 'equality, non-racialism and a culture of human rights at all educational institutions', and more specifically at schools. It sees as its main functions the development of programmes that facilitate and promote integration in schools; the implementation of the Values in Education programmes; the design of programmes to promote national identity through celebrating South African diversity; and the promotion of 'unity in diversity' through national symbols.[1] The DoBE lists the following documents as important to the enhancement and implementation of democratic citizenship education in schools: Values, Education and Democracy (2000); Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (2001); Integration Guide Book for Principals and Teachers (2004); Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum (2005); The National School Pledge (2008); and A Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa (2008).[2] I shall now cast a cursory glance at the Manifesto, the Schools Pledge and the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth to point out the underlying meanings of democratic citizenship education that the DoBE hopes to be realised in schools.

First, the Manifesto (Department of Education, 2001) emphasises six qualities that the education system should actually promote: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour (Department of Education, 2001: 3). The Manifesto takes these qualities further and explores how a democratic citizenship education agenda based on the ideals of democracy, social justice, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, *ubuntu* (humaneness), an open society, accountability (responsibility), the rule of law, respect and reconciliation can be taught as part of the school curriculum (Department of Education, 2001: 3). I shall now show how the Manifesto relates to a conception of democratic citizenship education. It seems as if dominant discourses on democratic citizenship education have been confined mostly to practices of deliberation, freedom and rights – both individual and social (Knight Abowitz and Harnish, 2006: 654). Callan (1997: 221–222) makes a cogent case for democratic citizenship education as being constituted by at least the following aspects: cohesive identity, public deliberation and responsibility for the rights of others. For Nussbaum, democratic citizenship education involves the cultivation of critical argumentation, reasoning and narrative imagination, that is to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of someone different from oneself (Nussbaum, 2002: 289). Benhabib (2002: 127) describes democratic citizenship education as involving 'democratic iterations' whereby people, through learning to 'talk back', can enact what they have in common and, at the same time, make public their competing narratives and significations with a real opportunity to coexist. They not only establish a community of conversation and interdependence (that is, they share commonalities), but also one of disagreement (that is, they do not share commonalities) without

disrespecting others' life-worlds (Benhabib, 2002: 35, 41). In all the aforementioned discourses on democratic citizenship education, deliberative engagement, freedoms of articulation and people's individual and social rights are foregrounded. On the one hand, from my analysis of the Manifesto, it does seem as if the Department of Education has in mind cultivating civil spaces for learners that involve engendering 'mutual understanding and the active appreciation of the value of human difference … [through] building consensus' (Department of Education, 2001: 3–4). Similarly, the Manifesto encourages people to build consensus and understand difference on the basis of 'debate, discussion, and critical thought' (Department of Education, 2001: 3). On the other hand, the Manifesto recommends that teachers ensure that the rule of law is observed in schools and that classroom practices be infused with a culture of understanding one's rights, as a teacher and as a learner, as well as recognising that others have rights too (Department of Education, 2001: 3–5). From the aforementioned analysis, it seems as if the Manifesto embeds some of the most salient features of democratic citizenship education: that is, creating civil spaces for learners to learn about others' differences, engaging deliberatively and iteratively with others, and establishing an appreciation of the rights of oneself and others and respect for the rule of law. By implication, the Manifesto clearly accentuates the Department of Education's democratic citizenship programme of procuring democratic iterations and the recognition of the rights of the other in public schools.

Second, the Manifesto considers the value of 'social honour' as central to the development of South Africa's democratic citizenship education agenda. The Department of Education came up with the idea that learners could achieve 'social honour' by singing the national anthem, displaying the national flag, and saying aloud an oath of allegiance that reads as follows:

> I promise to be loyal to my country, South Africa, and do my best to promote the welfare and the well-being of all its citizens. I promise to show self-respect in all that I do and to respect all of my fellow citizens and all of our various traditions. Let us work for peace, friendship and reconciliation and heal the scars left by past conflicts. And let us build a common destiny together.
>
> (Department of Education, 2001: 59)

This initial National Schools Pledge was later revised by the Ministry of Education (2008) and replaced by the following one:

> We the youth of South Africa, recognising the injustices of our past, honour those who suffered and sacrificed for justice and freedom. We will respect and protect the dignity of each person and stand up for justice. We sincerely declare that we shall uphold the rights and values of our Constitution, and promise to act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities that flow from these rights.

At face value, these 'pledges' confirm the Ministry of Education's commitment to ensure that learners and teachers in schools affirm their allegiance to the achievement of democratic justice.

Third, in its preamble, the Bill of Responsibilities for the Youth of South Africa states the following

> I accept the call to responsibility that comes with many rights and freedoms that I have been privileged to inherit from the sacrifice and suffering of those who came before me. I appreciate that the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa are inseparable from my duties and responsibilities to others. Therefore I accept that with every right comes responsibilities.
>
> (DoBE, 2008)

It seems as though the DoBE has in mind the enactment of responsibilities on the part of teachers and learners, based on actions related to being responsible for: ensuring the right to equality, human dignity, life, family or parental care, education, work, freedom and security of the person, own property, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, live in a safe environment, citizenship, and freedom of expression (DoBE, 2008). The Bill of Responsibilities quite clearly aligns the democratic citizenship education aspirations of the DoBE with performing duties and responsibilities, that is, the enactment of responsible actions.

Considering the aforementioned three major texts in the democratic citizenship education programme of the Department of Basic Education, some impediments have emerged that invariably have retarded its implementation in public schools. Hence the need for coming up with a 'practical guide' to promote responsibility and humanity in schools. In the section that follows I analyse at least three conceptual slippages that seem to have characterised the democratic citizenship education programme and its apparent lack of implementation in public schools: first, there is an assumption on the part of the Department of Basic Education, specifically the Directorate for Race and Values, that deliberations can actually be taught in quite a mechanical way, hence its production of a 'practical guide' for how democratic engagement should be taught in schools. The problem with such an understanding of teaching democratic iterations is that learning to talk back is not some impromptu mechanical procedure that requires of learners and teachers to be signalled on the strike of a gong when their moments of talking back should be initiated. Instead, deliberations are spontaneous spaces of engagement in which people develop a sense of connectedness with others with whom they engage and in whose responses they become situated – taking into consideration what the other has to say and simultaneously creating opportunities for the other to systematically scrutinise their views; second, teaching learners to uphold 'social honour' by patriotically respecting symbols of South Africa's post-apartheid democracy (that is, displaying the flag, singing the anthem and saying the pledge) could open up the way for blind patriotism, which would

undermine the democratic citizenship education agenda. Dogmatic patriotism occurs when one does not even begin to question some of the wrongs perpetrated by, say, government, and one blindly persists in honouring those who previously fought against the perpetration of injustices. I am not suggesting that displaying the national flag and singing the national anthem of one's country should not be done when the government acts unsatisfactorily, rather, what I am saying is that one's adherence to these symbols should not happen at the expense of being justifiably critical about government's apparent undesirable policies and decisions. This means that one's adherence to symbols should not signal an unbiased and blind adherence to the government itself. Third, teaching learners what it means to exercise their responsibilities, such as to ensure that people live in a 'safe environment', would paradoxically extend their 'duties' beyond their learning in schools, especially if the learners do not have control over many of the social realities under which people in South Africa live. For instance, it cannot be the responsibility of learners to ensure that they be taught in 'safe schools' if at times they do not have control over gang violence in their communities.

I have identified some of the conceptual inadequacies related to the DoBE's democratic citizenship education programme. These include the assumption that democratic iterations can be taught mechanically, that blind patriotism might not be perpetuated through honouring symbols, and that learners can and should responsibly ensure their 'safety' in schools. I now need to examine why the 'practical guide' for promoting responsibility and humanity in schools would potentially fall short of remedying the afore-mentioned conceptual slippages in the DoBE's democratic citizenship programme.

Some reflection on the practical guide for the promotion of responsibility and humanity in public schools

At face value, the 'practical guide' is a well-organised, concept-driven and colourful (user-friendly) text that uses many examples of how to acquaint learners with terms and ideas in and about harnessing 'responsibility and humanity'. It seems as though the practical guide is meant to make learners understand, clarify and enact ideas associated with cultivating democratic citizenship education. Quite sophisticatedly, it seems to be presented as a practical guide that aims to 'guide' learners in engaging in activities in and about democratic citizenship education. Yet it does not seem to come up with plausible explanations and ways for how mechanical iterations and blind patriotism can be avoided, and for 'safety' to be responsibly ensured at schools. Instead, the examples and explanations about these pertinent issues seem to further compound the polemic about inculcating in learners a commitment towards responsibility and humanity. Let me explain.

First, democratic iterations are explained through the use of terms such as 'dialogue', 'debate', 'negotiation' and 'discussion'. In fact, the guide's own explanation of dialogue seems to be biased towards reaching 'agreement': 'an

exchange of ideas and opinions on a particular issue, esp. [sic] a religious or political issue with a view to reaching an amicable agreement or settlement' (DoBE, 2008: 16). The 'practical guide' not only gives a parochial understanding of dialogue, but also seems to conflate the concept with other concepts, such as debate, negotiation and discussion. Considering the aforementioned explanation of dialogue, the practical guide introduces quite mechanically how learners should engage with one another, designing and recommending very prescriptive and anticipated prompts with the aim, of course, to make learners agree on pedagogical issues. In this sense, the 'practical guide' does not do much to reduce or attend to the conceptual misinterpretation of democratic iterations. If it really wants to serve the purpose of a 'guide', it needs to couch dialogue in a practical way by making suggestions on what learners might do or what conditions ought to be in place, without casting dialogue as some mechanical exercise that should make learners reach agreement or a settlement. Of course, dialogue is not the same as debate, discussion and negotiation. If one debates and has a discussion, the outcome is not always an inevitable agreement. Sometimes people debate and discuss issues with others without an agreement being reached, which of course does not make the dialogue superfluous. Similarly, agreement cannot be a precondition for dialogue, for that would mark the end of dialogue, but rather is an outcome of dialogue. If one engages with someone with the aim of reaching some kind of agreement, the possibility exists that the agreement might be plausible but, equally, also contrived, which possibly would render the consensus and even the dialogue a mechanical procedure. Instead, dialogue should be presented as a practice that allows learners to open up to one another with the possibility that they (learners) might even come to some kind of disagreement among themselves. The problem with a mechanical form of dialogue is that the possibility exists that the dialogue be 'policed' by teachers, who would want to see that an agreement is attained. In this way, learning to talk back might even be curtailed, because the possibility equally exists that one's aspirations to be heard might prematurely be stunted because of an obligation to reach agreement.

Second, the 'practical guide' depicts a notion of 'storytelling' that borders on promoting and encouraging dogmatism in schools. In fact, an allegiance to uphold national symbols patriotically yet blindly might become exacerbated through the 'practical guide's' insistence that teachers 'tell' imaginary stories and that learners 'listen' to their stories. It is one thing to narrate a story to give learners insights into the heroic lived experiences of individuals with the aim of encouraging them, through listening, to emulate such heroic examples. However, it is another thing how the story is in fact narrated. Teachers can 'convey moral lessons' through storytelling, but it is the way in which the story is told that potentially stifles its promise. If learners are just being 'told' stories, the possibility exists that learners might be denied opportunities to critically evaluate stories, especially heroic ones. Such forms of listening could then result in learners not challenging the portrayal of heroic characters, which could lead to them accepting things blindly (how many children heroically

worship *Hulk* the movie character without even beginning to problematise his (Hulk's) use of excessive physical power when provoked to anger?). It could be that, through storytelling, learners actually develop a kind of passivity whereby they merely endorse heroic stories without critically disrupting the storylines. This potentially makes storytelling a debilitating pedagogical activity, especially when learners accept things blindly without even beginning to question the underlying assumptions of the stories. Simply put, the practical guide seems to prepare learners to accept things more dogmatically, thus undermining its intention to engage them or 'to capture their (learners') imagination' (DoBE, 2008: 44). And, if this happens (that is, stories being told in a way that actually blinds learners' critical judgements), the fact that children are learning to become blind patriots might become of real concern for the DoBE and the critical implementation of its democratic citizenship education programme.

Third, the 'practical guide's' focus on teaching learners to become proponents of safety and security in schools is linked to producing both 'safe' schools and classrooms, and 'safe' environments where they (the learners) live. And the 'guide' hopes to achieve this through teaching learners how to deal with gangsterism and bullying. There is nothing pernicious about teaching learners about the ills of the gangsterism and bullying that are operative in schools. However, it seems to be an ambitious demand that learners should become responsible for ensuring that the environments in which they live should be 'safe' and 'secure', and free from gangsters and bullies. Of course, I am not suggesting that learners should not be taught to distance themselves from gang activity and bullying. But it is rather overwhelming and demanding to expect of learners to be responsible for their own protection and security in school and in their communities. This is expecting too much of schools and learners, and too little of the state police and security. It cannot be the learners' responsibility to ensure 'safe' schools (although admittedly some learners do become caught up in gang-related activity). The implementation of a democratic citizenship education programme cannot be conflated with the relegation of responsibilities. Learners have the right to be safe, and they ought to enjoy this right no more so than within a school environment. Equipping children to become responsible citizens does not mean that they should be expected to assume the responsibilities of government. That learners should be expected not to join gangs, and not to involve themselves in criminal activities goes without saying, but the government and its agencies for security and safety have the responsibility to ensure 'safety and security', both in schools and in the environments in which people live. I think the 'practical guide' overextends the responsibilities of learners by insisting that they should become involved in securing 'safe' schools and environments. In fact, such a view of responsibility, it seems, is grounded in an understanding that schools are appropriate places where community issues such as the prevention of gang violence and disrespect for the other can be taught. Not only does such a view take away the responsibility of families, community carers and the government to become credible agents of safety and security, but it also places learners in both an unsafe and irresponsible position.

Now that I have examined some of the challenges that confront the implementation of the DoBE's 'practical guide' to ensure that responsibility and humanity are present in schools, I shall attend to an amended version of responsibility and humanity and its implications for schooling.

Towards an amended version of responsibility and humanity and possibilities for schooling

In the first instance, to be responsible implies that one possesses at least the capacity to 'respond' or to do something about a situation, and also the 'ability' or authority to change a situation – that is, to amend or improve it. Cavell (1979: 441) argues that being answerable/ responsible for what happens to the other means that their (the other's) views are acknowledged, even if one might not be in agreement with them. Rather, one conceives the other from the other's point of view, with which one has to engage afresh (Cavell, 1979: 441). In so doing, one does not compromise one's relations with others, for that would mean a complete breakdown of society. One might find another group's actions (whether of gangs or bullies) repugnant (what Cavell would refer to as living my scepticism), but this does not mean that one views this group as outcasts unworthy of any form of engagement. That would be an abdication of one's responsibility. In demonstrating one's responsibility towards others, one immediately acknowledges one's capacity for intimacy with others – thus limiting one's idiosyncratic privacy. It is for this reason that Cavell (1979: 463) claims that 'human beings do not necessarily desire isolation and incomprehension, but union or reunion, call it community'. Our private actions may lead to a betterment of our communal actions. If one's privacy remains restricted to one with the intention not to exercise one's responsibility to others, one's practices would remain unshared and separated from the people with whom one happens to live. So, one's privacy opens a door through which someone else can tap into one's thoughts, which might be of benefit to society.

Now, for one to be taught (as the DoBE's 'practical guide' suggests) to enact one's responsibility on the basis of some mechanical and uncritical (dogmatic) initiation into dialogue is tantamount to learning what it means to engage others. But then one might not get very far in connecting with others, because democratic engagement also requires that one does so critically. I cannot imagine engaging with bullies and gang members without being prepared to deal with the unfamiliar and unexpected. And, to be nurtured to engage the 'unknown' other is to be taught also what it means to act with criticality, or at least to deal with the improbable. I cannot foresee a bully not being provocative, or a gang member not being hostile and, if one has not been initiated into what it means to encounter the improbable, one would not begin to enact one's responsibility in engaging with the unexpected. To put it differently, one would not have learnt to do something about an undesirable situation – that is, to enact one's responsibility.

Following from the aforementioned, to enact one's humanity requires that one recognises the frailties and vulnerabilities within oneself and others, and actually acts upon someone else's vulnerability. In other words, recognising another's humanity implies that one does not begin to ostracise or sever ties with others. Cavell (1979: 433) posits that, related to one's connection with the other is the view that one has to acknowledge humanity in the other, of which the basis for such action lies in oneself: 'I have to acknowledge humanity in the other, and the basis of it seems to lie in me' (Cavell, 1979: 433). A teacher's relationship with learners ought to be shaped by an acknowledgement that they be considered as fellow human beings. In acknowledging others as human beings worthy of respect – a matter of practising *ubuntu* – one should simultaneously acknowledge oneself as a person who should exercise respect. This is what I think Cavell (1979: 435) has in mind when he claims:

> Another may be owed acknowledgement simply on the ground of his humanity, acknowledgement as a human being, for which nothing will do but my revealing myself to him [her] as a human being, unrestrictedly, as his or her sheer other, his or her fellow, his or her *semblable*. – Surely this is, if anything, nothing more than half the moralists who ever wrote have said, that others count, in our moral calculations, simply as persons; or that we have duties to others of a universal kind, duties to them apart from any particular stations we occupy.

Of importance to the cultivation of humanity is an understanding that one has to go as far as engaging others by doing the improbable, in this instance, learning to forgive and expunge one's feelings of resentment, and doing the unexpected, even though it goes against the grain of one's beliefs. Arguing in favour of 'forgetting' elicits all kinds of emotions. Surely, as Krondorfer argues:

> To speak about forgetting in the context of the Holocaust, or of any genocidal atrocity for that matter, is an act bordering on immorality or, in any case, on callousness, for it seems to refuse empathy to, and acknowledgment of, the suffering of the victims. To advocate forgetting, it seems, moves dangerously close to denying the historical events and to erasing memory itself.
>
> (Krondorfer, 2008: 234)

But it is also the case, as he develops in his in-depth study dealing with Holocaust remembrance and the task of oblivion, that 'scholars recognise that memory and remembrance are not uncomplicated processes but are formed and informed by individual styles, personal trauma, narrative choices, cultural forces, political agendas, and national interests' (2008: 238). He does not pair forgetting with denial and amnesia, but suggests the more neutral term of 'oblivion', distinguishing between wilful acts of neglect and denial (which constitute political or psychological forms of forgetting) and 'unavoidable modes

of memory production based on sedimenting, condensing, suppressing and expunging lived experiences of the past' (2008: 242), which he labels 'oblivion'. By supressing and expunging lived experiences of the past, 'forgetting' assumes a different meaning. And arguing for 'forgetting' is to do the unexpected – that is, going against one's wishes (not to actually forget). If I supress my feelings of resentment towards others and momentarily expunge bad memories, I do the unexpected. This is so because I wilfully supress thoughts of something horrible that had been perpetrated before. Thus, forgetting something that I otherwise would not have done if I were not supressing my bad memories of an event, amounts to doing something 'improbable'.

Thus far, I have argued that democratic citizenship education in South Africa has not as yet achieved the expected results in public schools as a consequence of the conceptual inadequacies that characterise the DoBE's reports on and manuals for how to implement the discourse. Before one can nurture responsibility and humanity in public schools, one first needs to learn what it means to engage in democratic iterations, that is, learn to listen and talk back in classrooms. Equally so, one has to develop an authoritative voice that does not become subjected to uncritical or blind acceptance of things. And, finally, if one does not learn to respond critically or to cope with the unexpected, it would be quite challenging to begin to act responsibly. Similarly, if one does not learn what it means to forgive and expunge feelings of resentment, as well as to go against the grain (at times) of one's convictions, the possibility that one can show one's humanity would be very unlikely.

On teaching and 'a politics of humanity'

Since the demise of apartheid education, the development of policy in relation to teacher education in South Africa has undergone major adjustments. By far the most poignant conceptual and pragmatic change that teacher education has been subjected to points towards the cultivation of teachers who can enact their professions as democratic citizens. This implies that teachers ought to engender in learners a spirit of democratic citizenry that can imbue in them the virtues of dialogical engagement, connecting caringly with the other, and performing their tasks in a responsible manner – that is, through practices of *ubuntu*. And so it happens that the Norms and Standards for Educators, as enunciated in current policy on teacher education, accentuate the 'roles' of teachers in a post-apartheid dispensation along the lines of such democratic virtues.

In this chapter I do not wish to restate the work about which Pendlebury, Enslin and others have already written extensively, but rather to imagine what Nussbaum's 'politics of humanity' has to offer teacher education in South Africa. I want to explore what it means to be a teacher who does not practise disgust and shame and their implications for humane (*ubuntu*) learning. In this way, I hope to extend the 'calling' of a teacher beyond the confines of democratic citizenship towards an understanding of teacher education that resonates with a 'politics of humanity'. If universities intend to contribute seriously to

hopeful teacher education, their programmes have to be aligned with what it means to cultivate humanity.

Post-apartheid teacher education

More than a decade ago, a central feature of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000) was the seven roles that teachers (educators) were supposed to perform and also the competences that teachers had to display for assessment and qualification purposes. The following seven roles are very similar to those in the Norms and Standards for Educators: (1) learning mediator; (2) interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials; (3) leader, administrator and manager; (4) scholar, researcher and lifelong learner; (5) community, citizenship and pastoral role; (6) assessor; and (7) learning area/subject/discipline/phase specialist. Teachers are expected to perform these roles as part of their contribution to the reconstruction project of South African society (Pendlebury, 1998: 33). Each of the seven roles is constituted by the following three competences: practical competence; foundational competence; and reflexive competence. 'The seven roles and associated competences for educators for schooling provide the *exit level outcomes*. They are in effect the norms for educator development and therefore the central feature of all initial educator qualifications and learning programmes' (Department of Education, 2000: 12). An educator (teacher) is supposed, in the role of *interpreter and designer of learning programmes and materials*, to 'understand and interpret provided learning programmes, design original learning programmes, identify the requirements for a specific context of learning and select and prepare suitable textual and visual resources for learning' (Department of Education, 2000: 13). However, whether teachers were actually equipped to do so remains a question for debate.

Another criticism of the Norms and Standards for Educators (Department of Education, 2000: 10) relates to the expectancy that teachers ought to have been reflective practitioners. This was not always achievable, considering pedagogical practices such as the standard format for examination question papers in many subjects, which fostered the habits of 'teaching to the exam' and rote learning of textbook summaries, lecture notes and model answers (Pendlebury, 1998: 337). The Norms and Standards for Educators have always been silent on how the competences, and the 'flexibility of mind' to apply these competences, should be developed in student teachers and in-service teachers. The latter policy document only states that all 'the competences must be developed in all initial educator qualifications … They may be developed in different ways, with different emphases and at different depths. Providers have the responsibility to decide how this should be achieved …' (Department of Education, 2000: 11). This lack of clear guidelines helped to perpetuate the status quo and hinder the transformation of South African teacher education. These colleges stressed subject facts at the expense of 'principled knowledge and the development of critical discernment and independent judgement'

(Pendlebury, 1998: 337). This situation, in turn, always required that teachers be 're-educated' to become reflective practitioners, because change did not happen automatically. But the notion of a 're-education' is in itself highly contentious and problematic. A 're-education' would necessitate an unlearning not only of what and how teachers had been taught to teach, but also what they had been taught and not taught when they themselves were learners – a near-impossible task, and so the change that teachers were expected to assume an embrace has to a large extent remained unfulfilled and unexplored.

By now it is common knowledge among by far the majority of South African teachers (educators) in schools and universities that the country's institutions ought to be committed to the cultivation of democratic citizens, more specifically teachers and learners who can act as democratic citizens. A democratic citizen embraces the virtues of listening, talking, reaching consensus, disagreement and critical engagement, and simultaneously extends her responsibility towards society. Likewise, a democratic teacher is a critical-reflective practitioner who seeks to cultivate social justice through pedagogical actions (Samuel, 2010: 5). In a recent study, Arends and Phurutse (2009: 43–45) found that 'beginner' teachers in South Africa 'are thrust into classrooms without the necessary support and mentorship'; their (teachers') expanded roles involve 'more administrative duties instead of increased instructional time'; and school managers 'may not be critical and reflective enough about their staff and this poses serious challenges to school improvement initiatives', such as 'schools located in economically depressed areas … (producing) poor results'. However, what is disconcerting about their findings is that 'violence is increasing both inside and outside of schools', making it practically impossible for beginner teachers to cope:

> In South Africa, many learners are also exposed to, or are themselves victims of, physical and sexual abuse, extreme poverty and HIV/AIDS. As a result of HIV/AIDS some young learners become heads of households. It is in such situations that teachers feel inadequate as effective educators, as the classroom and school situation demands more of them than teacher training prepared them for.
>
> (Arends and Phurutse, 2009: 44)

Bearing in mind the aforementioned, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) produced the 'Report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education' in 2010. This report highlights some of the biggest problems facing teacher education in the country: the poor quality of teacher education programmes; the fact that teacher education programmes are not cost-effective; and the fact that policies for the supply, utilisation and development of teachers are driven by the wrong incentives (CHE, 2009: 11). One of the main weaknesses identified in the teacher education programmes relates to the inappropriate blend of theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge and the incapacity of teachers to manage learning in diverse social

and educational contexts (CHE, 2009: 102). And, if initial teacher education programmes do not sufficiently produce teachers who can integrate different forms of knowledge as well as manage diverse learning situations, it seems very unlikely that teachers will be produced who can deal with the challenges faced by teacher education, in particular the issue of violence in and beyond the school. In this chapter I offer an account of Nussbaum's 'politics of humanity' in order to show how teacher education programmes can be remedied as the country's universities endeavour to address the poor quality of teacher education programmes.

What I found unhelpful about the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education is that it does not actually pinpoint the conceptual problems relating to the teacher education offered by South African universities. It is simply not good enough to claim that teacher education programmes lack integration between theoretical, practical and experiential knowledge. It is also very vague to argue that there seems to be a lack of theory in the programme offerings. One can include more theory in teacher education programmes, but if it does not contribute towards reducing violence in and beyond the school environment, then this theory would be of little use. Of course, the actual link between more theory and a reduction in violence has in itself remained unexamined. The argument is that integrating theory into a teacher education programme should effect pragmatic change, such as combating different forms of violence. Neither would an argument for enhancing the relevance of programmes be meaningful if such relevance remained disconnected from producing teachers who are adept at issues of social justice in and beyond the school classroom. It is in this regard that Nussbaum's 'politics of humanity' has much to offer.

Towards a 'politics of humanity'

My reading of Nussbaum's *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame, and the Law* suggests that a 'politics of humanity' is constituted by at least two acts of being human: not to act with disgust and not to bring shame. This is so because both disgust and shame can undermine the quest to be human – that is, to enact *ubuntu*. First, the 'core idea of disgust is that of contamination to the self; the emotion expresses a rejection of a possible contaminant' considered as a pollutant to the human (Nussbaum, 2004: 99). And, to express disgust at someone or something is to suggest that that someone or something deserves one's revulsion or repudiation, because the human self reacts to stimuli that (s)he finds offensive (Nussbaum, 2004: 87). Nussbaum explains disgust as follows:

> My own experience of moralized disgust takes the following form. When my politics proves too gross and vile, I imagine, and sometimes seriously entertain, the thought of moving to Finland, a nation … I imagine … as a land of clear blue lakes and unsullied forests, and, at the same time, as a land of social democratic virtue, unsullied by greed, aggression, and

> corruption. In short, my fantasy is an escape fantasy, having more to do with back-formation from current discontents than with constructive engagement with Finnish society. Anger at US politicians tends in the direction of protest and constructive engagement. Disgust at US politicians leads to escape and disengagement.
>
> (Nussbaum, 2004: 105–106)

The point is that, if one shows disgust, one becomes discontented with and disengaged from others in society – that is, disgust rules out the possibility of 'constructive engagement' because 'its core idea of contamination, basically wants the person out of sight' (Nussbaum, 2004: 106). So, if a person feels disgust at racism, sexism, gender inequality, homophobia and xenophobia, the person considers such acts by people as offensive and revulsive and wants to disengage from such acts. Now a 'politics of humanity' does not entertain the idea of disgust in this sense, as people should not escape the realities of untenable human relations, primarily because escaping such acts would result in further marginalisation and victimisation of those whom one might consider as worthy of rejection and alienation. For instance, showing disgust at bigots would not necessarily resolve the problem of bigotry, because one disengages from something that one is discontented with. However, showing anger at the situation without assisting in remedying the societal ill proves to be far more undignified in the sense that one does not tackle the problem head on. To show disgust at school violence would not address the situation at all. In fact, turning one's back on school violence would merely exacerbate things such as abuse and anger at school; it would be better to engage with the issues that undermine school discipline. Thus, acting without disgust would give one a real chance to remedy an unsatisfactory situation – a matter of embarking on a 'politics of humanity'. A 'politics of humanity' demands that people engage with others as humans, without showing discontent with, disengagement from or revulsion towards situations or people they dislike; doing the latter would lead to more alienation and victimisation of people in society. If teachers do not attend to bullying in schools, bullies would merely be marginalised and excluded, without such unbecoming human behaviour being remedied. In essence, to practise disgust is to hide from humanity, because one excludes oneself from the problems that beset society.

Second, shame is an emotion that responds to society's 'disapproval of the offender', that is, certain groups and individuals are marked off as 'abnormal' – they look different from others, possibly through deformities such as being mentally and physically handicapped, and are socially ostracised and disapproved of (Nussbaum, 2004: 174–175). Put differently, shame is 'potentially linked to denigrating others' (Nussbaum, 2004: 209). For instance, during apartheid South Africa, the 'ideal' race, being white people, was closely connected with the denigration and hatred of black people. Black people were depicted as shameful, that is degraded and humiliated, and consequently denied the franchise. A 'politics of humanity' aims to protects citizens from shame,

because it refuses 'to take part in actively stigmatising … vulnerable people and groups' and is committed to protecting the vulnerable against discrimination (Nussbaum, 2004: 282–290).

Of course, some forms of shame can be positive, for instance shaming a corrupt politician is a way of disapproving of her offence. But to shame a person because her religion, sexuality or disability does not gain society's 'approval' is in fact a constructive form of exclusion of the other, which, of course, can lead to the destruction of the individual. Similarly, to shame a student just because she comes from an economically disadvantaged community is in fact to stigmatise others with the intention of excluding her from the pedagogical process. This brings me to a discussion of what it means to be a teacher who does not practise disgust and shame.

A teacher who hides from disgust and shame

I want to articulate my argument as follows: a teacher who engages others and does not stigmatise them will create opportunities to engage learners. Now, after a cursory glance at the Department of Education's (2011) 'Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications', in particular the basic competences of a 'beginner' teacher, the following competences for newly qualified teachers are identified: a sound subject knowledge; knowledge of how to teach subjects; knowing their learners and how they learn; knowing how to communicate effectively; possession of highly developed literacy, numeracy and information technology skills; being knowledgeable about the school curriculum; understanding diversity; being able to manage classrooms; being capable of assessing learners reliably; having a positive work ethic and displaying appropriate values; and being able to reflect critically with their professional community (Department of Education, 2011: 56). My interest is in the 'beginner' teacher's competence to 'display appropriate values'. And, taking into account that some 'beginner' teachers' weaknesses include the application of poor teaching methodology and planning, a lack of experience, an inability to control large classes, a preoccupation with rights and labour issues, and laziness (Arends and Phurutse, 2009: 34), it seems highly unlikely that the 'appropriate values' referred to by the Department of Education relate to the broader issues of undermining disgust and shame. In this section I want to show how repudiating disgust and shame can offer possibilities for 'beginner' teachers to exhibit 'appropriate values' and, at the same time, to address some of the weaknesses mentioned earlier.

First, a teacher only gains experience through teaching, which implies that such a teacher ought to repudiate ills such as laziness, bad planning and inadequate teaching methodologies. What follows from this is that, unlike disgust, which disconnects one from others, and shame, which stigmatises one, a 'politics of humanity' requires that teachers become active and engaged beings. By doing so, they acquire experience in choosing appropriate teaching methodologies and constructively planning their teaching. By moving away from

disgust and shame, a teacher actually commits herself to others – that is, to colleagues, learners, as well as the communities represented by the learners, and invariably improves on her teaching approaches and planning of lessons. Likewise, a teacher who resents shame also isolates herself from activities that can be shameful, such as not planning her lessons, not selecting appropriate teaching methodologies, not marking learners' tasks, not giving feedback to learners on tests, and not doing practical work. The aforementioned shameful acts will always disconnect teachers from learners, and staying away from what is shameful is in fact to enact one's humanity.

Second, some teachers who hope to address their inability to cope with for instance, large classes become intent on including learners in pedagogical activities without shaming them, that is, without stigmatising learners for at times achieving inadequate performances and perhaps test scores – instead learners are encouraged, motivated and supported to do well. What follows is that trust will be developed among teachers and learners, which can contribute towards more favourable pedagogical moments. By not being shown disgust for performances that at times are weak, the learners do not experience humiliation and undignified pedagogical moments, which augurs well for learning and, eventually, for teachers' 'control' and management of large classes. In fact, the issue of learner indiscipline would also be minimised, since disruption and rowdiness often happen as a consequence of learners' exclusion, albeit voluntary, from pedagogical activities.

Third, the claim that 'beginner' teachers are more concerned with rights and labour issues is perhaps not as debilitating as it at first might seem. For 'beginner' teachers to be concerned about rights and obligations would be apposite to treating learners and colleagues with dignity and respect. They, together with the learners, can become co-participants in teaching and learning processes, which would involve the one not showing anger and resentment towards the other and, in turn, both parties would not embarrass and humiliate each other's performance in the school. In a way, both teachers' and learners' professionalism would be enhanced if they shied away from treating one another with disgust and shame. Showing disgust towards a learner will invariably exclude her from learning (e.g. by dismissing learners from classrooms), and shaming learners, such as by insulting and humiliating them in front of their peers, would undermine their confidence and also their enthusiasm for learning. In addition, teachers act together with learners to the extent that they (the teachers) should expect to learn with and from them (the learners), and they (the teachers) should feel less threatened by occasions in which they sometimes need to admit that they do not know or understand everything. In this way, teaching itself is a form of learning anew with others (learners), where the teacher acts as listener, questioner, instructor, guide, and responsible and caring leader – the teacher shows a sense of moral maturity and refinement. Only then will learners not be hesitant to make mistakes or to offer reasons that might at times appear muddled or confusing. Teachers, through their actions, accept as conditional that classroom practices are meant to explore and construct, and

make allowance for erring. In this regard I agree with Burbules (1997: 73), who makes the point that our attitudes as teachers should include acceptance as a condition of exploration and discovery, that is, the occasional state of being lost, confused and unsettled. When teachers do not align themselves with such attitudes, the possibility of disrespecting and therefore shaming learners would be highly likely, because shame in the first place would find making mistakes quite reprehensible. Likewise, when learners and teachers disconnect themselves from disgust, constructive interaction among them becomes likely and the possibility for disagreement becomes quite acceptable, because the learners are not prevented from exercising critical reflection and imagination regarding pedagogical matters.

Fourth, laziness, such as teachers arriving late or leaving school early, as well as regular absenteeism, would only undermine the pedagogical process. Of course we have to show disgust at teachers who do not fulfil their obligations towards the school community, in particular towards the learners. But overextending our disgust towards them would further alienate some teachers, and perhaps their malpractices might worsen. Similarly, shaming learners might be necessary at times, such as when they play truant, but the shaming should not be extravagant, otherwise the learners will become too disillusioned and give up on their schooling. Here I am thinking specifically of some authoritarian principals who might treat learners too harshly for misdemeanours that perhaps are not too serious. For instance, meting out the same disciplinary measures to a learner who plays truant, and to a learner who is peddling drugs. And, if teachers can find ways to include learners and make them feel that they belong, and that they (the teachers) are acting in their 'best' interests, it would be far removed from shaming and treating them (learners) with disgust.

Fifth, resenting disgust and shame could go some way to dealing with violence in and beyond some schools. I am thinking specifically of schools in some of our poor communities that are being marred by gangsterism and drug abuse. Often, we find that gangsters roam the school premises, intimidating learners and even insulting teachers, and this often has violent and occasionally catastrophic consequences – for instance, a learner being stabbed or violently assaulted in the school playground. What the 'politics of humanity' demands is for us not to react violently towards aggressors, for that would lead to further recriminations and even revenge attacks (as is often the case). The offender should be engaged, even if at times it means curbing one's hatred and dissatisfaction with him or her. So, trying to avoid disgust and shame would go some way to addressing violence in schools, because at least one would be prepared to engage the other.

Towards an extension of democratic citizenship education

Thus far I have argued that teacher education which encourages the teaching and learning of values that are incommensurate with disgust and shame could address some of the competences required by 'beginner' teachers in

the new South Africa, and simultaneously assist them to minimise and curb their pedagogical weaknesses. However, such a 'politics of humanity' would be incomplete if not lived in conjunction with a radicalised democratic citizenship education agenda. Perhaps it is in this area of democratic citizenship education that the newly promulgated minimum competences for 'beginner' teachers fall short – an issue I hope to address in the final part of this chapter. The 'beginner' teacher is supposed to be critical, yet the policy does not pay adequate attention to this competence. Let me elaborate on how democratic citizenship education can contribute towards enhancing the critical competence of a 'beginner' teacher and, in turn, show how a 'politics of humanity' can be extended.

The policy on teacher competence is fairly vague when it suggests that teachers should be critical. Considering the expectations and demands of our new democracy, teaching teachers to be democratic citizens can contribute towards building a post-apartheid society. Why? In the first place, teachers would be initiated into discourses of deliberation and iteration – that is they will be taught to listen to others, dispute with others and offer points of view that will enable others to adjust their points of view, and ultimately, engage with the other from the perspective of the other. In this way, they will learn what it means to be critical. Moreover, to be initiated into a discourse of democratic citizenship implies that teachers will be taught what it means to connect with others (learners) hospitably, and thus create more opportunities in pedagogical activities for learners to take more risks and to do the unexpected. In this regard, Galston (1991: 221–224) aptly posits that democratic citizenship education is constituted by four types of civic virtues: (i) general virtues: courage, law-abidingness and loyalty; (ii) social virtues: independence and open-mindedness; (iii) economic virtues: work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change; and (iv) political virtues: capacity to discern and respect the rights of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse. 'Beginner' teachers are indeed in need of many of these virtues, particularly the ability and willingness to question pedagogical authority, and to engage in public discourse about matters of teaching and teacher education policy, since they are precisely the goods necessary to enact deliberation. It is for this reason that Kymlicka (2002: 293) cogently claims that a deliberative model of citizenship requires that people (teachers) act with a profound sense of deliberation:

> Democratic citizens [including teachers] must be not only active and participatory, critical of authority, and non-dogmatic, but also committed to seek mutual understanding through deliberation rather than exclusively seeking personal benefit through bargaining and threats. Without citizens [and teachers] who display these virtues, liberal democracy cannot fulfil its promise of justice, and may indeed slowly succumb to undemocratic or illiberal forces.

The upshot of this is that democratic citizenship education will engender opportunities for engagement with the other – a matter of becoming critical. Now considering that a 'politics of humanity' creates possibilities for teachers to engage with others and to connect with them, and that democratic citizenship education frames the nature of teachers' deliberations with colleagues and learners, then the hospitable relations that might emanate would invariably be non-hostile, non-aggressive, non-humiliating, and non-embarrassing. Only then would the teaching profession be contributing worthily to the cultivation of humaneness – an aspect that would enhance the critical competence of 'beginner' teachers.

I started off this section on teacher education with a suggestion that hopeful teacher education in South Africa can be engendered through a 'politics of humanity', and that such a 'politics of humanity' would extend the deliberative discourses offered to democratic citizenship education. Whereas a democratic citizenship education discourse can cultivate competent teachers who can engender a critical spirit in and through pedagogical activities, a 'politics of humanity' can frame such teacher competences along the lines of what it means to be human (*ubuntu*) – that is, initiating teachers into practices that entail a resentment of disgust and shame. Such teacher education practices would then be more hopeful in the transformation of education.

Notes

1 For further information on the Values in Education programmes it would be useful to consult the following website: http://www.education.gov.za.
2 Again, from the following website: http://www.education.gov.za.

6 On education and human rights in Africa

Restating the claims of cosmopolitan justice

Introduction

To begin with, human rights, following the seminal thoughts of Nickel (2007: 7), 'aspires to formulate and enforce international norms that will prevent governments from doing horrible things to their people and thereby promote international peace and security'. In the first instance, human rights are aimed at preventing specific problems initiated by governments, such as detention without trial, quelling political dissent, and discrimination on the basis of the Universal Declaration recognises that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (Nickel, 2007: 7). Second, human rights are universal and relevant to every living individual, unhampered by characteristics such as race, sex, religion, social position and nationality. According to the Universal Declaration, human rights are embedded in the dignity and worth of human beings and in the requirements of international peace and security (Nickel, 2007: 10).[1]

Today, human rights are more egalitarian, less individualistic and more internationally oriented than eighteenth-century rights in the following ways: first, equality before the law involves ensuring the protection of people against discrimination, procuring equality for women in all areas of life, making sure that political dissenters have rights to a fair trial and freedoms from arbitrary arrest, torture and cruel punishments, restraining government from perpetrating socio-economic abuses such as poverty, disproportionate illiteracy among women and girls, and affording people a lack of economic opportunities, social security and education; second, rights are considered to be less individualistic to ensure the protection of women, minorities and indigenous people against genocide; and third, international inquiries and interventions are considered as justifiable to prevent large-scale violations of human rights (Nickel, 2007: 12–13). Despite the fact that Africa has a human rights system in place, produced by the African Union (AU) in 1981 and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, established in 1986, Africa has been confronted with enormous human rights problems, exacerbated by the reluctance of several sovereign nation states to cooperate about human rights violations. One of the reasons I think a human rights agenda has not been implemented successfully

on the African continent is because several African leaders have scant regard for the imposition of legal sanctions (as has been the case in Zimbabwe under the leadership of Robert Mugabe) and that encouragement, consciousness raising, persuasion and even shaming have not actually worked. For many, the human rights system on the African continent seems to remain ineffectual and hypocritical, as it rarely coerces recalcitrant violators to change their practices (Nickel, 2007: 20). For instance, the South African government's diplomacy towards Zimbabwe has proven to be disastrous, considering the ever-present situation of political recriminations being perpetrated against the opposition on the part of the dominant ZANU-PF[2] party spearheaded by Mugabe.

Without listing the human rights abuses that continue to plague the African continent, suffice to say that Human Rights Watch has shown that, while many postcolonial African regimes have established Human Rights Commissions in order to secure donor support, these are largely ineffective and turn a blind eye to rights abuses (Mohan and Holland, 2001: 194). In this regard, An-Na'im (1999: 22) is adamant that 'African societies appear to regard the post-colonial state with profound mistrust and have no sense of ownership of it nor expectation of protection or service from it'. In other words, the state is concurrently considered as the perpetrator of human rights abuses and the institution through which grievances should be resolved. In most cases, the African state remains a significant generator of human rights abuses, as well as holding the key to people's security and protection (Mohan and Holland, 2001: 194). However, quite paradoxically, whereas the African state has mainly been considered as the legal protector of human rights that are said to belong to the public or civil domain, human rights abuses that fall outside of the state's purview and authority in the private realm are not considered the state's responsibility to enforce. And, as Mohan and Holland (2001: 195) argue, the private realm (dominated by patriarchal men) has consistently been the site of some of the worst human rights abuses, in particular gender discrimination, where 'clearly, domestic violence against women and the abuse of children are the most significant'. As acknowledged by Murray (2000), the protection of human rights on the African continent has been somewhat mixed. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall focus on at least three anomalies that have contributed to the lack of protection of human rights on the continent.

On human rights abuses on the African continent: a theoretical view

Although many important strides have been made in this regard, to some extent African countries do not respect constitutionalism. Instead, they often fail to promote economic, social and cultural rights and, more importantly, have a range of means to suspend the constitution. Some of these are legal, such as during states of emergency, while others are less obvious and range from the prejudiced selection of judges through to outright intimidation (Mohan and Holland, 2001: 189). For instance, the Nigerian state flagrantly abused human

rights through the suspension of the constitution during the Abacha regime, supressing Shari'a law, and stigmatising and threatening lawyers and judges (Mohan and Holland, 2001: 192). Only recently, South Africa's Jacob Zuma, by telling chiefs not to buy into the legal practices of the white man, and to solve African problems the African way, tacitly endorsed the controversial Traditional Courts Bill – controversial because it will have the effect of oppressing millions of rural women; women already existing on the fringes of society. The problem associated with human rights abuse is underscored by a dichotomous relationship between political rights, and social, economic and cultural rights. That is, the African state insists that people contribute towards building a democracy (albeit through limiting their political rights), yet the state simultaneously under-emphasises the importance of alleviating extreme poverty, marginalisation and under-development, as noted by Shivji (1999: 260) – a matter of restricting people's social, cultural and economic rights. The point is, human rights abuses flourish as a result of states dichotomising between the political rights of people, and their social, cultural and economic rights. Hence, there is a clear separation between the 'economic' and the 'political', which allows states and agencies to focus on one or the other, despite the supposed 'indivisibility' of rights. As stated by Sengupta:

> the human rights discourse has privileged the political over the economic with some going further to suggest that this is because the recognition of political freedoms is relatively costless compared to economic rights which promise tangible material inputs such as housing and health care.
>
> (Cited in Mohan and Holland, 2001: 188)

Without being too facetious, the human rights discourse on the African continent seems to be determined by the promise that the democratic election of the dominant party will ensure housing and employment for the masses – a situation that is usually not the case, as can be witnessed in several countries in Africa that have undergone postcolonial political change, yet struggle with meeting peoples' social and economic expectations in the form of employment opportunities, adequate housing and health care.

A second problem with the human rights discourse in Africa relates to the recognition of customary law within the formal legal system. Despite claiming to recognise Africa's uniqueness and diversity, and hence the legitimacy of its customary legal practices, these often conflict with 'universal' principles or are simply not taken seriously by constitutional lawyers (in part because they are not codified) (Mohan and Holland, 2001: 184). In African countries, citizenship is increasingly becoming equated with suppression and exclusionary practices, often resulting in treating African cultural difference as lacking any relevance for Eurocentric, 'universal' values (Penna and Campbell, 1998: 9). Consequently, unscrupulous African regimes and/or people used traditional customary practices to resist external scrutiny and persist with inhumane behaviour. In Africa, this tension has been brought to the fore over such matters as

female genital mutilation, and the relationship between customary law and common law, where the latter usually prevails (Murray, 2000).

It seems as if international organisations that support the promotion of human rights on the ground, such as the African Commission, are elitist, lack clear reporting structures and have unclear authority to enforce decisions or condemn violations of human rights (Murray, 2000). Similarly, many of the international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that have been major supporters of human rights causes, operate in elitist ways (for example, organising urban-based workshops for lawyers) and tend to impose, through funding conditionality, their own agendas on local NGOs. Now, if human rights violations are clearly identified by international human rights NGOs, and the latter lack the authority to enforce decisions and condemn violations, it does not augur well for the prevention of human rights abuses on the continent.

What follows from the aforementioned is that human rights abuses on the African continent will continue to be perpetrated with impunity, as several of the postcolonial regimes are still considered by their peoples as the powers that have liberated them from oppression and exclusion at the hands of the colonisers. The majority of Africans are eternally indebted to the previous 'liberation fighters' who now rule them (people), because the latter have been emancipated from inhumane suffering, indignity and humiliation at the hands of repressive colonial powers. After assuming political leadership, Idi Amin (Uganda), Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe) and Theodore Obiang Mbasogo (Equatorial Guinea) have used unlawful killings by security forces, government-sanctioned kidnappings, systematic torture of prisoners and detainees by security forces, life-threatening conditions in prisons and detention facilities, arbitrary arrest, and detention, including incommunicado detention, to consolidate their political powers and have even made people believe they were politically 'free', but have shown scant regard for socio-economic and even cultural development, as is evident from the precarious living conditions under which many Africans continue to suffer. Such autocrats used their political authority and state powers to initiate human atrocities against both those who supported the liberation struggle, and those whom they had to remove from power. And all this was possible because political freedom was privileged and regarded as separate from socio-economic freedom – a dichotomous view of freedom that certainly has accelerated human rights abuses on the African continent.

Moreover, a lack of integration between the common law and customary practices of people often resulted in political regimes bringing these dichotomous ways of rule into serious conflict. On the one hand, to avoid accountability to universal values of respect for the other (as this has obviously not been the case in several postcolonial countries), autocratic regimes misused customary practices and brought them into conflict with other ('universal') ways of doing, not only to keep integration at bay, but also to assume the moral ground on their part to continue with an abuse of cultural traditions that can cause further humiliation and suffering to many people. The continuation, for

example, of female genital mutilation, is nothing more than showing support for indigenous customs at the expense of having to be held accountable by the 'universal' values of showing dignity and respect for women. In this way, such regimes can equally dismiss 'imperial' intervention in all other 'customary' matters by 'modern' external forces, even though it means doing continuous harm to people. I cannot imagine that 'medicine murder',[3] for instance, is continued and legally allowed, or that public 'necklace' hangings[4] continue, just because some African regimes want to avoid 'modernisation' and to keep the 'West' from interfering with internal African political matters. The point is, customary practices seem to be abused not only to perpetrate human rights violations, as is the cases with female genital mutilation and 'medicine murders', but also to continuously bring the continent into conflict with its previous colonial powers – a situation that also resulted in further 'human rights abuses', as is evident in Zimbabwe with the Mugabe regime's confiscation of white farmers' properties. Using customary rights to reclaim lands and expel people in a violent and uncompromising way has certainly contributed further to human rights violations on the continent.

At the time of writing this chapter, I browsed through the website of the Human Rights Watch in Africa and found the most staggering information about human rights abuses that have been reported but gone unheeded: for decades, police in Kenya have failed to investigate politicians who may be implicated in serious crimes against humanity;[5] the long government inaction in Uganda on the killings of people when, in September 2009, police used lethal force, without clear justification, in the face of people's protests;[6] and reports of rebels in the Democratic Republic of the Congo having committed war crimes, summary executions, rapes and forced recruitments of boys into the rebel M23 army.[7]

Now, if human rights abuses are reported by Human Rights Watch in Africa – one of the world's leading independent organisations dedicated to defending and protecting human rights – then there is little chance that perpetrators of human rights abuses would not be held accountable for their crimes. And, if Human Rights Watch has worked tenaciously for more than 30 years to lay the legal and moral groundwork for deep-rooted change and to bring greater justice and security to people around the world, it seems very unlikely that any meaningful change would actually occur in preventing, minimising and eradicating human rights violations in Africa. Based on the aforementioned considerations, I shall now focus on a discussion of cosmopolitan justice vis-à-vis education to find a way in which the problem about current discourses on human rights can be addressed.

In defence of cosmopolitan justice

In my exposition of *ubuntu* as education in the previous chapter, I already referred to the seminal works of Martha Nussbaum, Seyla Benhabib, Jacques Derrida and Stanley Cavell for the reason that their ideas on cultivating

humanity, engaging in democratic iterations, and acknowledging one's responsibility and humanity towards the other and the other's difference respectively, would contribute to enlarging our moral imaginations in the quest to consolidate and extend a sense of democratic citizenship in and through pedagogical practices, in particular learning and teaching. To my mind, recognising our humanity towards others, engaging them hospitably, and enacting our responsibility towards them in their difference, are actions of a cosmopolitan kind that can go far in addressing the human rights injustices people encounter on the African continent. In this section I want to explore this notion of cosmopolitan justice in further detail, with reference to the ideas of Judith Butler[8] and Kwame Anthony Appiah[9] in order to come up with a more plausible conception that would contribute towards tackling the human rights abuses that have become endemic to African society.

First, Judith Butler, like all feminist cosmopolitans such as Nussbaum and Benhabib, among others, articulates a notion of cosmopolitan justice that revolves around the recognition of humanity, respect for human rights as experienced by all communities of difference, and the enactment of responsibility towards all humans. Butler's most significant contribution to cosmopolitan justice involves an understanding of recognising the other as a way of expressing and living our humanity. This is evident in her books, *Undoing Gender*, *Precarious Life* and *Frames of War* – all cosmopolitan projects that seek to uncover what it means to be human. For Butler (2004a: 22), cosmopolitan justice is about establishing recognisable relationships with others through political community (interdependent relationships) and ethical responsibility on the one hand, and through recognising that human interdependent relations are nurtured on the basis of understanding one another's encounter with grief on the other hand. Thus, for her, when one experiences and recognises one another's grief or loss, not only are relationships intertwined but also directed to an acknowledgement of what it means to be and act humanely (Butler, 2004a: 23). In other words, if people fail to recognise one another's difficult lived experiences, they remain unknowable to others in ways that might enhance the potential for human rights violations such as discrimination, oppression and marginalisation, and violence. That is, if they do not know one another's sense of grief and loss, the possibility that abuses might be perpetrated without any opposition could be enhanced. Her compelling notion of the 'recognisability' of others and their differences is connected to the idea of 'grievability', such as that others like oneself can experience loss, trepidation and difficulty that deserve one's acknowledgement. And, through the recognition of a shared sense of grief that all humans experience or might experience, not only will our understanding of what it means to be human be expanded, but our responsibility towards others as interdependent members of a global community will be enacted.

Butler's emphasis on recognising others in an interdependent global community and experiencing them with their difference and grief is at the heart of cosmopolitan justice. A lack of recognising others for who they are and what they encounter should be given due acknowledgement, as failing to do

so might undo people's interrelatedness. For instance, Africans who suffer persecution and expulsion should be recognised by all others (wherever they might live) as people who face inhumane and grotesque treatment. Comparing Africans' plight with the distress suffered by other persons everywhere else in the world is tantamount to trivialising the suffering they encounter as humans and, hence, might result in their situation being regarded as less urgent or important to address. We often hear that Africans are not alone in suffering heinous crimes and that atrocities are also committed in other parts of the world – as if the perpetration of such acts is more relevant and in need of being combatted first. As noted by Butler (2004b: 131–132), to recognise others in their otherness and difference is to become 'engaged when subject and Other understand themselves to be reflected in one another, but where this reflection does not result in a collapse of one into the Other'. Put differently, through our shared experience of loss, the other's loss should not become less important to address. Yet the potential for this to happen is rife when one collapses one's experiences into those of the other (Butler, 2004b: 132). Likewise, she attributes large-scale prosecution, such as what happened in Nazi Germany and the genocide of Tutsis by Hutus, to the problem of not thinking of recognisability in terms of community. In her words:

> if we claim that recognizability is a universal potential and that it belongs to all persons as persons [in political community], then, in a way the problem before us is already solved. We have decided that some particular notion of 'personhood' will determine the scope and meaning of recognisability.
> (Butler, 2009: 5)

Butler intertwines her elucidation of 'recognisability' and 'grievability' with an exposition of the dilemmas of life itself. She avers the following: 'To say that life is precarious is to say that the possibility of being sustained relies fundamentally on social and political conditions, and not only on a postulated internal drive to live' (Butler, 2009: 21). And, following Butler, it is the social and political conditions in Africa that will have to change in order for cosmopolitan justice to happen – that is, to recognise our human interrelationship as a global community of difference, and to recognise that the experience of grief has a real chance of being minimised and even eradicated if recognition is given to the difference of encounters with grief that exist everywhere and that demand a universal yet particular response. Butler (2009: 5) urges that contextualisation be taken seriously when she states: 'If we ask how recognizability is constituted, we have through the very question taken up a perspective suggesting that these fields are variably and historically constituted'. Butler's view of cosmopolitan justice will not only contribute towards the political hardships, turmoil and human rights abuse of Africans (who are often unseen) being heard, but also to them actually receiving the recognition they deserve for their struggles. That is, for Africans to hear about belonging to a global community yet they continue to experience exclusion. In the words of Butler

(2009: 21), human rights abuses, as texts of the 'liveable' experiences of many Africans, require 'support and enabling conditions'.

Second, cosmopolitan justice, as framed in the seminal thoughts of Kwame Appiah (2006), relates to his book *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers*, wherein he argues for a position of *kosmopolites* as a human community constituted by habits of coexistence, of 'living together' in conversation (Appiah, 2006: xix). Through association, he posits, humans can combat privileged views about the 'thoroughgoing ignorance about the ways of others' (Appiah, 2006: xvii). Following Appiah, cosmopolitan justice can be regarded as a cross-cultural conversation that can avoid colonising and exclusionary tendencies that have plagued (African) society for too long. What interests me about Appiah's notion of living together without being ignorant of the ways of others is his emphasis on others. In my view, these others cannot exclude those who perpetrate acts of violence, from whom people therefore should not be disconnected, but rather engaged in a conversation about what counts as values for a just and humane living. The point is that even those whom you might resent because of atrocities perpetrated against you should not be alienated from such a conversation, otherwise we might not find constructive ways to end violent human rights abuses against people in African society, for example. I concur with Appiah (2006: 78) when he states that, when we acknowledge and describe difference we do so in conversations that will enable us to 'get used to one another', and hence approach differing and conflicting values without fear or hatred. One of the problems with the human rights discourse in Africa is exactly the unwillingness of those who often are the 'victims' of violations to engage with the 'perpetrators', who are often regarded as unworthy of recognition and engagement. If a blind eye is turned to the recognition of the perpetrator of human rights abuses, there might be little opportunity for the violence to subside or even dissipate. In order to enlarge our perspectives in combating human rights violations is for the victims and perpetrators to engage with one another about the problem at hand. Therefore, I agree with Appiah (2006: 30) when he states that opening up the texts of our lives (even if contradictory, I would argue) will undoubtedly 'reveal to us values we had not previously recognised or undermine our commitment to values that we had settled into'. Certainly, for those perpetrators of genocide and war crimes on the African continent, undermining values of human rights abuses they have 'settled into' would then become just an opportunity for cosmopolitan justice to enter its initial stages (without of course discounting that the course of law has to be implemented). If forgiveness does not follow a course of finding out the facts about say a genocide, then it might perhaps reduce the legitimate suffering or consequences of the 'victims'. Hence, in South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission served as that institution that set out to ascertain what transpired during apartheid crimes. Yet the point is that, 'if we cannot learn from one another what is right to think and feel and do, then conversation between us will be pointless. Relativism of this sort isn't a way to encourage conversation; it's just a reason to fall silent' (Appiah, 2006: 31).

Likewise, Appiah raises the issue of going beyond mere talking of truth to urging people to find ways to implement values worth living by. Surely one does not have to remind others that human rights abuses are not worth living by. But this is also the problem. Perpetrators of human rights violations in fact embark on such actions, otherwise these actions would not exist. Appiah (2006: 144) reminds us that attempts to initiate cosmopolitan justice cannot happen without recourse to fallibilism – that is, the sense that our knowledge and imperfections of what constitute human life are provisional and can be revised in the context of new evidences. As far as cosmopolitan justice is concerned, addressing problems relating to human rights abuses cannot rely only on the imposition of existing truths about what lives worth living entail. So, in a fallibilist way (through trail and error), those who engage in conversations about the demerits of human rights abuses invariably search for new ways to eradicate the societal ills that have had catastrophic ramifications for life in general in several parts of the African continent, as mentioned previously. The point is, they might just come up with answers never thought of before. In the quest to find solutions for Africa's human rights, engaging with difference, as Appiah (2006: xv) reminds us of doing, will open doors to 'take seriously the value of not just human life, but particular human lives [albeit instigated by violence], which means taking an interest in the practices and beliefs that lend them significance' – that is, the 'significance' of reasons for human rights abuses. Perhaps we might just find a solution to Africa's problems by being afforded and opportunity to do the unexpected and to deal with the unexpected through fallibilism. This brings me to a discussion of how some of the ideas associated with cosmopolitan justice can be harnessed through education, with reference to a metaphor of cosmopolitan justice espoused below.

Cosmopolitan justice and education: learning to do the unexpected

While reading Mark Rowlands's (2008) engrossing, thoughtful and moving book, *The Philosopher and the Wolf: Lessons from the Wild on Love, Death and Happiness*, I became enthralled by the author's deep reflections on what it means to be human. This moving account of a life he lived with an adopted wolf foregrounds his philosophical views on cosmopolitan justice, which prompts one to rethink one's moral responsibilities towards others. In this section, I shall use Rowlands's ideas on what constitutes cosmopolitan justice in relation to my understanding of how education should react to the discourse. I consider metaphorically the relationship between Rowlands and his wolf in order to show how cosmopolitan justice can be linked to education. I now introduce a metaphor for cosmopolitan justice, based on a relationship between Rowlands and his wolf, which would help in improving education. Rowlands offers a moving, profound and vivid memoir of his relationship with Brenin, a wolf, that lasted for 11 years until her death from cancer. He recounts the story of his relationship with this wolf that he cared for greatly. Brenin

showed through her actions what Rowlands considered to be apposite for him to enhance his humanity. This implies that Rowlands's sense of humanity (that is, cosmopolitan justice) was enhanced by his observations of Brenin. To begin with, Rowlands depicts the wolf as one that will 'quickly forgive …', as has been evidenced by Brenin's playfulness with a pit-bull terrier named Rugger (Rowlands, 2008: 78). To him, the wolf does not bear malice and never acts mercilessly, which makes the wolf quite sensitive to the possibility of conciliation and the need for justice (Rowlands, 2008: 79–80). This observance of Brenin's 'playfulness' provides a powerful metaphor to illustrate that one should not act inhumanely. If people viciously and indiscriminately attack others – such as what one witnesses in the human rights abuses in Africa – the more insensitive others become towards the possibility of forgiveness. The possibility of reconciliation among different people would be thwarted if some people are tormented, insulted, terrorised and brutally killed just for being human. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa came up with several suggestions with regard to reconciliation only being possible if both perpetrators and victims of atrocities are willing to start afresh – that is, both give up their feelings of anger and resentment. But then, if conciliation were to be a condition that a community ought to aspire to attain, then hatred and revulsion would not become the order of the day. This is more easily said than done. How does one forgive the person who kills the other just because (s)he lives her life differently? How can one expect the victims of aggression, violence and abuse to simply forgive if their fellow members have been reviled, humiliated, tortured, maimed and even killed? Yet, if one truly cares about the good of society and the need for people to coexist, there is no other option but to start anew – that is, forgive. Perhaps this is why some African tribal communities cannot tolerate one another. Of course one cannot just forgive without the other's willingness to do likewise. After all, hatred for the other is in any case a human cultural fabrication that might have been instigated by underlying fears and distrust towards difference, urging in people a desire to annihilate the other, which hopefully will restore their feelings of superiority over those whom they persecute and murder (Semelin, 2007: 16–17). Justice cannot be attained if the possibility of tolerance[10] is not cultivated and people's different, contending views are not duly recognised – that is, peoples' right to be different. Here, I agree with Rowlands 'that most of the evil produced by humans is not the result of malicious intentions but of the unwillingness to do one's moral and epistemic duty' (Rowlands, 2008: 101). Thus, the unwillingness to engage the other, with her contending views, would make the possibility of conciliation among different people very unlikely. This holds equally for victims and perpetrators of human rights abuses.

My second argument in defence of cosmopolitan justice is one that relates to performing both a moral and epistemic duty. A moral duty is one that involves protecting those who are defenceless against those who deem them inferior (Rowlands, 2008: 98). Rowlands recounts the story of Brenin, who was lightly electrocuted when a shock passed through Rowland's

arm to Brenin when he (Rowlands) touched an electric fence. This caused Brenin to run off for a couple of miles before she stopped. When he eventually found Brenin she had the look in her eyes of having experienced severe pain and suffering without being protected by someone. Similarly, Brenin would always treat dogs that were demonstrably weaker than her 'either with indifference or with a peculiar sort of kindness' (Rowlands, 2008: 103). Metaphorically speaking, it seems that the wolf (Brenin) never took delight and pleasure in pain or suffering inflicted on her or others. Several African regimes' failure to protect defenceless victims of human rights abuses brings into question their willingness to do their moral duty. If by moral duty is meant that we protect the helpless and we do not do so, it follows from this that we have not necessarily performed our moral duty. Failing to exercise epistemic duty, that is 'the duty to subject one's beliefs to the appropriate amount of critical scrutiny: to examine whether they are warranted by the available evidence and to at least attempt to ascertain whether there exists any countervailing evidence' (Rowlands, 2008: 98), is quite relevant to those who perpetrate human rights violations in Africa. Metaphorically speaking,[11] many of the Kenyan police mentioned before failed to empathise with those killed, unlike Brenin, who was reluctant to attack a Labrador due to having judged that she might be superior in the fight. Instead, the Kenyan police also demonstrated their unwillingness to subject their attitudes about people to the required scrutiny. If the perpetrators of human rights abuses can act so violently towards others, one has to begin to question how their own convictions stimulate them to act in such an evil (indecent, disrespectful and undignified) way towards others. Performing one's epistemic duty requires that one acquires sufficient evidence and arguments with the possibility to inform, alter or extend one's views. And, if such critical scrutiny is performed, then at least the possibility is there to share our evidences in an open, willing, deliberative and dignified manner. Such an approach to exercising our epistemic and moral duty is far more favourable for the good of society than violence, which in many instances gets us nowhere. Violence merely causes more antagonism, hatred and indifference among people, making it highly unlikely for them to reconcile.

My third argument for cosmopolitan justice involves the love (*philia*) that Rowlands had for Brenin, whom he considered as a member of his 'pack'. Rowlands recounts the time he had to care for Brenin on hearing that the wolf had cancer and was about to die. His caring involved cleaning Brenin's 'smelly, suppurating, disease-ridden arse every two hours for well over a month' (Rowlands, 2008: 181). Much of the time Rowlands did not want to attend to Brenin, but he was driven to do so, mostly by his love for the wolf. According to Rowlands, 'even though you desperately don't want to do it, even though it horrifies and sickens you …', attending to the ill-fated Brenin was his biggest priority at the time (Rowlands, 2008: 183).

Again, metaphorically speaking, this notion of love for Brenin brings to the fore an important dimension of justice: one does something for their group ('pack'), even though it might horrify them. It most likely would horrify (distress) those who are victims of human rights abuses to engage their perpetrators, because the latter's hegemony usually causes them to oppress victims. But if they are really human (and they are), then the perpetrators of human rights abuses should at least have concern for their fellow human beings.

Thus, cosmopolitan justice based on a metaphorical interpretation of Rowlands's relationship with the wolf Brenin involves at least three things: to learn to forgive; to protect those who are helpless, both morally and epistemically; and to do the unexpected, even though it goes against the grain of one's beliefs or actions. If such a notion of cosmopolitan justice were to permeate the practices of perpetrators and victims of human rights abuses, tolerance among them would perhaps be more realisable than one could imagine. Why? Learning to forgive will engender opportunities for people to begin anew – they might not want to cast blame because, in most cases, blame hinders rather than advances engagement. This person would then want to explain herself through reasons I might not find acceptable or agree with. And, instead of moving on both parties will be curbed by an encounter that might even lead them to discontinue their engagement. I am not suggesting that people should not listen to the explanations of others. However, if justifications persist on the basis of blaming someone for acts perpetrated against me, I also remind him of such acts that might rule out the possibility of some re-beginning. In a way, people become more tolerant because they are willing to listen to others. Also, developing a sense of justice towards the helpless would curtail aggression towards them, which would also escalate levels of tolerance among people who might be deeply resentful of one another. Tolerance would then also gain momentum if people became more willing to do things they otherwise might not have been willing to do. Tolerance in itself demands that people contend with the intolerable. If I do not tolerate an attack on my freedom, which I might find intolerable, I might resort to other intolerable acts such as antagonistically (and paradoxically) defending my liberty.

Now, how can the aforementioned notion of cosmopolitan justice be realised in educational settings? First, if students are initiated into deliberations on what it means to engage with one another, they should be taught not only what it means to be deliberative and compassionate, but also what it means to be exposed to a notion of justice that introduces them to meanings of forgiving, even if such practices are perceived as being 'improbable' to achieve. I specifically think of some African communities that can use their educational institutions to cultivate a notion of cosmopolitan justice in their education discourses. Second, schools in Africa can create pedagogical opportunities for students to become more concerned with the helpless in order to build better communities. Such communities would not be concerned only with recognising the impoverished conditions of others, but also effect changes that can engender meaningful change. Third, educational institutions can do much to

initiate students and teachers into discourses of recognition and acceptance of the other on the basis of cultivating cosmopolitan justice, which has the possibility of establishing greater tolerance in communities. Greater tolerance implies that we become more tolerant of others on the basis that sometimes we encounter the intolerable. And, being urged on by going against the grain would imply that we are prepared to face even what we seemingly dislike, or never knew.

What I have been arguing for in this chapter is that our human (social) practices should in some way transcend our private concerns as individuals. Instead, our private actions should create conditions for something worthwhile to come to the fore that is consistent with a notion of cosmopolitan justice. What follows from this is that our private actions should be justifiable, with our reasons being evident to other individuals with whom we engage in public (worldly) relations. So, if we privately condemn the atrocious crimes perpetrated by perpetrators of human rights abuses, our idiosyncratic expressions or private thoughts should at least open the door for some form of collective, recognisable action with others, which could potentially lead to morally worthwhile actions that prevent and eradicate inhumane acts against any civilian population. I have argued for a notion of cosmopolitan justice beyond discourses of deliberation, compassion and risk taking, one that connects with forgiving the improbable, protecting the helpless, and performing the unexpected and even 'horrific'. Only then might human rights violations be thwarted.

Notes

1 The Universal Declaration's rights include *security rights* (a person's right to life, liberty and no cruel torture); *due process rights* (rights to effective remedy of violations, social and international order to enjoy rights, no arbitrary arrest, detention or exile, right to a trial in criminal cases, presumption of innocence in criminal cases, no retroactive laws or penalties, no arbitrary deprivation of nationality and property, and protection of moral and material interest resulting from scientific or literary production); *basic liberties* (no slavery or servitude, no arbitrary interference with one's privacy, family, home or correspondence, freedom of movement and residence, freedom to leave and return to one's country, freedom to seek and enjoy asylum in other countries from persecution, no marriage without full and free consent from the intending spouses, freedom to own property individually and collectively, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, freedom to form and join trade unions, freedom of parents to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children, freedom to participate in cultural life); *rights of political participation* (right to participate in government directly or through freely chosen representatives, equal access to public service, opportunities to vote in periodic or genuine elections); *equality rights* (equality of fundamental rights and freedoms, legal personality and equality before the law, freedom from discrimination, equal rights in marriage and family, equal pay for equal work, equal social protection for children born out of wedlock); and *economic and social rights* (social security, just and favourable remuneration for workers, rest and leisure, adequate standard of living for health and well-being, health care, special care during motherhood and childhood, the right to educational opportunities) (Nickel, 2007: 11, adapted from original).

2 The Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has been the ruling party in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980. The ZANU-PF lost its control of parliament for the first time during the 2008 parliamentary election, brokering a difficult power-sharing deal with the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), whose members are still subjected to political recriminations, and at times even torture.
3 'Medicine murders' involve killing human beings in order to use some body parts as 'traditional' medicine.
4 Perpetrators of crimes are publicly lynched and killed with a burning tyre around their necks.
5 Kenyan authorities failed to investigate and prosecute those responsible for violence in the Coast Region during September 2012, when more than 110 people were killed and 6,000 displaced. On 12 September, Dhadho Godhana, a Member of Parliament, was arrested in connection with the violence, but recent Human Rights Watch research suggests that at least three other politicians may have been involved. The investigations should include the role of these politicians, as well as government officials and police, who failed to act to prevent the violence, despite warnings that it was imminent. The deaths of at least 110 people, including nine policemen, in Tana River County began with an attack on the village of Riketa on 22 August. That attack led to revenge attacks on 7, 10, and 11 September. The Human Rights Watch researchers found that several local politicians may have been involved in organising the violence and that the police and local administration in Tana River failed to respond to reports from residents, made over a period of six months, that violence could be imminent. Police are failing to provide adequate security, as revenge attacks continue and communities continue to arm themselves. The violence in August and September 2012 was the culmination of smaller-scale attacks, cattle raids and counterattacks between the ethnic Pokomo and Orma communities since January. Both communities have lost lives and livestock, but police either failed to respond to the attacks, or arrested people and then released them without investigations (http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/13/kenya-investigate-all-politicians-tana-river-violence, accessed 14 September 2012).
6 In Kampala, authorities failed to investigate meaningfully the deaths of at least 40 people during two days of rioting in Uganda in; using the phrasing, 'three years ago', 'dates' the information. The families of some of the victims told Human Rights Watch that they still hoped for justice. The government made numerous promises to investigate the deaths during the so-called 'Kayunga riots', but a parliamentary committee mandated to examine the incident stalled, failing to call any witnesses. No police or military members have been held accountable for the violence (http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/10/uganda-3-years-no-justice-riot-victims, accessed 14 September 2012).
7 In Goma, 33 of those executed were young men and boys who tried to escape the rebels' ranks. Rwandan officials may be complicit in war crimes through their continued military assistance to M23 forces. The Rwandan army has deployed its troops to eastern Congo to provide direct support to the M23 rebels in military operations. The M23 rebels are committing a horrific trail of new atrocities in eastern Congo. The M23 armed group consists of soldiers who participated in a mutiny against the Congolese national army in April and May 2012. The group's senior commanders have a well-known history of serious abuses against civilians. In June 2012, the United Nations high commissioner for human rights, Navi Pillay, identified five of the M23's leaders as 'among the worst perpetrators of human rights violations in the DRC, or in the world'. Local leaders, customary chiefs, journalists, human rights activists and others who spoke out against the M23's abuses or are known to have denounced the rebel commanders' previous abuses have been targeted. Many received death threats and have fled to government-controlled areas (http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/09/11/dr-congo-m23-rebels-committing-war-crimes, accessed 14 September 2012).

8 At the time of writing this section, Judith Butler, professor in the Rhetoric and Comparative Literature departments at the University of California, Berkeley, was awarded the prestigious Theodor W. Adorno Prize, which recognises outstanding achievement in philosophy, theatre, music or film. The honour was conferred on her in Frankfurt on 11 September. On receiving the award, Butler was immediately attacked by some Jewish leaders, Israeli politicians and Israel defence and advocacy organisations, who argued that it was wrong to give such a prize in Germany to an outspoken critic of Israel's occupation of Palestinian land. What interested me about Butler, and her ideas on cosmopolitan justice in particular, was the dignified manner in which she responded to the unjustified attacks on her integrity.

9 Kwame Anthony Appiah is a Ghanaian-Anglo-Saxon philosopher, cultural theorist and novelist who has been influenced by the cosmopolitanist philosophical tradition, which stretches from German philosophers such as Hegel through W.E.B. du Bois and others. It is his ideas of combining universality and difference in a conception of cosmopolitanism that attracts me to his work.

10 I use tolerance in the sense of an 'appropriate response to people who differ from us, and whom we dislike or of who we disapprove' (McKinnon and Castiglione, 2003: 55).

11 I do not wish to invoke a debate about human and non-human interaction and what humans apparently can learn from non-humans, with reference to Alasdair MacIntyre's 1999 account of humans' just relations with dolphins and vice versa.

7 On educational change and the illusion of inclusion

Against exclusion on the African continent

Introduction

By way of introduction I offer a snapshot of some of the experiences of women in the rural areas of Greater Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo province (South Africa).[1] My motivation for focusing on a small rural community is because it is difficult to make generalisations about African cultures and their thought systems. Rather, my focus on the case in question is an attempt to understand how the social organisations through which Africans relate to each other operate, and what kinds of problems the practices of people (in relation to gender inequality) pose for the continent. I offer an account of how women in traditional African communities are marginalised and excluded from activities that influence their lives. The women under discussion are considered as hard working, creative and passionately caring. Their handicrafts such as beadwork enable them to pay for their children's education, buy food for the whole family and contribute to stokvels.[2] Despite being partially or completely illiterate, they have managed to support and pay for their children, especially the boys, to complete their schooling. It is claimed that they do not have to offer their daughters similar support as that offered to the boys. Some of the women operate *spaza* shops (convenience stores) or are street vendors, while others plant maize (sweet corn) and watermelons – this produce is often cooked, salted and dried for eating and selling.

Some women's spouses are unemployed, which makes these women the breadwinners of their families. Women are generally excluded from most deliberations, such as not having a say in arrangements to mourn their deceased spouse. Yet it is regarded as their duty to gather the wood and cow dung that are used to make fire, get to the river to draw water for washing clothes, and work in the fields to cultivate agricultural lands.[3] Gender inequality and patriarchy are rife in this community. For instance, women are prevented from participating in social practices such as public meetings, called *lekgotla/imbizo/dikgotla* or *tinkhundla*.[4] These meetings are geared towards encouraging community participation, decision making and problem solving. While women are invited to the meetings, they are prohibited from participating in the discussions as equals with the men. When it comes to traditional family practices

such as *lobola/magadi*[5] (herd of cattle or money paid by a potential bridegroom to the parents of the bride or wife-to-be), women are also excluded from the negotiations. In fact, it is common practice in such communities that a marriage can be arranged or negotiated for a young woman without her consent. Sometimes a woman is in a polygamous marriage to a cousin, or an older man, or a brother of her deceased spouse. A woman can also be 'married' into a family where there is no formal husband, but a male relative will be chosen for her to initiate (so it is said) procreation. Traditional women seemed to have been conditioned to uncritically accept their, at times, demeaning situations.[6]

In essence, several women in the rural areas of Greater Sekhukhuneland of the Limpopo province are not exonerated from abuse, whether social, physical, emotional or financial. Likewise, their autonomy is seriously undermined, as they are reprimanded about managing, for instance, their own funds. What is quite perplexing to note is that, despite the hard work and the sacrifices these women make for their children, which include feeding their families, selling produce, making their own utensils and selling such utensils to earn the money they require for buying household basics, paying medical fees and paying school fees for the children, they are simply excluded from discussions about important family and social matters. Their voices are muted and their autonomy is dismissed, and at times derided systematically, through a socially embedded practice of abusive patriarchy.

The aforementioned exclusion of women in traditional African communities is not unique to the women of Greater Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo province. What follows are instances that confirm the marginalisation, exclusion and underdevelopment of women in relation to education at all levels on the African continent.

Education, gender inequality and the exclusion of women on the African continent

Discourses of gender in equality, education and social development are intertwined and have significant implications for social justice and human advancement on the African continent. In this regard, as noted by Assié-Lumumba (2007: 1), African educational systems have been characterised 'by highly ingrained structural inequality with regard to region, rural or urban residence, religion, ethnicity, and social class'. Yet for Assié-Lumumba, and I agree, gender remains the most widespread and persistent facet of inequality, especially at the higher education level (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 1). In corroborating the aforementioned claims about gender inequality, educational statistics in African countries generally 'reveal consistent patterns of female under-representation in the distribution of education … [despite] some policy reforms and policy efforts in the past few decades in most countries' (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 2). This means that, for women, repetition, dropping out and forced-out rates are significantly higher than in the case of men, resulting in lower enrolment and higher attrition rates for women from the primary to tertiary levels

of the education sector (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 2). Not surprisingly, female students registered in the fields of science (usually associated with high drop-out rates) are fewer in numbers than those registered in the humanities and social sciences – a situation that contributes to asymmetrical gender representation in the labour market and in the occupational structure (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 2). A primary reason for the under-representation and high attrition rates of women in the contemporary higher education sector on the African continent 'bears the mark of patriarchal rules that excluded the female population from most of the formal educational process' (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 3). Like several of the women in Greater Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo, women are given unequal opportunities in terms of the type of educational institution they should attend (basic education to secondary education are privileged for women), and the disciplinary specialisation they should embark upon (with the humanities and social sciences being regarded as sufficient for women to specialise in, while the natural sciences are considered suitable for men).

On the African continent, women historically have played significant roles in the processes of decolonisation, state formation, household economy, and the African economy in general (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 5). The vital contribution of women in the so-called informal sectors and social systems in sustaining the lives of African families and states, such as the women of Greater Sekhukhuneland in their *spaza* shops, on their agricultural lands[7] and in their homes, is not considered as enabling enough for them to have eluded marginalisation and exclusion. On the contrary, despite the capabilities and potential of women (and girls) to contribute successfully to economic development in the informal sector (like the traditional indigenous contexts of the Greater Sekhukhuneland women), they 'have been marginalised in most African societies, as they have had less access to resources on the continent … [notwithstanding the fact that] they are key contributors to the vitality of economic and social production' (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 5). Instead, they make little or no contributions to major decisions (like the women in Greater Sekhukhuneland) and are 'generally marginalised with deliberate efforts to reduce them to voiceless, passive contributors [on the part of enforced patterns of patriarchy]' (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 5).

Moreover, gender disparities in formal schooling (such as in the families of the women of Greater Sekhukhuneland) vary considerably, in the sense that sons are enrolled more frequently than daughters, especially in those families where women head the household and are the most marginal (that is women) in economic terms. Clignet (2007: 47) makes the point that the more hard pressed women are, the

> more they are obliged to play the labour market as it is in order to increase the chances of the survival of the domestic group and the more they give priority to the formal schooling of their sons. And, considering that girls encounter more difficulties entering a school system than boys [as is the case with girls in Greater Sekhukhuneland], they also tend to survive more

> easily the academic obstacles that both are expected to overcome throughout a particular cycle of studies.
>
> (Clignet, 2007: 49)

Hence, females have low drop-out rates in the schooling sector in comparison with their high drop-out rates in the higher education sector, as they are in part discouraged from acquiring knowledge at the latter level. Generally speaking, there is a serious under-representation of women, particularly in the higher education sector (Moja, 2007: 57). Women are denied equal opportunities to enter the higher education sector because they are discouraged and at times prevented from improving their qualifications, and actually are urged to abort their education at the lower levels – despite performing successfully in the primary and secondary education sectors (Moja, 2007: 57).

Bearing in mind that gender inequalities are rife in higher education levels, 'women remain under-represented as students as well as faculty, researchers, and senior administrators … [exacerbating the] lack of representation in decision-making structures in higher education institutions' (Moja, 2007: 60). Accordingly, 'only 33 per cent of women are in higher education in sub-Saharan Africa in comparison to men … [with] figures indicating under-representation in graduate studies in science, engineering, technology (SET), and senior management positions are even more striking' (Moja, 2007: 60–61). Although South Africa is one of the few countries on the continent that has managed to increase women's enrolment in a short period of time, from 43 per cent in 1993 to 52 per cent in 1999 (Cloete and Bunting, 2002: 17), women remain in the majority in low-level administrative positions and non-professional categories (Moja, 2007: 61). Of course, gender inequality, and in particular the under-representation of women in higher education, are an infringement of women's rights and have implications in terms of their limited contribution to knowledge production at all levels (Assié-Lumumba, 2007: 6). Women's absence from the higher education sector will not only 'deprive the sector of their vision in policy formulation', but will invariably retard economic development by denying them opportunities for equality of income, state building and social progress. For this reason, Assié-Lumumba (2007: 5) claims that 'gender inequality is the most important characteristic of the African economy and its underdevelopment'.

The question remains: how does the social and organisational culture contribute towards the exclusion of women from their unimpeded participation in education? First, it seems (with reference to higher education) that the culture in higher education institutions mirrors the culture of the society within which the institutions are located. Moja (2007: 65) argues that 'society reinforces acceptance of practices that often blight the lives of those who eventually seek careers in higher education or entered advanced education as students'. For instance, sexual abuse and harassment are prevalent in some societies where such practices are not adequately addressed as being unacceptable. Consequently, we find that 'sexual harassment in higher education is reported to be serious

and many institutions have not developed policies and strategies to address the issue' (Moja, 2007: 66). Women are subjected to sexual violence, abuse and crime even at primary and secondary levels of schooling, leading to fewer of them gaining access to higher education (Moja, 2007: 66).[8] Second, gender-insensitive curricula, especially at school level, informed by some teachers' negative attitudes towards girls in relation to their perceived lack of ability to cope with science, mathematics and technology, enhance gender inequality (Moja, 2007: 66). In other words, women are under-represented in the natural sciences, with variations according to country.[9] Third, socio-cultural norms, values and practices (such as those witnessed in Greater Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo) 'relegate women to a subordinate position in [African] society but assigns women more roles in the reproductive sphere [constituting] yet another factor constraining women's access to education and particularly to the tertiary levels' (Meena, 2007: 95). This situation is exacerbated by the entrenched and quite repelling 'stereotyping and female-unfriendly contexts' in schools (Meena, 2007: 95), often leading to high illiteracy rates among women (Meena, 2007: 90).[10] Thus it seems that, in many parts of society in Africa, the ideology of exclusion of women, which perpetuates the subordinate positions they occupy in society, is a major contributing factor to African states' unwillingness to 'carry out social transformation that will dismantle power hierarchies based on gender relations' (Meena, 2007: 95).

Now that I have had a cursory glance at gender inequality, particularly in relation to the under-representation of women in and exclusion of women from all levels of education in many parts of African society, I want to address the issue of the exclusion of women with reference to the ideas of Martha Nussbaum, Iris Marion Young and Jacques Rancière.

On capability and education

Nussbaum's (2000: 1) capabilities approach to address the concerns associated with gender inequality and the exclusion of women is connected with her own analysis of women in various developing countries, including those on the African continent. For her, women not only lack support for fundamental functions of human life, but they are 'less well nourished than men, less healthy, more vulnerable to physical violence and sexual abuse … [and] much less likely than men to be literate, and still less likely to have preprofessional or technical education' (Nussbaum, 2000: 1). Women encounter greater obstacles in the workplace, including intimidation from family or spouse, sex discrimination in hiring, and sexual harassment – all, frequently, 'without effective legal recourse … [with] similar obstacles [also] often impede their effective participation in political life' (Nussbaum, 2001: 1). Likewise, women have fewer opportunities than men to live free from fear, as they often are married without choice in childhood, without recourse from bad marriages – all unequal aspects of their social and political lives that give them 'unequal human capabilities' (Nussbaum, 2001: 1). In other words, they possess 'unequal human

capabilities' because they are not treated as persons with dignity that deserve respect from laws and institutions. So, following Nussbaum (2000: 4), women lack essential support for leading lives that are fully human – a lack of support that is frequently caused by their being women. Using the capabilities approach one can focus on 'what people are actually able to do and to be … informed by an intuitive idea of a life that is worthy of the dignity of the human being' (Nussbaum, 2000: 5). Although universal in approach, capabilities are considered as particular to the contexts in which women happen to be situated in order, first, to understand them as suffering from acute capability failure and, second, to show that their precarious situations can actually be resolved in relation to what they are in a position to do, that is their opportunities and liberties are in particular social, cultural and political contexts (Nussbaum, 2000: 71). Attempting to understand a person's capability failure involves comparing a person's quality of life to that of others; while showing that their undesirable and undignified situations can be resolved involves delivering to them a certain basic level of capability (Nussbaum, 2000: 71). In short, the capabilities approach is aimed at ensuring that a person is treated as 'worthy of regard', and that he or she has been 'put in a position to live really humanely' (Nussbaum, 2000: 74).

Nussbaum (2000: 78–80) offers the following as 'human functional capabilities' according to which a person's capability failure can be judged, and as examples of what should be delivered to a person in order to ensure a worthwhile quality of life.

1 Life. Being able to live to the end of human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.
2 Bodily health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.
3 Bodily integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; having one's bodily boundaries treated as sovereign, i.e. being able to be secure against assault, including sexual assault, child sexual abuse and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.
4 Senses, imaginations, and thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a 'truly human' way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's choice, religious, literary, musical and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of *freedom of expression* with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way. Being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

5 Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect.
6 Practical reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
7 Affiliation. A: being able to live to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, *to engage in various forms of social interaction*; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have *compassion* for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and *friendship*. B: *having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation*; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protections against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity or national origin. In work, being able to work as a human being exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.
8 Other species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9 Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10 Control over one's environment. A: political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and associations. B: material. Being able to hold property, and having property rights on and equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted research and seizure.

My interest is in the capabilities of freedom of expression, compassionate interaction and friendship. And, following Nussbaum (2000), these capabilities are all aimed at preventing non-discrimination and non-repression. In other words, recognising the capability failures of women vis-à-vis freedom of expression, compassionate interaction and friendship involves understanding that, if women are not capable of exercising the aforementioned virtues, then they would be more vulnerable to discrimination, marginalisation and exclusion. And, if the latter are to be removed, then conditions that would prevent non-discrimination and non-repression will have to be cultivated (that is, rendered or delivered to women – and by women). My argument is that freedom of expression, compassionate interaction and friendship can contribute towards women experiencing a sense of self-worth and humanity that would enhance their dignity and self-respect. I shall now expound on these 'capabilities' in order to open up pedagogical spaces for people (men and women) to contribute towards resolving the problems associated with gender inequality and the exclusion of women in African society, more specifically through pedagogical encounters.

Freedom of expression

For women to articulate themselves freely when they are curtailed by not being able to do so, conditions will have to be put in place that would allow them to act with 'a certain basic level of capability' in relation to others, making their pursuit truly human. To be capable of expressing oneself freely in relation to others and their views involves not just a mutual recognition of humanity, but also 'to behave as a thinking being' (Nussbaum, 2000: 82). This idea of being free is supported by Gutmann (2003: 2000) who states in *Identity in Democracy* that 'living the life of a free person means being free to express one's identity and shape it through one's associations with others'. And, to freely express oneself through association with others one has the capacity to live one's life as one sees fit, consistent with respecting equal freedom for others, and to contribute to the justice of one's society and one's world (Gutmann, 2003: 26). As free citizens, women must be free to criticise the cultural practices that impede their civic equality and equal freedom or opportunity, especially when they are discriminated against on the grounds of gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion – all unwarranted sources of unjust and unwarranted civic inequality (Gutmann, 2003: 200). Yet, Gutmann (2003: 201) cautions against freedom of expression that becomes 'an unconstrained licence to discriminate'. If freedom of expression is used to exclude others unjustly, in particular the most vulnerable in society like women, then expressing oneself freely pulls in the opposite direction. Put differently, freedom of expression 'must not become an unconstrained licence to discriminate' (Gutmann, 2003: 200), because doing so would enhance discrimination and exclusion. The point is, freedom of expression should itself not lead to unjust actions such as those that bring about slavery, unequal suffrage, dire poverty, invidious discrimination and unequal protection by the law. It thus can happen that people express their own identities by excluding others from their associations, especially those associations that prejudicially exclude others on discriminatory grounds. In such instances, 'freedom of expression is constrained … [that is] discriminatory exclusions limit more than the freedom of expression of the excluded' (Gutmann, 2003: 104). Hence, recognising the capability of women to constrained freedom of expression that does not lead to injustice towards them or others would go some way to nurturing just relations among people in African society, especially if they are considered as worthy human beings who can freely criticise their cultural practices that are repressive and discriminatory at times.

Compassionate interaction

To recognise that women can engage in compassionate interaction involves acknowledging a manifestation of capability in two ways: establishing conditions for practical reasoning (MacIntyre, 1999: 83), and for compassion (Nussbaum, 2001: 401). The capacity to act as a practical reasoner involves

an ability to evaluate, adjust or reject one's own practical judgements, and an ability to imagine alternative possible futures so as to be able to stand back or be detached from one's previous desires, in other words to redirect or re-educate one's desires (MacIntyre, 1999: 83). A practical reasoner does not only have an ability to reach his or her own conclusions, but also opens himself or herself up to others, so as to be held accountable by and to others for those conclusions (MacIntyre, 1999: 84). In a way, by cooperating with others and being called to account for one's actions by others, one learns to scrutinise oneself as others scrutinise one – a matter of making oneself intelligible to others (MacIntyre, 1999: 148). While making oneself intelligible to others, one simultaneously acts with generosity, justice and compassion towards others (MacIntyre, 1999: 112). To have an ability to act compassionately towards others is a concern that these others who encounter suffering and vulnerability are worthy of being helped (Nussbaum, 2001: 328). The ability to imagine the suffering of others involves putting oneself into the shoes of others, as a consequence of recognising 'a deep respect for the dignity of humanity in each person' (Nussbaum, 2001: 366). As Nussbaum (2001: 367–368) aptly states, 'one sees the human being as both aspiring and vulnerable, both worthy and insecure … [and recognises] that weakness is an impediment to community'. In essence, compassionate interaction not only means engaging cooperatively with others, advancing one's arguments respectfully and being open to refutation and criticism, but also recognising the vulnerability of others and actually doing something about reclaiming their humane dignity. And, to recognise such a capability in women is to actively understand the situation of another through reason and dignity, what Nussbaum (2000: 82) refers to as 'being able to behave as a thinking being … capable of being done with and toward others in a way that involves mutual recognition of humanity'.

Friendship

Recognising that women have the capability to establish a friendship is closely related to what Derrida (2005: 282) refers to as 'to be able to honour in the friend the enemy he [or she] can become'. In other words, friendship does not simply involve loving a person, but also honouring what one does not love – that is, being capable of respecting the enemy even if the enemy is capable of enmity, war and inhumanity. The point about friendship in a Derridian sense is to acknowledge that humans are capable of injustices and crimes, and that one way of dealing with such a situation is to acknowledge its possibility, thus recognising that injustices are possible and that such injustices can be committed by those we love or have fraternal relationships with. Loving the enemy within friends relates to recognising the humanity within them and their propensity for doing injustice. But the concern here is more to find a solution for the inhumane acts perpetrated by human beings who have impoverished themselves by perpetrating acts of injustice and inhumanity.

Small wonder, Derrida (2005: 283) states, 'as much as you give to your friend I will give even to my enemy, and will not have grown poorer in doing so'. The aim of friendship for Derrida is to attain freedom, equality and fraternity (Derrida, 2005: 284). And the latter cannot be achieved if people do not recognise in themselves and others the capability of their human actions to act unjustly, and then actually to work against and repudiate their shameful actions. So friendship at once involves being capable of fracturing that which is inhuman, while at the same time remaining attuned to those who might bring us harm. It is such a capability of friendship that can help people to fracture and disrupt indignity or humiliation, instead of living in antagonism with those who perpetrate harmful acts and would not have to face the responsibility to account for their actions. I shall now turn to the discussion on preventing the exclusion of women in relation to the ideas of Young.

On inclusion and education

Young (2000: 54) argues that people (especially women) are subjected to external exclusion when they are purposely or inadvertently left out of forums for discussion and decision making such as back-door broking, where the powerful set up self-appointed committees to deliberate privately on setting the agenda and arriving at policies that they then introduce to public debate as accomplished facts. This kind of exclusion is quite explicit and transparent. However, there are more subtle ways of internal exclusion that are concerned with the lack of opportunity people have to influence the thinking of others, even if they have access to the forums and procedures of decision making. This type of internal exclusion, which is more subtle and complex, focuses on argument, style and idiom. In Young's words, 'people's contribution to a discussion tends to be excluded from serious consideration not because of what is being said, but how it is said' (Young, 2000: 56). And how things are being articulated often exclude others. Young proposes three ways of remedying internal exclusion, namely through greeting, rhetoric and narrative. Greeting refers to those moments in everyday communication when people acknowledge one another in their particularity – that is, forms of speech that lubricate discussion with mild forms of flattery, the stroking of egos, deference and politeness (Young, 2000: 58). In other words, greeting is aimed at establishing relations of trust among people that are necessary for discussion to proceed – that is, participants are obliged to listen to one another's opinions about issues that they encounter. And, as Young (2000: 61) avers, 'without the moment of greeting, however, no discussion can take place at all, because the parties refuse to face one another as dialogue partners'; rhetoric at least involves the use of figures of speech, such as simile, metaphor, puns and synecdoche, along with the styles or attitudes such figures produce – that is, to be playful, humorous, ironic, deadpan, mocking, grave or majestic (Young, 2000: 65). Rhetoric aims to produce special effects on listeners, such as using jokes, figures of speech and idioms that resonate with a particular audience in order to gain their attention.

As stated by Young (2000: 69): 'The good rhetorician is one who attempts to persuade listeners by orienting proposals and arguments towards their collective and plural interests and desires, inviting them … [to make judgements] rather than claiming himself or herself to know'; and narrative that involves each person and collective giving an account not only of their own life and history, but of every other position that affects their experience (Young, 2000: 76). In this way, 'listeners learn about how their own position, actions and values appear to others from the stories they tell'. Thus, internal exclusion can most appropriately be addressed through greeting, rhetoric and narrative, because as communicative procedures, women, for example, will not have to encounter incredulity, mockery or hostility from others (mostly men). Greeting is aimed at people recognising and acknowledging one another in order that they listen to one another; rhetoric gives argument an embodied style and tone; and narrative enables understanding across difference in the absence of shared premises – all modes of communication that can prevent the exclusion of women deliberations in and about promoting gender equality, or combating the assault on women's academic freedom, eradicating the persistent exercise of violence against women.

On disruption and education

Whereas both Nussbaum and Young consider gender equality as a desired aim of communicative processes, Rancière argues that 'equality is a practice, not a reward in the distant future' (Simons and Masschelein, 2011: 1). For Rancière, the practice of equality is at the disposal of all people who have equal intelligence, that is the ability to speak, think and act (Simons and Masschelein, 2001: 1). In his *On the Shores of Politics*, Rancière (1999: 33) argues that anyone is equal to anyone else on the grounds of his or her capacity to speak and listen – that is, the equality of speaking beings. Rancière (1999: 34) goes on to suggest that the equality of intelligence enables people to disrupt the configuration of a given social order so that their exclusion from a given social order can be prevented. So, instead of having a desire for gender equality, people (men and women) should actually interrupt the established norms of society and stake an equal claim to being equal members of society, without having to wait for gender equality to be given them – confirming equality therefore also is a way of interrupting the chains of reasons and consequences to create new forms of the common (Simons and Masschelein, 2001: 6). Thus, when women intervene on the basis of their 'intellectual equality', they use their ability to speak and understand (regardless of qualifications) in order to disrupt and eliminate established norms of behaviour, such as being excluded from participation in the public social order.

In sum, I started this chapter with the narrative of some women in Greater Sekhukhuneland in Limpopo province (a rural African region in South Africa) and showed how they have been excluded socially, politically and educationally. Such a situation of exclusion, I have argued, is not unique to this rural

region of African soil, but reflects in almost every facet of human life, especially education. And, in order to challenge exclusion and gender inequality, I have drawn upon the notions of capability, internal inclusion and equality of intelligence that can disrupt and eliminate the current levels of exclusion women experience on the African continent.

Notes

1 In the many towns and villages of Africa, most people earn their living in small-scale enterprises in which they and their family supply most of the work and required funds. Farming and herding are the occupations of the large majority of people in Africa, and the primary aim of food production is to satisfy the subsistence needs of the household (Şaul, 1995: 190).
2 *Stokvel* refers to a South African informal group savings scheme that provides small-scale rotating loans.
3 Agriculture is by far the principal occupation of the larger number of people in rural Africa. The contribution of men is limited to cutting trees and planting, weeding and the day-to-day tending of crops; harvesting is carried out by women (Şaul, 1995: 198).
4 *Lekgotla/imbizo*, *dikgotla* or *tinkhundla* refer to public meetings to discuss proposed public policies, and to deliberate on family, clan, community or local government social issues (Hyslop, 1999: 116–119).
5 *Lobola/magadi* refers to the dowry offered prior to marriage. The bridegroom's family gives a herd of cattle or money to the bride's family as a token of appreciation for agreeing to offer their daughter in marriage.
6 I now turn my attention specifically to the social conditions of the six women under discussion: Woman 1 was married to her teacher (without *lobola* and consultation); Woman 2 (completely illiterate) was forced to marry her cousin, who also verbally abused her; Woman 3 was married to an old man (known as *lekgolwa* or *lefamolele*), who spent three quarters of his life in the urban areas; Woman 4 did not have a 'legal' husband, but was married by an old lady who chose someone among her relatives; Woman 5 was married to a traditional healer under threat of being 'bewitched' if she refused the marriage; and Woman 6 was forcibly married to her deceased husband's brother.
7 In most parts of Africa, lands used for farming and living traditionally are not the possession of people. Rather, the 'land' is held by a corporate group that claims descent from a common ancestor. In some societies, this descent is determined through the male line (McCall, 1995: 180).
8 According to the South African Human Rights Commission, 500 cases of child abuse (mostly corporal punishment and sexual harassment) by teachers are reported to the Medical Research Council on average every month (Moja, 2007: 66).
9 In Togo, Tanzania and Burkina Faso, women constitute less than 10 per cent of the total number of students in the field of science (Meena, 2007: 91).
10 The Human Development Report (1999) reveals that the literacy rates for sub-Saharan Africa were 49.6 per cent for females and 65.9 per cent for males, which is lower than the average for all developing countries, which were 62.9 per cent for females and 80 per cent for males (Meena, 2007: 90).

Postscript

Terrorism and the challenges to African philosophy of education: on the possibility of an African Renaissance

Introduction

I have presented an African philosophy of education as a practice that can contribute towards addressing some of the major philosophical problems related to human life (albeit social, cultural or political) on the African continent. My intention was to ascertain some of the educational dimensions related to such problems and to offer, in turn, an account of how the educational concerns of philosophical problems on the continent can possibly be remedied or looked at differently. Having concluded the book, and with specific reference to educational, moral and ethical dimensions of African thought and practice, I am now confronted with a major philosophical problem that seems to raise its head in many parts of Africa, in particular in relation to disrupting peaceful and cooperative human coexistence on the continent. Of course the question can be asked: what does terrorism have to do with education? My contention is that terrorism is a form of political violence that has not necessarily been caused by education. Terrorism is caused by uncertainty, hopelessness and instability, leading to human deprivation, exclusion, dystopia in the world and, ultimately, to outrage. Yet, education is also about experiencing the other through deliberative engagement that in my view would become a meaningful mitigation of terror. Hence, in this postscript, the most pertinent position I advance, is the need for education to occur (on the basis of) deliberative engagement among people who perpetrate acts of violence and those subjected to the perpetration of such acts. An education for freedom from terror is justifiable in the sense that such a view of education would cultivate intercultural understandings and uncompromising attitudes towards people's beliefs and values – that is, the possibility for critical attitudes and social change would be enhanced. The aforementioned form of education is emancipatory and would hopefully instil in people the willingness and openness to engage in interculturalism, to appreciate the possibility of changing the world by seeing and thinking about things differently (including terrorism). And, before I argue as to how education (especially an African philosophy of education) can perform the aforementioned role, I find it apposite to first examine what terrorism entails.

Undoubtedly, terrorism has emerged as a global phenomenon and Africa has not been left unaffected by its consequences. For instance, in 1998, al-Qaeda cells blew up the American embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam and, in retaliation for these attacks, the United States bombed a chemical plant in Sudan, claiming that it was producing elements for chemical weapons for al-Qaeda. Subsequently, US policy in Somalia became preoccupied with apprehending the perpetrators of those attacks, who were believed to have taken refuge there. Terrorist acts in Europe, particularly the train attack in Spain, have been linked to cells in Morocco and Algeria, which interact with North African residents in Europe, and both countries have been victims of recent terrorist bombing attacks.

However, it was only after 9/11 that the focus on terrorism in Africa became much more pronounced. In 1993, the US deployed American troops on the continent, with the establishment in late 2002 of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa in Djibouti. In fact, counterterrorism efforts became even more pronounced in US Africa policy after the Islamic Court Movement took power in Mogadishu, Somalia in 2006, leading to the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia with tacit US support; and the Pentagon announced in 2007 that it would establish a new, unified Africa Command to bring together its varied programmes on the continent – a sign of increasing US focus on security in Africa. Today:

> no region of the continent is immune from this practice [of terrorism and] … one could select a host of recent examples, whether in Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Mauritania, that provide a sense of the pervasive nature of this practice.
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> (Davis, 2007: 4)

Of course, terrorism is a form of political violence that everyone would probably agree is undesirable. I concur that terrorism is a scourge upon society and that people who commit terrorist acts 'are often brutal and psychotic, on the fringes of society, engaged in criminal activities, or powerfully driven ideological zealots' (Fuller, 2010: 292). So, what constitutes terrorism, and how can a communitarian understanding of African philosophy of education deal with the challenges posed by terrorism?

In 2004, the US Department of Defense offered the following definition of terrorism: 'The calculated use of *unlawful violence* [not sanctioned by government] or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear; intended to coerce or to intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of the goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological' (Fuller, 2010: 287). For the US Department of State, the term 'terrorism' means 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant [interpreted to include unarmed or off-duty military personnel] targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience' (Kippenberg, 2011: 184). These

two definitions of terrorism outline a praxis of unsanctioned violence perpetrated for political, religious or ideological reasons; and one of unjustified terror that despises human life. First, it seems as if terrorism can only be perpetrated by subnational or subversive groups and that states are exonerated from being considered as agents of terrorism; and second, political resistance or opposition to the state is regarded as terrorism. Now, such a view of terrorism gives rise to a suggestive, political rhetoric that detaches acts of violence from a state's own politics that might have contributed to people's fury and resistance. For example, the Nicaraguan Contras (supported by the US in the 1980s), who killed 3,000 civilians, were absolved from having committed state terrorism against political resistance. Likewise, the Soviet forces that encountered fierce resistance from Afghan Mujahidin liberation 'fighters' in the 1980s were exonerated from having committed heinous atrocities, in the name of combating 'insurgent' (terrorist) violence. The point I am making is that despotic regimes (often supported by superpowers) that quelled people's political struggles for national liberation were not considered to be agents of terror. Often, the 'unlawful' violence perpetrated by liberation groups such as the Chechens, Kashmiris, Tibetans in China, Sri Lankan Tamils, Palestinians, Sikhs in India, Kurds in Turkey, Moros in the Philippines, Bengalis in Pakistan, Igbos in Nigeria, Eritreans in Ethiopia (before achieving independence) and Albanian Kosovars in Serbia has been considered as terrorist (Fuller, 2010: 290). Ironically, these groups' political struggles against often repressive regimes are considered to be illegitimate and subversive. That is, terrorism cannot be perpetrated by the state, but only by resistance groups.

The upshot of the aforementioned views on terrorism is that terrorists are moral nihilists who stand outside the legal order and must be annihilated (Kippenberg, 2011: 185). This means that, once terrorism is invoked, no political negotiation is required by the state to engage the domestic insurgents. Rather, the state has full moral authority to use unrestricted violence to wipe out the political opposition. Quite bizarrely, terrorists are described as having no homeland or conviction and as being driven only by hate, unbounded cruelty and murder. This might explain why the Syrian state's military forces of Bashar al-Asad showed no remorse in executing families and supporters of those liberation fighters in opposition to the state, or why the Libyan government of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi could violently eliminate political opposition – these despotic regimes are driven by the view that any form of political resistance is perpetrated by people who are hateful and barbaric and who therefore should be assassinated. Consequently, it seems absurd to view terrorism as a form of political violence perpetrated only by those in opposition to the state.

Instead, I contend that terrorism 'uses violence and the threat of violence as a political weapon and takes conflict to a new level through the use of specific *means* of conflict and political action [in a way] that breaks through the limits of democratic politics' (Schwartzmantel, 2011: 84–85). What can be deduced from such a view of terrorism is that it is fundamentally a political

phenomenon that aims at the transformation of society through violence that is exercised against both the state and civilians. The use of political violence can be exercised, first, by people as an emotional appeal to public opinion so as to draw attention to policies that require further debate and questioning, for instance the violent protest actions of certain British citizens against the country's foreign policy with regard to Israel and Palestine; second, it (terrorism) arises out of people's demand for recognition of a national or ethnic identity whose claim to self-determination has not been realised constitutionally, for instance the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or Basque terrorism; and third, terrorism arises out of an opposition to democracy whereby some people, for instance in Arab countries, claim that political rule cannot be arrogated by human sovereignty, but should rather be determined religiously through God's will, such as purported by al-Qaeda (Schwartzmantel, 2011: 89–90). What follows from the aforementioned views of terrorism is that it is quite possible that political violence can be executed, first, by both state and citizens and, second, as a result of people's disillusionment with a country's stance on the unresolved political crisis in the Middle East, or their claims to self-determination, or their religious stance towards what can be perceived as illegitimate and blasphemous democratic rule. Hence, on the one hand, terrorism seems to be associated with the exclusion or lack of recognition of people, and, on the other hand, is the result of a political misfit between state and citizens. And if the exclusion and misrecognition of people, and the political disjuncture between the state and citizens, are causes of terrorism, then something can be done by people, both as representatives of the state and of civil society, to actually combat terrorist action or even its possibility. My view is that people should aspire to engage in democratic iteration in order to reduce the potential of extreme political violence. But first I shall examine different notions of *jihād*, in particular how the concept has been shaped by historical events in the Middle East.

Different versions of *jihād*: radical or defensive?

Since the preparations for the 9/11 attacks began in 1998, when Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network declared war on the United States, the concept *jihād* – an exemplary religious action – has been accorded a militant and violent status. As a military ethic, *jihād* became linked to the attainment of purity by perpetrating violence and, as a violent conviction, *jihād* became associated with a struggle against what is perceived to be a 'pagan' Western civilisation, as well as a means through which Muslim 'fighters' are urged to seek salvation through martyrdom. Bin Laden's *jihād* or declaration of war against the United States was informed by three events: the US occupied the most sacred places on the Arabian Peninsula in order to steal the natural resources, to humiliate Muslims, and to use military means to oppress Muslim peoples; the US had inflicted grave damage on the Iraqi people, and continued to do so by means of an embargo, even though this had already cost the lives of a million people; and the US was destroying Iraq and wanted to break up all the other

states in the region into defenceless mini-states in order to guarantee Israel's superiority over the neighbouring Arab states (Kippenberg, 2011: 161). Thus, for bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network, *jihād* imposed on the Muslim individual a religious obligation to defend the territory of Islam against the enemy that invaded it. And, consequently, *jihād* against the West became the highest obligation of Muslims as they endeavoured to defend Islam:

> To kill the Americans and their allies – civilian and military – is an individual duty upon every Muslim in all countries, in order to liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Holy Mosque [in Jerusalem] from their grip, so that their armies leave all the territory of Islam, defeated, broken, and unable to threaten any Muslim.
>
> (Kippenberg, 2011: 162)

Moreover, al-Qaeda (meaning the base) is a description of a group of young men recruited primarily from 'below' who function with a large measure of autonomy in cells supported by shared convictions and commitment, while at the same time being subjected to central control. What started off as bin Laden's 'World Islamic Front for the *jihād* against Jews and Crusaders' turned into the al-Qaeda network. This network is guided by a rigorous militant ethic of conviction anchored in its manifesto, referred to as *The Neglected Duty*. This manifesto was authored by Abd al-Salam Faraj (d. 1982), one of the men in bin Laden's innermost circle and previously a member of the Egyptian Jihad responsible for assassinating President Anwar al-Sadat. *The Neglected Duty* elevates *jihād* to being equal to the five pillars of Islam (that is, believing in God, performing prayer, alms-giving, fasting and undergoing pilgrimage) and contains arguments in defence of the absolute priority of the military struggle, drawing on a rich store of Islamic traditions, conceptions and practices (Kippenberg, 2011: 163). The purpose of the al-Qaeda manifesto is to ensure the establishment of an Islamic state through violence, the prevalence of *Shari`ah* law, allegiance to a righteous leader (at the time, bin Laden), and persistent attacks on unbelievers and their allies with the intention of martyrdom. Thus, *jihād* is justified on the basis of quotations from the Qurān: 'Prescribed for you is fighting, though it be hateful to you' (2: 216); 'Ask God to grant you martyrdom' (3: 7); 'Smite above the necks, and smite every finger of them' (8: 12); and 'Count not those who were slain in God's way as dead' (3: 169). It seems as if members of al-Qaeda have been indoctrinated (as opposed to educated) with the view that Muslims all over the world have been subjected to excessive humiliations (especially by the US) and now have to use their religious convictions, supported by Quranic authentications through prayers, recitations and rituals, to justify their terrorist activities.

Now, taking my view from the fact that al-Qaeda's interpretation of *jihād* is recognisably different from that of the mainstream of Muslims all over the world (Kippenberg, 2011: 201), I want to reconsider the notion

whether *jihād* has only a singular meaning. There have been several statements in the form of *fatwas* made by senior Saudi and Egyptian *ulama* to denounce the radicalised violent actions (terrorist acts and suicide missions) of al-Qaeda. Likewise, many moderate Muslim clerics have offered different interpretations of the Quran to disprove the offensive terrorist tactics of al-Qaeda (Fuller, 2010: 284). The meanings invoked by moderate, non-violent Muslims involve going back to the Arabic root of the word *jihād*, which means 'struggle' or 'effort' on the part of the individual to live a virtuous life by upholding religious values and propagating her faith through personal effort and example – often described by the Prophet as the 'great *jihād*'. Similarly, *jihād* has become associated primarily with a defensive preservation of Islam, in particular by indigenous people offering resistance to foreign invasions by European and US military forces in the Middle East (Fuller, 2010: 283). I want to show that the argument for a defensive *jihād* seems to have become more relevant to developments in the Middle East over the past 25 years than a concern for searching for the 'correct' version of *jihād*.

Radical or violent *jihād* (terrorism and suicide bombing) was highly unusual in the Arab and Muslim world about two and a half decades ago. There were no suicide missions during the height of the revolutionary fervour of Arab nationalism and the disastrous defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war against Israel. It was only in the early 1980s that the Lebanese Shi`a employed successful suicide bombings against US targets, with devastating effects. But it was the Hindu Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka who regularly used the suicide vest in the 1980s. The frequency of suicide bombing in the Middle East only escalated afterwards, as a result of the US occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan:

> In 2007, the year with the highest rate to date, there were 658 suicide attacks, including 542 in US-occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, according to US government figures. This is more than double the number of attacks in any of the past twenty-five years. Furthermore, more than four-fifths of all those suicide bombings occurred only in the last seven years, and the practice is now spreading around the globe. The *Washington Post* notes that 'Since 1983 bombers in more than 50 groups from Argentina to Algeria, Croatia to China, and India to Indonesia have adapted car bombs to make explosive belts, vests, toys, motorcycles, bikes, boats, backpacks and false pregnancy stomachs … Of 1,840 incidents in the past 25 years, *more than 86 percent have occurred since* 2011, and the highest annual numbers have occurred in the past four years'.
>
> (Fuller, 2010: 283)

Of course, the motivations for the violent suicide bombings are manifold, ranging from a desire by people to defend the Muslim world and to sacrifice their lives for Islam in order to achieve paradise, to economic and social deprivation and personal pathologies. However, some, if not most, of the violent actions come 'in direct response to foreign occupation and the desire

to rid the country of the invader' (Fuller, 2010: 284). It seems that, rather than being indoctrinated by Muslim authorities, most of the youth are radicalised by the situation on the ground, namely foreign occupation, the killing of large numbers of civilians by American, Western or Israeli military forces, a sense of humiliation and defeat, and a thirst for revenge, sometimes for members of their own family who have been killed (Fuller, 2010: 285). Religious justification seems to be used as an afterthought to find moral support for violent action. This implies that the motivations for religious violence are not necessarily educational, but rather a defensive mechanism against unrelenting foreign occupation and what Muslims believe to be incessant humiliations. This view of the rationale for violence departs from Nelles's position (2003: 2) that 'education reproduces … political violence'. Despite Nelles's somewhat impoverished view on what stimulates terrorist violence, I nevertheless agree with him that one can respond non-violently, non-militarily and creatively to violence through education (Nelles, 2003: 6).

If defensive *jihād* were to have been educationally inspired, then by far the majority of religious educational institutions would not have authorised their teachers and *ulama* (religious scholars) to renounce the violence of radicals. In fact, the overthrow of despotic regimes in the Arab and Muslim world, the struggle for national liberation and, hence, armed resistance against foreign occupation cannot be motivated educationally because, in any case, countries in the region lack defensible citizenship education programmes. In those countries in which citizenship education is given some consideration, emphasis seems to be placed on 'social cohesion' or coexistence (Lebanon); 'combating rebellion against authority' such as riots, suicide operations, and belonging to armed opposition (Algeria); 'confronting growing threats and proliferation of extremist groups' (Egypt); 'appreciation for government' (Oman); 'loyalty to homeland' (Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Jordan); 'patriotism' (Libya); and 'allegiance to the King' (Bahrain) (Al-Maamari, 2011: 42). It seems as if political literacy and critical thinking (aspects of oppositional politics) are given less attention in Arab and Muslim contexts. For instance, in Lebanon, civic education places more emphasis on 'obedience rather than participation' (Akar, 2006: 61); in Saudi Arabia's national education programmes, 'student teachers tend to avoid politics as it might trouble their lives' (Al-Maamari, 2011: 43); and in Oman, civic education is 'not an integral component in teachers' preparation programme' (Al-Maamari, 2011: 44). Hence, the dearth of citizenship education programmes in the aforementioned countries has left their education systems vulnerable to the dominance of authoritarian values, a lack of opportunities for participation in governance and decision making, the prevalence of non-democratic and corrupt political regimes, and the curtailment of freedom of speech and belief. One therefore can assume that these countries' education systems could have done enough to teach citizens to be democratic, and even violent towards some of the despotic regimes and foreign occupiers in the region.

Now, if education has not played a significant role in encouraging people to embark on *jihād* (whether through either offensive or defensive radicalisation) to enact terrorism, but it rather is their rage that has caused them to act violently, then it seems unlikely that terrorism could be meaningfully countenanced through reimagining and reinterpreting the notion of *jihād*. Considering that education has played an insignificant role in perpetuating *jihād*, we want to invoke a notion of education that can contribute towards countenancing terrorism. My insistence on an African philosophy of education to combat terrorism is motivated not only by the fact that extreme radical groups have often abused and misappropriated the concept *jihād*, but also by the fact that education remains a credible response to bring an end to dehumanisation, global instability and terrorism.

African philosophy of education as a means to reduce terrorism

As has been argued earlier, terrorist violence is a symptom not necessarily of the formal educational processes in communities, but rather, first, is a result of people's misrecognition of each other (for instance, citizens' views that the state lacks legitimacy or the state's refusal to concede to citizens' sense of autonomy); and second, is a consequence of exclusion that causes people to suffer deprivations and grievances that turn to violence. Embedded in my argument that African philosophy of education can countenance terrorism is a view that such violence can be reduced if guided by compassionate imagining, recognising the other, and being responsible towards one another – a matter of recognising our common humanity, or what Benhabib (2011: 67) refers to as our 'capacity for communicative freedom' known as democratic iterations. In her words:

> By *democratic iterations* I mean complex processes of public argument, deliberation, and exchange through which universalist rights claims are contested and contextualised, invoked and revoked, posited and positioned throughout legal and political institutions, as well as in associations of civil society.
>
> (Benhabib, 2011: 129, my italics)

At least three processes can be identified in the discourses of democratic iterations. First, it involves the capacity to initiate action and opinion to be shared by others through public argument (Benhabib, 2011: 127); second, through iterations, people respect one another to agree or disagree on the basis of reasons they can accept or reject – a matter of deliberating as subjects and authors of opinions and laws (Benhabib, 2011: 67); and every iteration transforms meaning, adds to it, enriches it in subtle ways (Benhabib, 2011: 129). If terrorism were to be countenanced through democratic iterations, then people have to willingly initiate action to avoid violence and offer opinions that

others can share to embrace non-violent ways or ways in which violence can be contained. Then, reasons have to be considered and reconsidered on the basis that terrorist violence is executed by people who are seemingly desperate for recognition and who despairingly see no chance of their views being heard. Responses to such views have to be opened up (that is, invoked and revoked) so that the threat of violence can be undermined and validity claims can be taken into controversy, so that it is only though violence that people's demands can be satisfied. Likewise, to talk repeatedly through multiple causes of violence ought to stimulate deliberations away from forms of violence linked to overthrowing democratic regimes with authoritarian or dictatorial ones, to positions that reconsider causes of violence that emerge from perceptions of injustice and the lack of recognition and denial of equal social status (Schwartzmantel, 2011: 186).

Although Benhabib (2011: 194) seems to be clear on some of the dystopias of our times, namely an increasingly militarised empire, a world hegemony, subjecting every country in the world to increasing criminalisation and surveillance, punishing the poor by incarcerating them and letting the needy and destitute fall through the social net into criminality, madness and drug abuse, she seems to be surprisingly reticent about terrorist violence and its risk to a democratic public sphere. My contention is that it is the obligation of democratic iterations to countenance the dystopias, as well as the uncertainty of terrorist violence. Only then can there be a successful response to the dystopia of terrorism. This is so because democratic iterations are aimed at achieving cosmopolitan justice (that is, what collective decisions can we reach that would be just and legitimate), rather than being concerned with norms of human behaviour that are valid for all times and in all places (Benhabib, 2011: 152). The point is that democratic iterations will hopefully contribute towards arriving at a language that can offer a more hopeful response to terrorist violence.

What, then, should constitute this language that can offer a more hopeful response to terrorist violence? And, given the complexity and density of our pluralist contexts, can we begin to assume that there is indeed a singular language that can talk to both the despondent and the hopeful? And here I am not referring simply to inter-religious or multicultural dialogue – this has been happening and, in most instances, has created spaces of mutual respect and understanding. What I am now exploring is the possibility of a communal language, which I shall argue is critical within, and to, a pluralistic society. To Benhabib (2011: 127–129), the composition of this language would need to include shared opinions, respect of these shared opinions, and transformative meanings. According to Cavell (1979: 168):

> In speaking of the vision of language … and in emphasizing the sense in which human convention is not arbitrary but constitutive of significant speech and activity; in which mutual understanding, and hence language, depends upon nothing more and nothing less than our shared forms of life, call it our mutual attunement or agreement in our criteria.

He continues:

> But though language – what we call language – is tolerant, allows projection, not just any projection will be acceptable, i.e., will communicate. Language is equally, definitively, intolerant – as love is tolerant and intolerant of differences, as materials or organisms are of stress, as communities are of deviation, as arts or sciences are of variation.
>
> (1979: 182)

Previously, I have argued that terrorism is a form of political violence that has not been caused by education. I have also asserted that education has not played a significant role in encouraging people to embark on *jihād* (offensive or defensive way) to enact terrorism, leading to my view that a reconceptualisation of *jihād* would not necessarily reduce violence. I have argued, however, that terrorism is caused by uncertainty, hopelessness and instability, leading to human deprivation, exclusion, dystopia in the world and, ultimately, to outrage. So, while education does not cause terrorism, it can serve as a credible response to political violence. If an African philosophy of education, therefore, is to countenance terrorism, it has to manifest itself through a communal language that is able to transform meanings through the sharing of opinions, which are shaped by truths (ours and that of others) based on a value system of sincerity. And, because of our mutual attunement, this language/education would need to be as tolerant of differences as it is intolerant of indifference. So, on the one hand, this education needs to be about knowing the self (to know how to be), and knowing the other (to know how the other is). And, on the other hand, this education is about experiencing the other through acting responsibly and recognising our common humanity.

On the possibility of an African Renaissance through an African philosophy of education

Now that I have shown how an African philosophy of education can countenance terrorism, I shall focus on whether the notion of an African Renaissance is attainable. The promotion of an African Renaissance, following Pityana (1999: 148), involves the preservation of human dignity, the achievement of equality, the enhancement of human rights and freedoms, and the enhancement of the common good. I want to locate the notion of an African Renaissance as moral renewal within the interdependence between individual persons and the community. Human interdependence places a strong emphasis on achieving solidarity *through* individual persons' engagement with other people. Mokgoro (in Pityana, 1999: 144) states that the value of human interdependence 'has been viewed as the basis for a morality of cooperation, compassion, communalism, concern for the interests of the collective respect, respect for the dignity of personhood, with emphasis on virtues of that dignity in social relationships and practices'. Although the emphasis of human interdependence seems to be

tilted towards cooperation, communalism, collective respect and dignity in social relationships and practices, my contention is that the aforementioned practices cannot be achieved without the significant strength of will of the individual to live a sense of community from the inside.

It seems as if I suggest that the individual is prior and supreme vis-à-vis the community. This is certainly not the case. With reference to the ideas of Nyasani (1989) and Gyekye (1989), I shall attempt to move beyond the dualist opposition of individual person versus community. The assumption has always been that the African society is communal and ignores individual persons' interests, wills, desires and ability to act autonomously. Nyasani (1989: 13) challenges the view that African society puts more stress on African communalism or community of persons than on individual autonomy. He posits that the individuality of the individual becomes infused into a larger individual, which is the community, the clan or the tribe (Nyasani, 1989: 21). In other words, the individual person assumes responsibility for his/her actions 'not as a detached element of the whole but as an element within the whole [community] itself' (Nyasani, 1989: 22). Similarly, Gyekye (1989: 48–49) attacks the view that, as far as Africans are concerned, the community takes precedence over the individual person, that is that 'the individual is held as less significant, or rather his [her] status has been diminished, while that of the community augmented and made more prominent'. Gyekye (1989: 49) develops his argument for the individual person's interdependence with the community by drawing on the following fragment of Akan (the largest ethnic group in Ghana) thought: 'All persons are children of God; no one is a child of the earth'. He infers that, in Akan thinking, an individual person is conceived of as 'having an antemundane existence with God'. An individual person is thus conceived as 'self-complete' in its being except having been created by God. In his words:

> If this is so, it cannot be the case that the reality of the person is derivative and posterior to that of the community. It would not therefore be correct to maintain that the notion of personhood is conferred by the community; neither would it be correct to assert that the definition of personhood is a function of the community.
>
> (Gyekye, 1989: 50)

Furthermore, Gyekye (1989: 52) posits that a community constitutes 'a group of persons … linked by interpersonal bonds, biological or otherwise'. He believes that this fact about personhood in African thought 'takes away the right of the community to pontificate on the reality of the person and to define and confer personhood on the human being' (Gyekye, 1989: 52). Put differently, a person is a complete individual, that is an individual person, and 'this ontological completeness does not suffer diminution in consequence of his/her entry into, or membership of, the community' (Gyekye, 1989: 53).

However, to say that an individual person is 'self-complete' does not imply that he/she can be conceived of as without relations to other individuals. This

interdependence of individual persons and community emphasises the value of collective action in African thought, which maintains that the welfare of each individual person is linked to his/her identification with the community. Gyekye (1989: 54–55) asserts that this 'organic relation between the individual person and the … community' does not undermine his/her 'completeness' or 'personal autonomy'. In essence, the notion of African communalism is not necessarily opposed to individuality, but rather 'expresses the idea that individual persons, even in a communal setting, have identities, characters and wills of their own … with ability to think and act autonomously' (Gyekye, 1989: 57 and 59). It is an individual's 'will' to act autonomously that can deepen the notion of community.

Consequently, a renewal of African values can best be achieved through the engagement of individual persons in community. But then, in the first place, individuals should practise such values; individuals should want to engage with other people. To cooperate with and respect people and treat them with dignity are in the first place values of the 'good life' that individuals live and on the basis of which they willingly want their collective actions to be determined by the group or society. Berlin (1969: 158) regards this solidarity with the group or community as a desire 'for union, closer understanding, integration of interests, a life of common dependence and common sacrifice'. In this way, an emphasis on human interdependence can be considered a way to renew African moral values that can help 'sail the ship' of an African Renaissance, for the reason that, in the words of Gyekye (1989: 59), 'it attempts … to integrate and keep in creative balance individual uniqueness and social participation'. Pityana (1999: 147) makes the claim that any serious attempt to 'sail the ship' of an African Renaissance depends on a renewal of African moral values that is inextricably linked to the realisation of values constitutive of the interdependence between an individual person and the community, aimed at promoting 'social responsibility and solidarity, the duty of care, the virtues of sensitivity, selflessness and devotion to duty, and the vision of a society founded on justice and equality' – all aspects constitutive of an African philosophy of education.

In conclusion, I have argued that the notion of an African philosophy of education is an appropriate practice that can effect the moral renewal of African values associated with sailing the ship of an African Renaissance. An African philosophy of education can enhance critical reflection and imagination, as well as provide a moral premise in terms of which a renewal of respect for elders, compassion and human interdependence in an African spirit can be realised. In this way, the possibility of an African Renaissance is indeed on the cards. Finally, an African philosophy of education, when manifested in an aesthetic imagining of the other, and when encapsulated in universal acknowledgements of the other's well-being, can countenance acts of inhumanity and terror, because then we are not individualistic identities, but common human beings with common hopes and common fears, which underscores our common experiences. Terrorism, as previously argued, is not caused by education; it is caused when we fail to experience the otherness of the other. It is my

argument that an African philosophy of education, however, when shaped by compassionate imagining, can countenance terrorism and credibly respond to dehumanisation when we relate through experiencing others, and when we recognise and act responsibly to our common humanity.

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