De- *ethnicisation,* De-masculinisation and Re-Vitalization of the *Ubuntu* Paradigm for Sustainable African Development

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Abstract

Africa is in dire need of sustainable endogenous development perspectives geared at addressing the plethora of development challenges on the continent. This is because the current development ideologies reinforced in Africa, such as neo-liberalism, are racist, imperialistic, and imbued with paternalism and white saviourism. Intrinsic development paradigms for African Development, however, ought to be cognizant of the existential peculiarities in Contemporary Africa, such as 'White Africanisation' and embracing postmodern ethos. This paper uses critical theory, de-colonial and post-colonial criticism to argue that despite the volatile and recalcitrant critiques of the Ubuntu African paradigm, the framework has remained indispensable in African Development debates. The paper contends that the *Ubuntu* model for human well-being ought to be deconstructed and re-situated to align with the pertinent development sustainabilities such as ethical sustainability, gender sustainability, ecological sustainability, and human rights sustainability.

Introduction

There is a tendency to erroneously associate the *Ubuntu* philosophy with justice, equality, integrity, equity, egalitarianism and human dignity (Mayaka and Truell 2021, 651). However, the *Ubuntu* paradigm is buttressed in social ambiguities such as Interdependence, one-ness, whole-ness, greatest harmony(Mboti 2015,129-143), reciprocity, humanness, caring, compassion, mutuality, social cohesion, common good and communitarianism(Matolino & Kwindingwi 2013,199; Tutu, 1999, 34-35). The *Mbitian* dictum "I'm because we are" demonstrates the difficulty of extricating Ubuntu social consensus from androcentric epistemologies and patriarchal structures of reality. The bottom line is - who decides the "we are" if social consensus is to be deemed fair and just in a social milieu characterised by hegemonic masculinity and asymmetrical power relations between men and women.

2

The conceptualisation of development as an endogenous process aimed at empowering human persons to overcome structural barriers to poverty eradication and human wellbeing is indicative of the need to re-think the *Ubuntu* framework. This is because ethical development ought to focus on overcoming material deprivations and structural poverties such as choice poverty, opportunity poverty, and the poverty of powerlessness(Fakuda-Parr 1999, 100). Authentic or ethical development therefore 'appears' disconnected from the traditional African *Ubuntu* conceptualisation because it requires intrinsic development philosophies that promote and protect human flourishing irrespective of gender, race, tribe, ethnicity, age, and social status.

Sustainable development also requires that endogenous development paradigms like *Ubuntu* aligns with not only economic sustainability but also ethical sustainability, gender sustainability, environmental sustainability and human rights sustainability. This chapter argues that the current conceptualisation of *Ubuntu* is not in tandem with the above sustainabilities and this explains the need to re-construct and re-conceptualise the notion of *Ubuntu* so that it does not fall short of the contemporary requirements for social justice and non-discrimination.

This chapter employs emancipatory methodologies such as critical theory because it aims at liberating African people from moral, epistemological, metaphysical, ideological and collectivized gender oppression and subjugation. Post-colonial and de-colonial criticisms are used in this chapter as critical emancipatory frameworks because the philosophy of *Ubuntu* has been domestically colonised by a patriarchal gender blind cabal of African scholars who have insulated it from gender criticism under a covert hegemonic masculinity guise code named gender neutrality. The de-colonisation and post-colonisation of precepts and concepts implies the alignment of knowledge with the ethical requirements of equality, equity, justice, human rights and human dignity.

Neo-liberalism and the Crisis of Sustainable Development in Africa

In the 1990s, almost the entirety of the African Continent embarked on a neo-liberal expedition. Neo-liberalism is a form of disorganised capitalism that transfers the development function from the state to the market(Kizito 2023 124). In neo-liberal states, the *Bantu*(people) are stripped of *Ubuntu*(humaneness) because the production of economic growth takes precedence over human rights, gender justice and human dignity. Under neo-liberal capitalism, economic sustainability is prioritised over Ubuntu virtues such as humanness, human dignity, love, compassion, respect, the common good, and generosity. According to the neo-liberal perspective, economic sustainability is interpreted in terms of the state capacity to stimulate economic growth which is defined as economic development.

Due to the emphasis of economic sustainability, neo-liberal structural adjustment austerities such privatisation and liberalisation have precipitated corruption, fraud and banditry(Wiegratz 2019, 357; Whyte and Wiegratz 2016, 6). This has led to the de-humanisation of African people to levels unheard of before in the history of the continent. Even South Africa under the leadership of the freedom fighter Nelson Mandela embraced a neo-liberal path despite the socialist rhetoric of returning the wealth of South Africa to the people(Fourie 2022; Schneider 2003; Bond 2000).

Neo-liberalism turned the *bantu*(human persons) into *bintu*(things) that were a mere means to economic development. The bantu were de-humanised and *de-buntulised*(stripped of humanness) through land grabbing, land evictions, development induced displacements among other vices. Public health facilities in numerous neo-liberal polities turned into death camps and pig sties due to gross underfunding. A number of Africans in neo-liberal states became nostalgic about the better state of public health facilities during colonial and the early years of independence.

Neo-liberalism *greedised* the consciences of Africans into pursuing profit and materialism at the expense of ethics and integrity. This led to proliferation of vices such as child and human sacrifice, criminality, fraud, embezzlement, nepotism, adulteration of foods stuffs,

selling of fake medicines, vandalisation of public utilities, violent civil disobedience, money laundering, internet fraud and human trafficking. Although neo-liberal states boasted about high economic growth, corruption became a social system that entangled almost every one. One had to bribe to get a job, see a doctor, see a police officer and sit for an exam. Even in some Pentecostal and charismatic churches people had to bribe God by giving tithes, seed money and offerings in order to get blessings(Kizito 2022).

The neoliberal economic growth conception of sustainable development is a vague and tenuous because gross-dehumanisation and growth in *de-buntulisation* all contribute to economic growth and consequently economic development. For example, the displacement of 30,000 persons from their ancestral land without compensation in order to construct an oil refinery that employs 500 people contributes to economic growth. Similarly, the embezzlement of 3 billion US dollars by a politician in order to a build mega hotel also contributes to economic growth. The economic sustainability perspective on development is therefore morally unsustainable because it does not differentiate between ethical and unethical economic growth(Shiva 2011).

Sustainable development requires that we not only engender the moral economy which is the fulcrum of all other economies but also consider the structural injustices and vulnerability intricacies situated in all other economies. These other economies include; the market economy, the love/care economy, subsistence economy, sustenance economy and green economy(Kizito 2018 351). In a subsistence economy people satisfy their basic needs by utilising the riches of the natural world where as in sustenance economy human beings produce and reproduce wealth in partnership with nature(Shiva 1999). The green economy on the other hand creates systems and institutions that transform the market economy so that it expresses social and ecological values(Strassmann 1995). The green economy fosters a bio-centric and eco-centric ethics where animate and non-animate beings depend on each other for survival. Engendered ethical sustainability requires that we align all economies with equality, equity, human rights and social justice. Neo-liberalism fosters structural injustices but ignoring all the other economies where humans are situated. For instance, it regards the

work done by women in the private sphere or care economy as non-productive and economically useless because it has no market orientation. Similarly, it regards the people who are producing in partnership with nature as un-productive because they don't align with market logic. This leads to despicable de-humanisation and de-*ubuntulisation* of human species.

The denigration of work done by women in private sphere of the house hold or love economy not only tantamount to sexism but also the dehumanisation of women. This *obuntu bulamu* oriented work includes caring for the sick, elderly, children, person with disabilities and husbands working in the public sphere of employment. Women display the highest level of *obuntu bulamu*(dignified humanesss) by putting their carriers on halt in order to take care of vulnerable bantu such as foetuses and toddlers. In Nordic countries which are generally regarded as models on human development such as Norway, Finland, Denmark and Sweden, the debate on remunerating women working in the house hold is already in advanced stages. According to these countries, the work women do in the sphere of domesticity in terms of cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and sexual entertainment is genuine and remunerable although considered as informal in market oriented neo-liberal economy.

Therefore the human development sustainablities on which the Ubuntu philosophy should be anchored are ethical sustainability, gender sustainability, environmental sustainability, human rights sustainability, financial sustainability, economic sustainability and social sustainability. These sustainablities are not mutually exclusive but rather mutually reinforcing. Ethical sustainability ought to be the foundation of development sustainablities because it situates development on an ethics and integrity base. Ethical sustainablitiy is a pivot of all sustainablities because ethics lies at the motivational and intentional levels of human thought and action(Kanakulya 2015, 169).

Gender sustainability is also key to sustainable human development because it engenders all other sustaianblities by situating them on non-discrimination, justice, equality and equity. Environmental sustainablity aligns development to both the needs of

the present and future generations(Etieyibo 2017a 641). This is actualised by promoting and protecting ecological virtues such as environmental stewardship, de-growth, and bio centric ethics. Human rights sustainability on the other hand aligns economic growth, economic policies, market mechanisms and economic institutions with human rights principles and standards embedded in domestic, regional and international human rights instruments.

Economic sustainability requires the greening of economic policies and practices in order to promote and protect planetary health and climate justice. Financial sustainability on the other hand refers to the financing of development without compromising the needs of future generations, economic stability, gender justice, ecological justice and human rights standards. Social sustainability refers to the way social group, social institutions and social structures supports development so that it is not ecologically destructive, discriminatory, anti-human rights and morally unjust.

Engendering the Ubuntu Discourse for Sustainable Development

Proponents of the traditional Ubuntu conception fail to explicate how a derivative of a gendered patriarchal society turns out to be mutually just and non-discriminatory. It must be noted that traditional *Ubuntu* oriented African societies such as the Baganda, Shona, Zulu, Ndebere, Basoga and Batusi are characterised by un-equal gender roles and power relations between men and women. In these societies, men commanded a lot of power in terms of decisions making and control of material resources. Therefore Ubuntu concepts such as community, solidarity, mutual responsibility(Gyekye 1995) humanness, reciprocity, sharing, caring, respect, humility, dignity and mutual recognition(Lim et al. 2022, 2) are situated on androcentric epistemologies and metaphysics. This implies that the interpretation of the above concepts is *picturistic* of a male dominated patriarchal African society. In other words these are biased masculinised conceptions and perceptions of reality.

7

The ethos of patriarchal *Bantu* African societies demonstrate how Ubuntu conceptions discriminate and oppress women(Keevy 2009, 41). For instance among the traditional Bahima of Uganda, allowing your visitor to have sexual intercourse with your wife was a Ubuntu gesture of love, hospitality, friendliness, empathy, deep kindness, generosity and compassion(Prozesky 2003, 5-6). Similarly among the Bahima and Batusi, the kidnap and rape of one's bride and then reporting oneself to the in-laws so that bride wealth can be paid was regarded as a display of humanness and integrity. In both scenarios, the woman was treated as a pawn in the entire process because her views and consent were perceived as secondary.

Among other *Ubuntu* African societies like the Baganda, Basoga and Batooro, women were denied the prerogative to eat chicken, eggs, grasshoppers and other delicacies under disguise of mythical distortions. Among the Baganda in particular, the Nakku tradition was held in high esteem. According to this custom, the king was required to have sexual intercourse with a virgin girl between 12- 16 years before being coroneted as his majesty the Kabaka of Buganda. Although the Nakku remains the official wife of the king and is given an official palace, the king is not supposed to have carnal knowledge of her again and no other man should ever have sex with her in her whole life. This is a clear demonstration of the inhumanness of communitarian tenets that foster and reinforce Ubuntu solidarity and social cohesion.

Numerous scholars wrongly believe that *Ubuntu* concepts such as social justice, reciprocity, mutuality and social solidarity are gender neutral. However the gender neutral conceptualisation of a patriarchal society is a deceptive distortion and concealment of asymmetrical power relations between men and women. This fallacy of gender neutrality is embedded in the assumption of similarity and sameness of male and female persons(*bantu*). One cannot claim to be gender neutral in a social milieu characterised by discrimination and exclusion of women. Okyere-Manu and Konyana(2018 214) reiterate that *Ubuntu* "sounds gender-neutral and yet in reality its application basically serves to benefit male members in particular patriarchal communities".

In a number of *Ubuntu* oriented societies, women are denied the rights to own land, inherit property, the right to divorce and the right to control one's body and sexuality. The denial of women strategic gender interests such the right to land ownership is responsible for feminisation of poverty in a number of African countries. The feminisation of poverty implies that women dominate poverty statics. In other words, women are the poorest of the poor despite being entitled to practical gender needs such as access to land and water. The gender dimension of sustainable development requires the negation of structural constraints that produce and reproduce gendered poverty in society. These structural constraints include sexist, patriarchal ideologues and paradigms such as *Ubuntu* philosophy.

De-*Ambiguitification* and *De-Fallacisation* of the Traditional Ubuntu Conception

The classical philosopher Aristotle argued that 'man is a political animal'. The term political etymologically comes from the Greek word *polis* and the Latin word *socios* which mean society. The above Aristotelian dictum therefore simply meant that man is social by nature. Plato and Aristotle argued that the sociality of man is takes precedence from the fact that a human being has needs which he/she cannot provide by him/herself.

The *Ubuntu* oriented maxims that a person is a person through other persons(Tutu, 2004, 24-25) is a reverberation of the Aristotolean and Platonic perspective on the natural sociality and communicative dimension of the human person. This aphorism depicts how the individual human person needs other human beings in the process of self-actualisation and self-transcendence. It also points to the need to sacrifice one's self-interests for the sake of the common good.

The Ubuntu maxim *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* among the Zulu, *munhu munhu nekuda kwevanhu* among the Shona and *motho ke motho ka batho* among the Tswana people (Mugumbate et al. 2023, 3) means that to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and establishing human relations with them on that basis(Ramose 1999, 52; Maris 2020, 315). This *maxim* is vague and ambiguous because it confuses social solidarity with social justice and collective engagement with

9

equity and equality. In fact among other *lingua franca* the Ubuntu dictums such as "*umoja ni nguvu* (Kiswahili language), *ndi nii tondu wanyu* (Kikuyu language); and *an dhano nikeche wantie* (Luo language)"(Mugumbate et al. 2023, 3) simply mean that we are strong together. However, togetherness does not mean equally dignified social cohesion and social power does not mean equal empowerment of male and female agency.

The philosophers John Mbiti demonstrates the ambiguity of the *Ubuntu* oriented dictum "I am because we are, and "since" we are, therefore I am" in his clarification that "What happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group, community or country happens to the individual"(Mbiti, 1969, 106). The Mbitian thinking that whatever happens to the individual happens to the group is incredulous and implausible. This is because gender injustices suffered by individual women such as bridal rape, wife beating, child marriage, female genital mutilation, marriage to spirits, forced sexual intercourse with a dead husband, denial of foods such as chicken and eggs can never constitute collective happenings equally affecting males in a patriarchal setting. Similarly it is incoherent and fallacious to argue based on the Mbitian 'Iam because we are' maxim that injustices suffered by individual men such as forced circumcision among the Bagishu of Uganda and corporal punishment against boys and girls are collective happenings affecting both men and women in the entire society.

Therefore the ambiguity of the Ubuntu dictums 'Iam because we are' and 'We think therefore we are'(Ramose 1999, 44-49) is embedded in the false implicit assumption that communitarianism, collectivism and *grouplisation* are synonymous with ethicality, justice, gender equity, human dignity and empowerment. The decisions about what constitutes the major tenets of how a 'person becomes human through other persons' largely exclude women, and other vulnerable persons such as children and persons with disabilities. There is thus a need to for a *Ubuntu* paradigm that harmonizes the social and individual dimensions of a *Muntu* like the two sides of the same coin.

Metz opines that "to have *ubuntu* is to be a person who is living a genuinely human way of life, whereas to lack *ubuntu* is to be missing human, excellence or to live like an

animal"(Metz 2021, 1). Metz confuses humanness with humaneness(civility) and the fostering of human dignity. He also falsely assumes that the term humanness exclusively applies to an ethical virtue(Metz 2021, 4). The notion 'humanness' within Ubuntu orientated African societies is conceptualized with the ambit and parlance of an androcentric patriarchal society characterized by hegemonic masculinity. For instance, the denial of women property entitlements such as land rights and the right property inheritance is a 'humanness thing to do' because of the patriarchal distortion that nature as ascribed to women an inferiority or subordinate status to men.

In addition, the throwing away of twins in order to overcome an omen is a humanness oriented vice that aimed at protecting a family from a spiritual catastrophe. Similarly, the sacrifice of a human person to the spirits in order to stop a pestilence from the gods is an exhibition of humanness because the action aims at protecting a larger section of human society. In other words, humanness in this context is perceived through the utilitarian lens of promoting the greatest good for the greatest number. Animalism on the other hand is safeguarding the life of one individual and the expense of losing the lives the majority.

In defence of the *Ubuntu* conception of a human being, Ramose, argues quite convincingly that "to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them"(Ramose, 1999, 52). However, recognizing the humanity of persons in *Ubuntu* society is done basing on different gender roles and asymmetrical power relations between men and women which are assumed to be natural. More so, humane relations are also premised on patriarchal customs and traditions that foster adaptive preferences among women under the guise of reinforcing social harmony and social cohesion. Adaptive preferences derive from the socialization of women into accepting injustices, such as poverty, domestic violence, rape, denial of land and other property entitlements.

De-ethinicisation of the *Ubuntu* Paradigm for Sustainable Human development

The Ubuntu paradigm needs to be extricated from the *Bantu* ethnic enclave so that it is responsive to the promotion of sustainable human development irrespective of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sex, nationality and social status. The *Ubuntu* philosophy ought to equally appeal to white Africans, Afro-Asians, Latino Africans the same way it appeals to African Bantu, Afro Nilotics, Afro-Hamites, Afro-cushites, Black Americans and Black-Europeans. The paradigm also ought to equally appeal to traditional Africans, modern Africans, postmodern Africans and the global humanity. The *Ubuntu* paradigm therefore needs to be deconstructed from androcentric and patriarchal dictums such as humanness, reciprocity, love, social harmony, caring which are disguised as gender neutral.

Bantu societies such as the Baganda, Zulu, Ndebele, Shona, Bahima and Banyolo regarded kings and members of the royal family as more superior to commoners or subjects. The Buganda royals(abalangira) referred to subjects as abakopi(inferiors) and the Bahima called their subjects abairu(slaves). According to the Bahima it was a taboo to for a royal to spit on the ground when a muhiru(slave) is around. The Muhiru had to open his mouth so that a muhima could spit in. These despicable cases of dehumanization and *de-ubuntulisation* of subjects in Bantu societies demonstrate the need to deconstruct and *de-ethinicise* the Ubuntu framework so that it is in tandem with humaneness, non-discrimination and social justice.

According to Bhengu(1996, 27), a person who fails to exhibit humanness or Ubuntu is not a person but an animal however, among the Baganda, the Kabaka(king) was given beastly, super human and super natural attributes such as musota(snake), Mpologoma(lion), Ssalambwa(Viper) Sseggwanga(Rooster), Baffe(husband to both men and women), Nantawetwa(unbendable), Magulunnyondo(the one who has legs which are as hard as a hammer), Ssabasajja(greatest man among all men), Ssabataka(owner of all land) and Ssekesa(burning caterpillar), Nnantayanukulwa(the one whom you don't answer back) and Nnantasongwamulunwe(the one whom you don't point a finger at)(Kamoga 2016).

In addition, among the Batooro and Banyoro of Uganda, the King is given names such as Kabamba iguru(creater of Heaven), lion and Rukirabasaija(the greatest of all men)(Bačko 2017). Therefore although Ubuntu requires the eschewing of beastly and sub-human life styles(Metz 2021, 2), the possession of animalistic and deity characteristics by Kings implies that sometimes they could behave like beasts towards their subjects. In other words, we cannot expect an animal or deity to behave humanely or to practice *Ubuntu* humanness at all times.

The deification of kings among *bantu* tribes thus gave them the discretion to dehuminise, de-*ubuntulise* and subjugate men with impunity through raping their wives, marrying their wives, sacrificing their children to appease the spirits, grabbing their land and killing them because of a disagreement. In Buganda for instance, the subjects had to obey every request of the king with the salutation *wampa ssebo*(everything I have is from you). The dehumanization of people in *Bantu* societies was regarded as normal because it was analogous to a creator dealing with his creation or a potter molding the clay.

In addition, the *Ubuntu* virtues of generosity, compassion, love and humanness were appreciated among different Bantu tribes in order foster social cohesion within the group. Otherwise persons outside the tribe were regarded as foreigners and aliens who were a danger to society. These people were discriminated and socially excluded before being assimilated in the society. They were sometimes treated as slaves and ostracized for many years before being integrated into the society. More so, there was also ostracization of persons in *Ubuntu* societies for marrying a spouse from another bantu tribe. Ostracization was severe if a *muntu* married a person from the nilotic or nilo-hamitic ethnicities.

There is therefore a need to de-construct the traditional ethinicised *Ubuntu* ontology because it accords humanness and dignity to different bantu(people) in society on the basis of class, gender and social status. For instance, kings, queens, princes, priests and

priestesses command more humanness and dignity compared to subjects or commoners. In Buganda a princess is masculinesed with the title Ssebo(Sir). This implies that this masculinized female possesses more humanness and dignity than all other males and females who are not from the royal family.

According to the hierarchy of being in traditional ethnic *Ubuntu* communities, at the top are gods, spirits, ancestors and then kings, queens, princes, princesses, men, women, children, persons with severe mental and physical disabilities, animals and then inanimate beings(Tempels 1945; Teffo and Roux 1998, 138). Therefore *Ubuntu* has to be realized within the precincts of who commands more and less being or force. The Baganda for instance have a saying that kabaka talabwa mu kamwa(you should not look inside the month of the king). This implies that one should not question the decision or conduct of the king however wrong or unjust it might be. The Baganda have another saying that omusajja tazilwa. This meant that a man cannot be denied sex by a woman under any circumstance.

Sustainable human development requires that we equally enhance the rights and capacities of all human beings to command resources, agency, entitlements irrespective of gender, sex, disability, class, tribe, ethnicity and social status. This is because all human beings ontically and intrinsically command the same level of humanness, beingness, diginity, freedoms and rights. They are equal before the law and have equal rights access and control productive resources such as land and capital. The traditional ethinicised *Ubuntu* paradigm is problematic because it replaces ''sustainability with the 'community of life' and individuality with 'collective agency'(Van Norren 2022, 2791). This tramples on humanness and human dignity by suffocating the capabilities and agency of both male and female bantu to command resources and entitlements. It must be emphasized that in the pursuit of human wellbeing, human rights, social justice, equality, adequacy and fairness of a legal system and equitable distribution of goods and services are very fundamental(Gyekye 1995).

Harmonizing *Ubuntu* with Human Rights Jurisprudence and Justiceability

The traditional conception of *Ubuntu* has to be aligned with both soft and hard law international and regional human rights instruments that have been ratified or accepted by the various African Countries. Almost all Africans countries have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights(ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights(ICESCR), the Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women(CEDAW), the Conventions on the Rights of Person with Disabilities(CRPD) and the Convention of the Rights of Children(CRC). In addition with in the African Human Rights System, the majority of African States have ratified the African Charter on Human and People's Rights(Banjul Charter), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child(ACRWC) and the Maputo protocol to the Banjul Charter. The above International and regional instruments protect the human rights and dignity of all Africans irrespective of sex, gender, age, tribe, ethnicity, disability, nationality and social status.

The Maputo protocol protects women and girls from harmful cultural practices which are evident in many patriarchal *Ubuntu* societies. These esoteric and anachronistic cultural practices include Female Genital Mutilation(FGM), Wife beating, Child marriage, Forced marriage, Bridal rape, marriage to spirits, sex with a corpse of a dead husband and marital rape. The Maputo protocol also guarantees women reproductive rights especially the right to control one's body and fertility. The ACRWC also protects children from child labour and all forms of sexual exploitation(Kizito 2021,88). Sustainable human development requires that all development policies, plan and programmes align with the respect, protection and fulfillment of both regional and international human rights.

The facticity of dualist legal systems in the majority of African countries implies that the human rights enshrined in both international and regional human rights need to be domesticated or rendered justiciable so that the national courts can enforce them. The justiceability of a number of women's rights enshrined in CEDAW and the Maputo protocol

is still an herculean task due to the prevalence of sexist and patriarchal cultures, attitudes and mind sets that vehemently promote and protect hegemonic masculinity.

The protection and fulfillment of the obligations enshrined in international human rights instruments has facilitated the entry of a number of women in patriarchal *Ubuntu* societies into the private sphere of politics, economics and employment. Women now work as professors, doctors, bankers, cabinet ministers, members of parliament, engineers and entrepreneurs. Despite the above status quo, oppressive customs and traditions against women such as domestic violence, bride price and sexual violence are still persistent in a number of patriarchal *Ubuntu* African societies.

It is however unfortunate that the implementation of human rights on the African continent coincided the reinforcement of neo-liberal vulture capitalism. This implies that the subsequent realization of women's rights was not a conscientious and deliberative efforts but rather a decoy aimed at hiding the predatory ramifications of neo-liberal austerities and neo-liberal globalization. Therefore although the human rights priorities of neo-liberal states led to the uplifting of some women into the upper echelons of economic and political power, the majority of men and women were subjugated, impoverished and dehumanized by neo-liberal social transformations. Neo-liberalism demoted a number of men from being bread winners of the household to feminized defendants on handout from women.

Neo-liberal states practiced unsustainable development by prioritizing the promotion and civil and political rights such as the right to vote, freedom of movement, freedom of religion at the expense of social and economic rights such as right to work, right to health, right to social security and right to food. Social economic rights were looked at future aspirations to be realized when countries accumulate substantive economic growth. The upsurge of neo-liberalism led to souring unemployment, underemployment, high levels of poverty and social desperation. This forced a number of African men and women to opted for enslavement in the Arab world among other places. Many Africans also choose to undertake risky journeys to Europe where they ended up being exploited and even killed. Neo-liberalism therefore needs to be expunged from Africa because it not only abuses

human rights with impunity but also violets the ethics of *obuntu bulamu* or dignified humanness.

The Philosophy of *Obuntu Bulamu* and the Horizontalisation of Human beingness

As already intimated, the Ubuntu paradigm needs to be dignified and revitalized in order to align with the various development sustainabilities articulated above. In the proceeding sections, I propose that the philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* should be embraced as a sustainable frame work for the revitalization of the traditional Ubuntu paradigm. Some scholars have erroneously synonymized the *obuntu bulamu* maxim with the patriarchal and androcentric *Ubuntu* African philosophy(Nalugya et al. 2023; Mbazzi et al. 2020). However, *obuntu bulamu* is very different because it is anchored on engendered dignified humanness, engendered humaneness, engendered integrity, engendered mutuality, engendered social consensus, engendered commoning(common good), engendered personhood, engendered altruism, engendered social cohesion, engendered social solidarity, engendered human wellbeing and engendered human flourishing. It also echoes the treatment of both men and women as equal possessors of personhood, dignity and rights irrespective of race, ethnicity, tribe, gender, color, sex expression, nationality and social status.

The *obuntu bulamu* paradigm engenders the traditional conception of Ubuntu by aligning it with gender equality, gender equity, justice and human rights. The *obuntu bulamu* aphorism also engenders the Golden Rule(GR) and Kantian second formulation of the Categorical Imperative(CI). According to the GR, every human being ought to love others as he/she loves oneself and according to Kant's second formulation of the CI, we ought to treat all human persons as ends in themselves and never as a means to an end. It must be noted that the traditional Ubuntu paradigm is gendered in the sense that it fosters not only patriarchy and androcentricity but also asymmetrical power relations between men and women in society.

The philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* deconstructs and negates the vertical understanding of being where by some people are higher possessors of being while others are possessors of lesser being or force. For instance Kings and Princes command higher levels of being than women and men who are subjects or commoners. The *obuntu bulamu* maxim *de-animalises* and *de-deitylises* all human beings by horizontally situating them on equal diginity, humanness, humaneness. Accordingly, all human beings irrespective of gender, race, ethinicity, sex-orientation, age, nationality and social status have the same human dignity. In other words, every one possesses the same personness and human rights like everyone else.

The *obuntu bulamu* maxim is cognizant of the intersectionality of oppression in *Ubuntu* societies according to gender, race, tribe, ethnicity, age, disability, sex-orientation, disability and social status. It also negates epistemic injustice by guaranteeing epistemic and hermeneutic credibility to both men and women in society. An individual who is motivated by the ethics of *obuntu bulamu* abhors vices such as racism, sexism, tribalism, patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, androcentricity, homophobia, heterophobia, xenophobia and anthropocentrism. A *muntu mulamu*(a person who practices dignified humanness) uphold virtues such as human dignity, gender justice, epistemological justice, ecological justice, climate justice, human rights equality, gender equity, justice and fairness.

Obuntu Bulamu and the Sustainability of Development Soft Ware in the Wake of Neo-liberalism

Sustainable development must be built on ethical and engendered software. Development software refers to metaphysical paraphernalia on which development is founded. These include among others; policies, ethical principles, human rights standards, ethical and gendered ideologies, codes of ethics, codes of conduct, ethical and just legal regimes, ecological values, equality and equity standards, gender justice standards and social justice principles. The hard ware of development on the other hand refers to empirical or sensible manifestations of development such as the famers Bank,

family and children court, agricultural loans officer, Environmental commissioner, Justice of the commercial court, office of the human rights commission, equal opportunities commissioner and ethics and integrity officer. The ethicality of development hard ware largely depends on the ethicality of development software.

The unsustainability of neo-liberalism is evident in the obsession with development hard ware or material and sensible capabilities such as large agricultural farmers, large hotels, roads, hospital buildings, mobile telephones, cars, buses, skyscrapers, arcades, sugar corporations, oil corporations, health corporations, agricultural corporations, universities and airports among others. A close scrutiny of the development software of neo-liberalism explains the ethical, ecological, gender and human rights injustices ensconced by neo-liberal disorganized capitalism. Neo-liberalism is premised on development software like the amorality of the market, ethics less developmentalism, scientific development and the tripartite vices of greed is good, greed is right and greed works.

The philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* renders the development software of neo-liberalism an ethical aberration and a human right abomination because it is entrenched on junk science and despicable criminality. The philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* is premised on the notion that the material manifestations of development are a means and not an end of development. The purpose of development is empowering men and women to live a descent, dignified and humane life. This life is characterized by the equitable enjoyment and availability of material capabilities as well as freedom from material deprivations, choice poverty, opportunity poverty and the poverty of powerlessness.

The Ethics of *Obuntu bulamu* categorically entrenches sustainable human development on development software that includes *inter alia*; personal integrity, corporate integrity, dignified humanness, development ethics, morality of markets, ethical economics, green economics, ecological integrity, gender justice, ethical virtues, human rights, climate justice, de-growth, environmental stewardship, bio centric ethics. The above development software will produce and re-produce *obuntu bulamu* oriented development hardware in terms of women land fund offices, disability support centers, land compensation offices,

free breast feeding spaces for women in public spaces, well-furnished and equipped women hospitals, allowances for unemployed persons, free fertility centers, free cancer treatment centers, free well-equipped public hospitals, free public toilets, bathrooms for persons with disabilities, social security fund for the elderly and scholarships for students from poor backgrounds.

The Paradigm Shift from Androcentric *Ubuntu* to Androgynous Obuntu Bulamu

The term androcentrism refers to the understanding of reality from a male point of view. In Patriarchal societies, law, politics, customs and traditions are judged according to the reasonable man standard because women and children are regarded as emotional, unreasonable or less reasonable. The opposite of androcentrism is gynocentricsm. Gynocentrism refers to the understanding of phenomena from a female point of view. Matriarchal societies which are very few in Africa violate the principle of epistemic justice and hermeneutic justice by privileging women perspectives above masculine views.

The philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* promotes androgynocentric epistemologies and modes of knowledge. Androgynocetrism refers to the understanding of reality from the point of view of both men and women. Accordingly, both men and women are reasonable beings and command epistemological and hermeneutic credibility. Therefore the views of both men and women ought to be equally solicited in a democratic or social consensus.

As already articulated, the traditional *Ubuntu* paradigm is androcentric because its related nuances such as mutual recognition, social harmony, reciprocity and humanness are situated on masculine points of view. For instance *Ubuntu* ethos such as bride price or bride wealth promote *Ubuntu* virtues of love, sharing, friendship, respect and reciprocity among Bantu families and communities but fundamentally turn women into objects for economic transactions and exchanges. The practice of bride price not only *commodifies* and *chattelises* women's bodies but also violates their right to agency and equality in the marriage institution.

Although gender and human rights activists in Uganda among other African countries have not yet succeed in rendering the custom of bride price unconstitutional through their various litigations, the constitutional court has agreed with them that the terms bride pride and bride wealth are misogynous and need to be replaced with bridal gifts. The constitutional court has pronounced that the bridal gifts which are given during the conduct of a tradition marriage are un-refundable when the marriage breaks down or is dissolved. This is profound victory in the battle to render bride wealth unconstitutional and therefore null and void.

The androgynocentic ethic of *obuntu bulamu* defines a *muntu*(person) as one who believes, promotes and protects equal humanity, personhood, dignity, respect, sanctity and love of both men and women. A *muntu mulamu* detests social dictatorship, social oppression and social subjugation. The ethics of *obuntu bulamu* contends that the theory and praxis of sustainable development ought to negate the animalization of human beings, commodifications of human persons, the thingfication of human persons, the amoralisation of markets, the amoralisation of development, the enslavement of human persons, the irrationalisation of women, the discrimination of human beings and amoralisation of women.

The Transition from Anthropocentric Ubuntu to Bio centric and Eco-centric *Ubuntu bulamu*

The philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* is founded on the ethics of environmental stewardship and bio-centric ethics. Environmental stewardship challenges anthropocentric environmental dominionism which is entrenched on the argument that man should use his rationality to dominate nature because he is the center of the universe and therefore the most important life form therein(Horsthemke 2015, 5).). According to the ethics of environmental stewardship, human beings are stewards of the environment and should use their rational capability to live harmoniously with all the other beings in the universe. Bio-centric ethicists argue that all life forms have moral worth and intrinsic value. Eco-

centric ethicists on the other hand opine that nature has moral worth and intrinsic value(Etieyibo 2017b, 149-150). Bio-centric and eco-centric ethicists therefore argue that human beings have an interdependence relationship with nature and should promote the survival of all animate and inanimate beings in the cosmos.

Although some scholars have defended the bio-centric dimension of the traditional conception of *Ubuntu*, (Sindima 1990, 137; Ijiomah 2006, 50; Tanga 2004, 389; Etieyibo, 2011) the patriarchal and androcentric ramifications of the *Ubuntu* framework negate a bio-centric orientation in this paradigm. Eco-feminists have argued painstakingly that patriarchal is responsible for current global environmental crisis(Rodriguez, 2022). This is because the way men dominate and oppress women is the same way they control and subjugate the environmental(Warren, 1990; Merchant, 1980). In the Western world for instance androcentric development theories such as modernization, economic growth and neo-liberalism have precipitated global warming and climate change.

Although patriarchal *Ubuntu* societies have environmental promotion and conservation models such as environmental totemism and ecological spiritism, these duo are accidental consequents of a patriarchal society characterized by hegemonic masculinity. The fact that women are treated as less human others logically implies that nature is the least other. Environmental Totemism refers to taboos that associate clans of people with certain animals or plants such as the Lung fish clan, elephant clan, mushroom room, lion clan and monkey clan among the Baganda. Therefore, it is an abomination to eat or kill your clan totem.

Ecological spiritism on the other hand refers to the association of animate and inanimate beings such as trees, stones, caves, rivers and hills with goods or spirit beings. These dwellings for spiritual entities should therefore never be destroyed or degraded in order to avoid the wrath of deities against the community. Unlike the traditional Ubuntu conception the philosophy of *obuntu bulamu* intentionally, conscientiously, and meticulously promotes ecological justice and environmental sustainability by negating

speciesm or the superiorisation of human beings above all the other beings in the universe.

Conclusion

The crisis orchestrated by neo-liberalism on the African continent validates the urgent need for endogenous Pan African paradigms to engender sustainable development and human flourishing. The traditional *Ubuntu* conception of human wellbeing is ill equipped to solve the ethical crisis posed by neo-liberal transformations in the African social, political and economic milieus. This is because the traditional *Ubuntu* aphorism is patriarchal, sexist and premised on androcentric ethics, metaphysis ad epistemologies. The fallacies and ambiguities of the *Ubuntu* framework are embedded in the collectivistic and hegemonic masculinity oriented nuances such as Iam because we, a person is a person through other persons, social harmony, mutuality, humanness, social solidarity and generosity. This therefore calls for the de-ethinicisation of the *Ubuntu* philosophy so that it aligns with international and regional human rights standards as well as the ethics of globality. This chapter has demonstrated that the peculiarities of contemporary Africa in terms of White Africanisation, Asian Africanisation and postmodern enculturation demonstrate the need to de-construct, re-conceptualize and re-vitalize the Ubuntu framework so that it aligns with engendered human development sustainabilities. The chapter has provided a panacea to the traditional *Ubuntu* maxim by substituting its gendered cliché with the philosophy of Ubuntu bulamu. The dictum of *Obuntu bulamu* rejuvenates the traditional *Ubuntu* precept by aligning it with horizontal humanness, androgynous gender ethics, bio-centrism, eco-centrism and ethical development *soft-warerisation*.

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