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Ubuntu Ways of Living – A Prerequisite for South African Social Justice

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Supervised by Professor Samantha Vice

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Abstract

Principles of distributive ethics are tailored to influence policies and governance at a political level.. South Africa, including many other developing economies, have distributive policies that are ineffective due to the maladministration and corruption that surrounds them. In this essay I submit that in the absence of adequate and effective interventions from governmental institutions, mandated to promote social justice for the most disadvantaged, individuals should carry the duty to aid them, and that duty should be guided by communitarian-ethical principles, such as those found in Ubuntu. . I also argue that, as a matter of social justice, the aid from the private individuals should be used to establish trading and commercial business ventures as opposed to charitable giving, with the aim of promoting the interests of the worst-off group, that is, black women of South Africa, and thus promote social justice.

Key Words: **Ubuntu. Ethics. Prioritarian. Community. Management.**

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Introduction

South Africa is notoriously known for its long and ugly history of racial, social and economic discrimination towards the majority of its citizens who are predominately classified as Blacks, includes, Africans, Coloureds and Indians. This racial prejudice was practiced and enforced through both human acts and institutional policies that led to all sorts of harm (psychological, verbal and physical) being committed to individuals belonging to these groups. This harm to individuals and their livelihoods was enforced through a political, institutional and economic system known as 'Apartheid'. The apartheid system, institutionalised; practised and legislated from 1948 to 1994, had a social hierarchy where whites were at the apex of the hierarchy, followed by Indians and coloureds and then African blacks. The higher the strata you were placed, the better the treatment and the benefits distributed to you. White people received much better benefits such as housing; education and health care from the Apartheid state compared to their black counterparts who were placed at the lower strata of the hierarchy. Black people still feel the cold pinch of apartheid in terms of, for example, accessing descent jobs, health care, education and better living conditions. Similarly, African/Black women are the worst affected, or put differently, they are more disadvantaged, economically and socially, compared to other race and gender groups in South Africa. According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), "the unemployment rate among black African women was 41,0% during [2021: Q2] compared to 8,2% among white women, 22,4% among Indian/Asian women and 29,9% among coloured women" (Stats SA, August 2021). This group of South Africans has no or little means to improve their social welfare, with heavy reliance on institutional government intervention such as

grants and other welfare programmes. A Kantian would regard the poverty experienced by a person as unjust because it limits their range of choices and therefore their autonomy – simply defined as one's capacity to self-govern. Simply, one's capacity to self-govern can be generally understood as a person's ability to engage in free decision making for themselves without being deceived or coerced.

A consequentialist, inclined to maximise welfare or utility, on the other hand, would also not morally justify the living conditions of the poor, but for different reasons though. She would argue that poverty is unjust insofar as the harm and suffering it brings about to the poor and the society as a whole. Without referring to any statistical source, one would presume that harms associated with poverty include, but are not limited to, malnutrition; lack of access to medication and adequate housing; inability to access certain modes of transport and many other socio-economic challenges. A proponent of Ubuntu ethics would not find moral justification in the harms, resulting from poverty, suffered by a person. Her reasons, however, would differ from those given by a Consequentialist and a Kantian. She would argue that poverty is not only bad because of the resulting harms experienced by a person affected by it, but also insofar as it ruins and dampens relational and communal values amongst individuals whose ways of life are rooted in cooperativeness, harmony, togetherness and common good, which according to Kwame Gyekye (2002, p. 310), "requires that each individual should work for the good of all."

In addition to the socio-economic harms experienced by black women in this country, their daily struggle is amplified by a psychological one. Intimate femicide in South Africa is five times more compared to the global average, according to Stats SA. These

acts of psychological, physical and economic harms directed to women in this country are morally impermissible. Also, the current adverse state of affairs women experience daily are clearly morally bad and affect them in a harmful way. From the above, one can see that there is a prima facie case showing black women are the most disadvantaged group compared to other groups in South Africa and can, therefore, be deemed as the 'worst-off group.' It is worth noting that the word 'worst-off group' will be used interchangeably with 'the most disadvantaged' and 'the poor.'

I do not intend to argue for morally acceptable institutional or policy reforms needed to improve the welfare of black women in order to facilitate social justice in the country. It also important to highlight that the focus of this research report is not on merely promoting and advocating acts of benevolence towards the poor or the worst-off. Instead, its primary intention is to consider other alternatives, outside state-run institutional polices and reforms, that are bounded by certain moral values and duties and that can serve as a means of promoting the welfare of those who are most disadvantaged and thus promote social justice. Therefore, I will argue for non-governmental practices that can be adopted to improve the state of affairs of the worst-off group, i.e. black women of South Africa. In essence, these practices will be community-driven and will not be required by charity but rather, by duty and justice.

Furthermore, the acts I refer to are those that are not governed or performed by the state, but by members (i.e. private individuals and civil society as a whole) who regard themselves as sharing the same fate and identity with those who are less disadvantaged than them. The community, in this case, is made up of members, of any race or gender, who deem themselves compelled by moral duty to aid the poor, and who subscribe to

Ubuntu ways of life, of shared identity and shared solidarity, in delivering this aid to the poor (Metz, 2019). This thinking of what constitutes a community is shared by Gyekye (2002: p. 299). According to him a community is not:

> a mere association of individual persons whose interest and ends are contingently congruent, but … a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds, biological and/or non-biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of the group and who have common interest, goals and values.

Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984: p.180) expands on the above conceptualisation of a community given by Gyekye when he asserts that what constitutes a community is the "organic dimension to the relationship between the component individuals." The organic dimension of individual relationships that ground a community, as mentioned by Menkiti, seems to suggest those relationships that are original, pure and that are of life itself. In other words, the relationships that exists between individual members of a community are those that are of life and natural in their make.

Furthermore, the acts of aid referred to here, may not necessarily be universal and relevant to every member of our global society. Ubuntu ways of life, as I will show in the upcoming sections, require agents to act upon their moral duty to aid those who are less fortunate, in virtue of the identity and solidarity they share. Put differently, Ubuntu agents have a stake and are responsible for aiding those that are worst-off, implicated in injustices caused by the Apartheid government and other existing forms of injustice. Thus, these acts of aid are applicable to members of the South African community. Hereafter, for the purposes of this research report, members of a community refer to those members who meet the above-mentioned criteria and who are made up of private

individuals and the civil society. In answering the question that is to follow, I will frame my main argument using an Ubuntu ethical account. But before I answer the question, I will first briefly look at what other normative ethical theories, particularly Western-based, say about how we ought to treat the poor. The two main theories I will unpack are Consequentialism and Deontology. This will be followed by juxtaposing the two ethical theories with Ubuntu ethics to assess if it can morally stand toe to toe with these western-based theories in promoting and protecting the interests of the poor, and at the same time bring to light its distinctiveness. This will be followed by a moral investigation aimed at assessing whether Ubuntu ethics/ways of living can speak to matters of social justice in South Africa. Subsequent to this, I will argue for a *prescriptive* approach on how we can aid the poor. That is, the aid to the poor should take a business-like and commercial approach. Lastly, with the aim of demonstrating how Ubuntu can be possibly practically applied in bringing about an inclusive and harmonious social justice in South Africa, I will give a hypothetical illustration of how private individuals in South Africa could go about doing so.

In light of what has been mentioned thus far, I will answer the following question:

I. Does the Ubuntu ethical account, as an alternative ethical approach that can protect and promote the interests of the poor, provide moral justification in prioritising the redistribution of benefits to the worst-off, for aims of advancing social justice?

The given question carries vast importance. Firstly, the welfare policies of the South African democratically elected government have failed to take a lot of black women, the worst-off group, out of poverty. The implementation of policies is crippled with

corruption and maladministration, making these policies less potent and making their intended benefits (such as access to housing, education, health etc) inadequate in terms of their reach and access. The biggest problem is not that the policies are not valuable in and of themselves but rather it is the lack of implementation of these polices and the corruption that surrounds them. The consequence of this is that more people, particularly black women, get dragged deeper into poverty, leading to a growing pool of the worst-off group. In addition, since 1994 the South Africa's poverty levels have been rising with 1 of 5 South Africans living in extreme poverty. This means about eleven million South Africans survive on R28 a day. Moreover, according to a World Bank report titled 'Overcoming Poverty and Inequality in South Africa', "the share of household wealth held by the top 10 percent in the distribution was 71 percent, while the bottom 60 percent held 7 percent of the net wealth" (World Bank, 2018: 51). This makes South Africa the most unequal country in the world with a Gini coefficient, a statistical measure of inequality, of 0.7 (2021). Such high levels of inequalities, represented by the Gini coefficient of 0.7 – where 1.0 represents absolute inequality, are known to cause great animosity and division amongst members of the same society. Thaddeus Metz (2011, p. 544) echoes this point and says: "it is hard to enjoy a sense if togetherness with others in society when one is seriously impoverished. One feels a sense of shame, inferiority or at least distance when one's basic needs are not met while substantial segments of one's society enjoy great wealth."

The proposed solution to social justice problems currently faced in South Africa is not directed at fixing or refining the government institutions that are supposed to facilitate social justice reforms. However, I am not absolving the state, non-governmental and

governmental institutions, and relevant policies from performing their duties towards the poor. What I am advocating for is an additional 'pair of hands' coming from private individuals who would aid those living in poverty as a way of fulfilling their moral duties. One might, however, argue that individuals in South Africa are already burdened with taxes and other contributions to the state and they might not find reason to take on the state's duty to provide relief to the poor or the worst-off group. My reply to this is, firstly, we cannot wait a day longer for the state to mend its institutions whilst harm associated with poverty continues to impact black women of South Africa every single day. Secondly, with more black women slipping into poverty every year, it is apparent to me that institutions (governmental and non-governmental) mandated to safeguard the interest of the poor do not have adequate capacity to fulfil their given mandates. Therefore, individuals, particularly those that have more, have a moral duty to give to those who are less fortunate than them. Lastly, African traditions, ethics and ways of life, which are rooted in shared identity and solidarity, demand us to provide aid to those in poverty for the aim of bettering and benefiting them and the community as a whole. And of course, by aiding women, we aid their children and other dependents and so indirectly benefit those others too.

I submit that this aid should take a business and commercial framework as opposed to the traditional methods of providing it, that is, through charitable contributions. My reason for this is that contributing or "investing" (without expecting a commercial return), to ventures that are operated by the worst-off, with the expectation of making shared profits, is more sustainable and has potentiality of redistributing benefits (wealth for example) in a manner that they can be passed down to future generations. In addition, following this

approach can potentially enable the worse off to fend for themselves and lessen their dependency on others, including the state.

Outline of Sections

This research report will begin with a general introduction. It will then, discuss the generally accepted normative ethical theories that look at ethical approaches applied when aiding the poor. This will be followed with discussing the ethical approaches Ubuntu argues for when aiding the poor. Subsequent to this, the report will discuss Ubuntu as a moral vehicle to social justice. The Ubuntu philosophy as management theory will then be discussed. A hypothetical case will be given to illustrate how we can apply ubuntu ethics as means to social justice in South Africa. Lastly, concluding remarks will be given, with a list of references provided at the end of the report.

Normative Ethical Theories on Aiding the Poor

Before attempting to answer the given questions, I will first unpack what other (commonly western-based) ethical theories say about individuals' acts towards aiding the poor or the worst-off group as a matter of social justice. Most ethical approaches such as the ones mentioned earlier in the introduction, that is, consequentialism and deontological ethics, give western-based moral solutions on how we ought to treat the worst-off or the poor and how we can foster social justice where social injustices prevail. Furthermore, moral philosophers from philosophical traditions outside Africa,

tend to ignore African ethical values, which might be relevant in driving social justice matters in the continent. For example, Afro-relational ethical accounts such as Ubuntu, are concerned with dealing with matters of social justice from a communitarian and inclusive perspective whilst most western accounts tend to follow ethical frameworks that are individualistic in their posture. These (western) ethical accounts tend to value more individualist properties such as autonomy (Kantian) and utility (Utilitarian) and therefore put less moral weight on communal properties such as mutual aid, togetherness, co-existence and harmony. Before proceeding any further, it is important to mention that my aim is not to discredit or nullify the importance and relevance of western-based ethical accounts on how we ought to deal with matters of social justice, or specifically, how we ought to treat the poor, but rather my aim is to show that communal-based ethical accounts such as Ubuntu also have moral weight and credibility in addressing such matters of social justice.

The first normative ethical theory I will analyse is consequentialism and the particular form of it known as Utilitarianism. My analysis will also speak to what these theories say about how agents (government institutions, private individuals, etc.) ought to treat the poor or those who are more disadvantaged. Stephen Darwall (2003: p. 27) describes consequentialism as "a normative theory of which states of the world (things that can happen) have intrinsic value, which have disvalue, and some account of how these values compare, either with ordinal ranking or with some cardinal metric." To put it in a more lucid way, consequentialists make non-moral judgements on whether state of affairs should be deemed good or bad, and then evaluate the consequences, among comparable ones, of bringing about different states of affairs. Actions that yield the

best consequences, amongst a set of competing consequences, are regarded as right actions and these, according to a consequentialist, are actions that are morally right or obligatory to perform. So, in essence consequentialists aim to maximise outcomes that bring about the most good and minimise those that produce the most harm, and, for them, doing so is our moral duty. A consequentialist could find moral justification in killing a robber who was about to rob and kill two innocent people. This is because, in a consequentialist world, the death of the robber, versus the death of two innocent people, would bring about a state of affairs that has a net benefit to the society as whole, as a result of more individuals benefiting. On matters of treating the poor, on which there is a large body of literature, a consequentialist might argue for acts of benevolence towards the poor because of their ability to potentially reduce harm associated with poverty. Advocates of this normative theory would also argue that poverty should be avoided or minimised because it brings a net disvalue (less happiness or satisfaction) to the society as a whole. Utilitarianism is a particular form of consequentialism and its core moral stance is to command acts that maximise utility or welfare as much as possible, given an array of available acts. The distinctive feature of utilitarianism is that it identifies a 'good state of affairs' as welfare, with some versions then regarding welfare as pleasure or happiness, which is understood by Utilitarians as having intrinsic value, i.e. having value in and of itself.

On matters of treating the poor, a utilitarian will therefore, justify acts of aiding the poor because they are expected to generate more happiness versus not aiding them at all. There are two difficulties associated with the aforementioned related theories. Firstly, information is not always available about the possible consequences of available acts

which may make it difficult when having to choose that particular act that will maximise utility. Onora O'Neill (2005: p. 644) argues that consequentialist ethical theory "lacks precision" because there are cases where there is an absence of data that may be paramount for a consequentialist when having to choose the most valuable act. Secondly, utilitarianism puts emphasis on the satisfaction of individuals' desires and happiness, making them individualistic in nature compared to other ethical accounts that are relational and communal in nature and that tend to put moral emphasis on communal values. Ubuntu ethics, for instance, values the community as a whole and its betterment, when compared to utilitarianism which assigns less or no value to the community itself. Ubuntu ethics would consider the value of the community when considering what constitutes right action, while utilitarianism would consider only the happiness or satisfaction of the individual members of the community.

In addition to highlighting some difficulties associated with western ethical accounts, as an example of utilitarianism, consider Peter Singer's well-known essay titled "Famine, Affluence and Morality." Singer (1972: p. 231) argues that "if it is in our power to prevent something very bad from happening, without thereby sacrificing anything morally significant, we ought, morally, to do it." He essentially encourages us to distribute our benefits (such as money and wealth) to a point of marginal utility. At this point (marginal utility), an additional unit of giving would cause us to sacrifice something of comparable moral significance (p. 241). This means the additional giving would therefore be impermissible as it would probably cause harm to the giver and to those, she has ties with. To put his concept of marginal utility into light, consider the following example. A person earns ten thousand Rands a month with her total cost of

living, including personal savings, estimated at nine thousand Rands. Also assume her marginal utility point is at her normal salary value (R10 000) where additional giving will cause harm to her and her loved ones. Then, according to Singer, the individual in question has to give all of the remaining earnings, R1000, to famine relief so she can fulfil her moral duties. A difficulty I note with Singer's assertions on famine relief is that they are too demanding for agents and this extreme approach to famine relief may become exhausting overtime, leading to some people abandoning Singer's principle. The second challenge pertaining to Singer's assertions on famine relief worth noting is that, they do not factor in relational values which are deemed to have moral weight in Afro-relational ethical accounts such as Ubuntu ethics. If for instance person A steals money from person B to give it to person C who is deemed poor, then a Utilitarian may deem the act of stealing as morally right on the basis that it yields a particular desired outcome, that is, promoting general welfare or happiness. This is despite the fact that another person was harmed in achieving this preferred outcome. Ubuntu ethics will not agree with this approach for the simple reason that it would harm relations that exists between the relevant agents.

Because Utilitarians argue that distributive principles, according to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy (2017), "should be designed and assessed according to how they affect welfare, either its maximization or distribution", they would not morally justify a distribution that prioritises the worst-off. This is because it may not maximise utility or welfare of the overall people. Simply, the aggregate sum of respective utilities from each individual in a society might not be maximised. This means prioritising the distributions of benefits in favour of the worst-off so that not only

to aid them to meet their ends but also so that relational values could also be maximised, as an Ubuntu ethicist would have it, would not be morally valuable to a Utilitarian.

What I have been describing so far is 'act-utilitarianism', which assesses each action in terms of its consequences. 'Rule-utilitarianism' on the other hand would have us obey rules, obedience to which would promote overall welfare. Rule-utilitarianism, however, is usually thought to be unsustainable, because firstly, it does not factor in the possibility that individuals might disagree with the adopted rules overtime as their values, perceptions and principles change with the progress of their lives. Secondly, it does not put moral weight on relational values that communitarian ethics such as Ubuntu would, thus, making it narrow and individualistic.

I will now look at another type of normative ethics known as Deontology, and assess its moral significance on matters of social justice, with a particular focus on what it says on how we ought to treat the poor. Darwall (2003: p.30) explains deontological theories as theories that "hold that what is morally right and wrong is not determined at any level of analysis by what would promote the best outcomes or states, assessed agent-neutrally." In other words, a deontological ethicist would argue that the rightness or wrongness of an action does not only depend on the outcome the act brings about, but rather by the duties that bind that particular agent. Deontological ethics are duty based and are closely associated with a well-known German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Kant is famous for pioneering a moral principle called the Categorical Imperative which has two main formulations. The first one is 'The Formulation of Universal Law' which asserts that you ought to "act only according to that maxim by

which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law", (McNaughton and Rawling, 2007: p. 35 quoting Kant, 1993: p. 30). This means that, according to Kant, agents should engage in acts that are governed by principles that could be made universal or generally acceptable by rational agents. The second formulation of the Categorical Imperative is the 'Formulation of the End-in-itself', which says that you ought to "act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means" (McNaughton and Rawling, 2007: p. 35 quoting Kant, 1993: p. 30). This unconditional principle by Kant demands an agent not to coerce and deceive others for the purposes of fulfilling his ends or interests as this will reduce the agent's autonomy on the receiving end.

How does Kantian ethics deliberate on how an agent ought to treat those affected by poverty? Using Singer's example of famine relief, Kantian ethics demands that we "only to avoid being unjust to those who suffer famine and then be beneficent to those nearer home" (O'Neill, 2005: p. 641). Using Singer's example of famine relief, Kantian ethics proposes that agents, particularly those that can meet their ends, have a moral duty to direct their beneficence to the poor so that they can pursue their ends. According to O'Neill (2005, p. 644), for a Kantian, "relief of famine must stand very high among duties of beneficence." So, for a Kantian, to help the needy means you are also owning their ends and you consequently help them to achieve those ends. In addition, she mentions that we ought to "only to avoid being unjust to those who suffer famine and then be beneficent to those nearer home." Put differently, O'Neill is of the view that an agent should primarily never be unjust to the poor and that he also has a

moral duty to direct his beneficence to those closer to him than those further from him. O'Neill's assertions seem to complement the principles of Ubuntu of prioritising giving aid to those nearer to the agent versus those who are distant from her. "There is an extra reason to serve those with whom one has actually communed," adds Thaddeus Metz, a proponent of Afro-relational ethics. In contrast, it should be noted that the motivation to give to the poor for a Kantian is different for an Ubuntu ethicist. A Kantian would give to a poor individual so that she can help him to advance his ends and therefore, live an autonomous life with a wider range of choices. An agent who lives a life governed by Ubuntu ways of life and ethics would give to the poor not only so that the impoverished agent can advance his needs but also to advance the needs of the community as whole, which is deemed to have moral worth and valuable in and of itself. Afro-relational ethical accounts like Ubuntu assign moral status to the community and advocate that each member of the community commits to advance the goals of the community because of the simple reason that each member finds her identity in community members she communes with. "In a communalistic view, what has primary intrinsic value can be said to be the community or beings as embedded in the community or the relationship fostered by the individuals in the community" Edwin Etieyibo (2017: p. 156-157) writes.

Another problematic aspect about the Kantian moral theory is that it has a narrow account of 'Humanity.' According to Kantian ethics humanity is defined in terms of the rationality and autonomy of the agent. Ubuntu ethics on the other hand, has a broader scope of what humanity is. It is defined in terms of the ability of agents to co-exist and live harmoniously amongst each other. The two varying schools of thought of what

constitutes humanity, seem to indicate that the Ubuntu ethical account, seems to place importance on communitarian-based attributes of humanity rather than individualistic attributes that typically come from Western-based ethical accounts. Thus, an Ubuntu ethical account seems to provide a wider moral reason on why we ought to give to the poor, that is, we ought to give to the poor not only for the promotion of the implicated individuals but for the promotion of the community as a whole. Considering this, I therefore, believe that Ubuntu ethics can be an attractive alternative when one seeks to investigate ethical ways on how we ought to protect and promote the interests of the most disadvantaged in South Africa.

What has been presented thus far are arguments showing Ubuntu ethics as a credible ethical alternative to Western ethical approaches on how we ought to deal with poverty. As mentioned earlier, my aim is not to reduce the importance and relevance of Western ethical account on how we should aid the poor but rather to investigate the moral force Ubuntu has in defending and promoting the interests of the poor in comparison to its Western counterparts. My aim is also to highlight the distinctiveness of the Ubuntu philosophy as an alternative moral vehicle that is morally credible and worthy to address social justice matters of South Africa. In the upcoming section I will comprehensively unpack Ubuntu ways of life and ethics and thereafter speak to the duties Ubuntu bestows on an agent particularly with regards to aiding those who are more disadvantaged.

Ubuntu and Aiding the Poor

The African-based philosophy, Ubuntu, sits under the realm of communitarian philosophy and it is usually expressed in Zulu, a native language in Southern Africa, as Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu, which roughly translates in English as 'A person is a person through others' or 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am' (Mbiti 1989, p. 106).

When attempting to describe the term Ubuntu, Scholars of Ubuntu Philosophy converge to one word, 'humanness' – the quality of being a human being. According to Mogobe Ramose (2014: p. 121), "Ubuntu philosophy is the lived and living experience of human being [which] means that the human dignity of the Bantu-speaking peoples demands recognition, protection, promotion and respect on the basis of equality with all other human beings, wherever they may be on the planet." Ubuntu is rooted in African traditional cultures, which tend to be communitarian and family orientated in their nature. Mfuniselwa Bhengu (2006, p. 159) echoes this point and says that "Ubuntu is the key to all African values and involves humanness, a good disposition towards others, and a moral nature. It describes the significance of group solidarity and interdependence in African culture." To evade any confusion, it is important to mention that, although African cultures and values have certain commonalities particularly those relating to communal living, they are unique and different in their respective formulations. The Igbo people of Nigeria, for example, will have common traditional values – rooted in communal living and co-existence, with the Nguni people of Southern Africa but will however differ on certain traditional values and approaches, such as those that relate to ancestral rituals and practices, for example. Like many

communitarian-based ethical accounts, the ideal of the Ubuntu philosophy is rooted in moral virtues one should possess in order to live a harmonious life with others. It is accepted that in an Ubuntu-world, moral agents should display certain moral virtues and are expected to perform their actions in relation to these virtues when communing with other fellow members. Gyekye (2002, p. 303) mentions that "these moral virtues can be said to include generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence, respect and concern for others; in fact, any action or behaviour that conduces to the promotion of the welfare of others." Metz gives a descriptive and prescriptive explanation of Ubuntu. He mentions that the Ubuntu aphorism mentioned earlier, 'Umuntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu', has a descriptive sense "to the effect that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community" (2007, p. 323) and also a prescriptive sense "to the effect that one ought to be a mensch, in other words, morally should support the community in certain ways" (2007, p. 323). What is worth noting in Metz's explanations of Ubuntu is that both explanations include the term community. This may have to do with the fact that under the Ubuntu philosophy and worldview, individuals see themselves as a vital component of the community, where the individuals and the community are intertwined as one. Furthermore, Ubuntu agents, bounded by duty, live a life that promotes the common good for all. David Lutz (2009, p. 318) adds that "to promote the good of a community is to promote the good of all its members." Living for the betterment and sake of the community does not necessarily mean that an individual has to negate pursuing her own needs. Lutz (2009, p.314) adds that "in a true community, the individual does not pursue the common good instead of his or her own good, but rather pursues his or her own good through pursuing the common good."

Moreover, Metz attempts to develop a theoretical principle grounded in Ubuntu values that can guide agents on the rightness and wrongness of action, that is not only Afrocentric in its construction but that can also be appealing to both African and Western scholars of philosophy and ethics. In pursuit of this quest, Metz lists the following six competing theoretical interpretations of Ubuntu with the aim of fishing out the view that best encapsulates Ubuntu ethics and our general intuitions of ubuntu ethics.

U1: An action is right just insofar as it respects a person's dignity; an act is wrong to the extent that it degrades humanity.

U2: An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others: an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows.

U3: An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an act is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one's fellows without violating rights.

U4: An action is right just insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an act is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one's valuable nature as a social being.

U5: An action is right just insofar as it is in solidarity with groups whose survival is threatened; an act is wrong to an extent that it fails to support a vulnerable community.

U6: An action is right just insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community (Metz 2007: p. 328-334).

Metz's rejects U4 on the basis that the 'self-realization' component attached to its interpretation, which is also mainly associated with western ethical theories and known to be individualistic, does not harmonize well with the ethos of Ubuntu. In contrast, Lutz (2009, p. 317) rejects Metz's reasoning for discarding interpretation U4. He provides support from literature indicating that traditional western normative ethical theories have previously attached moral worth to interpersonal relationships. Metz and Lutz go on to provide justification on why U4 should be rejected (Metz) or accepted (Lutz) as the correct interpretation of Ubuntu and also as a possible formulation of an African-based ethical theory. I will not dwell on the debate between Metz and Lutz on whether U4 should be considered a generally accepted interpretation of Ubuntu because it falls outside the scope of this research report. I do concede, however, that U4 is an important and relevant interpretation of Ubuntu because if its modern and secular posture. Realising one's self is not mutually exclusive to one's capacity to relate with others in a communal fashion. Lutz (2009,

p. 316) supports this thinking by adding that "the actions that produce harmony, reduce discord and develop community are simultaneously the actions that perfect one's valuable nature as a social being." Motsamai Molefe also contributes to the importance and relevance of self-realisation that is embedded in this interpretation. He says that "it is equally important to recognise that those interpretations of Ubuntu that do not take it as a self-realisation view of morality will not necessarily be equivalent to the idea of personhood prevalent in African philosophy" (Molefe: 2020, p. 10). I will, for the purposes of adhering to the scope, settle for U6 as the most suitable interpretation of Ubuntu. Rightfully so, Metz (2007, p. 334).

admits that this formulation (U6) is "too vague" and "could use clarification and specification." He therefore refines U6 as follows:

> An action is right just insofar as it promotes shared identity among people grounded on good-will, an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to do so and tends to encourage the opposites of division and ill-will (Metz: 2007, p. 338).

Metz's revised interpretation lays a solid ethical foundation for the right action that ought to be performed by a moral agent, particularly in relation to how we ought to treat the poor or those who are destitute. But before I move on to how Metz's revised U6 can provide moral justification for promoting the interests of the poor, I want to take some time to untangle its formulation. Metz argues that this formulation should be founded on two pillars, a relationship of shared identity and a relationship of good-will or solidarity, and he regards the latter as morally supreme. He describes the relationship of shared identity as "a matter of considering oneself a part of the whole, being interdependent and sharing a fate, experiencing life as bound up with others and being integrated with others" (2019, p. 10). Metz (2007
p.335) mentions that when shared identity exists between moral agents, "the more people think of themselves in terms of their group membership; the more the ends they share… and the more they will sacrifice to achieve these ends." Metz regards the second pillar, relationship of good-will or solidary, to be the cornerstone for the formulation of U6 and he regards it as intrinsically valuable or deserving of moral worth. When there is a relationship of solidarity there is a sense of "achieving the good for all, considering and aiding, being committed to the good of the community, and being concerned for others' welfare" (2019, p. 10), which can also be interpreted as

"the greater the good-will [or solidarity], the stronger the desire that others benefit… and the greater the empathy with their flourishing or injury"
(2007, p. 336).

Now that I have illuminated what constitutes an ethical principle that can ground the rightness and wrongness of action from an African ethical perspective (according to Metz), it will be appropriate to thereafter ask the question, how does this principle contribute to the intuition of aiding the poor or those who are more disadvantaged? It is apparent to me that according to African traditions, ethics and ways of life, rooted in shared identity and solidarity, there is a demand for moral agents to provide aid to those in poverty for the purposes of promoting their welfare and that of the community as whole. In addition, an agent guided by Ubuntu ethics and ways of life will not only be motivated to give to the poor as a matter of promoting their well-being, but will also do so because she sees and identifies herself in the individuals she is aiding. It is evident to me that the act of giving to the poor associated with the western ethical accounts mentioned earlier, i.e. consequentialism and deontology is only related to Metz's second pillar, relationship of solidarity, of his conception of what makes communion. For instance, a Kantian would give to the poor insofar as she is, according to Metz, "being concerned for other's welfare [or ends]" (2019, pg. 10), whereas a consequentialist would give to the poor for the moral reason of "achieving the good of all", according to Metz (2019, pg. 10). These western accounts both appear to be missing Metz's second pillar of 'relationship of identity' in virtue of the moral reasons agents give for aiding the poor. This simply means that moral reasons for aiding the poor coming from both Anglo-American ethical accounts seem to lack Metz's second

pillar (relationship of identity), necessary to complete Metz's conception of what communion represents. As an example, referring to Singer's reasoning on why we ought to give to the poor as mentioned earlier, an agent can contribute their benefits (e.g. wealth or money) to organisations like Oxfam without knowing or identifying with the recipient of his contribution on the other end. The contribution to Oxfam will therefore be motivated by the moral duty of promoting the interest and welfare of those who will receive the benefit. The motivation rooted in shared-identity would therefore be absent in this case. Thus, an Ubuntu ethicist will give to the worst-off for wider moral reasons, that is, for not only standing in solidarity with the poor but also because he shares and intertwines his identity with that of his community members and the community as a whole. Before I proceed to the next section, it is important to highlight how the conception of personhood from an African ethical perspective also speaks to the cause or duty of aiding the poor and also how it can address the question asked earlier, that is:

I. Does the Ubuntu ethical account, as an alternative ethical approach that can protect and promote the interests of the poor, provide moral justification in prioritising the redistribution of benefits to the worst-off, for aims of advancing social justice?

It is important to understand what constitutes a 'person' so that we can understand what actually gives a person moral worth and why, therefore, a person ought not to be wronged. Therefore, I will look at both the African and Western conception of personhood. To understand how both the Western and African ethical accounts conceptualise personhood is important because it will help us understand how a person

ought to be treated, particularly when he is regarded as the most disadvantaged. I will first shed light on what constitutes a person from a western ethical perspective, which will then be followed by an African ethical approach on personhood. Most western ethical accounts of personhood look at certain features or capacities as necessary prerequisites for becoming a person. They consider, amongst others, rationality; self-awareness and autonomy (the ability to self-govern) as essential features that need to be present before we can ascribe personhood to a being. According to David DeGrazia (2006, p. 42), referring to general attributes that constitute personhood, "personhood is associated with a cluster of properties without being precisely definable in terms of any specific subset: autonomy, rationality, self-awareness, linguistic competence, sociability, the capacity for intentional action, and moral agency." According to DeGrazia, a person does not have to possess all of these attributes to be considered a person and adds that "a person is someone who has enough of the properties" (2006, p. 42). He mentions that because certain groups of animals such as normal adult apes and dolphins have high cognitive and emotional capacities and also possess the ability to socially relate, they should be regarded as 'borderline person'- "lying in an ambiguous gray area between paradigm persons and those who are clearly not persons" (DeGrazia, 2006: p. 44). Animals who are beyond this point, that is, that are deemed more "talented" than their peers in the same group should actually be deemed as persons, according to DeGrazia. He bases this assertion on the notion that this group of beings possess linguistic competencies over and above other personhood-relevant properties they possess, such as consciousness (both mental and physical); rationality and sociability. DeGrazia's main claim is that animals including borderline persons, have

equal moral claim to life as normal human beings. “I believe we should regard human and nonhuman borderline persons as having rights to life like ours,” he remarks (2006, p. 50).

John Harris (1985) also provides a western ethical account on personhood. He argues that it can be exhausting to come up with a comprehensive and universal list of properties of personhood and goes on to say that what defines personhood is whether a person finds her life valuable and has the desire to continue living. He mentions that:

> If we allow the value of life for each individual consist simply in those reasons, whatever they are, that each person has for finding their own life valuable and for wanting to go on living, then we do not need to know what the reasons are. All we need to know is that particular individuals have their own reason, or rather, simply that the value their own lives. (2006, p. 16)

Harris believes this condition is sufficient to attribute personhood to a living being. In contrast, those who disvalue their lives are morally permissible to end it should they no longer find value in it or no longer have the desire to continue living. He adds, “to frustrate the wish to die will on this view be as bad as frustrating the wish to live, for in each case we would be negating the value that the individuals themselves put on their lives” (Harris, 1985: p. 17). With regards to the question whether animals have full moral worth and therefore deserve the status of personhood, Harris takes a somewhat similar view as that of DeGrazia. Harris contends that animals that possess linguistic competency – “language [being] the hallmark of self-consciousness” (p. 19) – should be regarded as persons. He, however, cautions the application of personhood to the so-

called borderline persons because it may require careful consideration and evidence of these non-human beings in assessing their ability to use language to communicate. According DeGrazia and Harris personhood is not only limited to human beings but it can also be extended to animals. Furthermore, animals and human beings have equal moral status and therefore, both groups deserve equal moral treatment. DeGrazia (2006, p. 50) attests to this by arguing that "I believe we should regard human and nonhuman borderline persons as having rights to life like ours." An African-based perspective on personhood, however, takes a different approach, ethically speaking, of what makes a person a person. Molefe puts forward an African ethical perspective, that is secular and naturalist, in defining personhood. According to Molefe, personhood is regarded "as some kind of achievement, to be a person is to be morally recognised to be living a genuine human life" (Molefe, 2020: p.5, quoting Metz, 2010). Before an individual is called a person, she must strive for moral perfection where she "ought to perfect her own humanity" (Molefe, 2020: p. 5). Molefe mentions dignity to be a vital attribute constitutive of personhood, from an African ethical perspective, and it is usually associated with human beings. He adds, "to accord dignity to some being is to recognise it as possessing some ontological property in virtue of which we ought to respect the being in question.", (2020, p. 12). What Molefe essentially means is that people with dignity deserve recognition in virtue of possessing "a particular honourable quality or status" (2020, p. 12), which in turn demands some level of respect. Gyekye (2002, p. 307) concurs with Molefe's thinking with regards to the African-based approach to personhood and adds that "the natural membership of the individual person in a community cannot rob him/her of his/her dignity or worth, a fundamental and

inalienable attribute he/she possesses as a person." Metz (2011, p. 544) expands on the importance of this attribute, dignity, and mentions that "individuals have dignity insofar as they have a communal nature, that is, the inherent capacity to exhibit identity and solidarity with others." What is important to note, according to Metz, is that it is the possession of this capacity for dignity that matters and not particularly its use. Consequently, because human beings possess the capacity to relate with others in a communal way, displayed by their capacity for dignity, they ought to be treated with respect and are considered to have moral worth. Simply put, according to Metz, a person is a person insofar to his capacity for dignity which is displayed when he positively relates with his members of the community. Contributing to the literature on African views of personhood, Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984, p. 176) contends that "the various societies found in traditional Africa routinely accept this fact that personhood is the sort of thing which has to be attained, and is attained in direct proportion as one participates in communal life through the discharge of the various obligations defined by one's stations."

Gyekye (2002) however disagrees with Menkiti's conceptualisation of communitarianism, He argues that Menkiti's interpretation of communitarianism may be either "radical or unrestricted" (p. 299) and offers a more "restricted or moderate" (p. 306) interpretation. Briefly, Gyekye mentions that Menkiti's interpretation of personhood is overstated and misdirected in a sense that it construes personhood as something that has to be "acquired" (Menkiti: 1984, p. 178) and something that has to be "achieved" (Menkiti: 1984, p. 172) because a human being is not necessarily born as a person but acquires her title or status as she progresses in life. Gyekye refutes

Menkiti's conception of personhood by arguing that, what it is acquired or achieved is not personhood but rather the status and habits of the human being in question. "What a person acquires are not status, habits and personality or character traits: he/she, qua person, thus becomes the subject of the acquisition process, he/she cannot be defined by what he/she acquires" (2002, p. 303), Gyekye adds. He, rightfully so, disagrees with Menkiti's understanding of communitarianism mainly on the basis that it discounts the agent's capacity to self-realise in his individual capacity and appears to undermine the agent's individual rights. Menkiti's traditional and political interpretation of what constitutes a community seems to have little room for individual rights because "it gives the community priority over the individual person", according to Gyekye (2002, p. 299).

I find Gyekye interpretation and understanding of African-based personhood more appealing, and he summarises the view as follows:

> [The] restricted communitarianism offers a more appropriate and adequate account of the self than the unrestricted or radical account in that the former addresses the dual features of the self: as a communal being and as an autonomous, self-determining, self-assertive being with a capacity for evaluation and choice. (2002, p. 306)

The above interpretation is appealing because, firstly, it gives room for an individual to self-realise in his own individual capacity, to which this process is not solely determined by the community, but jointly by the community and the respective individual. Secondly, it nullifies the misconceptions associated with communitarian-based ethical accounts that are typically associated with what Metz (2011 p. 533) calls

"group-think", "uncompromising majoritarianism" or "extreme sacrifice for society." Metz seems to argue for a more liberal conception of a community, a community that caters for individual liberties and rights. He adds, "to seek out community with others is not best understood as equivalent to doing whatever a majority of people in society want or conforming to the norms of one's group" (2011 p. 538).

I find both Metz's and Gyekye's conceptualisation of personhood and the community to be more attractive especially because of the fact that it is more relatable to the secular world we live in and does not negate the rights of an individual. What I also find pleasing about these moderate interpretations is that they do not idolise individual rights as is the case with many Western ethical accounts of personhood. Although individual rights are given moral consideration, the less radical views of communitarianism, such as the moderate one advocated by Gyekye (2002, p. 309), "consider duty as the moral tone, as the supreme principle of morality."

After what has been illuminated about both Western and African ethical accounts on personhood, it is suitable to now consider what the African-based conception of personhood demands when it comes to treating those who are destitute. On the African ethical account, personhood is realised in virtue of possessing the capacity to commune with one's fellow community members, which, according to Metz (2011), is exhibited when there is shared identity and solidarity. This thinking therefore invokes a moral duty, when cases arise, to help those who are destitute for their own sake; for the sake of the agent's need to self-realise and for the sake of the community as a whole. Gyekye's take on African personhood seems to place importance on duties an

individual has to perform rather than the rights he bears. He does not negate the importance of individual rights but mentions:

> Individuals would not have a penchant for, an obsession with, insisting on their rights, knowing that insistence on their rights could divert attention to duties they, as members of the communal society, strongly feel towards other members of the community… perhaps the least advantaged – members of the community (2002, p.309).

This means that in a communitarian-based way of living, an agent does not necessarily focus on asking what rights s/he has in relation to helping the poor, but in turn, asks the question what duty s/he has towards them. Therefore, It is also not impossible in communitarian ethics for an agent to sacrifice his individual rights for the sake of fulfilling his moral duties.

As mentioned earlier, western scholars such as DeGrazia and Harris contend that animals have equal rights to human beings, based on their conceptualisation of personhood. I find these considerations of personhood to be misguided especially when faced with moral dilemmas relating to distributive justice. Let me explain this through the following example. Suppose I have only one loaf of bread that I could either give to a starving human being or a starving orangutan that is assumed to be a person in some Western ethical approaches, because of its ontological attributes or its awareness of the desire to continue living. Further assume that this bread is the only resource that can be distributed on a deserted island and its consumption would determine the lifespan of the being consuming it. This means that cutting the bread in half and distributing the halved portions to both the human being and the orangutan, would, for example, cut the

lifespan lived in this deserted island by half for each being, that is, a 3-week lifespan as opposed to a 6-week lifespan. According to arguments provided by both DeGrazia and Harris it would mean that a morally acceptable solution would be to divide the bread in half so that both beings live an equal, 3-week, lifespan. This is because these accounts have an egalitarian approach when it comes to individual rights, that is, animals have equal rights to human beings. Therefore, according to the assertions made by both DeGrazia and Harris, it would be morally permissible to shorten the life of a human being in order to save that of an animal – an orangutan in this case.

On the other hand, the African account will demand the bread be distributed to the human being purely on the basis that a human being has more moral worth in virtue of her inherent and natural capacity of dignity, which is regarded to be a unique feature for personhood. Agreeing to this assertion, Metz (2011, p. 544) gives his own analogy: "if you had to choose between running over a cat or a fellow person, you should run over the cat, intuitively because the person is [morally] worth more."

Other African ethical approaches cater for a spiritual and tri-logical dimensions, from which the conception of a community is constituted by the unborn; the living and the living dead. Referring to the above-mentioned example I just gave, they would find moral justification in prioritising the distribution of the bread to a human being over the orangutan. These African scholars hold the view that there is a hierarchy of beings where God is at the apex, with animals and plants at the lower echelons of the hierarchy and are therefore deemed to have a lower moral status than that of humans. Non-human beings are also considered morally worthy but are however given a lower moral status compared to humans. Edwin Etieyibo argues that "to say that humans are above animals

on the ladder of beings does not mean that one is representing animals as not having any intrinsic value" (2017: p. 153). Therefore, this account neither discounts nor nullifies the moral value of animals. It simply asserts that animals have a lower moral worth when compared to human beings. It seems to me, at least, that the African ethical approach of personhood is more demanding than just having features or properties that make a human being a person. Being a human being with relevant qualities is a necessary prerequisite but not sufficient to ground personhood, from the African ethical perspective. With reference to the preceding example of distributive justice (human being vs. an orangutan) one can note that African approaches have an alternative ethical view on personhood and can thus provide wider moral reasoning for aiding the poor and, at the same time, help us to navigate possible solutions when faced with moral dilemmas.

Ubuntu a Moral Vehicle to Social Justice

In this section I will explore Ubuntu's moral force in dealing with social justice matters, particularly in a South African context. Before I do this, I will first look at generally accepted western ethical accounts that speak to distributive justice. In particular, I will briefly analyse John Rawls' principles of distributive justice and thereafter briefly delve into Prioritarian-based ethical accounts that advocate for the prioritisation of the most disadvantaged in the society with particular refence to the distribution of benefits and burdens. It worth mentioning that although these principles of distribution are designed and more apt for influencing institutional policies, I will borrow from them with the intention of applying them to individual acts, that is, I will use them to guide acts of

individuals in aiding the most disadvantaged group of South Africa. But before I proceed to do so, it would be fitting to first unpack the concept of social justice. Rachana Kamtekar, quoting Socrates, conceives social justice "as that which best allows the city to be a mutually beneficial social arrangement" (Kamtekar: 2001, p. 190, quoting Socrates: 369b et seq., 433a). This view suggests that social justice exists when social arrangements (policies, institutions, governance, society etc.) work for the mutual benefit of all who live in the society. Distributive justice is one component of social justice and assesses the morally preferred or acceptable principles of justice. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2017) mentions that "principles of distributive justice are therefore best thought of as providing moral guidance for the political processes and structures that affect the distribution of benefits and burdens in societies, and any principles which do offer this kind of moral guidance on distribution, regardless of the terminology they employ, should be considered principles of distributive justice."

John Rawls, well known for his book titled Theory of Justice, takes on an enormous task of establishing morally relevant principles of distribution essential in dealing with issues of social and economic justice. Hui Jin, a scholar of Confucian ethics, references Rawls' principles of Justice as follows:

> *First Principle*
>
> Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all.
>
> *Second Principle*
>
> Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both:

(a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and

(b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. (Hui Jin, 2022: p. 3, quoting Rawls, 1999, p. 266)

To adhere to the scope of this research project, I will briefly focus on the Rawls' second principle because of its focus on prioritising the worst-off, which is the primary focus of my research question, that is:

I. Does the Ubuntu ethical account, as an alternative ethical approach that can protect and promote the interests of the poor, provide moral justification in prioritising the redistribution of benefits to the worst-off, for aims of advancing social justice?

It is important to point out that Rawls' principles of justice are formulated in what he calls the

'original position', a hypothetical situation where rational agents choose principles of justice not knowing their features, capabilities and dispositions so that they can choose principles that are fair and just to all agents of the society under conditions of initial equality. I will now briefly illuminate the foregoing principles by Rawls. The first principle simply asserts that each person is entitled to certain civil and political liberties and all individuals share these liberties equally. He views this principle as the most essential one and mentions that it supersedes the second one. This means that in the original position the supreme principle to be adopted is the one that allows for equal civil and political liberties to all rational agents. In addition, this principle takes priority, in terms of moral importance, over the second principle.

In the first portion (a) of the second principle, also known as the 'Difference' or 'Maximin' Principle, Rawls remarks that an unequal society is justified as long as the objects of distribution (e.g. wealth, subsidies etc) are distributed in a manner that benefits the least advantaged in the society, that is, benefits are distributed so that they benefit the worst-off group the most. With regards to the second portion (b) of the principle, Rawls argues for equal opportunity for individuals in a society. Moreover, if everyone has an opportunity to access scarce resources or primary goods, prevailing inequalities in that society should not be attributed to the distribution of these goods but rather to the varying levels of gifts or talents of the rational agents constituting that society. Put differently, Rawls makes an argument that it is morally justified to move from a state of affairs of equal distribution to that of unequal distribution, attributed to varying talents and gift of rational agents, provided that the conditions of the worst-off improve. These inequalities are known to be 'Pareto Superior', because, according to Matthew Clayton and Andrew Williams (2000, p. 7), the "unequal financial rewards attached to different occupation can act as an incentive for the productive to take more socially beneficial jobs or to work harder."

My first dispute with Rawls' difference principle is in in line with Gerald Cohen's argument particularly with regards to Rawls' inability to specify when this condition of justified inequality will be met. It seems to me Rawls is unclear on when this condition will be satisfied and gives no clarity on the magnitude and degree of the inequality that is needed to get to a point where this inequality is justified. Moreover, because of its stance on non-relative comparison of distribution amongst rational agents, Rawls' difference principle gives the impression that it underscores the

injustices that emanate from the pareto-superior condition. Relative comparison amongst agents occurs when the welfare or livelihood of an agent is compared with another over the same time period, whereas absolute comparison refers to a change in a person's livelihood over different time points. Because Rawls looks at the worst-off in absolute terms, we might fail to see the underlying injustices once we conduct a relative comparison of the agents' welfare. Rendall (2013, p. 943) develops this argument and mentions that "fairness is a relational concept. It makes no sense to say that Bert is being treated unfairly if he is not compared with Ernie at all." "Anyone who believes that, because the possible sources of inequality are morally arbitrary, an initial equality is prima facie just, has no reason to believe that the recommended Pareto improvement preserves justice, even if the initial improvement should be accepted on other grounds", adds Cohen (1995 p. 162).

My second contention with Rawls's difference principle and the inequalities it morally permits is that it does not sit well with an Ubuntu ethicist because great inequalities, including those that emanate from morally arbitrary conditions, can dampen relational values between agents and, as a result, foster ill-will and inharmonious interactions. Metz (2011, p. 240) echoes this point by mentioning that "large inequality not merely prevents the positive relationships of people thinking of themselves as a 'we', engaging in cooperative behaviour and helping one another for their sake, but also fosters their opposites, namely 'division' and 'ill-will." Empirical evidence from a study by Richard Wilkinson titled "Why is Violence More Common Where Inequality is Greater?" suggests that "the relation between violence and inequality appears to be

part of a more general tendency for the quality of social relationships to be less good in more unequal societies.", (2004, p. 4).

Now that I have unpacked the Rawlsian (prioritarian) difference principle, the question then arises: how will the principle look like if it were applied to the distribution of benefits by private individuals instead of the state, more particularly, if the acts of these private individuals are grounded in Ubuntu ways of life and ethics? My thinking is that an Ubuntu ethicist would agree with the difference principle insofar as its moral stance of prioritising the distribution of benefits to the worst-off, but would not necessarily agree with the inequalities, emanating from arbitrary and varying dispositions of the agents' talents and gifts, that come with it. Metz (2019, p. 26) agrees with this line of reasoning and mentions that "even if it were true that the worst-off would have somewhat less wealth with less inequality, there can be good moral reason to doubt that more inequality would be yet more just." This is because, according Metz (2019, p. 26), "wealth is not the only morally relevant consideration, so are relational values." This would therefore, mean that in a world governed by Ubuntu ways of life and ethics, where there are equal opportunities and liberties for all, individuals would agree on principles of distribution that are skewed towards the worst-off group, that maximise relational values and at the same time reduce any prevailing inequalities. I am also of the view that the ethics of Ubuntu would agree with the productive or the talented receiving a higher wage due to their talents and possibly the strenuous responsibilities their jobs entail. I also believe that, if the Rawlsian difference principle was applied by private individuals under the auspices of Ubuntu ethics, rooted in communitarian values,

individuals would mutually share in both the benefits and burdens that are either inherited by or distributed to individuals, for the sake of standing in solidarity and self-identifying with one another. Gyekye (2002, p. 312) supports this line of thinking and argues that the "communitarian ethical and political theory, which considers the community as a fundamental human good, advocates a life lived in harmony and cooperation with others… a life in which the products of the exercise of an individual's talents or endowments are (nevertheless) regarded as the assets of the community as such." In the later part of this section I will show how Ubuntu ethics incorporates a prioritarian-centred distribution of benefits that favours the worst-off.

I now concentrate on the Prioritarian ethical approach construed in general terms and that is outside Rawls' conception of Prioritarianism. In doing this, I will also assess its moral credibility in prioritising the worst-off as a matter of social justice. According to Matthew Rendall (2012, p.939), "Prioritarians give priority to the worst-off because their absolute position is worst. It is important to help them whether or not there are other people who are better off." According to this account, a prioritarian would choose principles of justice that favour the worst-off group in a society, with no relational comparisons made in agents' welfare. Clayton and Williams (2000, p. 6-7) add that "those principles must attend in the first instance to the fate of the worst-off since, because they fare worst from the operation of social arrangements, their complaints are, other things being equal, strongest: the worst-off you are, the greater is your legitimate complaint and, therefore, the greater is the moral urgency to benefit you." Basically, Clayton and William argue that the worst-off have a higher moral claim to benefits in comparison to those that are better off.

Richard Arneson (2000, p. 343) summarises the foregoing interpretation of Prioritarianism as "egalitarian[ism] in tilting favour of those who are badly off." A prioritarian driven policy mandated to allocate budgets and funding to schools in Gauteng for example, would allocate more funding to schools that have fewer resources and more disadvantaged than those schools that are more resourced and less disadvantaged.

The problem with Prioritarianism is that it does not ask how the worst-off degenerated into their badly-off condition, that is, is it because of their own individual responsibilities or rather, is it a result of misfortunes caused by circumstances beyond their control? Arneson aims to tackle this problem by amending the concept of Prioritarianism to 'Responsibility Catering Prioritarianism [hereafter RCP]', which asserts that "the moral value of altering a state of affairs in a way that makes someone better off or worst-off depends, other things being equal, on the degree of responsibility the person bears for her present condition" (2000, p. 344). According to this rendition of Prioritarianism, benefits should be distributed to agents in proportion to the extent of their individual responsibilities for being in the conditions they find themselves. Therefore, those who squander or gamble with the opportunities given to them are morally justified to receiving fewer benefits than those who are determined in pursuing and striving for their goals. Although I do not believe that Arneson's RCP, on its own, is sufficient in addressing matters of social justice in South Africa, I do, however, sympathise with it because of its approach of taking into account a person's responsibility in determining the degree of benefits to be distributed to him. With communitarian-based ethics, such as Ubuntu, individuals

have a dual responsibility to meet their own ends and those of the community. Gyekye (2002, p. 31112) mentions that "the successful pursuit of the dual responsibility requires that, through the development of one's capacities and through one's own exertions and strivings, and hence through self-attention, the individual person should him/herself attain some appropriate status socially, economically, intellectually, and so on." I should mention that although Gyekye's comment is in line with advocating and highlighting the importance of individual rights embedded in communitarian ethics, there is an implicit reference to the responsibility one has in living a purposeful and meaningful life. In communitarian ethics individuals have a moral duty to pursue a virtuous life that not only fulfils the interests of the community but those of the individuals as well.

So, borrowing from the prioritarian principles of prioritising benefits to the worst-off, how would these principles look like when they are administered by private individuals instead of state institutions, and those individuals are guided by ubuntu ethics? This would probably translate into individuals redistributing their tangible (e.g. money or wealth) and non-tangible (e.g. talents) benefits to the worst-off in the form of providing monetary and non-monetary aid to them. However, as previously mentioned, this aid would not satisfy Metz's (2019) complete conception of a communion which is founded on the relationship of identity and the relationship of exhibiting solidarity. The non-institutional prioritarian approach I mention would only satisfy the pillar of solidarity insofar as individuals, particularly those that are better off, provide aid to the worst-off for reasons of promoting their good or welfare. Thus,

the element of aiding the worst-off because we share the same identity and co-exist with them, paramount in communitarian ethics, would be absent.

I now turn to Ubuntu ethics and assess its account of prioritising the poor. Because Ubuntu ethics is communitarian in its nature, Metz (2019) contends that its distribution of benefits and burdens would be similar to how a family would intuitively distribute its resources. He mentions that the head of household would follow a "balanced distribution' (2009, p. 24), where resources are not only allocated in a manner that favours the worst-off but they would be allocated so that they favour the flourishing as well. This means that, according to Metz, the distribution of resources would occur in such a way that "everyone gets a similar share, but with the particularly talented and the particularly untalented each getting something greater than a strictly equal share." Metz simply means that, those who are more talented should get relatively more benefits so that they can realise their full potential and help them to flourish. Equally so, those who are less advantaged should receive a larger share of the distribution so that they can "reach a decent minimum of good" (2019,
p. 25). It seems to me that Ubuntu ethics does not necessarily advocate for a strictly prioritarian distribution of benefits, but rather a balanced one where both the talented and the untalented get a higher proportion of benefits. For the purposes of this report, I will focus on the distributions due to the untalented, particularly those that are badly off not because of their delinquent behaviour or acts but rather because of circumstance beyond their control. Strict Egalitarians might not agree with the prioritarian stance inherent in Ubuntu ethics insofar as it does not advocate for equal

distribution to all agents. But what is problematic with strict egalitarianism, especially in the context of a very high unequal society such as that of South Africa, is that on the issue of distribution of scare resources those who are better-off stand a chance to receive an equal share of benefits, even though they might not necessarily deserve them. This line of thinking is shared amongst many communitarian-based ethics such as 'Confucianism'. Jin (2022, p. 10) mentions that "it is neither righteous nor humane for a society to enrich some of its members who are relatively rich (that is, the better off) at the expense of all members or that of the members who are relatively poor (that is, the worst-off)."

Etieyibo (2017), in his article titled "Ubuntu, Cosmopolitanism and Distribution of Natural Resources", argues that Ubuntu is a strict cosmopolitan moral and political theory and serves as a plausible account for global justice. At this stage it would be appropriate to demystify the concept of 'strict cosmopolitanism.' Etieyibo (2017, p. 144) mentions that strict cosmopolitanism holds that:

> we have a duty towards others and such duty including the duty to provide aid (a) must not be balanced against any additional duty to help those close to or near us (e.g., locals or compatriots); (b) does not increase in strength and level when locals or compatriots are implicated and in question.

Etieyibo essentially means that because the ideal of Ubuntu is cemented in humane interactions of individuals amongst one another, it requires that all persons should exhibit this quality of humaneness regardless of where they may be placed on the globe. It is unfortunate that Etieyibo does not go on to argue how Ubuntu's cosmopolitanism is a plausible account for global justice. I disagree with Etieyibo's

interpretation of Ubuntu as a strict cosmopolitan moral and political theory on the basis that, when dealing with distributive ethics and limited resources, one has to make a call regarding where to prioritise the distribution of these limited resources. It is my view that in such cases, resources or benefits should be first allocated to close compatriots or to those who we have close affiliation with rather than those who are far away from us. Metz (2019: p. 24) agrees and argues that "although human persons matter insofar as they are by nature capable of communion, there is extra reason to serve those with whom one has actually communed." It appears to me that Etieyibo's interpretation of Ubuntu as a cosmopolitan ethical account is relevant insofar as one is talking about relating and treating all members of the global community in a humane way and affording them their rightly-deserved dignity and respect. However, it is difficult to apply this interpretation when dealing with the allocation of scarce and finite resources. It is apparent, to me at least, that Ubuntu, as an interpretation of cosmopolitanism, is best suited to being a moderate cosmopolitan moral and political theory, which holds that "we do have the duty to provide aid to others, but that we also have special duties to locals or compatriots." (Etieyibo, 2017: 144). Considering the given question in this report, this interpretation of Ubuntu as a moderate cosmopolitan would justify prioritising the provision of aid to the worst-off members of South Africa. This means that the strength and level of duty to provide aid will increase when aiding compatriots from South Africa rather than when aiding individuals from elsewhere.

What I have presented thus far is an argument that the ethics of Ubuntu, and its inherent prioritarian moral stance, can provide an alternative and forceful moral justification for

prioritising the distribution of benefits to the most disadvantaged, that is, black women of South Africa. Moreover, I have shown that principles of distribution rooted in communitarian ethics such as Ubuntu ethics and that are performed by private individuals, rather than governmental institutions, are prerequisites for social justice in an unequal country like South Africa.

I will now assess whether the ethics of Ubuntu has moral force in deliberating on matters of management, particularly those relating to business and commerce. I will then argue that the aid from private individuals directed to the worst-off should take a business and commercial posture.

Ubuntu Philosophy and Management

As previously mentioned in the introduction, the aid directed to the poor should follow a business approach. I submit that the aid to the poor should be used to establish small enterprises that the poor can manage for the aim of bettering their welfare, creating jobs and as a matter of social justice. The National Development Plan (NDP) anticipates that by 2030, 90% of the jobs created in South Africa would be coming from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMMEs), which is expected to translate to 11 million jobs in the country. This means that South Africa needs about 49 000 scalable SMMEs to realise these anticipated 11 million jobs. With the current government failures, rooted in corruption and maladministration, I suspect it will be unsuccessful in realising this goal. Therefore, I am of the view that private individuals who are compelled by moral duty to aid the poor should do this by helping the worst-off to establish and manage their own

small enterprises that could be vehicles to poverty alleviation and possibly social justice in South Africa. In this section, I will first briefly look at generally accepted management theories, mainly those originating from the Western part of the globe, with a particular focus on their accounts of ethical ways of managing the affairs of a business. This will be followed by an Ubuntu ethical account of business management. My primary aim in this section is to apply Ubuntu-centred business ethics when managing the affairs of a business. This is because, as mentioned earlier, in response to the given question, the prioritarian aid from private individuals to the worst-off should follow a business framework that is grounded in Ubuntu ethics.

Milton Friedman (1970: 51-55) writes an article in the New York Times Magazine titled "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits", which essentially refutes the claim that businesses have a social responsibility beyond that of maximising profits.

Friedman argues in favour of the 'Stakeholder Theory' also known as the 'Owner-Value-Maximising theory', which contends that a manager of a business has a sole responsibility of promoting the interests of the owner/s of the business who have contributed capital towards it, with the aim of receiving a return (profit) from it. He argues that "[a corporate executive] has direct responsibility to his employers. That responsibility is to conduct the business in accordance with their desires, which generally will be to make as much as money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society" (1970, p. 51). Friedman goes on to say that executives or business managers who use company resources to promote some social interests rather than maximising stockholders' profits are acting unethically. In addition, according to

Friedman, a manager should promote some social interest only if in the long run it will achieve its goal of maximising profits. The best way a manager can perform his social responsibilities, according to Friedman, is for him to maximise profits for his owners. This is because once a company focuses on maximising profits the government will be able to claim more corporate tax from it and consequently this will create an opportunity for government to receive additional income that it can, in turn, use to spend on public or common goods. Friedman argues that the competitive nature of the free market system "forces people to be responsible for their own actions and makes it difficult for them to 'exploit' other people for their own selfish or unselfish purposes" (1970, p. 53). This view is mistaken when you consider that in the free market system there are rampant fraudulent and corrupt business practices, specifically when you consider well known historic cases such as that of Enron in the United States and Steinhoff here in South Africa.

Contrary to individualistic management theories such as the stockholder theory, for a business guided by Ubuntu ethics, "making a profit is important, but never if it involves the exploitation of others" (Louw, 2001: 25). In addition, the stockholder theory is narrow minded and excludes other stakeholders (such as customers, employees, surrounding communities, the environment etc.), that affect the sustainability of any business venture. Its advocacy of maximising shareholders' profits as an imperative, seems to discount other nonmonetary values or goals, such as living a humane life, that are paramount in communitarian ethics such as Ubuntu.

The stakeholder theory, articulated by Edward Freeman (2007), overcomes the narrow conception of how one ought to morally manage a business as submitted by Friedman.

In short, the stakeholder theory puts an emphasis on a group of people who have a direct or indirect joint stake or interest in the business and who also have an interdependent relationship with each other. It considers different, but interconnected, parties that have a direct or indirect impact on the business rather than placing priority on just one party, that is, the owner of the business. The party in question or the stakeholder is, according to Freeman (2007, p. 12), "any group or individual that affect or be affected by the realization of an organisation's purpose."

Both management theories should be rejected, especially if one must consider a management ethics that is framed by Ubuntu ways of life and ethics. Firstly, the stakeholder theory should be rejected because its conception of how a business should be managed is narrow and individualistic. It does not embrace communal values that are embedded in many African traditions and that can then, lead to an exaggerated promotion of self-interest at the expense of others' welfare. Lutz (2009, p. 317) adds that "theories that were created within and for individualistic cultures are not at home within communal cultures." A business operated and managed guided by Ubuntu ethics would typically be concerned with not only promoting the interests of its shareholders but that of the community as a whole, including but not limited to employees, suppliers, local communities, and its customers. The reason for this is that the managers will see themselves organically intertwined or their identities linked with other parties who are indirectly or directly implicated by the business. Furthermore, the stakeholder theory should be rejected on the basis that its conception of the community in which the business operates is not as comprehensive as the one conceptualised in communitarian ethics. Freeman, giving a western account of what a business is, mentions that a

"business can be understood as a set of relationships among groups which have a stake in the activities that make up the business" (2007, p. 9). This conception of a business as a community of individuals with varying interests being grouped to form one unit, can be deemed as a nonorganic formation of different individuals by a communitarian ethicist. Menkiti (1984, p. 179) describes this conception of a community as a "mere collection of self-interested persons, each with his private set of preferences, but all of whom get together nonetheless because they realize, each to each, that in association they can accomplish things which they are not able to accomplish otherwise." In addition, Lutz submits a communitarian-based conception of what a business is, and mentions that it should be understood as a "community [where] the purpose of management is neither to benefit one collection of individuals, as owner-value-maximisation theories claim, nor to benefit many collections of individuals, as stakeholder theories tell us, but to benefit the community, as well as the larger communities of which it is a part" (2009, p. 318). With this understanding of a firm being a community from an African ethical perspective, Gyekye (2002, p. 299) then adds that, a business is "a group of persons linked by interpersonal bonds, biological and/or non-biological, who consider themselves primarily as members of the [firm] and who have common interests, goals and values." It is apparent that from the African ethical accounts of how a business ought to be managed, a manager has wider and inclusive objectives and interests that he must take into consideration. It is neither the sole interest of the shareholders that should be maximised nor that of the varying, ununified interests of relevant parties but rather the interest of the community as a whole, where all members implicated in that community share a common and single

interest. The shared and common interest, of a firm managed and guided by Ubuntu ethics, will be to promote the good of the firm and the community in which it operates rather than promoting narrow and individualistic interests such as profit maximisation.

In an article titled "UBUNTU: The Global Philosophy for Human Kind" (2006), Mfuniselwa Bhengu advocates that companies adopt indigenous principles that can cultivate inclusivity and a sense of belonging in a workplace, and that could possibly close the alienation gap that exists between the worker and the owners of means of production. He goes on to propose that the indigenous principles can be incorporated in South Africa's corporate culture for the sake of harmony and interdependence in the workplace. I will briefly explain these principles and then use them in a hypothetical case study that is to follow in the next section. Although these principles usually exhibit themselves in close and local traditional communities, I believe they can be extrapolated to the general South African society with a particular focus on applying them to the affairs and management of a business.

The first Ubuntu principle Bhengu looks at is Ukusisa, which is described as an act of lending a newcomer, particularly the one who does not have much, materially speaking, cows for the purpose of affording him dignity and respect – known to be essential for Ubuntu-based personhood. Bhengu (2006, p. 160) adds, "it is part of the African tradition to heartily welcome them [newcomers] cordially and help so that they feel at home." The lending of the cows is done to protect the self-respect and dignity of the disadvantaged newcomer who has a responsibility to look after the borrowed cows and to bring them back to the lender/ community once they have multiplied. The act of lending cows is also instrumental in aiding the newcomer to fight poverty, which Metz

describes as “a situation in which some people are lacking external, material goods and others could alleviate their plight, at least without enormous sacrifice on their part” (2011, p. 237).

The second principle I borrow from in Bhengu’s article is known as Ukwenana – “an act of giving or sharing without expecting returns” (2006: 161). This is a common in many African ways of life where small communities, in villages for example, share the little they have without any expected gains. A mother who commutes to work every day can leave her young ones with her neighbour who will then take care of the children without asking for any compensation. Better yet, she will nurture them as if they were her own because, according to Bhengu (2006, p. 161), “love is the essence of our way of living.”

The last, but not least, principle I look at is the concept of Ilima, which Bhengu (2006: p. 161) describes as “a community practice where people rally around a family to lend support in building a house, ploughing, or harvesting.” Just as with the concept of Ukwenana, there are no expectations of receiving any form of benefit or gain once you have offered your helping hand. What the family that is being assisted would typically do, is to brew traditional beer not only to thank those who volunteered their aid, but to mingle and be one with fellow community members. Bhengu (2006 p. 161) calls this “the unity of the community or a collective solidarity.”

The aforementioned indigenous principle are all principles that govern acts of indigenous people and their ways of life. There are principles that can guide acts of private individuals of South Africa when directing aid to the worst-off for the sake of social justice.

In the next section I will apply these principles in a hypothetical case for the purpose of demonstrating how these principles can guide acts of private individuals of South Africa, when aiding the poor.

Applying Ubuntu Ethics: A Hypothetical Example

In this section I will apply what has been said about Ubuntu ethics, particularly with regards to its interpretation as an ethical account; moral stance on aiding the poor; conception of personhood; and its approach on how a business venture ought to be managed, with the aim of demonstrating and prescribing how Ubuntu ways of life and ethics can be good prerequisites to social justice.

Consider the following hypothetical example. Suppose all South Africans hold a national imbizo or lekgotla (traditional gathering). An Imbizo or Lekgotla is defined by Letseka (2014: p. 549) as "forums where matters of public interest were openly debate[d] and collective decisions made." I will parallel this imaginary imbizo with Rawls' conception of the original position, where, according to Clayton and Williams (2000: p. 6), "individuals are deprived of information that may jeopardize the fairness of their agreement" and in this position they are "uncertain of the probability of occupying any position in society, and are duty-bound to agree only on principles which they can abide by, and to respect certain other constraints on their choices."

Unlike in the original position, however, determining principles of distributive justice in our hypothetical example, all members of the South African community have all the necessary information available to them. Further suppose that in our thought experiment

of this imaginary imbizo, we reach a consensus – vital in traditional and indigenous deliberations - that benefits would be distributed, all else equal, favouring the worst-off. It is vital to note that members of this community reach agreements on consensual basis rather than through a majority rule, which "is much more competitive and exclusionary" (Metz, 2017: p. 133).

Amongst other things we agree upon are:

i. The worst-off group in South Africa is made up of black women – as per the abovementioned racial classifications.

ii. Applying a prioritarian ethical approach, the distribution of benefits would be in monetary and non-monetary (coaching; therapy; skill development etc) terms.

iii. The distributions of these benefits from private individuals to the worst-off would be used to establish small-scale bread production schemes or ventures that the worst-off can operate and manage.

iv. We settle on the production of one single product, that is bread, because of its readily available demand and its propensity to be used recurrently.

v. After suitable and adequate training, these bread schemes would be expected to enter the bread market, trade and make a profit.

vi. Profits derived from these schemes are invested back into establishing additional bread schemes so that other members of the worst-off group, who have a lower moral claim to benefits, can also benefit and therefore, encourage a fair distribution.

vii. vii. Lastly, the bread production schemes are operated and managed using indigenous principles such as those mentioned above (Ukusisa, Ukwenana and Ilima), along with other communal values such as shared identity, co-existence, harmony, interdependence and solidarity or good-will.

With the aforementioned assumptions in place, I can now demonstrate how Ubuntu ethics can be applied when promoting the interests of the worst-off. Part of the consensus we reach in our hypothetical case is that those who are willing and capable of aiding the poor do so by establishing a single-purpose stokvel. Dirk Louw (2001, p. 24-25) describes stokvels as "joint undertakings or collective enterprises, such as savings clubs, burial societies and other (often formally registered) cooperatives." So, stokvels are community-based financial exchanges between members belonging in that community, where funds can be saved and disbursed at some future date when a certain event is triggered. The stokvel, in this case, would have a specific mandate of pooling all monetary aid from willing individuals, for the purpose of using the accumulated funds to establish small, but scalable, bread production ventures. In addition, these ventures would be established in local communities enabling local community members to conveniently access them and consequently, contribute to their survival and sustainability. Because personhood in communitarian ethics has dual features of self (Gyekye, 2002, p. 306), that is, a person is a communal being and at the same time a self-regulating and independent being, the motivation to buy the bread from these local bread schemes would also be two-fold. This means that a local community member, who is in consensus with the distributive principles adopted on our imaginary Imbizo, would not only purchase the produced bread from these ventures to satisfy her own self-

interest (satisfying her hunger, for example), but would also do so to meet the interests of the community, that is, promoting the interests of the worst-off who dwell in it. By doing so, the individual in question would be exhibiting her capacity to cordially commune with her fellow compatriots, a necessary prerequisite to personhood in communitarian ethics.

In this imaginary case, using Metz's interpretation of Ubuntu as an ethical theory, buying bread from these schemes would constitute the right action insofar as it promotes the conception of communion rooted in shared identity and solidarity or good-will (Metz: 2007, p. 338). Individuals, of any gender or race, compelled by duty and justice, would therefore perform the right action when they buy the bread from these ventures operated by the worst-off, for the sake of minimising social ills that come with inequality and thus, promote harmonious communion. What is also important to highlight is that such individual acts would be compatible with Ubuntu's interpretation as a moderate cosmopolitan moral and political theory. This means that, when it comes to the allocation of scarce resources, such as the monetary spend towards these bread schemes, individuals would prioritise distributing their benefits to local compatriots rather than to those who are far off. This means that individuals would not purchase bread of similar make and characteristic from bread ventures operated in other countries that run similar initiatives, for instance. The individuals would not perform these acts because they would, according to the interpretation of Ubuntu as a moderate cosmopolitan moral and political theory, be compelled by moral duty to purchase breads that is produced locally and that is operated by the worst-off member of our community. Furthermore, these individuals would be aware that buying this bread

would be a way of redistributing their benefits to the worst-off they commune with and would be motivated to do this so that they can improve their prospects and welfare. The redistribution of benefits would not be limited to the monetary spend by individuals. It would also include non-monetary distributions such as, but not limited to, business coaching, mentorship, therapy; training and other skill-enhancing contributions the better-off can share.

Considering what has been said thus far about the application of Ubuntu ethics in this hypothetical case, what would Ubuntu ethics then say about the duties of the talented? As mentioned earlier, and supported by Gyekye (2002, p. 312), in communitarian ethics "a life lived in harmony and cooperation with others" is a life that demands talented members to share their talents with other members of the community and the community as a whole. The sharing of inherent skills and disposition by the better-off or the talented would possibly reduce the inequalities associated with the Rawlsian difference principle. This means that the Rawlsian inequalities that are permitted because of arbitrary difference in talents of rational agents would be possibly be eliminated. This is because the agents would not only share their tangible resources such as money and wealth, but would also share their inherent talents. Also, the sharing of resources by the better-off resembles the indigenous principle of sharing benefits with the poor mentioned earlier, known as Ukusisa, that is common in many African traditions and ways of life.

What is important to consider in our hypothetical case is that individuals who redistribute their benefits, monetary and non-monetary, would engage in such acts with no expectations of receiving returns from their distributions, unless such gains are

harmonious and humane living amongst each other. This act of giving without expecting gain is grounded in the indigenous principle abovementioned called Ukwenana.

Let us further supposed that part of the consensus reached in our Imbizo is that profits would be shared amongst members of the worst-off group by using them to create additional bread schemes that would be operated and managed by other worst-off members. This concept of profit-sharing may be foreign to a proponent of the owner-value-maximisation management theory but may not be, to a communitarian ethicist. “In contrast to a banking model, it would be natural for those inspired by indigenous African values to pool their resources and then loan them out either without seeking interest or on a profit-sharing basis. (Metz, 2017: 131). Profits are shared with other members of the worst-off group so that a fair and equitable distribution can be achieved.

In addition, sharing profits with other worst-off members would discourage ill-will that tends to be associated with unequal societies. As shown in the empirical study by Wilkinson mentioned earlier, unequal societies tend to breed individual acts that are rooted in ill-will and dissonance, such as criminal and violent acts.

In reference to the aforementioned hypothetical case, what I have argued for thus far is that social justice in South Africa can be achieved by individuals prioritising their distributions, monetary and non-monetary, towards the worst-off, with monetary distributions being pooled in community-based financial arrangements such as stokvels. Proceeds from these stokvels would be used to establish bread production schemes that are owned and operated by the worst-off group. The resulting profits from these

ventures, assuming they become profitable, would be shared with other members of the worst-off group by establishing similar ventures they can manage. Profits will be shared with other members of the worst-off group because "there is Ubuntu in profit-sharing economic schemes" (Bhengu, 2006: 180). Better-off members of community would not only contribute to the stokvels for the purposes of establishing these ventures, but would also contribute to their sustainability by continuously purchasing the resulting bread. By doing so, private individuals would be exhibiting their personhood as their acts would cultivate harmonious communion with other fellow members of the community, particularly those that are most disadvantaged. All of these acts, including 'investing' in these schemes and consumption of the bread produced, would be guided by Ubuntu principles and values and they would be performed with the aim cultivating social justice in South Africa.

Some scholars of ethics or readers of this report might not necessarily agree with the ethical approach I have submitted as an alternative approach of promoting social justice. In the following section I will look at some objections that may be put forward against this approach.

Objections

I will now consider some objections that might be raised on the prescriptive ethical approach of aiding the poor, I have submitted. The first objection I bring forward is in relation to the effectiveness of the proposed prioritarian acts being performed by individuals rather than government institutions. To this point, Jin mentions that:

> One might want to personally help the worst-off, but in general our individual acts can produce only limited effects on these persons because they are of a great number and each of them has severe specific difficulty, which is unlikely to be solved or even significantly eased by most individual acts. Collective political acts, in contrast, can produce much larger effects on each of them (2022: p. 2).

Jin argues that, in Confucian ethics, there are moral reasons for prioritising the distribution of benefits to the worst-off. Moreover, he argues that acts of prioritising the worst-off should be carried out by government institutions rather than individuals. The reason for this, according to Jin, is that if these acts were performed by individuals, they would prove to be ineffective because of the large numbers of people who belong to this group and each member may have severe unique challenges that can be best solved by the state. This may be true in a state where distributive policies are sufficient and comprehensive to cater for the interests of the worst-off and those policies are effectively implemented by the state.

But, in the case of South Africa, as mentioned earlier, policies are not ineffective insofar as their moral strength but rather they are ineffective insofar as their application. The corruption, lack of will to implement them, and maladministration that surrounds them renders these polices ineffective. The existing South African government has good social welfare policies such as the recently introduced Basic Income Grant (BIG), aimed at responding to unemployment challenges brought by Covid-19. Further to this, on 21 April 2020 the South African government announced a social and economic stimulus package or relief fund amounting to R500 billion, to fight the negative economic and social effects resulting from Covid-19. Some of these funds were later

reported to be misused for the benefit of a few government elites. Writing on the corruption associated with the R500 billion Covid-19 relief fund, Aphiwe Deklerk (2021) notes that the Special Investigating Unit (SIU) is probing irregular contracts worth R14.8 billion. Some of these contracts were undeservedly awarded to firms that were linked to government officials. The bidding prices of these contracts were reported to be exorbitant, some reported to be five times higher than their market prices. Moreover, distributive policies of the existing government are also not immune to fraud and corruption. I argue that institutional policies such as the Broad-Based Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and Employment Equity (EE), designed to foster economic transformation and to create opportunities for black South Africans to meaningfully participate in the South African economy, have also failed the most disadvantaged people in the country. Black people are slipping into poverty every year, proportionally more than their white counterparts. All of these aforementioned factors contribute to the high inequalities in the country. A recent report from the World Bank titled, "Inequality in Southern Africa: An Assessment of the Southern African Customs Union", indicates that 10% of the South African population, mainly white people, own more than 80% of the wealth in the country, making South Africa the most unequal country in the world. The report also looked at gender dynamics when dealing with inequalities in South Africa. It indicated that "on average, women in SACU [Southern African Customs Union, which consists of Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa,], earn 30 percent less than their male counterparts (with similar education and other relevant characteristics)" (World Bank, 2022: 4). What is alarming about the report is that the South African pay gap is higher than the SACU average. The country is

reported to have a pay gap of 38%, meaning that women in South Africa receive earnings that are 38% lower compared to the male peers who have the same level of education and other job-related attributes.

What I have thus submitted is empirical evidence indicating that, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, the ruling government has failed to reverse the inequalities brought by Apartheid. I argue that, it has actually deepened inequality levels since it came into power in 1994. It has failed to effectively use its policies to better the welfare and livelihoods of black South Africans, particularly black women – the worst-off. Government's failure to promote the interests of the worst-off, reveals that we need an alternative ethical approach when dealing with social justice matters of South Africa and that approach, I believe, would be best delivered by acts of individuals rather than state policies.

The second objection I present is in relation to the prioritarian ethical approach of distributing benefits to the worst-off. Strict egalitarians argue that "an unequal distribution of benefits and burdens across different people is, in itself, unjust or morally bad.", (Clayton and Williams, 2000: p. 3). They hold the ideal of equality supreme because, according to Clayton and Williams, "equality is an important value which we should aim to achieve." (2000, p. 4).

Knowing this, egalitarians may argue against the prioritarian distribution associated with

Ubuntu ethics, and advocate for benefits to the poor to be distributed equally, notwithstanding the possible consequence of the less-disadvantaged receiving more benefits than they actually deserve. The Ubuntu way of life and ethical principle is, rather, that of prioritising distribution of benefits to the worst-off in order to better their

prospects and also cultivate harmonious relationships amongst members of the community. “Great inequalities of wealth undermine relational values”, Metz adds (2019: 24). In my response to this objection, I hold that focusing on equality as a supreme ideal may be a misguided target or objective. Achieving equality at the expense of ill relations between community members may not sit well with a proponent of Ubuntu ethics. Also, by prioritising the distribution of benefits to the worst-off, there is a chance that inequality might consequently, be reduced as a by-product of a prioritarian-based distribution. Clayton and Williams (2000: p. 4-5) mention that ‘attaching priority to the interest of the worst-off does not value the reduction of inequality for its own sake, but only as a by-product or as a means of raising the level of the worst-off.” Lastly, it appears that strict egalitarianism is more concerned with the distribution of material goods whereas

Ubuntu ethics is equally, morally speaking, concerned with how people relate to one another. There is more at stake than the distribution of wealth and benefits for an Ubuntu ethics proponent.

The third objection I look at is with regards to the prescriptive approach I propose when delivering benefits to the poor. I have argued that this aid should be used to establish small but scalable business ventures for the sake of sustainability. Furthermore, these business ventures should be managed by the worst-off, applying Ubuntu principles and values. I will not defend the Ubuntu-centred business management approach applied when directing aid to the poor in detail here, as I have comprehensively done so in the previous section. I will, however, briefly expand on the defence given earlier. A libertarian such as Milton Friedman, who argues that the sole goal of a business is to

make profit and managers have a duty to their employers to realise this goal, may find the ethical approach I propose to be problematic. Friedman argues that "a corporate executive is an employee of the owners of the business…. [He has a] responsibility to conduct the business in accordance with their [employers'] desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible while confirming to the basic rules of the society", (Beauchamp and Bowie, 2001: p. 51). As mentioned earlier, this account exposes its individualistic nature that is also known to promote corporate greed and also widen the income (and relational) gap between the better-off and the worst-off. This does not sit well with Ubuntu ethics, which is also concerned with human excellence, which is achieved "if, and only if, one lives communally (or harmoniously) with other persons or honours communal (harmonious) relationships with them" (Metz, 2019: 9).

Concluding Remarks

Distributive ethical accounts have been mainly argued from a standpoint of institutions and policies as vessels to carry out distributive justice. In this report I have argued for private individuals as alternative agents that could distribute benefits to the poor. Moreover, I have presented Ubuntu as a forceful moral alternative ethical account to western ethical account that can speak to how we ought to treat the poor. I argued that because of the inequalities emanating from the previous apartheid government and those that are enforced by the existing one, South Africa's distributive principles are to follow a prioritarian ethical approach. In this approach, the worst-off members, particularly black women, would be prioritised when allocating resource. This means that benefits would not be allocated equally to all members of the worst-off group, as

strict egalitarians would have it, but rather, they would be allocated in accordance to who need them most. That is, the most disadvantaged would have a higher moral claim to receiving benefits compared to other members of the worst-off group such as white women; black men; white men etc. These other groups will still have a moral claim to receiving the benefits although their claim will rank lower to the most disadvantaged group, i.e. black women.

I have also presented what personhood means in communitarian ethics, such as Ubuntu, and juxtaposed the Ubuntu conception of personhood with that construed in Western-based ethics. Ubuntu ethics proved to provide an alternative and morally more comprehensive perspective of what constitutes personhood, especially when faced with moral dilemmas that arise when having to make decisions about the distribution of scarce resources.

Lastly, I have argued that the aid to the poor should be pooled by private individuals to form small business ventures that are operated and manged by the poor so that the distribution becomes sustainable. This, assuming profits are realised and shared amongst the worst-off, would translate to additional business ventures being established for the benefit of other members of the worst-off group who have a lower moral claim to receiving these benefits, thus, leading to a scalable distributive approach. Following this approach, being guided by Ubuntu ways of life and ethics, South Africa stands a chance to realise an inclusive, comprehensive and effective social justice.

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