

**Non-Anthropocentrism and Extrinsic Value in
African Environmental Ethics**

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Introduction

Anthropocentrism is characterised by human-centeredness. In terms of environmental ethics, an anthropocentric ethic is one which prioritises human goods over the good of non-human entities, or which defines what is good through a human lens or standard (Kopnina, H., Washington, H., Taylor, B. et al, 2018). As a result, moral worth is allocated or assigned according to whether or not something brings value to humans. The implication is that nonhuman nature is extrinsically valued. Specifically, it is given instrumental value according to how it can be used for the end goal of humanity. From this, Etieyibo draws out two key points in terms of the type of value which is attributed to elements of the natural kingdom:

“[H]umans are (1) the single and most important bearers of intrinsic value or (2) individual nonhuman organisms/ nonhuman nature possess no intrinsic value.” (2018: 165)

This conclusion is based on the assumption that humans have some intrinsic value. In contrast to this, I will argue that neither humans nor non-human nature needs to be assigned intrinsic value in order for the resulting environmental ethic to be non-anthropocentric. This goes against the first point, by denying the intrinsic value of humans entirely. It also goes against the second point, by suggesting that an ethic which gives no intrinsic value (or which gives extrinsic value) to nonhuman organisms or nature need not be anthropocentric. I will argue that elements of traditional African worldviews such as communitarianism, Ubuntu and Maat point toward a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic which allocates contributory extrinsic value to both humans and non-human nature.

An important distinction for this paper is the difference between three key types of value which can be attributed to humans and non-human nature. The first distinction is between intrinsic and extrinsic value, and the second is between two types of extrinsic value – instrumental and contributory extrinsic value. Instrumental value is ascribed to objects which are useful in fulfilling certain roles or completing valuable tasks. In other words, it is a value attributed to things which are means toward some greater end. A traditional example of instrumental value is that of money. Money is valuable because it allows people to achieve things which they value. For example, money may allow someone to pay for life-saving surgery. Here, the money itself is only valuable insofar as it can be used as a tool to acquire something of greater value. Instrumental value is ascribed to something in relation to something else, where one relatum has a greater value than the other. To use the previous example, the value of the money is less than the value of the life-saving surgery. This is

because the value of the means (money) is derivative from the value of the ends (life-saving surgery). Extrinsic value is importantly related to context, for example, the cultural context might determine aesthetic standards whereby something is judged to be beautiful.

Instrumental value is a specific type of extrinsic value, but it is not the type of value I would like to accord to humans and other beings in this project.

A second type of extrinsic value which is important to the current argument is contributory value. This type of value is ascribed to objects which are part of a greater whole.

Contributory value holds between things being related, but the relata can have equal worth or worth can be placed on the relation itself. It is possible either that the constituents of a whole have no value individually or that the value of the whole is greater than the sum of the value of its parts. For example, the value of a piece of art could be greater than the value of its individual brushstrokes. However, this is not the same as instrumental value. Not only do the individual brushstrokes make up the aesthetic value of the artwork, but the artwork as a whole is what gives the brushstrokes value. This multi-directional value is different from the uni-directional value involved in instrumental value. In this project, I will defend the thesis that the principles of Ubuntu, personhood, vital force and Maat point toward humans and non-human nature having contributory extrinsic value.

Finally, intrinsic value is attributed to that which is valuable in and of itself (Taylor, 1971).

Intrinsic value need not involve any type of relationship, since the object of value can be valued for its own sake. Accordingly, intrinsic value is not contextually bound. For example, a hedonist would see pleasure as the sole locus of intrinsic value (Taylor, 1971). Pleasure is valuable, not because of what it is useful for, but for itself. Most of the current literature which argues for the non-anthropocentrism of African environmental ethics does so by attempting to show that both humans and non-human nature possess intrinsic value. While I find this strategy convincing, I will present an alternative way to defend the same conclusion, further strengthening this position against its critics who primarily argue that African environmental ethics is anthropocentric. Instead of arguing for their intrinsic value, humans and non-humans could be said to be extrinsically valuable if we take African thought as strictly communitarian.

If all beings are valuable because they help to achieve the ultimate communal good, then African thought is not anthropocentric. In this case, there is no distinction between the way in

which humans and non-human nature is valued. This stance is compatible with both strict communitarianism, ethics of nature relatedness, and the idea of holism whereby everything in the universe hangs together, sharing and transferring vital force. It is also in line with the idea of duties which ensure that humans and non-human nature are treated with care and respect. I will argue that ascribing extrinsic value to all beings is both in line with African thought and a plausible argument for the non-anthropocentrism of African philosophy in general and African environmental ethics in particular.

The work of this dissertation can be read in both a descriptive and normative light. The distillation of an African environmental ethic from the current body of literature is a descriptive task. This task has resulted in my stance that an African environmental ethic is a non-anthropocentric one. Because an African environmental ethic is non-anthropocentric, it can make an important contribution to current environmental debates, and could be a viable ethic on which to base environmental legislature, especially during a climate and resource crisis. Behrens describes the “untapped wealth of indigenous [African] knowledge and wisdom” (2010: 193) which could add significant value to eco-philosophy as a whole. The application and use of an African environmental ethic would be a normative task, but it is not undertaken here. Such work has been done elsewhere, for example through the proposal to establish ecovillages globally, based on the ethics espoused by Cheikh Anta Diop and the Songhai Centers set up by Godfrey Nzamujo (Verharen et al., 2021). Rather, the possibility of this application is part of the motivation for specifying the ethic, and is one reason why this is an important task.

Before the main body of the argument is presented, a qualification needs to be made regarding my use of the term “African philosophy”. There are questions around whether the term “African philosophy” can accurately be applied to a group of philosophies which may have very little in common. The converse of this is the argument that what characterises one type of African thought may not be representative of the whole of Africa. For example, ideas which may stem from a certain part of West Africa could not be described as “African philosophy” because they do not apply to other parts of Africa. In other words, thoughts and ideas within Africa and stemming from a traditional African context are varied, so to label them as African philosophy would be to homogenise these philosophies under a banner which does not accurately describe or connect them.

The response to this problem is two-pronged. On one hand, the label of African philosophy need not be homogenising, because it could include different specific and heterogeneous African philosophies under one banner. To draw from the analogy made by Etieyibo (2021), a Zulu dress may not be the kind of garment worn in every part of Africa, but it is still an African dress. In the same way, thoughts labelled as “African philosophy” need not be representative of all African thought to be considered African. On the other hand, it is important to note certain striking similarities between philosophies from across the African continent. One such similarity which will be briefly explored in this dissertation is the parallels between the Ancient Egyptian concept of Maat and the Bantu concept of Ubuntu. This is one of many patterns of thought which occur in different parts of Africa, but which mirror each other in their core principles, and support the idea that African philosophy is tied together by many common threads of thought which are found throughout the continent (Behrens, 2006). These two points support the use of the label of “African philosophy” under which this dissertation is written.

My research will build on the current literature by presenting an alternative way in which to read African philosophy as non-anthropocentric. Instead of arguing that animals and non-human nature have intrinsic value, I will argue that they have extrinsic value. However, I will also extend this argument to humans. The key difference between my account and the general trend in the literature is the claim that all beings have extrinsic, rather than intrinsic value. This approach avoids the difficulties of explaining the intrinsic value of animals, land and other elements of the environment, which seem to be treated as means toward some greater end in certain traditional practices. There is a gap in the current literature surrounding whether or not African philosophy is anthropocentric. Taking both humans and non-human nature to have extrinsic value will add to the current discussion around whether or not African philosophy is anthropocentric, as well as providing an alternative strategy to defend the idea that it is non-anthropocentric.

To begin with, In Section 1 I will discuss the main trend in the literature, which is the idea that African philosophy is non-anthropocentric because of the extension of intrinsic value beyond humans, and including the rest of the natural kingdom. Specifically, I will look at how the idea of vital force is used to attach intrinsic value to humans and non-humans alike. In Section 2 I will discuss the counter-argument which has been made, that African philosophy is anthropocentric because of the extrinsic, specifically instrumental, value which

is given to non-human nature. This is based on the practices of ritual animal slaughter, taboos and totems. Section 3 will explore the ways in which the principles of Afro-communitarianism, including strict communitarianism, personhood, Ubuntu and Maat, point toward the extrinsic value of humans. Tying these two previous points together, in Section 4 I will look at how the extrinsic value of nature together with the extrinsic value of humans puts the two on a level moral playing field, and can be the basis of a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic. Finally, Section 5 will deal with two possible objections to my argument, as well as responses in defence of my stance.

1. Intrinsic Value of Non-Human Nature

1.1. Intrinsic Value

Taking both humans and non-human nature as intrinsically valuable is one way in which to argue for the non-anthropocentrism of African environmental ethics. The attribution of intrinsic value means that something is valued for its own sake, and not for what it is able to produce, add toward or make possible. In the context of environmental ethics, attributing elements of the environment with intrinsic value is a solid basis for a non-anthropocentric ethic. This is because the value of an element of nature is not valued in human terms, or for the benefit which it might provide to humans. Instead, it is valued for its own right, despite the context in which it is placed. Non-human nature then becomes a moral subject and holds its own moral weight irrespective of any relation to humans. As a result, nature is not used and abused for the sake of human gain, and humans are not morally superior to non-human nature when it comes to moral decisions.

There are various ways in which to explicate intrinsic value. Taylor outlines five different ways in which to understand intrinsic value:

- (i) To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it is sought or desired *for its own sake, or as an end in itself*.
- (ii) To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it has value and that its value depends on its *nature* rather than on its consequences or its relation to other things.
- (iii) To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it would have value even if it were *the only thing existing in the universe*.
- (iv) To say something has intrinsic value is to say that there is an *objective, non-natural property* inhering in (belonging to) it.

- (v) To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it has *non-derivative value*. (Taylor, 1972: 441)

Some have suggested that pleasure, virtue and knowledge, among other things, may be described as valuable in at least one of these ways (Ross, 2001). Traditionally, Western philosophers have taken humans to be intrinsically valuable. This is the basis for concepts such as human rights, which protect people from actions which would fail to recognise their worth. For example, the right to healthcare protects people from untreated disease and injury, by recognising that health benefits the wellbeing of humans, who are intrinsically valuable. Intrinsic value, then, can be variously specified as well as variously applied to concepts, properties and objects, including people.

The concept of intrinsic value is also tied to individualism. Gyekye explores the relational, social and communal nature of African ethics, which stands in contrast with the individualistic nature of Western ethics. This relational ethical approach is based on the needs and nature of humans: “The natural sociality or relationality of human beings would – and should – prescribe a social ethic, rather than the ethic of individualism” (Gyekye, 2010: 29). The ideas of holism, relationality and mutual dependence which exist in African ethics go against Taylor’s descriptions of intrinsic value. On the first and third points, valuing something (i) for its own sake or (iii) giving value to it even if it were the only thing existing in the universe both have individualistic undertones. To value something in isolation without considering its context is out of place in an African ethic, in which individual elements hang together in a societal nexus (Teffo & Roux, 2002). To take an individual out of this nexus is to strip it of both the societal standards through which value is measured, as well as the setting in which that value is realised. This applies to human society as well as to elements of the natural kingdom.

Point (v) has a similar implication. For a person to have (v) non-derivative value is for that value to be self-produced outside of the context of a community. Taylor himself discounts the description (iv), arguing that value is not the right kind of thing to be described as a property. His argument is based on the fact that intrinsic value, unlike other properties, is a non-natural property, since it cannot be determined through empirical means whether an object has this property. On the other hand, an intuitionist account of value requires that an object’s value is an essential property. I will not expand on or defend Taylor’s position here, but rather take it as a note of caution against the use of the fourth description. The description of valuing

something for its nature (ii) comes close to the idea of vital force giving intrinsic value, which I take to be the most promising way in which to ascribe intrinsic value either to humans or to non-human nature, or both, within the context of African environmental ethics.

1.2. Vital Force and Intrinsic Value

In most of the current literature, humans and non-human nature are said to have intrinsic value and this value is assigned or conferred on them through the idea of vital force. The force thesis, as outlined by Tempels (1959), is a metaphysical worldview whereby beings are imbued with vital force. Beings do not have the same amount of force. Rather, there is a hierarchy or chain of force in the universe. God is the apex of this hierarchy, as the ultimate source of vital force. Lower down are spirits and ancestors, humans, animals, plants and inanimate objects (Teffo & Roux, 2002:196). Existence and force are intimately intertwined: “Force is the nature of being, force is being, being is force” (Tempels, 1959: 51). Force is the essence of something’s being, which is in line with Taylor’s description of something having intrinsic value based on its nature, rather than intrinsic value being a non-natural property. As an essential characteristic of all animate and inanimate objects of the universe, force plays a connecting role, and is a kind of common denominator. Force is not a homogenising idea: “forces may differ in their essence; thus we have divine, celestial or terrestrial, human, animal, vegetal, and material or mineral forces” (Ikuenobe, 2014: 3). Though forces themselves may differ in essence, they are the common essence of all human and nonhuman beings. If force is used as a standard for moral consideration, then this consideration is extended beyond humans, animals and even plants. This idea is attractive, since it gives intrinsic value to all beings, including non-human nature, and even to inanimate objects, such as elements of the natural landscape. These types of arguments are made by Etieyibo (2017) and Tangwa (2005), but their specifics will be discussed in Section 4.1.

A possible problem with using vital force as a determining factor for moral worth is the idea that the moral consideration might vary in degree in line with the degree of force. If this is true, then Horsthemke (2017) points out that humans would still be considered morally superior to the rest of the natural kingdom. Humans would still be subordinate to spirits, ancestors and god, because they have a greater degree of force, but this can still be seen as anthropocentric. This hierarchical structure points to anthropocentrism because of the close connection between humans and the divine. Not only is nonhuman nature lower on the hierarchy of vital force, but Horsthemke argues that the hierarchy itself centres humans. The

divine is seen in relation to humans, since spirits and ancestors were humans who reached a certain level of personhood in their mortal lives. Similarly, nonhuman nature is seen as the environment for the sustenance and existence of humans (Mbiti, 1969). Horsthemke concludes that the ontological hierarchy based on vital force means that “[humans] have moral responsibilities and duties first and foremost to God, then to the ancestors and their fellow humans, and only thereafter, indirectly, to the rest of creation” (2017:125). In other words, the ontological hierarchy creates a parallel moral hierarchy. The lower moral status of the natural kingdom, together with the centring of humans within the hierarchy, leads to a picture of African morality which is decidedly anthropocentric.

However, there are possible responses to this problem, one of which is Etieyibo’s (2019) response to Horsthemke. Etieyibo denies that the ontological hierarchy implies or necessitates a parallel moral hierarchy. Accordingly, it is not the degree of vital force, but rather the possession thereof which has moral implications and gives intrinsic worth. In the same way, anthropocentric worldviews may take the possession of rationality to be the indicator of moral worth. Since humans are the only known beings to possess rationality, this is anthropocentric. However, humans have differing degrees of rationality. Despite this, they do not have different degrees of moral worth. This analogy shows how possession of an attribute is a good indicator of moral worth, and the degree to which the attribute is displayed is not as important a factor. This argument is in line with Etieyibo’s argument, which is the most plausible strategy to argue for the intrinsic value of human and non-human beings, with the implication that African philosophy is not anthropocentric. In this thesis, I will take Etieyibo’s response to the force problem, and other arguments which base moral worth on force, as sufficient to allow vital force to be a marker of moral status, without the implication of anthropocentrism. In contrast to Etieyibo’s view, I will argue from the standpoint of extrinsic, rather than intrinsic value, presenting an alternative position which can be used in the case that the intrinsic position fails.

Within Western literature on environmental ethics, there are various standards to determine what has intrinsic value, and accordingly what can be treated as a moral subject. Two of the main views within Western environmental ethics allocate moral status according to the ability to feel pain, and sentience. Both of these approaches display a narrowness which leads them to exclude plants, natural features such as rivers, as well as superstructures such as ecosystems. Bentham (1780/ 1983) and Singer (1975) take sentience to be the essential

characteristic which determines moral consideration. This is helpful for animal ethics, because it allows animals which cannot express rationality to be morally treated. However, unlike the use of vital force as a criterion for moral treatment, this works well for animals, but is difficult to extend to the rest of nature. A plant could arguably display some degree of sentience through newly-researched tendencies such as crown shyness, whereby trees of the same type do not grow too close to each other to block out sunlight, and chemical root communication through soil organisms (van Dam & Bouwmeester, 2016). However, the same cannot be said of a natural feature such as land, or a macrostructure such as an ecosystem. Soil and ecosystems both contain sentient beings, but do not have a shared, “group” sentience which would allow them to be morally considerable on their own. Basing moral consideration on vital force solves this problem of narrowness, because even non-sentient elements of nature have vital force and are the subjects of moral consideration.

Some of the benefits of using vital force as a marker for moral consideration in an environmental ethic include its wide application, as well as its equalising and connective roles. Vital force equalizes a heterogeneous array of elements, including the divine realm, people, sentient and non-sentient elements of nature. It also connects these elements through their common vitality, as parts of a whole, closed system of vital force. Sentience and pain, while they are a common property in both humans, animals and possibly some forms of vegetation, do not play the same connective role, because they are not the basis of community in the same way that vital force is the basis of mutual respect and community within the framework of Ubuntu. This makes vital force a more emotive, stronger basis for commonality, especially with its connection to the divine. The recognition that animals may feel pain in a similar way to humans may cause humans to respect animals more and treat them better, and the same is true for sentience. On the vital force basis, animals and nature are not only respected and well-treated because of a common property or capacity, but rather because they form part of the same divine web of being. This is clearly a much closer form of connection, and it makes vital force a stronger criterion for moral consideration than either the capacity to feel pain and the property of sentience. The allocation of intrinsic value to both humans and non-human nature is one way in which philosophers have constructed a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic. African environmental ethics specifically can explain this intrinsic value, and resultant moral consideration, through the idea of vital force. While I agree that vital force is a good indicator of moral status, I believe that it points toward extrinsic rather than intrinsic value.

2. Extrinsic Value of Non-Human Nature

2.1. Types of Extrinsic Value

Two types of value which are important for this project are instrumental and contributory value. Ethical frameworks which give non-human nature instrumental value are largely anthropocentric. On the other hand, I will argue that an ethic which gives non-human nature contributory value can be non-anthropocentric. Traditional African practices, especially ritual animal slaughter, the adherence to taboos and the protection of totems, point toward non-human nature being extrinsically valued. I will argue that the type of extrinsic value revealed by these practices is contributory, rather than instrumental.

2.1.1. Instrumental Value

Instrumental value is the kind of value discussed above through which objects are valued insofar as they facilitate the achievement of some more valued outcome. Valuing non-human nature instrumentally is typical of anthropocentric viewpoints. This is the basis of the view that African environmental ethics is anthropocentric, as argued by Horsthemke (2017). Horsthemke (2017) holds that African thought is characterised by moral anthropocentrism. This is because the respect and duties due toward non-human nature is indirect, and ultimately benefit humans. Morally right actions and moral value are judged in human terms. Horsthemke argues that the anthropocentrism of African thought is seen in both its communalism and in African religion. In African religious systems, practices such as animal slaughter seem to value the animal only in as far as its slaughter benefits humans, for example by forming a connection to the divine realm. Animals are not valued as ends in themselves but rather as means toward some greater good, which clearly demonstrates the concept of instrumental value. This greater good is based on human benefit, which shows the anthropocentric nature of an African environmental outlook, according to Horsthemke (2017). Any practice which takes nonhuman nature as instrumentally valuable must be anthropocentric if the ends are those of humans. This is because they would have the two defining characteristics of anthropocentrism, as outlined by Etieyibo (2018): first, that humans are the only and most important bearers of intrinsic value, and second that nonhuman nature has no intrinsic value. Taking nonhuman nature as instrumentally valuable and humans as intrinsically valuable is the mark of an anthropocentric environmental ethic.

Western ethics are also often presented as anthropocentric due to their centring of human values and the view of non-human nature as instrumentally valuable. Of course, colonialism

is one way in which African and Western environmental ethics have come into contact. Ikuenobe (2014) explores the ways in which colonialism disrupted the deep connectedness between humans and nature, and replaced it with a capitalist, Western mind-set of utilisation and division. On Ikuenobe's account, colonialism and capitalism have replaced the close connection and recognition of dependence on nature with a separation from nature and consumeristic attitude toward natural resources. For example, "[b]y getting rid of their herbal mode of healing, [Africans] did not see any need for leaves, plants, roots and bark of trees and the need to preserve them. Thus, they have sought to destroy or exploit them for economic gains" (Ikuenobe, 2014: 18). This demonstrates the disconnect from nature and capitalistic attitude associated with a Western society, which has spread to Africa as a result of colonialism. The idea of exploiting natural resources for economic gains clearly shows the instrumental value attached to nature. Natural resources are seen purely as means towards a greater end, that of economic gain, which is purely based on human benefit. Ikuenobe presents a practical example of how extrinsic, specifically instrumental value, when attached to nature, results in an anthropocentric environmental ethic.

However, an anthropocentric worldview does not necessarily imply that nature is disregarded or treated poorly. As Opke and Oti note, "[t]hat everything exists for man, in the African sense, does not imply aggressive dominance or subjugation over the rest of nature... In fact, reverence for all creation is an essential part of the moral order of the universe and determines everything that happens to or befalls humanity" (Opke & Oti, 2019: 106). Many traditional practices benefit the environment tangentially or as a by-product, despite being anthropocentric in nature. For example, taboos protect land and nature from human influence and could be read as conservational (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). However, the main aim of the taboo is to protect humans from the wrath of spirits. The key premise of the viewpoint that African environmental ethics is anthropocentric is that humans and non-human nature are valued differently, with humans being the only locus of intrinsic value.

From the above argument, it is clear that an African environmental ethic can be characterised by anthropocentrism, without its being harmful to the environment. However, there are two reasons why this is not the view I will take, which are normative and descriptive respectively. Firstly, it is more likely that an anthropocentric worldview would result in disregard for the environment. This is the normative point, because I will defend the stance that an anthropocentric viewpoint should not be used when it comes to an ethic which informs

environmental choices. The non-anthropocentric nature of African environmental ethics makes it apt for application to current environmental decisions, in the face of a global environmental crisis. This is part of the motivation for examining African environmental ethics, in order to explore the ways in which it can contribute toward the global environmental discussion. Secondly, and most importantly, a close examination of the literature on African environmental ethics reveals that it is better characterised as non-anthropocentric. The specific characterisations vary, and include Tangwa's eco-bio-centrism as well as Metz's ethic of nature relatedness. The basis for my argument is traditional African practices, ethics and metaphysics, which point toward both humans and non-humans having contributory value, resulting in a non-anthropocentric ethic framework.

2.1.2. Contributory Value

In order to explain contributory value, it is useful to set up specific vocabulary to distinguish between the parts and the whole. Let the state of affairs be the single contributory event or object, which partially constitutes a scenario of intrinsic worth. For example, the state of affairs would be the existence of an individual paintbrush stroke, while the scenario is the full painting. As noted by Bradley (1998), a state of affairs which has contributory extrinsic value could have no intrinsic worth, or it may have some intrinsic worth, but less than the overall intrinsic worth of the whole state of affairs. Simply defined, contributory value is '[t]he value a constituent has in virtue of contributing to the whole' (Bradley, 1998: 120). Contributory value is extrinsic, rather than intrinsic, because it depends on the circumstances in which the object of value is placed. The value of a paintbrush stroke outside the context of a painting is different from that within the context of the painting.

An important distinguishing aspect of contributory value which differentiates it from instrumental value is the multi-directional nature of the value it creates. Not only does the paintbrush stroke give the painting aesthetic value, but the paintbrush stroke is made more valuable in the context of the painting. The same cannot be said for goods which have instrumental value. Objects which have instrumental value have a one-directional relationship of value conferral with the scenarios of greater worth which they bring about. For example, if a key is used to open a lock then it is instrumentally valuable. With no lock to open, the key becomes value-less, but the lock does not lose value without the key, because there are different instruments which can be used to achieve the same end of opening the lock. The lock gives the key value, but the key does not give the lock the same value. This is one way

in which the fine difference between the two types of extrinsic value which have been discussed, contributory and instrumental value, can be pulled apart. This distinction is also important to consider when applied to the context of environmental ethics, as will be further explored in Section 4.

The fact that contributory value can be applied to objects which also have intrinsic value, shows the compatibility between my view and the traditional view, whereby both humans and non-human nature have intrinsic value. On one hand, the constituents (non-human nature) can have intrinsic value, but less than that of the overall good of the human and non-human community as a whole, which is in line with the traditional view. On the other, the constituents (non-human nature) need not have intrinsic value, and only the overall good of the community to which they contribute has intrinsic value. There is a third possibility, whereby even the overall good of the community has only extrinsic value, perhaps to the individual constituents themselves. This is a more radical stance which cancels out the need for intrinsic value entirely through creating a kind of value loop. Any of these three stances is compatible with the idea of humans and non-human nature having contributory extrinsic value, but I will argue in favour of the second view.

Applying contributory value to non-human nature is not linked to an anthropocentric ethic in the same way as the application of instrumental value does. This makes it a way in which non-human nature can be said to have extrinsic value, without the ethical framework immediately becoming an anthropocentric one. As a result, the line between instrumental and contributory value of non-human nature parallels the line between an anthropocentric and a non-anthropocentric ethic respectively, which makes the distinction a crucial one to explore. Those who have argued for the anthropocentrism of African environmental ethics have pointed toward several traditional African practices which show that non-human nature is valued instrumentally. While I agree that these practices show an extrinsic, rather than an intrinsic, value being attached to non-human nature, I believe that it can be better understood as contributory extrinsic value.

2.2. Non-Human Nature in African Environmental Ethics

Three practices which demonstrate the extrinsic valuing of non-human nature are those of ritual animal slaughter, taboos and totemism. Ritual animal slaughter places the value of the sacrifice's outcome over the value of the animal's life or lack of suffering. This is difficult to

square with the attribution of intrinsic value to the animal involved, and rather suggests an extrinsic value. Taboos are “pedagogical tools aimed at inculcating desirable behaviour” (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010: 122). They can be cashed out as avoidance rules, especially relating to non-sentient elements of the environment, such as areas of land and rivers. Another way in which taboos are realised is through restrictions on the use of totem animals. Totem animals have a symbolic and symbiotic relationship with a clan, which involves respect and care (Irele & Jeyifo, 2010). Horsthemke argues that although African morality is anthropocentric, it includes and promotes “respect toward the nonhuman (animal and natural) world” (2017: 120), which is seen through things like the protection of totem animals. Taboos and totem practices, while they may have positive and conservational impacts on the sentient and non-sentient elements of the environment, are performed because of the fear of retribution from the spirit world. The motivation behind these practices is arguably self-preservation, which points toward the extrinsic value of the non-human nature involved.

2.2.1. Ritual Animal Slaughter

In some African cultural groups, animals are slaughtered as part of rituals including initiations, weddings, funerals and various celebrations. Similar ritual animal slaughter has been attributed to cultural groups across Africa. Archeological evidence dating back to at least 5200–3800 BC suggest that the Middle Pastoral groups of the Messak, now the Libyan central Saharah, held regular feasts which included ritual cattle slaughter (di Lernia et al., 2013). The Pakot people of West Central Kenya undertake *sapana* and related initiation rituals which involve the slaughter of steer cattle (Schneider, 1957). The Xhosa-speaking people traditionally slaughter a cattle or goat slaughter as part of the *umkhapho* mourning ritual, as well as slaughtering either an ox or a cow for the celebratory *umbuyiso* ritual (van Heerden, 2002). These are a selection of African cultural and religious ceremonies which include ritual animal slaughter, but they serve as a demonstration of how widespread these practices are, not only across the geographical locations within Africa, but also across a large span of time. This is the basis for my including them as a common traditional African practice, from which the ethical attitude toward animals can be distilled.

Etieyibo (2018) describes this slaughter as a way of connecting the human and the divine through nature. In a much-quoted passage, Tangwa describes the closeness between humans and the environment in traditional Nso thought:

“[T]he distinction between plants, animals, and inanimate things, between the sacred and the profane, matter and spirit, the communal and the individual, is a slim and flexible one” (Tangwa, 2004: 389)

In the practice of ritual animal slaughter, the animals play an important role, as they are given the ability to bridge the divide, however slim, between humans and the divine. The animal takes on qualities which are above the human capacity to hold, even sometimes being described as the embodiment of spirits or ancestors (Taringa, 2006). Sacrifices can be made to god, as well as to ancestors and spirits (Horsthemke, 2017). This means that the animal is not treated as a moral subject in its own right, or not as a moral subject equal in consideration to those who benefit from the slaughter. In other words, it is not attributed intrinsic value, because it is not protected from pain and harm for its own good. Instead, the ceremony is conducted for the benefit of the humans involved, or for the god, spirit or ancestors receiving the sacrifice.

One aspect of these kinds of rituals which is especially indicative of the prioritisation of the outcome of the slaughter over the animal’s life or lack of suffering is the central role of pain in some rituals. In some cases, the animal must exhibit pain in order for the ritual to be considered successful, and “[t]he types of animals used are those that make the most noise whilst dying, generally cattle or goats, as the crying animal indicates the ancestors’ approval” (Rudnick, 2003: 57). This directly demonstrates the fact that the ancestor’s approval of the sacrifice is valued above the animal’s pain. With this in mind, it becomes difficult to claim that ritual animal slaughter is compatible with the recognition of the intrinsic value of animals. This type of treatment is more in line with an extrinsic value of animals, since their wellbeing is not prioritised over all else.

Despite Etieyibo’s claim that such ceremonies “forge some linkage between the material or physical and spiritual worlds” (2018: 175), it is not clear that this gives intrinsic value to the animals involved. Rather, the focus is on the humans in communion with the spirit realm, and the animals are mere means in the situation. The animals may benefit from the eventual communal good. For example, if appeasing the ancestors means that a plague is avoided, then the animals and natural kingdom reap the benefits of this sacrifice. The greater communal good then, the avoidance of the plague, does not only benefit humans, but also non-human nature. However, this does not seem to be the main goal, and is more like a happy accident, or unintended positive consequence that stems from the real purpose of the sacrifice by

chance. For the animal being sacrificed, it is not clear that the greater good is in line with the individual good, as it would probably die in both circumstances. Etieyibo claims that such a reading of sacrificial slaughter fails to recognise the symbolism of the slaughter over the practice itself, but the symbolism cannot fully outweigh the practice itself. Any cruel practice could be defended through the use of symbolism, but this does not excuse the effects of the practice on the beings involved. The practice of ritual animal slaughter is more consistent with animals having extrinsic, rather than an intrinsic, value.

2.2.2. Taboos

Animals are not the only consideration when it comes to environmental ethics, and taboos are one way in which the attitude toward non-sentient elements of the natural environment can be extracted. There are various taboos set in place in a range of traditional African communities, especially to do with the land and the spaces which cannot be occupied or trespassed upon by humans. These are areas which are protected and inhabited by spirits of various descriptions. Chemhuru and Masaka (2010) discuss the ways in which environmental taboos can be drawn upon to distil the environmental ethic of the Shona people of Zimbabwe. These taboos include restrictions on the use of certain natural resources. Importantly, the taboos are based around the belief in supernatural forces and their protection of certain sacred areas.

Chemhuru and Masaka examine these taboos, and use them to draw out an environmental belief system. One important finding is the conservational consequences of taboos: “Shona environmental taboos transcend simple prohibitions on certain sacred sites, plants and nonhuman animal species, pools and rivers, among others and enforce a desirable and sustainable use of the environment” (2010: 122). The outcome of these taboos is clearly beneficial to the environment, because of the conservation of resources and the protection of areas of land which can sustain animal and plant life, and protect them from human interference. The taboos have a similar effect to modern heritage and conservation sites.

However, these positive results may not be intentional, and could instead be a by-product of the taboo. The taboos may not point toward the intrinsic valuing of the land, plants and resources which they protect. Instead, it has been argued that the reasoning behind these actions is the avoidance and fear of retribution from the supernatural realm, which includes natural disasters, disease and death. This is the point on which Horsthemke (2017) focuses in order to show that the traditional taboos in African cultures are anthropocentric. Taringa (2006) explores the ways in which nonhuman nature is treated with reverence and respect

without it having intrinsic value. Through the example of protection of sacred land, Taringa shows how good treatment of nature is a result of fear of divine punishment or retribution. The end concern is the protection of the humans from the negative impacts of the spirits, rather than the protection of the environment for its own sake. Horsthemke points out that “if people act predominantly out of fear of invoking the anger of the spiritual world, then this will hardly open their eyes and minds to, say, animal’s *inherent value*” (Horsthemke, 2017: 131). The focus of the people adhering to the taboos is their own wellbeing, and even if the animals are seen as intrinsically or inherently valuable, this is overshadowed by fear and self-preservation. Although the taboos may have outcomes which benefit the natural world, this does not necessarily mean that the taboos point to an intrinsic valuing of plants, nature and land.

The purpose of taboos has also been analysed, in order to establish whether or not these taboos value non-human nature as being imbued with intrinsic value, and being moral subjects as ends, rather than means. I believe that Horsthemke puts forward a convincing case in arguing that taboos do not display an intrinsic valuing of the elements of nature they concern, because of the relation to spirits and ancestors which should not be disturbed or angered. Where my opinion differs from his is that I take this as a contributory, rather than an instrumental form of extrinsic value. Accordingly, Horsthemke finds the lack of intrinsic, or inherent, value accorded to elements of the environment demonstrative of an anthropocentric ethic. In contrast to this, I will argue that taboos which point to the extrinsic value of nature might be part of a non-anthropocentric ethic in which all elements of the system, including humans, are extrinsically valued. Disturbing the spirits would lead to a lack of social harmony and it would detract from the communal good. Together with this, a safe and functioning ecosystem is essential to the communal good as well, especially if non-human nature is included in the idea of community.

2.2.3. Totems

Another way in which taboos are implemented is the respect for and protection of totem animals. Totemism is a connective, embodied metaphor between a clan and an animal, whereby the members of the clan honour and appropriate characteristics of the animal (Irele & Jeyifo, 2010). For example, an animal might embody grace, which is appreciated and adopted by the clan who holds this animal as its totem. The relationship between the clan and its totem animal is one of respect and community, which comes with certain duties and

taboos in order to maintain it. Animals are seen as connective in many different ways. As discussed above, animals are able to connect the human and the divine through ritual animal slaughter. Animals also serve as an intermediary between humans and nature (Lévi-Strauss, 1962). They share many of the attributes and capacities of humans such as sentience, cooperation, hunting, mating et cetera, but they are also more part of the natural world than humans are. Because of this, through connecting with an animal as a totem, humans are also more connected to the environment around them. The practice of totemism has many other practical functions, including the verification of belonging to a certain clan and the choice of an appropriate spouse based on whether the totem animals were compatible (Irele & Jeyifo, 2010). This demonstrates the integration of totem animals into everyday life, and the ways in which these symbols play a functioning role in the community. It also underscores the argument that non-human nature could be included in the idea of community, through both the connective and the practical roles of totem animals.

The adherence to totem animals is also protective, in a similar way to the taboos surrounding non-sentient nature. Clan totem animals are protected from being killed and consumed except in cases of self-defence, and violations of these taboos affects “not only the life of the violator but his/her very being as well as the entire community” (Tangwa, 1996: 189). For example, people belonging to the *vaera Nzou* clan cannot eat elephant meat, because their clan totem is the elephant (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). This is similar to the taboos around land protection, in that the failure to adhere to this taboo is believed to result in disease. In this specific case, such a transgression “invites illness or the loss of the offender’s teeth” (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010: 123). African metaphysics does not separate the divine from the ordinary, and spirits operate in the same plane of existence as humans, which allows their wrath to be physically expressed (Wiredu, 1987). This is important to keep in mind, because it makes the fear of divine retribution a very real fear of tangible physical consequences. The protection of animals through totemism is in some ways similar to the modern protection of endangered species, as it recognises their worth and the role they play as parts of a wider natural community. Through totemism, animals are protected, recognised for their positive attributes, and allowed to play symbolic and practical roles in the community, which points to their having contributory value as parts of this community.

2.3. Non-Human Nature and Contributory Value

Contributory value seems to be more in line with African environmental ethics and African ethics more generally than instrumental value, because of its emphasis on relationships and holism. This is especially true when one considers the themes of personhood, Ubuntu and Maat, all of which emphasize a connectedness and interdependence between the various elements of the universe, both human and non-human.

Ritual animal slaughter can be read in the light of contributory, rather than instrumental value. The goals of ritual slaughter are to connect humans to the divine. A lack of connection between humans, spirits and ancestors goes against the ideals of communalism. Ancestors especially are a part of the community, and play a crucial role in moral decision making among other aspects of everyday life (Menkiti, 2004). To abandon the practice of ritual animal slaughter would be to sever an important communal connection, which is likely to have negative consequences. The anger of spirits and ancestors could also be realised through natural disasters or disease (Chemhuru & Masaka, 2010). This does not only negatively affect humans, but also impacts the wider community including animals and nature. Natural disasters especially can destroy all kinds of fauna and flora. This is one example of how a communal good, framed as something like safety, flourishing or wellbeing, can be shared by humans and non-humans alike. Accordingly, the animal slaughter is a way for that animal to contribute toward a wider communal good, rather than simply an instrumental use of that animal to achieve a human end. That animal itself would have been negatively affected by the wrath of the spirits in the absence of ritual slaughter. Ritual animal slaughter is a way of connecting humans to the divine realm through sacrifice.

Similarly, taboos and totems which protect elements of the natural environment may point toward a dual form of contributory value. On the one hand, employing totems instils an appreciation and respect for different animals, in recognising their positive attributes and physically enacting the connective metaphor of totem traditions. In the same way, taboos which protect land connect the land to the divine realm of the spirits through the spirits protection thereof, which also translates to an honouring and elevation of these natural features. The respect, recognition and togetherness which taboos and totems create support the widening of the community beyond humans to include the rest of nature. This also allows both animals and plants to be valued for their contributions toward the community of which they are a part. In this way, the symbolism surrounding both restrictive taboos and totemism

are connective, and draw animals and nature closer to humans via the divine. On the other hand, the symbolism surrounding taboos and totems means that non-human nature is drawn into everyday communal life. The rules of the community, such as which forests can be entered into and which people can be married, are drawn from taboos and totems. This means that metaphorically, nature plays an active role in the community through these traditions. Through totems and taboos, humans connect with nature via the divine, or the fear of divine retribution.

Each of these elements of traditional African religious and cultural practices points toward an extrinsic value of non-human nature. However, unlike those who argue that African environmental ethics is anthropocentric, I believe that this extrinsic value is better characterised as contributory extrinsic value, and not instrumental extrinsic value. If the idea of community is extended beyond humans, as has been suggested by several authors as discussed in Section 4.1, then ritual animal slaughter, the enactment of protective taboos and the recognition of totem animals are all ways in which non-human nature contributes toward the greater communal good. Through ritual animal sacrifice, humans connect with the divine via nature, and the adherence to taboos and practice of totemism connect humans to nature via the divine. Animals, plants and other elements of the environment are essential parts of this community and their value as parts of a whole system is clearly in line with the idea of contributory value. Further, if it can be shown that humans are also extrinsically valued, then this together with the extrinsic value of nature is a promising basis through which to construct a non-anthropocentric ethic.

3. Extrinsic Value of Humans

While it has been argued that non-human nature is assigned extrinsic value, the idea that humans have extrinsic value is more controversial. Authors who present an African environmental ethic as anthropocentric have often done so by highlighting the instrumental value of non-human nature. For example, the moral duties owed toward the natural world would be a result of its connection to the human and divine, making these duties indirect (Horsthemke, 2017). As an illustration, animal slaughter could be seen as anthropocentric because the end goal is to connect the human to the divine. While the animal is valued, this value is derived from the connection it allows humans to make, rather than for itself. A similar extrinsic valuing of humans might lead to very negative consequences, which is perhaps why it has not been explored as an option in the literature. For example, the practice

of slavery is arguably based on the idea of slaves as instrumentally, rather than intrinsically, valuable. A slave is purely used for economic gain, and is not valued for their own worth as a person. However, while it is evident that the instrumental value of either nature or people is harmful to them, it is not clear that contributory value has the same consequences.

I will argue that contributory value is actually the type of value attributed to humans, through a close study of Afro-communitarianism and how it points toward the communal good as intrinsically valuable, as well as strict communitarianism, processual personhood, Ubuntu and Maat, all of which point toward humans being valuable as parts of a greater community. Each of these ethics instills a great respect toward and care for fellow human beings, unlike the instrumental value framework. In the same way that nature is seen as valuable because of its contribution toward the communal good, these elements of African ethics and metaphysics suggest that humans are seen in much the same light. The upshot of this, which will be discussed in Section 4, is that the similar valuing of both humans and non-human nature is characteristic of a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic.

3.1. Afro-communitarianism & Intrinsic Value

Afro-communitarianism is a lived worldview which clearly demonstrates the high value placed on the communal good, rather than on the individual. This fits with the view that individuals within a community have contributory value, because they are not the locus of the intrinsic value, although they are essential to the realisation of this value. Metz describes Afro-communitarianism as “the view that harmonious communal relationships merit pursuit either as ends in themselves or at least as an essential means to some other end such as vitality or wellbeing (Metz, 2007; Gyekye, 2011)” (Cordeiro-Rodrigues & Metz, 2021: 61). The description of relationships, vitality and wellbeing as ends conforms to Taylor’s first definition of intrinsic value: “To say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it is sought or desired *for its own sake, or as an end in itself*” (Taylor, 1972: 441). The goals of Afro-communitarianism are variously specified, but a common term associated with it is harmony, specifically social harmony where “[s]ocial harmony is for us the *summum bonum*—the greatest good” (Tutu, 2000: 35). This description of social harmony points toward its being intrinsically valuable, as it is valued as the ultimate goal toward which the community strives. The idea of the communal good being intrinsically valuable is reflected across the literature: “one often has a reason to pursue harmonious or communal relationships as an end, not merely as a means to some other perceived value” (Cordeiro-Rodrigues &

Metz, 2021: 61). These descriptions clearly position the social, or communal, good as intrinsically valuable.

Whether the relationships themselves or the greater communal value is taken as an end, they are realized by the individuals within the community. This type of extrinsic value given to individuals within a community cannot be described as instrumental value, although it is clearly a form of extrinsic value. If the individuals within the community were only instrumentally valued, then they would not be of any value once their purpose had been completed, for example once the community had achieved a certain degree of wellbeing or harmony. In contrast, the individuals are not only the source of this harmony but also the experiencers of it. They are essential to communal harmony not as mere instruments, but rather as contributors who have some value over and above their contribution.

The individuals and the community are tied up in a way that prohibits the individuals from being labelled as instrumentally valuable. Although the communal good has intrinsic value, it cannot exist in isolation. Drawing from Taylor's description, the communal harmony or wellbeing cannot be valuable "even if it were the only thing existing in the universe" (1972: 441), because communal harmony needs a community of individuals in which to be realised. The community itself is the seedbed of the communal good: "[f]or Afrocommunitarians, the way one communally relates to others is the moral standard by which to evaluate one's actions and character and thus formulate moral principles" (Cordeiro-Rodrigues & Metz, 2021: 61). The relationship between the extrinsic and the intrinsic good in this situation is not one-directional, as is the case in which the extrinsic good is an instrumental good. Instead, the two are interrelated and co-dependent in a way that suggests a form of contributory extrinsic value.

To use the previous analogy of money, the relation between money and the object which it buys is different from the relation between a single paintbrush stroke and the whole artwork. As soon as the money has been used as an instrument to achieve a greater good – buying the object of value – it is no longer valuable itself. This is a one-directional relationship, since the object gives the money value through allowing it to be used. The money does not give the object any more value than it already has. On the other hand, a paintbrush stroke is still valuable as a part of the whole artwork, because removing it would affect the overall aesthetic. The brushstroke's value is dependent on the artwork, but the artwork's value is also

partially dependent on the brushstroke. The multi-directional nature contributory value fits the relationship between the individual and the community better than the unidirectional nature of instrumental value. Afro-communitarianism then not only presents the communal good as intrinsically valuable, but also supports the idea that individuals within a community have contributory extrinsic value.

For individuals, human and non-human alike, to be extrinsically valuable, they must contribute toward something with greater value. Afro-communitarianism suggests that the communal good could be this greater good. Many of the descriptions of the communal good position it as intrinsically valuable, and humans are extrinsically valuable through their capacity to realise this good. The specification of the communal good is left open, as it is outside the scope of this dissertation. The benefits of this flexibility in terms of specifying the communal good are further explored in Section 5, where I consider objections to my position. Aspects of Afro-communitarianism are found in various philosophies across the continent. These include ideas of strict communitarianism, personhood, Ubuntu and Maat, each of which share the core values of holism, interdependence and interrelatedness. These are rich in meaning to draw upon in distilling an African environmental ethic, and especially useful in exploring the ways in which humans have contributory extrinsic value.

3.2. Strict Communitarianism

Within Afro-communitarianism, there are different views as to the relative strictness of this communitarianism. The two main viewpoints are strict and moderate communitarianism. Strict communitarianism is distinct from what Gyekye (1997) calls “moderate communitarianism.” According to strict communitarianism, the community takes preference over the individual (Famakinwa, 2010). On the other hand, moderate communitarianism gives equal weighting to both the individual and the community. For example, if Action A benefits the individual but Action B benefits the community at large, then a strict communitarian would take Action B. Gyekye argues that these actions should not be in conflict, since the communal good is what is good for the individual. To demonstrate, he draws upon the image of a Siamese crocodile with two heads and one stomach. The crocodile heads (individuals) should not fight over which one chews the food, because they are both nourished by it since they share a stomach (community). The analogy points toward the cohesion between individual and communal goods upon which moderate communitarianism is based.

Molefe (2017) outlines problems with each of these positions. For the strict communitarian, the prioritisation of the community over the individual may come at the expense of the rights of the individual, since “individuals will be sacrificed on the altar of promoting the communal good” (2017: 4). This can have unwanted consequences, such as stripping a person of her autonomy (Gyekye, 1992). If the communal good is always seen as the prevailing good, then individuals cannot choose which goods to pursue. Molefe (2017) discusses how the agent’s obligations to her community can deny her autonomy in fulfilling her own projects. For example, investing time and money in projects of self-perfection or personal achievement at the expense of the projects of the wider community. This stands in stark contrast to ideas of Western Liberalism - in a rights-based, individualistic system, the autonomy of the individual as one of its most important characteristics for which rights aim to protect. And as Cobbah remarks, “The roots of the Western concept of human rights lie in liberalism” (Cobbah, 1987: 312). As such, it is not likely that this individualistic framework is appropriate for an African context. What is clear from the foregoing then is that the problem faced by strict communitarianism comes from the Western Liberal camp, which points toward the harms of the communal good being less valuable than that of the individual.

For the moderate communitarian, it is not clear that the communal good and the individual good are always in line. As a result, it is difficult to weigh up conflicting goods, especially if the two are said to be equally valued. This is a significant problem for the moderate communitarian, and it has been widely argued that the stance of moderate communitarianism fails as a result (Famakinwa, 2010; Táíwò, 2016). Although the details of these arguments are outside the scope of this dissertation, I believe that pointing toward its fundamental conflict is enough ground to take the stance of strict communitarianism over moderate communitarianism. There is also substantial research in support of the idea that African societies are of the strict communitarian mould. Politicians including Léopold Sédar Senghor and Kwame Nkrumah have linked the idea of communalism to that of socialism, since both take the individual as subordinate to the community. Accordingly, socialism has sometimes been seen as a fitting framework for African countries, because it is in line with strict communitarianism. I will not defend the link between strict communitarianism and African ethics, but will rather take this research as sufficient to frame African ethics as strict communitarianism.

Strict communitarianism points toward the extrinsic value of humans, because it places a higher value on the community than it does on the individual. Gyekye's primacy thesis outlines the idea that not only is the community superior to the individual in terms of moral decision-making, but that the community itself is partly constitutive of the person (Famakinwa, 2010). The good of the community takes preference over the good of the members of this community. This can be framed as the communal good having intrinsic value, while the good of the members has contributory value. Afro-communitarianism's emphasis on the communal good as intrinsically valuable is supported by strict communitarianism, which adds that individual members of the community are the locus of contributory extrinsic value.

Humans are extrinsically valuable because they are necessary components through which to achieve the final good, which is the communal good. One example of the communal good is Metz's idea of harmonious relationships (Metz, 2011), where harmonious relationships refer to the inextricable link of all beings or entities or simply a harmony in the relation of human and non-human entities, including animals. Harmonious relationships are the end goal, and the ultimate good, and the community members are the means toward that end, and so are extrinsically valued. The type of extrinsic value which best describes the humans in this context is contributory extrinsic value. The good of the community takes into account the good of the members of that community, so each member's goals add toward the communal good. Whatever the ultimate communal good is, it cannot be achieved without the cooperation of members of the community. In other words, humans make up the community, and they are the components through which this communal good is achieved.

3.3. Personhood & Ubuntu

The extrinsic value of humans can be understood as valuing humans not individually or in and of themselves, but rather as a part of a larger whole. Humans are extrinsically valued in two senses. First, their value is derived not from themselves, but from certain kinds of relationships in which they participate. The relational value of humans is seen in ethics such as Ubuntu, whereby a person's humanity is bound up with the humanity of others. Mbiti describes Ubuntu through the maxim "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (1970: 141). This highlights both the interconnectedness of members of the community as well as the importance of their relationships which make up individual identities. Not only is

the communal good the intrinsic good, as discussed through strict communitarianism, but the identities of the individual members themselves is formed by and inclusive of the community.

This has both an ethical and a metaphysical dimension. On the ethical side, humans are not valued as isolated parts or individuals, but rather their value is intimately tied up with their community. Personhood is importantly related to value, because the status of being a person is built on the standards of living an ethical life, and achieving moral greatness within the community. Through the process of becoming a person, “the community plays a vital role as catalyst and as prescriber of norms” (Menkiti, 1984: 172). The community sets the standards and norms for personhood, as well as socialising individual members into the understanding these standards and norms. It is also the arena in which personhood is achieved, since it is within the community that moral decisions are made and actions taken. Accordingly, the community plays a vital role in determining and even constituting the value of a person. A person is a person within a context. Since the moral value is attached to personhood, and personhood is attached to the context of community, the value of a person is tied up with the community.

Different communities may have different standards and norms of personhood. Further, they have different means through which this personhood is achieved, or at least worked toward. These include different rites of passage, different cultural expectations of the types of relations that constitute mutual recognition of personhood, and different standards of moral excellence. This does not point to the kind of isolated, individualistic notion of intrinsic value. The close connection between the value and its context suggests a type of extrinsic value. To use the analogy of puzzle pieces, each piece has contributory extrinsic value which depends on its being part of the right puzzle and within the context of other pieces. In the same way, the ideas of personhood and Ubuntu give value to people which is intimately tied up with and at least partially determined by their community context. A human may be considered a person within one context, but another community may have different standards and norms and thus see that human *qua* person differently.

On the metaphysical side, the community is at least partly constitutive of the individual. Drawing again on Mbiti’s description of Ubuntu: “I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am” (1970: 141), this makes it clear that a person’s “I” is made up by the

community's "we". Humans' identities are shaped by their communal context, not only in terms of personhood, but also in terms of personality and character. This further highlights the point that intrinsic value does not capture the type of moral weight given to persons within the context of personhood and Ubuntu. Together, the ethical and metaphysical components of personhood and Ubuntu do not imply that humans should be intrinsically valued. To value people intrinsically would mean valuing them individually and in and of themselves, in a way that does not fully encapsulate the connectedness to the community and the role which the community plays in their being valued as human persons or humans *qua* persons. For example, if happiness is taken to have intrinsic value, then it is always better to have happiness than not to have it, despite the context. It is valued in and of itself, rather than the relational value which characterises extrinsic goods. Based on the principles of Ubuntu and personhood, the value of a person cannot be singled out or separated in this way, because people are intimately intertwined with their communal contexts. With reference to both the idea of strict communitarianism as well as that of personhood and Ubuntu, it is the nexus of relationships which is the most valued aspect of these situations, rather than the individuals in this relationship. As a result, humans can be said to have extrinsic value, specifically contributory value.

3.4. Maat

The concept of Maat is closely related to that of Ubuntu, and the two are often discussed in conjunction (Gutierrez, 2015). Both are lived philosophies, which share core principles of moral excellence and unity. Although she was a goddess within the ancient Egyptian pantheon, Maat is described more as a concept, an underlying cosmic and moral principle of balance and harmony (Karenga, 2003). The fact that Maat is better represented as an idea than an embodied goddess is seen in the sparseness of depictions of Maat in the form of a goddess, reflecting the abstract nature of Maat (Mark, 2016). Part of the principle of Maat is living life in such a way that one's early actions reflect the regularity and harmony of the cosmic movements and cycles (Mark, 2016). This points toward the peace and connectedness between humans and the natural world, extending even beyond the confines of the earth, to include the cosmos.

Maat is also related to truth and justice, and the most well-known mythical story of the goddess is her role in the journey to the afterlife, as discussed by Karenga (2003). To summarise the myth, the deceased heart is placed on a scale and weighed against Maat's

ostrich feather. If the life they have lived follows the principles of Maat, and have been just and honest, then their heart will be lighter than the feather and they will continue to the afterlife. If not, their heart is consumed by a monster and they cease to exist. This story shows the parallels between the concepts of Ubuntu and the achievement of personhood, and the ancient life principle of Maat. The processual nature of personhood is similar to the continual striving to uphold the principles of Maat through living an honourable and balanced life. The focus is also to be a good part of the greater whole, but Maat especially extends this idea of wholeness beyond the human realm. The idea of mirroring the universe in one's actions and interactions shows the emphasis which is placed on the unity of existence, and the way in which humans hold value in relation to other elements of creation.

The pillars of Maatian ethics bear strong resemblances to the ideas of Ubuntu and personhood, and also point toward an extrinsic value of humans. This is especially true of the relational nature of the ethic, as well as the focus on building character within a community:

Maatian ethics, as a way of life, a cooperative project of moral living, is informed by the central concepts of *location, tradition, relationality and character*. The essential thrust is to locate oneself in a definite moral community and tradition, to extract from both community and tradition grounding and guidelines for living a full and meaningful life in relationship and responsibility, and to cultivate the character or ethical substance to achieve this. (Karenga, 2003: 268, emphasis in original).

These ideas of relationality and character have clear parallels with the concepts of holism, interdependence and processual personhood. The community is the seedbed for the growth of a moral person in much the same way as it is within the context of Ubuntu. The community is a space of determining moral laws and standards, as well as the context in which these laws and standards are enacted. The focus on relationship and responsibility further tie the individual to the community, making their moral standing a function of their interactions with the community.

Karenga relates Maatian ethics to Fanon's three key moral questions: those of identity, authenticity and moral potential. Each of these questions points toward an extrinsic reading of moral value. In terms of identity, the question posed is "who am I-in-community?" (Karenga, 2003: 268). The concept of self is not as a stand-alone being, but rather as a being defined by the connection to and place within the community. This speaks to the role of community as partially constituting one's identity. The self and the community are intimately

intertwined and enmeshed, and one cannot have value without the other. That the borders of a person's identity are blurred and overlapping with the wider community means that they are not valued in isolation or of their own accord but rather as parts of a whole. To value a person intrinsically involves delineating that person's identity, and the Maatian ethic makes this a difficult task by highlighting the inseparability of a person from their community.

On the question of authenticity, Fanon explores the community's role as the evaluator of moral goodness. Karenga words the question as "does my self-definition coincide with my practice and my community's evaluation of me?" (Karenga, 2003: 269). To fulfill the values of Maat in life, these values must be both determined and measured by the community. Goodness and moral worth is weighed up in the context of community and to the standards which the community has set. To live according to the principles of Maat is to live according to those principles in the eyes of the community. The myth of weighing one's heart against Maat's ostrich feather after death shows that one's moral worth is determined by the degree to which one has lived by Maatian principles. Accordingly, moral worth is closely tied to and determined by character. Character itself is determined by the evaluation of the community. The tie between moral worth and the community is firmly established by the community's role as evaluator of character. This supports the extrinsic worth of humans, because their moral worth is determined with respect to their embodiment of communal values, and the degree to which they have served to benefit the community through their character.

Third, on the question of moral potential, Karenga describes how this is realized within the context of community: "given who I am, based on my rootedness in family and community and given the standard of Maat by which I and others measure me, am I doing all that is worthy of me?" (Karenga, 2003: 269). Moral character is developed through embeddedness in the community, and interactions with various members within this community. The potential to become a morally excellent person is intimately connected with the community itself. As a result, one's moral standing cannot be measured in isolation or abstraction from one's community, in line with the discussion of Ubuntu and personhood. This points toward humans having contributory value, since they cannot be morally evaluated outside the context of their communities. To use the artwork analogy, it would not make sense to judge the aesthetic value of a single paintbrush stroke. Instead, the mark must be evaluated within its context, and judged by how it adds to or detracts from the overall aesthetic of the artwork. According to Maatian ethics, a person's identity is partially constituted by their community,

their moral worth is judged by the community, and the moral potential is realized within the context of community. All these factors point toward humans having extrinsic contributory value.

4. The Resulting Non-Anthropocentric Ethic

Up to this point in the dissertation, I have argued in favour of two key premises. In Section 2, I drew upon the practices of ritual animal slaughter, the adherence to protective taboos, and the lived metaphor of totem animals to show how non-human nature has extrinsic contributory value. In Section 3, I explored both Afro-communitarianism and strict communitarianism to show that the communal good is intrinsically valued. Further, an analysis of the elements of Afro-communitarianism, namely personhood, Ubuntu and Maat, revealed that humans also have contributory extrinsic value. In this section, I will use these premises to construct an argument for the non-anthropocentrism of African environmental ethics. Firstly, I will explore similar ways in which African environmental ethics has been portrayed as non-anthropocentric in the current literature, as well as developing the concept of extending the community beyond humans, which has been referenced throughout the dissertation. Secondly, I will show how through the two premises – that both non-human nature and humans have contributory extrinsic value – we can conclude that African environmental ethics is non-anthropocentric.

4.1. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics & Intrinsic Value

The connection between Afro-communitarianism and environmental ethics in African philosophy is not new, and has been widely explored in the current literature, but is generally framed in terms of intrinsic rather than extrinsic value. Etieyibo (2017) makes the link between Ubuntu as a form of communitarianism and how it can be extended to apply to non-human beings. Ubuntu promotes humane relations which are cashed out as “embracing the values of caring and sharing” (Etieyibo, 2017: 639). The implications of this attitude are very different from the Western capitalist and consumerist attitude, especially with respect to the environment. Important aspects of communalism, such as taking the projects and interests of others as one’s own, collaborating rather than competing and having concern for the group rather than the individual, result in an environmentally friendly, non-anthropocentric ethic when applied beyond humans. Etieyibo explores the idea that “our *beingness* commands us to behave in certain ethical ways” (2017: 638), which speaks to the valuing and good treatment of non-human nature as a part of fulfilling the standards of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is ripe in

meaning to be used for the construction of an African environmental ethic, and this is generally explained through (i) the need for good treatment of members of the community due to their intrinsic value, relating to vital force and personhood and (ii) the inclusion of nature within this community, recognising the intrinsic value of plants, animals and features of the environment and treating them accordingly. Combined, these two premises result in a non-anthropocentric African environmental ethic based on intrinsic value, through the extension of the community beyond humans.

Similarly, the interdependence between the individual and the community, which is a key aspect of strict communitarianism, fits well with a non-anthropocentric, environmentally focused worldview. These ideas are based on the mutual dependence and recognition of the vital force within both humans and non-human nature. Vital force is the marker of moral worth, and Ubuntu provides a means and a motivation for the recognition of non-human nature as valuable and apt for inclusion in the community. This, as noted by Etieyibo, makes it an ideal basis on which to build an environmentally sustainable ethic. This may be limited in that humans seem to have a different type of community with each other than they do with animals, suggesting different levels of community and closeness. The idea of differing degrees of community is further explored by Metz (2017).

Metz's African modal relationalism also draws parallels between communitarianism and environmental ethics. Metz presents a hierarchy of moral status based on the degree to which a being can be part of a communal relationship. The problem with this worldview is that it has strong anthropocentric undertones. The standard for community is the community between humans, which immediately sets the idea of value up in human terms. The problem with making community the standard for value is that it excludes certain aspects of the environment completely. For example, it would be difficult for a person to be in community with a plant or even an ecosystem, and even more so for something like an atmosphere. These are all things which could be valuable to the wider community extrinsically, but which are difficult to value in terms of community and the ability to commune. Further, Metz's position overlooks community between non-human nature, such as symbiotic relationships between plants and animals, which could be seen as relationships of community.

There are striking similarities between Metz's view and that of Behrens' (2010) African Relational Environmentalism, which holds that the interrelatedness of humans and nature can

be used as the basis for a non-anthropocentric ethic. This stance is related to, but distinct from Holism, which ascribes value to the collective community of both humans and nature. This is similar to my stance, but a nuanced distinction can be drawn between them, in that my stance values the *good* of this community, and not the community itself, intrinsically. Behrens notes that basing an environmental ethic on interrelatedness need not give nature intrinsic value, since it “does not necessarily imply valuing nature for its own sake” (2010: 471). However, he also notes that nature cannot be valued only as a result of the instrumental good which it provides to humans, if the ethic is non-anthropocentric. This means that an extrinsic value, other than instrumental value, is suitable for this kind of relational ethic. Behrens explores this value through the idea of harmonious relationships, which is reflected in Metz’s later paper, but also faces the same problem that Metz’s view faces, since it is difficult to conceptualise relationships outside the context of living beings. However, Behrens contends that

“[f]orests, ecosystems and rivers may not be capable of being objects of human concern in quite the same way, but their protection, integrity and health may be instrumentally important for the well-being of many living things, including human beings” (2010: 476).

In suggesting the ascription of instrumental value to non-sentient elements of nature, one is not sure of what to make of Behrens’ argument that African Relational Environmentalism is non-anthropocentric or whether he moves away from the notion of a non-anthropocentric African environmental ethics. This highlights two problems with relational or communal ethics. First, they ascribe value based on a human sense of relating and second, the account seem to run into the problem of properly accounting for the intrinsic value of those elements of nature which cannot be part of relationships as we understand them. My extrinsic value framework avoids both of these problems.

Tangwa’s (2004) eco-bio-communitarianism makes a similar link between the two topics. Eco-bio-communitarianism emphasises the “recognition and acceptance of interdependence and peaceful coexistence between earth, plants, animals and humans” (Tangwa, 2004:389). Here, the community of beings extends beyond the human and divine. Tangwa describes eco-bio-communitarianism as a philosophy of “live and let live” (2004: 389) which involves the respect and peaceful coexistence with or between humans and non-human nature. The interdependence between humans and non-human nature points toward their being part of the same community, a community which extends not only beyond humans, but also beyond

plants and animals to include elements of nature such as the earth, or the land itself. Behrens (2010, 2017) calls this extended community the “biotic community”, and draws parallels between familial relations and the relations between members of this community. That all these elements are in a relationship of community suggests that they all share the same intrinsic value, in a similar way in which humans recognise the intrinsic value of other humans through communal relationships which underpin Ubuntu and build one’s personhood.

Maat has also been tied to non-anthropocentrism. The Maatian ethic and ontology has been variously characterised as demonstrating eco-bio-centrism (Hornung, 1999, 2001), or cosmotheism (Assmann, 1996). From Diop’s writing, Verharen et al. (2021) draw out his hypothesis that ancient Egyptian ethics is eco-bio-centric, as supported by Erik Hornung (2001) and Ian Assmann (2002). Elements of Ancient Egyptian creation stories also point toward this lack of anthropocentrism. The emergence of Gods from nature, rather than the emergence of nature from God, as typically seen in Western, anthropocentric creation myths, shows the centrality of nature as a creative force, rather than the superiority and power of humans being centred (Verharen et al., 2021). The idea of cosmotheism stems from the myth that humans are a product of light or the divine, in the same way that other elements of the environment share this divinity. This idea bears striking similarities to the vital force thesis. In both cases, elements of the natural kingdom contain divine forces within them, which connects them to a greater whole and gives them value relative to this wider community. The principles of Maat stipulate that “humanity’s ethical mission is to promote a universal harmony that includes humans, other life forms and the earth’s inorganic features” (Faulkner, 2005). This is in line with both the idea of eco-biocentrism as well as the contributory extrinsic value of humans and nonhuman nature. The end goal being the promotion of harmony is in line with its being intrinsically valued. This harmony is not only between humans, but also clearly extends to the rest of the natural kingdom, echoing the idea of Ubuntu which extends the community beyond humans.

Once the non-human elements of the environment are included in the idea of community, the communal good can be specified in a number of different ways. I will not try to present a concrete communal good toward which the community strives for two reasons. Firstly, to specify a communal good from a human perspective could fall into the trap of anthropocentrism, which is exactly what this ethic aims to avoid. Secondly, the flexibility of

leaving the communal good open to interpretations allows for different communities to have different final goods at different times. This type of flexibility is seen elsewhere in African philosophy, especially to do with the specification of goods. For example, the ideas of personhood and what constitutes a person is often left as a flexible notion to account for the different standards of personhood in different communities, and to allow for the evolution of these standards through time. One example of the communal good is Metz's idea of harmonious relationships (Metz, 2011), where harmonious relationships refer to the inextricable link of all beings or entities or simply a harmony in the relation of human and non-human entities, including non-human animals. Whatever the communal good, it must cater for both human and non-human members of the community.

Elements of Afro-communitarianism, including Ubuntu, personhood, vital force and Maat have all been drawn upon to construct non-anthropocentric environmental ethics based on the recognition of intrinsic value beyond humans. This shows that these concepts are apt for the formation of such an ethic, but also that the current literature has only focused on an ethic based on intrinsic value, rather than exploring extrinsic value. An extrinsic value argument could reinforce the idea that even different readings of African ethical concepts come to the same conclusion, which strengthens the core claim of both approaches: that African environmental ethics is not anthropocentric. Whatever the ultimate communal good is, it cannot be achieved without the cooperation of members of the community. In other words, humans are the means through which this end is achieved. The communal good has intrinsic worth, and is the end toward which communitarian societies strive. The literature supports the idea of extending the community to include animals, plants and non-sentient natural elements, especially through ideas of Ubuntu, cosmotheism and vital force.

4.2. Non-Anthropocentric Ethics & Contributory Extrinsic Value

I have defended the premises that non-human nature is extrinsically valued (Section 2), and that humans are extrinsically valued (Section 3). I will now tie the premises together, and show how the conclusion that African environmental ethics is non-anthropocentric, based on contributory extrinsic value, flows from them. This differs from the approach taken in the literature, which focuses on intrinsic value (Section 4.1), but it comes to the same conclusion.

My argument follows a similar line of thought to the view that African environmental ethics is non-anthropocentric based on the claim of intrinsic value of beings or entities. To

demonstrate this, I will consider the argument that Ubuntu recognises a common vital force, which indicates common intrinsic value, between humans and nonhuman nature. Etieyibo (2017) explains vital force as the metaphysical dimension to Ubuntu's ethical dimension. The viewpoint based on intrinsic value shows that African environmental ethics is non-anthropocentric because humans are not the only locus of intrinsic value. Rather, the moral playing field between humans and non-human nature is even, because both are intrinsically valuable. As a result, non-human nature is not treated as only instrumentally valuable, and to be used toward a human end goal. This goes against the hierarchical structure of being, whereby humans have a different and more important type of value than nonhuman nature does. Since both humans and nonhuman nature share the same type of vital force, they share the intrinsic value which it confers, and are presented as moral equals. In my view, a parallel argument can be made in favour of extrinsic value.

On one hand, I have argued in line with Horsthemke (2017) that non-human nature has extrinsic value in that it benefits the greater community through traditional practices such as ritual slaughter, totemism and taboos. Unlike Horsthemke, I see this as contributory, rather than instrumental extrinsic value. On the other hand, I have argued that Afro-communitarianism and elements thereof including Ubuntu, personhood and Maat, point toward the contributory extrinsic value of humans. Their value is less than, and derived from, the value of the community as a whole, which can be extended beyond humans to include the natural realm. I have also looked at various arguments in favour of considering nonhuman nature as a part of the notion of community which permeates African thought. Combining these three ideas levels the moral playing field through the locus of intrinsic value being the communal good, where the community goes beyond humanity, or the good of humans. Humans and non-human nature have contributory value in that they have some input toward this final good, but neither is valued purely as a tool to achieve this good, as instrumental value would entail.

The idea that eco-bio-communitarianism and African environmental ethics in general is non-anthropocentric ethic has been explored in terms of giving humans and non-human nature intrinsic value, but it is made more powerful by the fact that it can accommodate humans and non-human nature having extrinsic value. To explore further the non-anthropocentric ethic which is drawn from the idea that both humans and nature have contributory value, it is

useful to compare this new ethic to a typical anthropocentric environmental ethic in diagrammatic form.

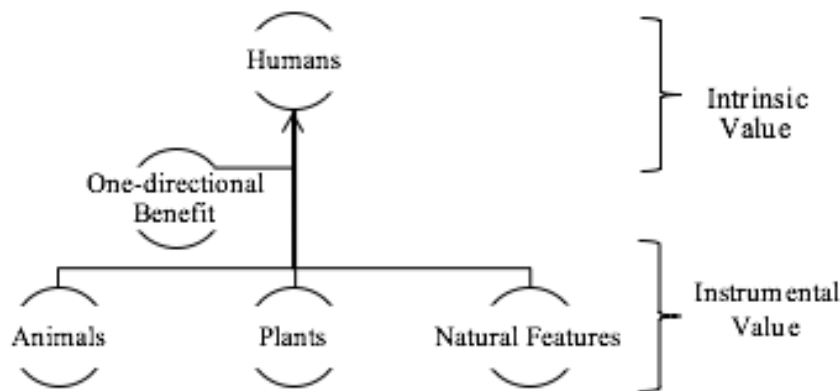


Figure 1: Anthropocentric Ethic

Figure 1 shows a typical anthropocentric ethic, which includes a hierarchical relationship between humans, who are valued intrinsically, and nature, which is valued instrumentally, as seen in the labels on the right-hand side of the diagram. Humans are the only locus of intrinsic worth and nature derives its value from its potential to benefit humans. This is a unidirectional benefit, since nature does not benefit from the relation with humans, and without humans, it has no use and thus no instrumental value, or any value of its own. This is shown by the one-directional arrow between nature and humans. Humans and animals exist in a hierarchical relationship, with humans as superior to and more valuable than, the rest of the natural kingdom.

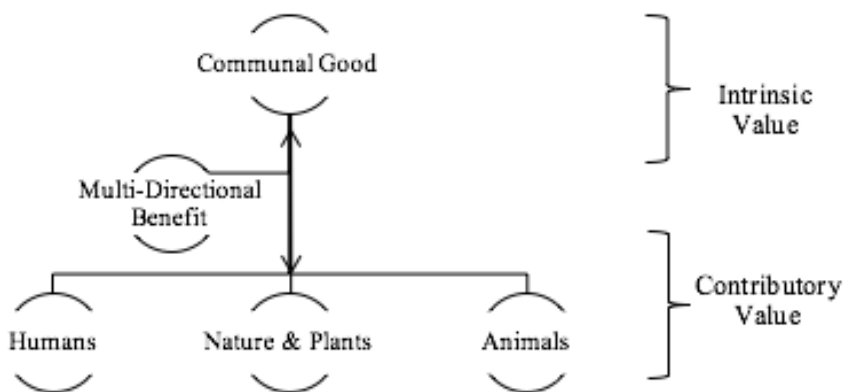


Figure 2: Non-Anthropocentric Ethic

On the other hand, Figure 2 shows the non-anthropocentric ethic for which I have argued. The locus of intrinsic value, if there is one, is the communal good. As noted before, the system need not include something of intrinsic value for it to function as a non-anthropocentric ethical framework. Humans and non-human nature are made morally equal through their shared contributory value. They are no longer in a hierarchical relationship. Of course, humans (i) are very different from nonhuman nature and (ii) contribute toward the communal good in completely different ways from which nonhuman nature would. This does not detract from the core idea that the two are equally valuable. To use the artwork analogy, it is true that every paintbrush stroke may be very different in quality, colour, texture, size etc. Nonetheless, each contributes toward the overall aesthetic of the artwork. A lighter shade may make the painting more vibrant while a darker shade adds depth, but although they affect the overall aesthetic in different ways, neither is valued above the other. In the same way, neither the contribution of humans nor that of nonhuman nature toward the communal good is more valuable than the other. This ensures an equitable distribution of value across humans and non-human nature, disrupting the hierarchical and anthropocentric environmental ethic based on instrumental and intrinsic value of nonhuman nature and humans respectively.

This benefit between the loci of extrinsic and the intrinsic value is multidirectional, since the community works toward the communal good and the communal good benefits the whole community, as shown by the double arrow in the centre of the diagram. A similar diagram could be drawn up to depict the traditional non-anthropocentric ethic whereby every being in the universe has intrinsic value, as determined by vital force. This diagram would also show no hierarchy between humans and non-human nature, and would be equally valued on the higher intrinsic value, level, rather than on the lower, extrinsic value level. What the two non-anthropocentric ethics share is the lack of a hierarchical relation between humans and the natural world, the basis in African ethics and metaphysics, and the same type of value being ascribed to both. These similarities mean that either framework can be seen as a non-anthropocentric African environmental ethic, and different readings of African traditional practices, ethics and metaphysics lead to the same conclusion.

5. Possible Counter Arguments

5.1. Objection 1: Justice in the Absence of Intrinsic Value

A possible problem which may face this account is the lack of justice in a system which does not place intrinsic value on either humans or non-human nature. The traditional Western notion of rights is built on the idea of humans having intrinsic value, which stems from Judaic-Christian roots (Deng, 2004). For example, humans have a right to privacy because privacy is necessary to the recognition of the value and humanity of each person, simply because they are people. In a Western worldview, autonomy, identity, value and rights are tied up together:

“The human person is of intrinsic value... Inasmuch as the human spirit is that aspect of human identity that transcends all socially constructed aspects of identity— such as race, gender, culture, and class—the protection and refinement of this value is the supreme objective of any legitimate social order and may be regarded as the proper focus of human rights claims.” (Penn & Malik, 2010: 668).

For the liberal, the protection of individual autonomy is tied to the protection of identity, since one’s identity is at least partially constructed from the autonomous choices one makes. It is this personal identity which is seen as intrinsically valuable, and protected through rights. Some would argue that a system without rights would be one of abuse, because of the degrading and harmful treatment of humans which results in the absence of respect for their intrinsic value. The main goal of human rights is the recognition and honouring of human dignity (Deng, 2004). The South African Bill of Rights, part of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, echoes this idea: “Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected” (South African Constitution, §10). Taking dignity as inherent points toward the kind of intrinsic value upon which the structure of rights is based.

Without humans being intrinsically valuable, the idea of rights would fall away, which could have negative consequences for both humans and non-human nature. It has been argued that the lack of human rights in some African countries post-independence is the reason behind major humanitarian crises and abuses (Deng, 2004). It might be that if human beings are not recognised as intrinsically valuable, then they could be valued instrumentally. The use and abuse of humans as mere means toward a greater end, usually economic, is the basis for extreme and cruel treatment such as child labour, slavery and human trafficking. In each of these examples, the end goal is some human gain, and the victims are treated as means

toward this end, with no value of their own. One could argue that the denial of humans' intrinsic value results in an absence of rights and finally in unacceptable consequences in terms of their treatment.

The absence of rights does not only have implications for humans, but also for other members of the natural community. One could argue that rights have already played an important role in environmental ethics, and should not now be excluded. There are also those, such as Regan (2004) who have argued in favour of animal rights, based on valuing animals for their own sake, and not as instruments to be used by humans. Laws which protect animals, such as the South African Animals Protection Act of 1962, can be read in terms of rights. For example, Section 2c stipulates that it is punishable by law to “unnecessarily starve or under-feed or deny water or food to any animal”, which could be seen as a right to food and water. Laws such as this which protect animals, and the progress made toward animal rights are an important step not only toward the protection of species, but also toward the protection of the natural habitats in which they live. The extension of rights to animals recognises their status as moral patients worthy of respect and good treatment for their own right, and blocks the instrumental treatment of animals. The lack of intrinsic value of non-human nature in the ethic I have outlined might seem problematic because it goes against the idea of rights, which could have negative impacts on both humans and non-human nature with respect to their just treatment.

Possible problems associated with a lack of individual rights were also discussed in Section 3.2. Strict Communitarianism, as one of the problems which such a view might face. The lack of intrinsic value attributed to either humans or non-human nature means that neither would be accorded rights, which could lead to cases of serious mistreatment.

5.2. Response: The Place of Duties

Some African philosophers, including Etieyibo (2020), Cobbah (1987), Gyekye (2010), Menkiti (1984), and others, have suggested that African ethics, rather than being a rights-based system, is better described as a duty-based system. Rights, as previously mentioned, are based on a liberal ideology which individuated members of society, separating them from, and giving them power against the community as a whole (Cobbah, 1987). For example, one can have rights against greater organisations of which one is a part, such as a company or a state. In this way, one is detached from the whole and protected from harms which the whole

might cause. Cobbah (1987) cites the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Bill of Rights as two examples of the global spread of a Western liberal rights-based ideology. Clearly, a rights-based system is not consistent with the ideas of Afro-communitarianism, and with African ethics more generally. Gyekye (2010) points out that there is a close conceptual and practical connection between communitarian ethics and ethics of duty. He argues that “[i]n this morality duties trump rights, not the other way around, as it is in the moral systems of Western societies” (2010: 35). Menkiti (1984) has echoed this connection earlier, teasing out the reason why communitarian ethics is more compatible with duties than rights:

“In the African understanding, priority is given to the duties which individuals owe to the collectivity, and their rights, whatever these may be, are seen as secondary to their exercise of their duties. In the West, on the other hand, we find a construal of things in which certain specified rights of individuals are seen as antecedent to the organization of society; with the function of government viewed, consequently, as being the protection and defense of these individual rights” (1984:180)

The Western notions of individualism and liberalism upon which rights are based are diametrically opposed to the African notions of communitarianism and personhood. In traditional African societies, the recognition of a person’s humanity is not shown through according them certain basic and higher-level rights, but rather through the duties which are owed to them as a result of their needs, as well as the duties they fulfil as part of their obligations to the society, and the achievement of personhood. Since I have based the non-anthropocentric ethic outlined in this thesis on the idea of communitarianism, it is more appropriate to focus on duties than rights.

Duties can be based on the possession of vital force, even in the absence of intrinsic value. Humans and non-human nature can be owed duties as a result of their being part of a common community, which is distinguished through the possession of vital force. This is the stance which has been taken with respect to an African ethic of human duties which excludes rights, or include them only marginally (Oyowe, 2014). Combining the system of duties based on community belonging with the idea of eco-bio-communitarianism and an Ubuntu which extends community beyond humans, results in a non-anthropocentric ethic which recognises the needs of every element of the natural kingdom. Humans and non-human nature are not given moral consideration as a result of their having intrinsic value based on

vital force, but rather through their extrinsic contributory value as parts of the larger natural system, connected by vital force.

Duties play a parallel role to rights, in that many rights can be reframed as duties. For example, the right to privacy can be reframed as the duty owed to respect the privacy of others. Allowing duties to be owed to non-human nature means that moral choices are based on an ethic of mutual respect and interdependence. Accordingly, a system without rights need not be a system without respect, care and good treatment of individuals. In fact, these kinds of choices are more likely to be respectful toward the elements of ecosystems, humans and non-humans, equally. Each element adds to the community and has extrinsic contributory value as parts of this greater whole, so the resulting moral framework does not prioritise humans. It is a non-anthropocentric ethic which is drawn from traditional African thought and would be an apt framework through which to view and weigh up environmental decisions, especially within the context of the climate crisis. The move from a rights-based system to a duty-based system is one which makes the environmental ethic more African, less anthropocentric and easier to apply practically.

Taking duties, rather than rights, as the basic principle through which moral decisions are made adds an element of flexibility which would otherwise not have been present. The duties owed to different beings or elements of the environment can be specific to their needs, without the ethical framework being anthropocentric. Gyekye's idea of duties emphasises the needs of individuals as a determining factor of which duties they are owed: "the attitude to, or performance of, duties is induced by a consciousness of needs rather than of rights. In other words, people fulfill—and ought to fulfill—duties to others not because of the rights of these others, but because of their needs and welfare" (2010: 35). Of course, the needs of humans differ substantially from those of an ecosystem, for example. A framework of duties can capture this variety of needs much more effectively than a framework of rights. Although rights can be ascribed to animals, it is more difficult to ascribe rights to something like the atmosphere, because the idea of rights is rooted in an anthropocentric liberal tradition. Duties, on the other hand, can be owed to anything within the environment, and do not have the same criteria as rights. This is an advantage over rights, which work as minimal criteria. Duties can work as maximal criteria, since duties can demand good treatment over and above the basic necessities which rights outline. The most important feature of setting the contributory

extrinsic value framework within the context of duty is that it is a more African notion than rights, and the aim of this paper is to distil an African environmental ethic.

A lack of intrinsic value may undermine the notion of rights, but a successful environmental ethic does not need rights. In reality, duties do the ethical work of rights in a way which is better suited to a non-anthropocentric ethic. As a result, the lack of intrinsic value of humans and nature does not imply the abuse or poor treatment of either.

5.3. Objection 2: Vital Force and Intrinsic Value

One might argue that my stance is irrelevant, because the view based on intrinsic value already does the necessary work of showing that an African environmental ethic is non-anthropocentric. This is the view outlined above whereby intrinsic value is designated or assigned to the elements of the environment which possess some vital force, and whereby humans and non-human nature are made morally equal by both having intrinsic value. The question one might ask is: why offer an explanation in terms of extrinsic value if the intrinsic value explanation already does the job? The view that vital force is the signifier of intrinsic value and moral worth has several attractive attributes: It is able to extend the locus of intrinsic value beyond humans, and toward the natural world. It allows elements of nature to have the same kind of value as humans, levelling the moral playing field between the two. As a result, it could be taken as a good basis for a non-anthropocentric ethic. It is based on a traditional African worldview. All of these attributes seem to make the view based on contributory extrinsic value redundant, otiose or superfluous.

5.4. Response: Vital Force and Extrinsic Value

In response to this, I will offer two strategies. The first response is that I do take vital force as part of the contributory value framework, because it is the wide possession of vital force which supports extending the community beyond humans. However, vital force is itself relational, and is not the right type of thing to be possessed by individual beings. Etieyibo's (2017) argument emphasises the idea of possession, since it is the possession of vital force, to whatever degree, that gives beings intrinsic value. In contrast, Behrens (2014) argues that

Life, on this account, is not merely something each individual living organism possesses, it is a complex network of which any individual living thing is only a part. Furthermore, living things only fully have life because of their interconnectedness

with other things. It is as though life is something one “plugs into,” rather than just possesses. We share life, rather than own it. (2014: 75)

Even if an individual “plugs into” this life force or vitality, it is the greater system of vital forces, rather than the being itself, which has this life force. Accordingly, it is the system as a whole which has moral value, rather than the individual being. If vital force is set up as this kind of nexus, then it is incompatible with the idea of intrinsic value. This is especially true of Taylor’s third description of intrinsic value: “[t]o say that something has intrinsic value is to say that it would have value even if it were *the only thing existing in the universe*” (1972: 441), since vital force cannot exist in isolation. A similar argument was made with regard to Ubuntu, in which a person’s humanity is dependent on a nexus of communal relations. There are also clear parallels with the kind of contributory value which I have suggested earlier.

Behrens’ conception of vital force touches upon the idea of holism, an important characteristic of African philosophy which supports this relational reading of vital force. Holism as a feature comes up in several different aspects of African philosophy, including ideas of Ubuntu, Maat and personhood. This is also evident in African metaphysics, including the metaphysics of vital force. Teffo and Roux describe this as “[r]eality is seen as a closed system so that everything hangs together and is affected by any change in the system” (2002: 196). Vital force is one of the mediums through which this system is realised, as the “system of vital force constitutes a closed universe” (Teffo & Roux, 2002: 196). Part of my argument is that the idea of community should not be limited to humans, and the system of vital force reinforces this notion of holism and togetherness between different elements of creation. Vital force can be read as an indicator of extrinsic, rather than intrinsic value, which is compatible with my ethical framework based on contributory value.

The second response is that the end result of both Etieyibo’s and my own argument are the same. Both are arguments for the non-anthropocentrism of African philosophy. One way to avoid the conflict between the two is to position my viewpoint as an alternative to Etieyibo’s. Etieyibo’s stance may fail if there is sufficient reason to think that beings are not all intrinsically valued. If this is the case, the view that all beings have extrinsic value could be used to maintain the conclusion that African philosophy is not anthropocentric. The two viewpoints are not necessarily in conflict, but rather are different means toward the same end. Both agree on two points. First, both argue that value extends beyond humans. Second, both argue that the same kind of value applies to both humans and non-human nature. The key

difference is that Etieyibo focuses on intrinsic value whereas I focus on extrinsic value. However, this difference does not detract from the conclusion which both strategies reach. My argument stands as an alternative, rather than in opposition to, arguments for the non-anthropocentrism of African thought whereby all beings have intrinsic value.

Arguments such as those presented by Horsthemke (2017) about ritual animal slaughter indicating the extrinsic value of nature may be better accounted for by the extrinsic than the intrinsic stance. This is because on the extrinsic stance, one can accept that these animals are being extrinsically valued, and not valued as ends in and of themselves, when they are being sacrificed. The sacrifice is an example of how those animals contribute toward the greater good of the community – for example, through protecting the community from disease and natural disaster. In the same way, human sacrifices point toward the extrinsic value of humans. This is similar to the argument presented by Etieyibo, but it does not rely on the beings sacrificed having intrinsic value. It does not make sense to cause harm toward something which should be intrinsically valuable. On the other hand, if that harm is balanced by something of greater intrinsic value, and the sacrifice is simply of something extrinsically valuable, then this can deal with Horsthemke’s critique, without resorting to an anthropocentric conclusion. The above principle can be applied to any situation in which either humans or animals are not intrinsically valued in traditional African practices, such as taboos and totems. Vital force plays an important role as an indicator of membership within a global, human and non-human community. This ties it to extrinsic contributory value, rather than intrinsic value, because it underscores the idea of holism and community, rather than individual possession of individual (intrinsic) worth.

Neither of these objections are strong enough to undermine my account and the arguments that I have offered for it. Justice can still be upheld without humans and non-human nature having intrinsic value, and without rights. Instead, a system of duties does the same work, but in a way that is more in line with African thinking, and less anthropocentric. While the argument for non-anthropocentrism through intrinsic value based on vital force is a strong one, it does not make the extrinsic view redundant, otiose or superfluous. Instead, vital force is a kind of nexus, and plugging into this nexus can be seen as a marker of membership in a community that extends beyond humans. This shows that vital force is compatible with extrinsic contributory value. Further, both the intrinsic and the extrinsic views come to the

same conclusion, which shows that they need not be in conflict, but rather stand as complements or alternatives.

Conclusion

The view of African environmental ethics which I have outlined in this thesis is non-anthropocentric, and gives contributory extrinsic value to both humans and non-human nature. Instead of positioning humans and non-human nature on an equal moral playing field through valuing both intrinsically, this strategy shows how African environmental ethics could be read in a different way, while still maintaining the conclusion that it is non-anthropocentric. An analysis of the practice of ritual animal slaughter, the adherence to protective taboos and the belief in totems, shows that non-human nature has extrinsic contributory value in a traditional African worldview. Similarly, elements of Afro-communitarianism, including strict communitarianism, demonstrate that the communal good is given intrinsic value, while Ubuntu, processual personhood and Maat reveal that humans are also accorded contributory extrinsic value. Together, the contributory extrinsic value of non-human nature and humans alike mean that the two do not exist in a moral hierarchy, but rather in a nexus of community bound by vital force.

The final good being the communal good means that it is not determined by human needs, but rather takes the needs of the wider community, natural and non-natural alike, into account. The levelling of the moral playing field and the fact that the locus of intrinsic value is not determined by human interests, are characteristic of a non-anthropocentric ethic. Two possible problems for the account are that all beings could have some intrinsic value as a result of vital force and that without this intrinsic value, ideals of justice could be undermined. The idea that vital force gives intrinsic value to all beings is not convincing, since it is not the right type of thing to be individually possessed. Rather it is relational, and it is derived from some higher being. However, it does play a role in uniting members of a community which extends beyond humans. Similarly, the fair treatment of humans and non-human nature does not have to be based on rights flowing from intrinsic value. Instead, they could be reframed in terms of duty. Anthropocentric thinking has been a major contributor to the current environmental crisis (Behrens, 2017). As a result, a non-anthropocentric ethical framework is needed to correct these wrongs and steer humanity on a different environmental course. Many authors have noted that African philosophy is the ideal basis for such an ethic, and one reason for exploring African environmental ethics is to spread these ideas, so that

African thought can be included in the global conversation around a suitable ethical framework through which to make moral decisions concerning the environment, especially in a time of global environmental crisis.

Although I have presented the communal good as intrinsically valuable, further research could be done into the idea that there is no locus of intrinsic value in the ethical system. This results in a kind of value loop, whereby the community is extrinsically valuable and produces value by attaining or promoting the communal good, and the communal good is extrinsically valuable because it serves to benefit the community. This could serve to underline the ideas of holism and the closed universe of beings and value alike. The kinds of communal good which would account for both humans and non-human nature could also be investigated further, in order to create an ethical framework which is more practically applicable to moral problems and decisions.

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