UTUISM: THE AFRICAN DEFINITION OF HUMANISM

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UTUISM: THE AFRICAN DEFINITION OF HUMANISM

[1]*Njuguna Waitherero

*Corresponding email: simnjug@gmail.com

Abstract

Then human person is the only created being who can transcend the limits of his very being, to comprehend, grasp and appreciate the Creator and even investigate the Being *qua* Being. In this venture, man realizes that even he himself is a complex reality that is fused into a Metaphysical World. We therefore investigate ourselves concisely. What is the reality underlying our very being? Is the reality that defines and/or composes an individual common to all humanity, and if yes, what is the nature of that reality? This paper expounds on the background of *Utuism* in relation to humanism from the African perspective. The paper further provides prejudices from earlier scholars that helps in understanding the human person. Further, a review of human person from Western and African Philosophers is also provided.

*Keywords***:** *Utuism, Humanism and Utu*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

It is an undeniable fact that the human person, who has been the subject of endless inquiry, is at the same time its object. At the beginning, the early Greek philosophers posed their quest on the universe; its nature and its causality, that is, they busied themselves with investigating what was the material principle of nature and its material cause.[1] The inquiry fascinated these early philosophers till the time they took the wonderer himself as the object of study. Man realized himself as being the[2] centre of the created world, the universe. In other words, the researcher became the researched. Apart from investigating the transcendent being, man defines himself following the Aristotelian categories[3] so as to comprehend himself both in relation to other human beings and also in relation to the entire creation. Perhaps the ultimate call by Socrates and, to some extent, the Melitian Philosophers of "man know thyself",[4] has not been exploited enough due to the numerous challenges surrounding the human society, that is, socio-cultural, politico-economical, psycho-intellectual, techno-climatic explosion and conflict. The nature of the human person has been understood as rational. This nature of the human person has really dominated the various disciplines studying man: rationalists, moralists, sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, and humanists among others. Each of these schools defined man from the perspective of their own interest and inquiry. The rationalists, for example, defined man strictly as different from other animals, by centring their focus on reason as the main difference. The development of understanding the human person has elicited heated debates, especially about prejudices advanced against some particular races and/or part of the regions by some of those who have been taken to be giants of the intellectual world. For example, although Aristotle defined "man" as a "rational

being", what he called "man" excluded all other people, other than the Greeks. And it was not all Greeks who were included in this definition either, but only the upper class and the rich, excluding women and children. This was later challenged as being segregative, despite the fact that he was among the greatest philosophers the world has ever known, having written at least on all major subjects of inquiry.

In a general understanding, we can deduce that man's sense of wonder about things in and outside himself, sharpened his curiosity to know not only the sense of things, but the sense of senses in general, and the meaning of meanings in particular. A lot of factors, however, have helped to condition man's approach to his quest for knowledge. These factors may also be deduced as part of what defines man in both the subjective and objective manner. Thus, the environment, the culture, religious beliefs, the organizational structure, and the value systems are factors that, jointly or singly, influence(s) man's effort to comprehend himself and his world. Metaphysically, we cannot be justified to treat man as a subject independent from the idea of God, who Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas graced as the Supreme or the Primordial Cause of everything that is. Therefore, man's venture of understanding himself and his environment opened up this other problem of knowledge: the problem of God. The quest to know himself as a person, his environment and his source, and the source of his environment is ever typified in the Man-World-God scheme. It is worth noting that, every rational inquiry revolves around this scheme, to borrow from Edmund-Ugwu Agbo's work, *Africa: Origin, Trends and Articulation of African Philosophy.*[5]It is under this human understanding and background that we pose the question, "in the course of man defining himself, is he limited to the boundaries of only a 'rational being' or do we have other specific difference(s)?" From the African context and/or understanding of man, which has been defined more closely by people like Placide Tempels in his work *African Philosophy*, numerous critical writers like Alexis Kagame, Marcel Griaule, D. A. Masolo's *Self and Community in a changing world (2010),* and Kenneth Kaunda's *Humanism*, among others, we get to embrace a more extensive concept well taken in both South Africa and Zimbabwe, now developed into a philosophy: *Ubuntu* and *Hunhui* (South African local languages, Nguni and Shona terms respectively). The terms literally mean showing humanity to one another: the word *Ubuntu* itself captures the spirit of the being human.[6] It is this second part of the meaning of the term that we want to explore.

Statement of the Problem

This work intends to investigate and explore on the human person. Guided by the African conception of the human person, his essential definition and understanding, we will engage his ontological or metaphysical paradigm, especially as an active being. This of course creates a double problem: the traditional definition and understanding of man as a rational animal, and the question of his transcendence. Is the specific difference "rational animal" in the definition of man inclusive of all that there is, or is it exclusive? Is man's rationality the only superior faculty differentiating him from other animals or is there more to this? What is responsible as a principle or as a faculty in man that initiates his response towards his fellow

men as different from other animals? Is it out of reason, or instincts, or is there another factor or principle, initiating singly or in combination with the other faculties? What we are almost certain about man as an acting being is that he cannot just act, or things cannot just happen without the principle cause and/or secondary cause which in our discourse we term as co-principle. What we are invited to explore critically, is why the individual human persons act the way they do and if that "whyness" can explain the paradigms taken to define what is good or bad. This, nevertheless, has been investigated by different writers either as books, theses, or papers, as will be unravelled.

Through the line of discussion, as briefly said in the introduction, some major prejudices have been levelled against some race. This line of prejudicial thinking against some cultures or people living under various and specific boundaries to a point of depleting their essences, is one of the generational metaphysical errors advanced towards humanity by some part of the global humanity. We wonder why these misunderstandings did happen or do happen! Would it be intentional speculative diversions or rather mental digressions? First, the many works, even by Africans themselves, fail to show why and how the aforementioned issues of Africa dwell on philosophical problems. Africa's problems should be analysed from the African perspective by upholding the core values that made Africans be able to live harmoniously. In the African philosophical debate, cultural crisis expresses the epistemological roots of the deep social, political, economical, psycho-intellectual and biological nature of the African person. As D. A. Masolo lights up what had been said that the African philosophical debate expresses the epistemological roots of the social, political, and cultural crisis of *Muntu,* the African person – Africans' continued servitude to Western domination (Towa), Africa's dependence on Western tutelage (Hebga); the invention of Africa at the margins of Western knowledge (Mudimbe).[7] Second, failure to recognize the indigenous African definition of human values, which cemented the integration of the indigenous socio-political systems, makes any other endeavour of solution-making cosmetic. Thus, through these, as will be seen, the definition of man or the human person lacks the universal or objective appreciation.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Segun Gbadegesin in his article "Yoruba philosophy: Individuality, Community, and the Moral order" in *African Philosophy*,[8] brings about the natural relationship between individuality and the community in a traditional African thought system. To expound on this relationship, he touches on the values placed on individuality vis-a-vis community, the expectations of the community on its members, and the humanist foundations of communalism.[9] Similarly, in our project of *Utuism,* we embrace Gbadegesin's argumentation that to understand the meaning of an individual in relation to the community, it is worthwhile we trace our steps back to the coming-to-being of the new member of the family and the community. According to him, the newborn baby is practically received into the hands of the community/family through the hands of the midwives. This begins the process of socialization, through which the child develops.[10] This same idea or argument has been

advanced by other writers, but we single out K. A. Busia in his work *The Challenge of Africa*.[11] Writing during an important period when the Africans were attaining their independence from their colonial masters, he emphasized the fundamental need of the African people to unite as a family. He says that: There is, everywhere, the heavy accent on family – the blood relatives, the group of kinsfolk held together by a common origin and a common obligation to its members, to those who are living and to those who are dead ... The individual is brought up to think of himself in relation to this group, and to always behave in such a manner as to bring honour and not disgrace to its members. The ideal set before him is that of mutual helpfulness and cooperation within the group of kinsfolk.[12]

What Gbadegesin and Busia do not discuss is whether therein in the nature of the newborn child, or in the individual, there is an inherent value that connects him to the community as such, though it be developed through the very community. *Utuism* as the principle of love enhances this relationship. Similarly, Gbadegesin argues that any human society is bound to have cases of conflicts involving individuals who either refuse to conform or who feel offended somehow.[13] This argument is very true. However, Gbadegesin should investigate deeper into the inner human value(s) that these conflicting individuals 'refuse to conform' to or 'feel offended somehow' if they are not applied. The individual is not only virtually but also essentially connected to his society in various ways and at different stages in time. Thus we cannot put any focus of the individual in isolation from the community. Joseph Nyasani in one of his works, "The Ontological Significance of 'I' and 'We' in African Philosophy" in *African Christian Studies* Vol. 7, no.1, 57, holds that: my own individual life-force is not mine by right or by nature but a gratuitous conferment from the ex post facto reality of those who already enjoyed it and who jealously safeguard it for the purpose of continuity, social cohesion, social harmony, and physical integrity, and for realizing the teleological good of human (African) existence the Mitsein in perpetual communion and perpetual vitality.[14]

Maybe this understanding is what is being elevated by Okot p'Bitek in his article, "The Sociality of Self"[15] by arguing that no individual person can ever define himself without the society, and that there is no society without an individual. To Okot p'Bitek, the term 'I' by itself defines a numerous relationships but not one relationship. Otherwise, how do we define 'I' outside the 'We', 'Us', and 'Our' or other connections? According to Nyasani's argument, no one can (strictly to the term) be an "outcast".[16] *Utuism* embraces all human beings. The classic statement of this position is to be found in John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* that the individual owes his existence to other people. He is simply part of the whole. Whatever happens to an individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual. The individual can only say, "I am because we are; and since we are, I am."[17] Mbiti embraces this as a passport to entering any African milieu.[18] Any time we touch Mbiti's African world-view, we are faced by his relating of the African people with the concept of time. He argues that the African verb tenses refer to the future, cover six months or at least two years. In the East African languages in which I have carried out research and tested my findings, there are no concrete words or expressions to convey the idea of distant future … People have little or no active

interest in the events that go in the future beyond, almost two years from now, and the languages concerned lack words by which such events can be conceived or expressed.[19]

Perhaps in this book whereby Mbiti holds that it is the community which has primacy over the individual, in his mind, maybe presenting the idea that both the community and each individual need to relate by being active now, but not by postponement to the big future. He maintains that community determines the behaviour of an individual towards another. And it is the community that defines the individual as is also experienced through *Utuism*. Thus, when Nyasani reflects on culture and its primacy, he argues that in the African context it "plays the role of unifying, edifying and assuaging irrational rancour and petty antagonisms."[20] This is the same power that controls *Utuism.* Malcolm X, while giving a speech entitled "The Black Revolution" on April 8, 1964, intended to send a message to the Blacks and the Whites at the same time. He said at the meeting sponsored by the Militant Labour Forum at Palm Gardens in New York: In fact, in most of the thinking and planning of whites in the West today, it's easy to see the fear in their minds, conscious minds and subconscious minds, that the masses of the dark people in the East, who already outnumber them, will continue to increase and multiply and grow until they eventually overrun the people of the West like a human sea, a human tide, a human flood. And the fear of this can be seen in their minds, their actions, of most of the people here in the West in practically everything that they do. It governs their political view and it governs most of their attitudes toward the present society.[21]

C. Cagnolo (a missionary priest working in the central part of Kenya), in his work *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore,* the New Edition[22], presents a general overview of the Person in an African perspective. He encountered great barriers like language of the locals, no written reference, the people themselves looked at him as a stranger, and the pressure of the missionary work. Perhaps this would explain the shortfalls of some elements detected in this written account of the Agikuyu community who dominate this region of Kenya. The book seems to be written for a complete different audience other than the indigenous people. This makes the work sound like a narration of an alien group whose existence is being discovered. But the Agikuyu existed as normal people, with all the human faculties just like other human beings. Unfortunately, what seems to be deduced of them is generalized to all the indigenous people of Africa that are in a way different from the Western communities, which the writer came from. The 2006 edition presents this section of the Bantu history and governance in good cultural and traditional definitions. Despite this type of reporting, the editors, just like the writer of the previous edition, do not present explicitly the seemingly natural underlying principle that guided the Bantu and presumably that guide the entire humanity as an acting being in relation to other human beings. This underlying principle is what we, in this work, call "*Utu*". This "*Utu*" is what defined the relationships of the Bantus amongst themselves and with their God.[23] Maybe this is an assertion of Homer's (the Greek writer) belief that "there is no people without God or without a religion", as Plutarch wrote.[24]

Kwasi Wiredu in his work, *The African Concept of Personhood,* while analysing the Akan notion of personhood, argues that personhood is not "an automatic quality of the human

individual; it is something to be achieved, the higher the achievement, the higher the credit."[25] Personhood here, according to Wiredu, is thus an activity, not a passive endeavour. He maintains the following on man: Status as a human is not susceptible to degrees, nor is such status conferred on an individual as 'reward' for her efforts. One is either a human or is not – there is no such a thing as becoming human. In contrast, personhood is something for a human to become by different degrees through individual achievement. An individual's human status, then, is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for personhood.[26] Another important work is *Racial and Communal Tensions in East Africa: African Contemporary Monographs* written by The Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs.[27] In this concise work of various monographs at the time of African independence, some have treated the interpersonal conflicts and tensions, their causes and effects.[28] Some of the important monographs in our interest include: "Some thoughts on racial and communal tensions in East Africa"[29] by Lawrence Sagini, "Community criticisms from the East African standards"[30] and "External events and internal communal tension"[31] by Ali A. Mazrui, and "Racial consciousness among the Africans: A colonial heritage"[32] by Bethwell A. Ogot, and finally, "Cultural tensions in a mixed society" by Ezekiel Mphahlele. They all agree on the existence of interpersonal conflict and tension. This as will be seen in Chapter Five demean *Utuism.*

Giving the external causes only, they however never see (or they assumed to discourse on) the internal cause(s), within the human person himself. They concentrated more on the community or the society as the central blame at the expense of the primary causes, which are the individuals themselves who make up the community. Philosophically speaking, you cannot deal with the whole, forgetting the parts that make up the whole, unless you justify the principal omission. Loretta E. Bass in her book, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan* Africa,[33] in trying to answer the fundamental question "Why child labour in Africa?" did an extensive research and work. She basically ventures on why we should study this reality, that is, the cultural and historical context, the political economy of children's work, the conflict of interest in children work and school, the value of children's work and making sense of child labour in Africa. She did this well especially the exposure of the fact that, children sometimes, in some places, are used as soldiers, prostitutes, and as slaves. However, Loretta Bass should proceed meticulously after her current last chapter, and investigate the inner motive in those persons that do engage the children into dehumanizing[34] situations and activities. Though she seems to explore the children who have no other choice than to work through these deplorable states, on our considered opinion, we would take into task the societies into which these children are. Making sense of child labour in Africa[35] should create a chapter on "the lack of both humanity, humanity in action and humanness in those who misuse the order of creation and the definition of children". This would positively fit the *Utuism* experience.

Ifeanyi A. Menkiti in his book *Person and Community in African traditional thought*, brings about a clear understanding of the human person from both African and Western perspectives. In defining the relationship of an individual and the community, he postulates that, whereas the African view asserts an ontological independence to human society, and moves from society to individuals, the Western view instead moves from individuals to

society.[36] Ifeanyi further argues that the above distinction also brings about the tendencies of African societies being organized around the requirements of duty while Western societies tend to be organized around the postulation of individual rights. *Utuism* experienced is an art of duty towards the other person. Ifeanyi argues that 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. On the one part of the West, he argues that we find a number of things in which certain specified rights of individuals are seen as antecedent to the organization of the society; with the function of government viewed, consequently, as being the protection and defence of these individual rights. However, Ifeanyi does not bring the underlying fact that both the Africans and the Westerners use for their arguments as a pivot to their points on the human person, who is the primary and end of any discourse touching him. *Utuism* enhances this reality.

Kwame Gyeke in his book *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*,[37] uses the Akans'[38] proverbial wisdom which is a general characteristic to all traditional African communities, regardless of their geographical settings. Gyeke presents one of these many proverbs which says that "The prosperity (or well-being) of man depends upon his fellow man."[39] Such African world view sayings that primarily touched both the individual and the community showed that there is a mutual connection between the two human realities. In another Kwame Gyekye's article, "The relation of Okra (Soul) and Honam (Body): An Akan Conception"[40] in *African Philosophy*, he starts with very fundamental questions: What is a person? Is a person just the bag of flesh and bones that we see with our eyes, or is there something additional to the body that we do not see?[41]

Theoretical Framework

M. M. Agrawal presents to us a fundamental theory in reference to our current undertaking of *Utuism* when he argued that: To attain the consciousness of selfhood as a person, requires one choicelessly to have submitted oneself to the personifying process of human relationships.[42] He further says: A being who did not have the attitude of value towards the others, could actually imbibe, in their fellowships, this framework which is completely essential for his 'personhood'. A man's being is *being-in* in the web of human relationships. One cannot choose to get in or get out of the web of life.[43] This Agrawal's theory, which we intend to integrate or marry with Karl Marx's theory, who although notoriously a critique of universal morality, is upheld and can be used for his glorified image of the natural status of man as the bearer of such potentialities which allow him to treat himself truly as an end of morality, and any situation or action that hinders him to be that is unethical.[44] Thus, when these theories are blended together, they support the single theory we are to use throughout this discourse or thesis. That is: The human person masters his own person-hood by embracing his intrinsic worth, which only becomes actualized towards his ultimate and final cause; to be with the absolute principle cause of the entire world, who is God. Man can achieve this 'if and only if', using his rationality and consciousness, embraces his *Utu*, which

is the active capacity to harness, manage, and transform himself entirely. Braced with this theory, we intend to re-elevate man as the primordial being of creation, and though he is a subsistent being, no other being in that category can precede him, and neither can another human person ever be justified to be superior intrinsically and fundamentally than the other.

Some Prejudices in Understanding the Human Person

David Hume:David Hume (1711–1776), during the age of reason or enlightenment, in trying to explain why we have different races said "it is fixed in nature" and to him, "only the white race has produced the best men in and over time, and civilization".[45]

Immanuel Kant: Immanuel Kant, on his work *Feelings of the beautiful and the Sublime* (1764), argued that mental characters of people are discernible in their morals, especially feelings of the beautiful and the sublime.[46]

Thomas Jefferson: Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826), the 2nd president of America, in his work *Laws of Virginia*, said that the Blacks are not only ugly, but unable to use reason due to their inferiority. In imagination and memory, the Blacks and Whites seem to be the same, but, in reflection the Blacks are inferior to the Whites. Blacks are ugly, no body symmetry, no flowing hair, and colour. To him, the Blacks secrete more with their glands of skin other than the kidneys, hence, smelling sweat odours.[47]

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831), using his much quoted work, *The Philosophy of History,*[48] divided Africa into three: a) European Africa [that part of Africa which is North of the Sahara Desert], b) Asianic Africa [the area bordering the Middle East, that is, Southern Egypt and Northern Sudan], and c) Africa proper [all the land South of the Sahara Desert]. To him, those living in Northern Africa were Europeans while those living in the Asianic Africa were Asians. In this work, Hegel said that nothing in Africa proper indicates that reason has been at play, and that Africa has no idea of concepts like God, law, freedom, the world, morality and religion. Thus, they were living in a state of innocence.[49]

Lucien Levy-Bruhl: In another book, *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality* by Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1857–1939),[50] the author argues that: Africans are pre-logical, they are not familiar with their functions ... they lack indispensable logical material ... the slightest abstract reasoning tires them and become immediately harassing.[51]A conflict of terms is encountered from Levy-Bruhl's understanding of two terms: mentality and mind. The former is a product of the latter and can never be the vice versa. Without dwelling on whether his assertions are metaphysically, logically and linguistically erroneous and biased for they all are, Levy-Bruhl ought to have brought out clearly the difference between cultural orientations and influence to the way of seeing things and the logical analysis and synthesis involved.

Diedrich Westermann and John Collins: To Westermann, the significant difference is that while the Whites are rational, the Africans are emotional. It is with such people like John

Collins Carothers in his work, *The Mind of Man in Africa*, and especially when he argued that the Africans preoccupy themselves with the physical needs, that is, food, sexuality and sensual needs, which are the lowest in the hierarchy of needs, that we are provoked to stand up in defence.[52] This suggests that all actions of an African person would be motivated only by physical needs but no volition, consciousness, intellectual or relational faculties.

Placide Tempels: Placide held that : To declare on a priori grounds that primitive peoples have no ideas on the nature of beings, they have no ontology and that they are completely lacking logic is simply to turn ones back on reality.[53]

Empirical Review

Various Arguments on the Human Person as Basis on *Utuism*

Man is a being befitting the term "being" as such (in the finite order of beings) of Aristotle. This fits in the orders of subsistence and dependence. Despite this assertion, many contemporary authors, especially those prominent in bioethical issues, argue for the difference between man being a 'human being' and a 'human person'.[54] They argue that for an entity to be called a 'human person', it must have developed at least incipiently exercisable cognitive capacities or abilities. Some protagonists in this school of thought include Peter Singer,[55] Michael Tooley,[56] Ronald Green,[57] Daniel Maguire[58] and Joseph Fletcher, who critically evaluated some recent controls of human life, health and death, and the conflict between biological and ethical responsibility.[59] These men argue that not all human beings are persons, but only those with requisite cognitive abilities. Being a human being has of itself no moral significance.[60]

In dealing with the understanding of man as an entity, we are faced by a dualistic understanding of body and soul. This is whereby dualism separates the consciously experiencing subject, identified as "person", from that subject's body. These positions provoke us to understand the human person *vis-a-vis* human being, more so, as "an acting-being" as Karol Wojtyla[61] would put it. Since as asserted above, any project on the human person would proof to be difficult, we narrow down our area of study to the humanness of the so-called 'human person' in the 'human being', not as two independent entities, but as the same subject *cum* object. In our analysis of humanness as understood in a conventional way, we realized the term *Utu* of the East African Bantus being a concept with a deeper meaning than that of *Ubuntu* of South African Bantus. This is from the perspective of *Utu's* active and activating element. Despite its origin from a geographical region, *Utu* has a universal and critical paradigm in that action is a fundamental definitive character in a human person. Any attempt to present man outside this essential basis would render the whole priority futile.

Some Western Philosophers on the Human Person

Aristotle's Definition of Man: Man is an existence (substance) befitting its categories. The classifications or categories as given by Aristotle were meant to help the demonstration or prove of something. They also helped in explaining how we think about things, that is, a subject and its predicates.[62] The Aristotelian categories are ten, though the first category,

substance, is essentially a philosophical term of art. According to Aristotle, man fits into the scheme of nature as a "thinking animal", that is, man *qua* man is an animal with a specific difference of rationality. This specific difference happens not to be possessed by any other animal apart from man. By man it is understood to mean both male and female. Only man among the animals is able to use his mind both in reflective and futuristic ways. By way of using this specific difference, man reflects on things and can even, looking to the future, plan the yet to happen, something other animals cannot. Thus, according to Aristotle, "man is a rational animal" means man is an animal in the first instance, but in the second instance, man differs from the category of other animals (specific difference) by his ability to use reason which is endowed intrinsically in his very nature. In *Metaphysics* A.1, Aristotle says that "all men suppose what is called wisdom (*sophia*) to deal with the first causes (*aitia*) and the principles (*archai*) of things."[63] "All men by nature desire to know".[64] Through this he affirms the centrality of active reason in man. We do not intend to enter into 'the what' was in the mind of Aristotle when he talks of "man is a rational animal". Man has the mind that distinguishes him as a rational being. This human mind possesses both actuality and potentiality, and is the efficient, formal and final cause of the body.[65] This, as a matter-of-fact, calls for the one studying Aristotle's definition of man to be more aware of these complications.

Epicurus and Epicureans: Epicurus (342 or 341–271 BCE), who relied so much on Democritus for his atomic theory of nature, was a practical philosopher. According to Epicurus, the chief aim of human life is pleasure. Though one may argue that Epicurus saw the mechanical origin of all things and in a way placed man into the nature of things just as a machine or mechanism whose nature was destined to go for pleasures only, he in a special way saw only in man, the power and the duty to regulate the traffic of his desires. Despite this, he was convinced that pleasure was the standard of goodness, but he was equally certain that not every kind of pleasure had the same value.[66] It is this line of principle of pleasure that would guide the Epicureans in their argument on human behaviour.

Dark Ages, by Boethius: According to him, no earthly good and pleasures can give the true happiness, unless one turns to the Supreme Good to whom philosophy leads.[67] Following what Pythagoras long ago said, Boethius affirmed philosophy as a "love of wisdom". According to him, the love of thought causes all things. In the end the love of wisdom is the love of God.[68] Boethius in his treatise *Contra Eutichen et Nostrorium,* puts the person as "an individual substance of a rational nature."[69] In his argument he presents *substance* in its primary form, devoid of accidents or definitive character. The definitive character would here be presented by the *rationality*. This substance he presents it as prime (*Substantia prima*), which has its meaning like Aristotle's *Ousia prote*. Here nature would be understood as the 'whatness' of that reality. Thus, according to Boethius, famous dictum, *Persona est rationalis naturae individua substantia[70]*, that is, the human person is that individual substance whose whatness is the rationality, which in this case cannot exist independent of the individual substance.

Thomas Aquinas on the term "Person" (1225–1274): Aquinas brought more emphasis on the difference between the term 'person' in relation to both God and man. Aquinas indicates that whenever we predicate of God some perfections attributed or found in creatures, there is a fundamental difference, for in God, they can only be in a most excellence way.[71] Aquinas demonstrates that the term 'individual' does not apply to God in the way we apply it to creatures. We can say that God is a unique, single and undivided Substance that subsists *in se* and is *in seipsum substantia*.[72]To give the difference, Aquinas argued that in creatures, the term 'individual' is connected with the principle of individuation and primary matter that is individuated.[73] It is in this individual human person that we seek to investigate more closely some of the reasons of the seemingly impulsive reactions. Some of these reactions portray a conscious level prompting the human person to act

Karol Wojtyla and Transcendence of Human Action: According to Wojtyla, the notion of the 'transcendence of the person' may be examined and widened in relation to all the traditionally distinguished absolute exponents of values: 'Truth', 'Unity', 'Good' and 'Beauty'. These are the transcendental attributes of God as previously given. However, the vision of the transcendence of the human person that is formed through his relation to these absolute points of reference does not lose anything of its significance, when reference is made to experience, especially, to the experience of morality. For the transcendence of the person understood metaphysically is no abstract notion; the evidence of experience tells us that the spiritual life of man essentially refers to, and in its striving vibrates with, the reverberations with the experientially innermost attempts to reach truth, goodness, and beauty. We may thus safely speak of the role of these absolute modes of values that accompany the experience of the personal transcendence. Man's fulfilment is based on self-determination and freedom. Thinking and comprehending are manifestations of man's intellectual function, but besides his shaping of means and projecting their relations, his practical function consists in the evaluating and distinguishing of what is true and what is not. In reference to our stand on *Utuism* as an intrinsic human act, which must be manifest in relation to the "other", Wojtyla, as if knowing our position, argues that this must have a bearing upon the interpretation of the person's transcendence in the action, in particular, in what concerns the function of the conscience, on which in our approach the transcendence depends. It is the activity of the mind, the whole effort directed toward moral truth and not consciousness alone that seems to supply the basis for the transcendence of the person. Man strives for truth and in his mind the ability to grasp it as a value by distinguishing it from non-truth which is combined with the urge to search and inquire. The person's transcendence and fulfilment depend on the truthfulness of the conscience.[74] Transcendence comes from the Latin term *trans-scendere*, that is, to go over and beyond a threshold or a boundary. This may refer to the subject's stepping out of his limits toward an object. This psychological movement is in a different way known as intentional acts of external (transcendent) perception.[75] Thus conceived, transcendence as an essential element of the person can be best characterized by comparing the dynamism of the person with the dynamism of nature.[76] This transcendence is dully manifest in *Utuism*.

Existentialism on man: Existentialists propose that man is nothing else but what he makes of himself, that is, subjectivity. If not that, man has a greater dignity than a stone or table. He is the being who '2hurls himself toward a future and who is conscious of imagining himself as being in the future. The goal of existentialism's first move is to make every man aware of what he is, and to make the full responsibility of his existence rest in him; but he is also responsible for all men. The Existentialist, on the contrary, thinks it very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears along with Him; there can no longer be a prior Good, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it. Everything is permissible if God does not exist, and as a result man is forlorn, because neither within him nor without does he find anything to cling to. Man is condemned to be free because he thinks that man will interpret the omen to suit himself. As for despair, we shall confine ourselves to reckoning only with what depends upon our will, or on the ensemble of probabilities which make our action possible.[77]

Emerich Coreth and Human Transcendence:

Emerich Coreth argues perfectly that questioning or inquiring presupposes some knowledge about being. To him, this knowledge, through which we 'anticipate' in the direction of being as a whole, is not a grasping possessive knowledge which possesses that which is known, but a knowledge which projects that which can be known. This is a presumption that we already know about being, or about the meaning of being. The origin of this knowledge lies in the art of questioning itself.[78] Whenever we question, we know that we question, that we are the inquirer, that we perform the act of inquiring. In every act of inquiring or knowing, some being is given which coincides immediately with knowing, which knows itself as being. The act knows itself as being. Being knows itself as act. We have an immediate unity of being and knowing in the very act of knowing.[79] The immediate identity is the origin of every knowledge about being, since no other being is as immediately given to us as the self-knowing act of inquiring or knowing. Knowing is not something different from and extrinsic to being; it is merely the self-possession, the self- luminosity, the self-presence of being in the original identity of being and knowing. When we question, we know about the difference between being and our knowledge, about the transcendence of being with respect to our knowledge. We know that being exceeds us and our knowledge. When we inquire we know not only about the being of our act, but also by anticipation about the being of that which we do not know, about which we inquire. This not-knowing too is comprised within knowing. We know that we do not know, that we do not know everything. In our knowing not-knowing we proceed beyond our limited knowing towards that which we do not know. But we proceed beyond it in and through knowing; only this proceeding beyond makes inquiry possible.[80] Following this line of Coreth, we deduce the dignity of human knowledge is founded in acting to that knowledge, not contrary to it.

Paul Ricoeur and the Transcendental Synthesis: Ricoeur argues that what is reflected between sensibility and understanding is the point of departure of a transcendental study of man as intermediate, and on the intermediate function of the imagination. As soon as reflection comes on the scene it sunders man, for reflection is essentially dividing, sundering.

It is one thing, it says, to receive the presence of things; it is another to determine the meaning of things. To receive is to give oneself intuitively to their existence; to think is to dominate this presence in a discourse, which discriminates by denomination and connects in articulate phrasing.[81] The very existence of a discourse on finitude should suffice to establish that the idea of perspective may be the most abstract of all the ideas about man, and that it in no way attests to the triumph of a concrete philosophy over the so-called abstract views of critical reflection.[82] The reflection on the transcendental imagination and the mediating term in the theoretical order brings about the synthesis between understanding and sensibility. Though this is consciousness, it is not self-consciousness. The consciousness philosophy speaks of in its transcendental stage only constitutes its own unity outside of itself, the object.[83] Philosophy of transcendental style is the first stage of a philosophical anthropology. Whoever would commit it to the flames and start right off with a philosophy of the person would leave the panthetique, only to fall into a fanciful ontology of being and nothingness. If man is a mean between being and nothingness, it is primarily because he brings about 'meditation' in things; his intermediate place is primarily his function as a mediator of the infinite and the finite in things. The transcendental stage is thus the condition of any transposition of the myth of 'melange' and the rhetoric of 'misery' into philosophic discourse. But while the transcendental provides the first moment of philosophical theory of 'disproportion', it remains deficient with respect to the substantial richness of which myth and rhetoric gave a pathetic understanding. There is a surplus that a merely transcendental reflection does not allow us to elevate to the plane of reason.[84]

Louis Dupre and transcendental Selfhood: Dupre encounters the understanding of man in an ontological way. He argues that to penetrate man essentially is to understand his transcendence. According to him, the centre of human piety has moved inward where the "Self" encounters its own transcendence. We therefore support Dupre's viewpoint that the principle of autonomy, in the practical order, sealed the self-off from a transcendence that had already been placed well beyond theoretical reach. Ironically, this presents a paradox in that the same principle of autonomy would eventually prepare the possibility of a return of transcendence by detaching the subject from its finite, objective expressions. Dupre argued that philosophers coming in the wake of Kant philosophy, would develop its implied subjectively beyond the restrictive immanence of Kant's moral theory. On the other hand, Schleiermacher identified this passive self-transcendence with feeling, the undifferentiated state of immediate consciousness which precedes all cognition and activity. Religion then came to mean 'feeling of absolute dependence'.[85] In our adventure we agree that this definition reflects a clear attempt to understand the self as intrinsically related to transcendence, an awareness 'that the whole of our spontaneous activity comes from a source outside of us in just the same sense in which anything towards which we should have a feeling of absolute freedom must have proceeded entirely from ourselves.' The feeling of absolute dependence, then, reveals the transcendent ground of consciousness, the point in which consciousness is both itself and more that itself.[86] This transcendent determination of self-consciousness is its religious aspect, or the religious feeling, and in it the transcendent

ground or the Supreme Being is itself presented. It is present, then, insofar as in our self-consciousness is also posited the reality of all things as active and passive, that is, insofar as we identify ourselves with the reality of all things and they with us. It is present as a condition of all being, which is woven into the opposition of receptivity and self-activity as a universal feeling of dependence.[87]

The failure to activate the goals which the person sets himself in the process of his self-realization introduces an equally crucial factor into the ethical situation. It is freely admitted in the attitude of resignation. Both repentance and resignation lead the self beyond the ethical order, for to acquire them it must adopt an attitude fundamentally different from that of active, moral striving. Instead of control it must cultivate obedience. Though transcendent determination of self-consciousness enters into the very immanence of self-realization, and ethical striving turns into religious abandon. By its own inner dialectic, then, the moral attitude leads beyond itself. Ethics without failure is no ethics at all, yet, in order to cope with failure, man is forced to leave the ethical order behind being a constant tension between the dynamics of immanence and of transcendence, the self is reducible neither to active endeavour alone nor to passive surrender. Possibility and necessity are equally essential facets of the self.[88] We can assertively see man as an active being from the above argument. As long as man continues to define himself as self-transcending – and there are strong indications that he does, albeit in the negative way of one who fails to achieve transcendence – the absence of any beyond causes is in fact a fundamental disorientation.[89] The philosophical argument against an indefinite continuance is, of course, equally formidable. To existentialist philosophers the idea of immortality basically conflicts with the very nature of man's self-understanding and the self-realization of a finite freedom. An eternity of free self-realization would turn freedom into its opposite, since over an infinity of temporal succession, all possibility must necessarily be realized. 'Man can be individual and free only to the extent that he implies in his being all the possibilities of Being, but does not have the time to realize and manifest them all.[90]

Some African Philosophers on the Human Person

Joseph Major Nyasani on the Person, Personality and Individuality:

Nyasani treats the issue of man objectively, venturing into the person and investigating his personality and individuality. In his book *Metaphysical Psychology: Rational Psychology*, he re-echoes the philosophical meaning of the human person, that is, an individual human being characterized by consciousness, rationality, and a moral sense.[91] He stresses that the latter two characteristics distinguish man from other brutes, making him unique, thus, define the human person. The rational nature and the sense of morality makes man an active conscious being. This man's active consciousness, in his rationality and morality, perhaps would explain why Nyasani stresses man as a cultural and social being.[92]

We embrace Nyasani's basic premise in relation to personality when he says that "no personality or idea of personality would exist in the absence of some concrete person or some positive object of attribution".[93] Thus, personality is being understood as the sum total

of all the behavioural and mental characteristics through which an individual is understood as being unique from others. In his endeavour, Nyasani also advances the sociality of the human person.[94] If we also beg his treatment on individuality of man which makes him unique in a natural foundation, we would realize why an individual is praised and honoured or blamed and judged depending on the choice of acting. That said uniqueness defines itself in the spacio-temporal world where he interacts with other human individuals.[95]

Segun Gbadegesin on Individuality and Community:

The relationship between individuality and community has been a major concern to sociology. Though we may argue that each defines the other, individuality is a part of a community and not vice versa. Segun imparts this understanding by arguing that a person is introduced into the society or community right from conception by the mother. Upon the child's birth, the other women together with the mother of the child receive and welcome him into the society. This may explain why the child-birth is a society's celebration.[96] In this understanding, we get a good support therefore, that an individual action must mind the community or society in which one is a member.

K. A. Busia and individuality in community:

K. A. Busia, just like Segun, advances his argument that an individual is a fundamental component of a community. This is an indication that the relation of an individual to the community is very fundamental. That is, an individual is the nucleus of the community, without which we cannot talk of the community. Nevertheless, Busia should connect the relation of individuals' actions to the other members of the community as their basis in terms of qualification.

Kwame Gyeke and Person and Community:

To Gyeke, the community confers the personhood on the individual and thus the individual's identity is merely derivative of the community. Despite this great connection between an individual person and the community, Gyeke argues that an individual is ontologically complete.[97] He advances this argument in the book he co-edited with Kwasi Wiredu, *The Person and the Community: Ghanaian Philosophical issues.*[98] In the aforesaid affirmation, it does not intrigue the dignity of intrinsic human actions that daily define the human person.

Joseph Kahiga Kiruki on Personhood:

Joseph Kahiga presents the basic views of personhood. In his emphasis on the relation between the individual human person and the community, he argues that the individual human person is confined to specific communities founded together by tribe, culture, race, gender, religion and class. Despite this fundamental connection, J. Kahiga maintains that the individual personal identity transcends the said boundaries. To support this assertion, he argues that persons have infinite moral value – literally, "without boundaries".[99] In this argument, he re-echoes the transcendentalists' view. Kahiga analyses some Western debates on the understanding of the human person. He singles out people like Peter Singer, Michael Tooley, and Mary Anne Warren, who argue that a human being is a "person" only if the

actively instantiate capacities like self-conscious, rationality, autonomous volition and ability to communicate using language are present. He also engages the theorists such as John Finnis, John Kavanaugh, Patrick Lee, and Eric Olson, who argued that a human being is essentially a "living animal of the species *Homo sapiens.*" Some members of this group argued that all human animals count as "persons" due to their intrinsic potentiality for self-conscious rational thought and autonomous volition, even if one cannot yet, or can no longer, actualize that potentiality.[100] The extreme is the standpoint of those like Olson, who argue that personhood is a phase of a living human animal's existence. That is, those individual human beings are essentially living human animals, but not essentially persons.

3.0 CONCLUSION

Every individual should demonstrate an awareness of his connection to the other human beings and by natural fairness to other beings in the created order. This consciousness provokes the realization and appreciation of the Supreme Being through which all other created beings get their being. It should be noted that there are those who by birth, age or incapacitation are not in a position to use reason. Either because it has not developed in the case of children, or faded in the case of the aged, or worse still through sickness of any form (psychologically, physically, or emotionally). No matter the cause of the absence of reason or demeaned/diminished consciousness, those, in whichever condition, are with firmness, human beings with full dignity of the human person. There is nothing that disqualifies anyone alive from being a full human being. As a matter of fact, the only *sine qua non* for this disqualification is only death. It is from this understanding that man ought to act in a way that should befit his very nature. *Utuism* becomes the active realization of the interconnection between an individual to the other human individuals. Thus, Chapter Three will present a metaphysical understanding of the human person.

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[1] Richard McKeon (Ed.), *The basic Works of Aristotle* with an introduction by C.D.C. Reeve (New York: Modern Library Inc., 2001), p. 646. This was Aristotle's argument pointing at the ancient writers in his *Parts of Animals* [Bk. I: Ch. 1, 640b5].

[2] Aristotle, *Organon: de catégorie,* [Ch. I–IV].

[3] Ibid.

[4] In Plato's *Protagoras*, Socrates lists Bias as one of the seven sources of the Delphic maxims including "know thyself", 343a–343b.

[5] Agbo Edmund-Ugwu, "*Africa: Origin, Trends and Articulation of African philosophy",* an article posted on 28th January, 2011 at www.allafrica.com website.

[6] J. W. T. Stanlake, & Samkange, *Hunhuism or Ubuntuism: A Zimbabwe Indigenous Political Philosophy* (Harare: Graham Publishing, 1980), pp. 106ff.

[7] D. A. Masolo, "African Philosophical Debate'' in *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa,* Vol. 1 No. 2, (Indiana: Indiana University Press, Summer 1999), p. 2.

[8] Segun Gdadegesin, "Yoruba Philosophy: Individuality, Community, and the Moral order," in *African Philosophy*: an Anthology by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 128–132.

[9] Ibid., p. 130.

[10] Ibid., p. 131.

[11] K. A. Busia, *The Challenge of Africa* (New York: Praeger, 1962), pp. 30–39.

[12] Ibid., p. 33.

[13] Gbadegesin, O*p. cit*., p. 132.

[14] Joseph M. Nyasani, "The Ontological Significance of 'I' and 'We' in African Philosophy", in *African Christian Studies* Vol. 7 no.1, 57.

[15] Okot p'Bitek, "The Sociality of Self" in *African Philosophy: An Anthology*, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze (ed.), Blackwell, 1997, pp. 73–74.

[16] *Op. cit*. p. 74.

[17] John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, p. 106.

[18] This is the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man (Mbiti, 1969), pp. 108-109.

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[25] Kwasi Wiredu, 'The African Concept of Person hood,' *in Flack, Harley E. and Pellegrino, Edmund D. (eds.) African American Perspective on Biomedical Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1992), p. 104.

[26]Ibid., p. 104.

[27] The concise monograph was harmonized at Nairobi in 1966.

[28] *Racial and Communal Tensions in East Africa: African Contemporary Monographs* (Nairobi: The Institute of Social and Cultural Affairs, 1966), pp. 58-–59.

[29]Ibid., pp. 7-8.

[30]Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[31]Ibid., pp. 70-76.

[32]Ibid., pp. 104-112.

[33] Loretta E. Bass, *Child Labour in Sub-Saharan Africa* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004).

[34] We use this term "dehumanizing" to show that all human acts are derived basically from the nature of man that differentiates him from other animals. To our conviction, something more than reason is also at play to dictate what an individual acts towards himself or other fellow human beings.

[35] Bass, *op.cit.,* pp. 179-190.

[36] Menkiti, *op.cit.,* p. 180.

[37] Kwame Gyeke, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual scheme* (New York: Cambridge, 1987), part II, sect. 6.

[38] The Akan people are a community in Ghana.

[39] Gyeke, *loc. cit*., p. 155.

[40] Gyeke, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual scheme*, used as article in Emmanuel Chukwudi. *African Philosophy,* (Blackwell, 1997), pp. 51-65.

[41] Ibid., Opening remarks of the article.

[42] Emmanuel Chukwudi, *African Philosophy*, p. 153.

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[46] Cf. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, "The Colour of Reason: The idea of 'Race' in Kant's Anthropology" in *Post-Colonial African Philosophy: A critical Reader* (Lewisburg: Blacknell University, 1997), p. 104.

[47] Thomas Jefferson, *Laws of Virginia* (Charlottesville: The University of Virginia School of Law, 1819), [ii], p. 244.

[48] Ibid., p. 9.

[49] Ibid., p. 9.

[50] Lucien Levy Bruhl. *The Notebooks on Primitive Mentality* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

[51] Ibid., p. 136.

[52] John Collins Carothers, *The Mind of Man in Africa* (London: Tom Stacey, 1972), p. 93.

[53] Placide Tempels*, Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1969), p. 22.

[54] www.christendom-awake.org/pages/may/humanperson Accessed on 14.09.2013.

[55] Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death: The collapse of our Traditional Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 173, 202-206.

[56] Michael Tooley, *Abortion and Infanticide* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983). The entire book is devoted to the said argument.

[57] Ronald Green, *The human embryo research debates: Bioethics in the vortex of controversy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). The entire book is devoted to the said argument.

[58] Daniel Maguire, *Death by Choice* (New York: Doubleday, 1974); *Sacred Choices: The right to contraception and abortion in ten World Religions* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2001).

[59] Joseph F. Fletcher, *Humanhood: Essays in Biomedical Ethics* (Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1979), pp. 197–230; *Moral and Medicine* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

[60] Cf. Peter Singer, *loc.cit*., pp. 202-206.

[61] Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person* (Dordretch: D. Reidel Publishing Co., 1979), pp. 14-44.

[62] Samuel Enoch Stumpf, *Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy,* 5th Ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Vanderbilt University,1966), pp 84-85.

[63] Aristotle, *Metaphysics,* Transl. with an Introduction by W. D. Ross, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1925), 981b28.

[64] Ibid.*,* Part 1.

[65] Aristotle, *Metaphysica*, Translated by W.D. Ross in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*. Edited by Richard McKeon in 2001 edition (New York: Random House, 1941), Bk XI: CH. I.1059ab.

[66] *Op. cit.,* p. 112.

[67] Ibid., pp. 152-154.

[68] Ibid., p. 153.

[69] Anicus M. S. Boethius, "*Eutichen et Nostrorium*", III, 4, in Tractates, De Consolatione Philosophiae (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1973). The English translation of this work is by H. E. Stewart, E. K. Rand and S. J. Tester.

[70] *https://philpapers.org › rec › MULBOP-2* Accessed on 23.06.2014.

[71] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica.* (Christian Classics, 1981) I, q.29, a.

[72] Joseph M. Okemwa, *Self-determination and Freedom in "The Acting Person" by Karol Wojtyla* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications-Africa, 1997), p. 65, reacting on Karol's understanding on the human person as it will be shown in one of the following sections.

[73] Thomas Aquinas, *loc. cit,* I, q. 29, a.

[74] Ibid., p. 159.

[75] Ibid., p. 159.

[76] Ibid., p. 119.

[77] Ibid.

[78] Emerich Coreth, *Metaphysics* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1968), p. 69.

[79] Ibid., p. 69.

[80] *Op. cit*., p. 71.

[81] Ibid. pp. 28-29.

[82] Ibid., p. 37.

[83] Ibid., p. 37.

[84] Ibid., pp 70-71.

[85] Ibid., p. 26.

[86] Ibid., p. 35.

[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid., p. 36.

[89] Ibid., p. 63.

[90] Ibid., p. 81.

[91] Joseph Major Nyasani, *Metaphysical Psychology: Rational P*sychology (Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy Press, 2013), p. 99.

[92] Ibid., p. 102.

[93] Ibid.*,* p. 103.

[94] www.galerie-inter.de/kimmerle/frameText8.htm Accessed on 08.10.2013.

[95] Cf. *loc. cit.,* pp,106–107.

[96] Cf. Segun Gbadegesin, "Yoruba Philosophy: Individuality, Community, and the Moral Order" in *African Philosophy: An Anthology* by Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998, pp.130–140.

[97] Kwame Gyeke, "Akan Concept of a person" in *International Philosophical Quarterly,* 18:3, 1978, pp. 277-288.

[98] Kwame Gyeke, and Kwasi Wiredu (eds.), *"Person and Community" in Ghanaian Philosophical Studies 1*, Washington DC.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 1992a.

[99] http://bioethics.iu.edu/files/3813/6846/9914/KahigaEberl_PersonhoodAfrican_and_Western_Views.pdf pp. 2-3.

[100] See quote no. 84 in this work.