

Chapter 6

A postfoundational ubuntu accepts the unwelcomed (by way of ‘process’ transversality)

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Introduction

This interdisciplinary conversation seeks to facilitate a rational, transversal conversation between the speculative cosmology of English mathematician and philosopher A.N. Whitehead commonly known as ‘process’¹⁹ thought and the operative principles and lines of force and congruent attractions and repulsions in the African concept of ubuntu.

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19. We acknowledge here the strong *caveat* and challenge by Seibt (2005) against a total equation of the terminology and structure of Whitehead’s philosophy of organism with the nomenclature of ‘process’. While ‘the term “process ontology” should not be equated with Whitehead’s philosophy’ (Seibt 2005:2) it is employed here and throughout as a shorthand reference, aware of the formal inadequacy of its usage. It is further acknowledged that the thesis of this chapter rests heavily on the implications of ontological and relational space both occupied and resisted (i.e. welcomed and unwelcomed) between societies and

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Ubuntu has been arguably translated into English as ‘a person is a person through other persons’ (e.g. Forster 2010a, 2010b; Louw 2001:15). Ubuntu is commonly understood to proffer utopic ‘virtues that reflect an orientation towards other people, like kindness and hospitality’ (Kruidenier 2015:3 of 7). The usual, and historically preferred, ‘hermeneutical process’ (Müller 2015:3) of ubuntu has until now – we respectfully post – begun and ended on a foundation of the best of human (individual and societal) nature.

However, it is the thesis of this chapter that such a hermeneutics of utopian optimism stands to be respectfully challenged by dystopian realities, which are also part of the human condition. As Louw (2001:26) observes, the African aphorism ‘incorporates both relation and distance.’ The operative lens of this work is this: How much more ‘distant’ can we be from one another when we are at enmity? Also, how much more ‘related’ are we when we are restored to one another and within our societies? Ubuntu, understood in a postfoundationalist manner, can and does account for and includes not just the ‘saints’ among us but also the ‘sinners’ – not just relation but also distance, the welcomed and the unwelcomed.

■ Philosophy of organism (‘process’)

The terms ‘relation and distance’, and the ontologies which they represent, are described in Whiteheadian terms as reflective of the existential ‘various grades of proximity and remoteness.’ Whitehead equates his category of positive prehensions with persistence and continual relations. He associates negative prehensions with elimination. It may be safely posited that personal and unending (i.e. enduring) positive human relations without distance is a world that does not exist – in any culture, African or otherwise. Whitehead’s categorical scheme (1978:187) acknowledges and works with this reality: ‘[A]n absolute extreme of undifferentiated endurance [is a world] of which we have no direct evidence.’

Whiteheadian relations of proximities and occasions of personal distance of remoteness reflect the philosophy of organisms’ account of the play of contrasts which defines all ontologies and their relationships: ‘[N]o realized eternal object shall eliminate potential contrasts’ (Whitehead 1978:278).

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(footnote 19 continues...)

their constituent members as well as the space both occupied and resisted between the concepts and realities and epistemologies depicted in both Whiteheadian ‘process’ thought and that outlined by postfoundational understanding of ubuntu. See the ‘General Process Theory’ (GPT) challenge to Whiteheadian ‘entities that never move’ (Whitehead 1978:73) and yet they relate as explicated by Seibt who charges that the Whiteheadian construct (and therefore, in this chapter’s context, also to some understandings of ubuntu) are ‘strangely incongruent since emergent one-place properties apparently lack proper logical subject’ (Seibt 2009:481).

Whitehead (1978) describes the world and other people that we encounter as providing the ‘presentational immediacy’ (p. 174) of publicly-presented influences (data) which require our private interpretation, which is always subsequent and consequent to the encounter which is prehended. It is important in the philosophy of organism to acknowledge that the *real* world lies behind, beneath and beyond each encounter:

We open our eyes and our other sense-organs; we then survey the contemporary world decorated with sights, and sounds, and tastes; and then, by the sole aid of this information about the contemporary world, thus decorated, we draw what conclusions we can as to the *actual* world. (Whitehead 1978:174; emphasis added)

The actual world of meaning, for Whitehead, is found in the interpretation of life’s encounters which facilitate their subjective integration from the objective realities. For Whitehead (1978) ‘[t]hese integrations often involve various types of “symbolic reference”’ (p. 173).

The creaturely demands on our symbolic references are a process by which the many influences of life are necessarily reduced for our single incorporation by our selective prehensions. Some influences and data we take in or accept or appropriate into our lives and sense of being (positive prehensions) and others are either rejected or held in abeyance for some future consideration (negative prehensions). Whitehead (1978:211) applies linguistic symbolism in his use of his all-important concept contained in the word ‘conrescence’ as it bears the ontological freight of explaining the whole process by which each ‘subsequent and therefore new’ event arising from the interface of previous events – an evolution (with no moral judgement) as ‘the process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity.’ That ontological unity is a composite one because ‘it will offer parts of itself for subsequent ‘subordination’ to its ontological successor. It is the bold thesis of our ‘process’ ubuntu conversation that the word and motion implicit in such a conrescence exactly describes the relational ontology of ubuntu: a person is a person through other persons.

Whitehead (1978) explains that the central principle of ‘process’ is that each entity is ‘constituted by its becoming’ (p. 23) and the central element of that becoming is extended by which ‘the term “many” presupposes the term “one”, and the term “one” presupposes the term “many”’ (Whitehead 1978:21). It is a relational ontology in which each occasion is an ‘event’ which arises from the conrescence of prior events. In this philosophy of organism, the becoming of events occurs out of prior events.

Every event in life, however familiar it may appear, is in this cosmology not exactly as its predecessor(s) – hence, each prehension is novel and is each conrescence. This creative advance is the essence of Whiteheadian relational ontology and it is the very ‘nature of things that the many enter into a complex unity ... the many become one, and are increased by one ... [producing] a novel togetherness’ (Whitehead 1978:21).

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Each 'one' is 'a system of all things' (1978:36). This ontology serves to 'blur the distinction between what is universal and what is particular.' A few paraphrased reverberating renditions of ubuntu seem appropriate at this juncture: I am because you are, I am through you, I love because you love, I suffer because you suffer.

■ Etymology of ubuntu provides a transversal node

Transversal touchpoints with this 'process' ontology can be discerned in an etymological description of the symbolic representation of the relational ontology of ubuntu:

Ubu evokes the idea of being in general. It is enfolded being before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity. In this sense ubu is always oriented towards ntu. At the ontological level there is no strict separation between ubu and ntu. Ubu and ntu are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of being as an oneness and an indivisible whole-ness. Ubu as the generalized understanding of being may be said to be distinctly ontological; ntu as the nodal point at which being assumes concrete form or a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment may be said to be distinctly epistemological. (Ramose 2001:para. 3)

Ubu cannot be separated from ntu: the former provides the universal and the lived individualities of the many 'ntu' reflect the many 'ones' in community. In this we can hear the concurrent Whiteheadian description (Whitehead 1978:29) of this relational ontology by which the many become one and the one becomes the many which are increased by one – and the 'many' provide the way in which the collective 'one' (or ones) to which they belong, enter into the world.

This chapter is anthropological as it does not deal with the theological or human understanding of their relations to the divine (e.g. 'vertical' in Forster 2010b:7–8 of 12) but rather with the 'horizontal relationships that shape who one is. True (ubuntu) identity ... is shaped through *shared life in the community*' (Forster 2010b:9 of 12; emphasis added). Such a relationship as defined by ubuntu is understood to be reflective of 'individual identity [that] is based upon a complex active interrelationship of beings that share a common meaning in community' (Forster 2010b:9 of 12). It is the thesis of this transversal examination of a selected commonality between ubuntu and 'process' constructs that complexity of human interaction cannot arbitrary and *a priori* limit what would, or would not, qualify as falling within the realm of 'complex'. Also, the question of seeking 'common meaning' invites a question as to what would constitute the fullest of human 'meaning'. The answer implied in the fundamental perspective of this study is that it is in responses to occasions of suffering that humanity discovers threats and challenges to 'meaning'. The 'localised' (i.e. horizontal) meaning provided by a community to its ubuntu constituents

(because 'it' is, then 'we are') contains not some but all of life's occasions – the welcomed and the unwelcomed.

Whitehead's cosmology coheres with the Ramosean explanation of ubuntu: For Whitehead, the atemporal, or trans-temporal, ontological ground is, firstly, the 'one' (cf. ubu-) comprised of 'the multiplicity of data' (Whitehead 1978:224) and, secondarily, the source of meaning is located in the activity of the creative prehensions of individual's entities (cf. -ntu) as they exist in the nexus of 'prehension' (Whitehead 1978:191).

■ Transversality

However, 'universal' we might wish to maintain that both ubuntu's creaturely interrelated sensibilities and 'process' categories of relations may be, this conversation between them is not suggesting a universality forced between them to seek a larger meaning but rather the application of a 'figure of discourse – that of "transversality" ... [which] replaces universality' (Schrug 1994:75). This conversation strives to enact a transversality 'extending over, lying across, intersecting, and converging without a resultant coincidence' (Schrug 1994:65). Such a transversal interface – if it is to be coherent and rational – requires a point or points, of praxis between the interlocutors. This chapter treats occasions of creaturely suffering and influences and impulses that would threaten a community as located at a 'praxial critique [serving as] the place from which discernment and valuation issue' (Schrug 1994:73).

In this chapter, occasions of unwelcomed influences in life provide the conduit for a dialogue of transversality in that they lie across, extend over, intersect both the speculative structure of 'process' thought and speak to what defines an ubuntu community. Schrug (1994:65) refers to a 'play of figuration' which defines a transversal conversation. The two disciplines will reveal in their transversal considerations 'some family resemblances' (Schrug 1994:65).

This study is aware of the danger, and some ongoing suspicion, within the African academy of appropriation by thinkers of the Western and Northern Hemispheres of worldview historically viewed as alien itself and imposition of an Anglo-Saxon worldviews upon a study of ubuntu.

The extension sought in this work is that this dialogue can achieve two goals, namely, (1) free the philosophy of ubuntu from a foundationalist residence on some utopic ship, isolating outside of its schema all manifestations of human dystopic tendencies (as being un-ubuntu) and therefore unable to speak to human suffering and (2) can also release its 'process' interlocutor from allegations of an isolation in a speculative and philosophical bubble. Such a conversation can bring a sense of freedom to both. Ramose (2003:7) holds

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out the promise of such transversal freedom, in his observation that 'it is clear that the liberation of philosophy is possible only through dialogue.'

In a concurring defence of a transversal conversation between an ubuntu schema and that of a 'process' relational ontology (i.e. cosmology), Whitehead, speaking in harmony with Ramose, observes that in the history of culture(s) the general assumptions must be fluid and cannot remain in isolation, immune from change just as 'the older hills, are worn and diminished in height, surpassed by younger rivals (Whitehead 1978:10).

Space does not permit an examination of all the probable inconsistencies and failures that reside in all human endeavours, not less that of ubuntu and 'process' thought. It is enough to say here that both philosophical worlds that each have created, and whose respective views of life they reflect, are not monocultures but are multivalent in themselves. Van Huyssteen (2000) observes that there is, in all systems of thought:

[T]he kind of cognitive fluidity that enables true interdisciplinary dialogues with one another as a form of transversal reasoning. Transversality in this sense justifies and urges and acknowledgement of multiple patterns of interpretation as one moves across the borders and boundaries of different disciplines. (p. 427)

It is the premise of this work that occasions of suffering, oppression, misery, injustice, evils and – with apologies to Shakespeare – the 'thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to' (Shakespeare 2003–2005, *Hamlet*, Act III, Scene 1, l. 1755–1756) each provide in this study the precise point of philosophical and existential conciliation and a transversal conversation between ubuntu and 'process'. This will be addressed momentarily.

In citing his own 1999 work entitled *The Shaping of Rationality: Toward Interdisciplinarity in Theology and Science* Van Huyssteen (2005:1) applies transversal rationality as a 'heuristic device ... for identifying those interdisciplinary spaces where the relevance of scientific knowledge can be translated into the domain of Christian theology and vice versa.' Although Van Huyssteen was here self-referencing his dialogue between theology and science, we present here that an interdisciplinary conversation between the philosophies of Whitehead and ubuntu provides a prime candidate for Van Huyssteen's 'interdisciplinary space for thinking between more than one knowledge system or reasoning strategy' (Van Huyssteen 1998:5). It is the thesis of this chapter that the two knowledge systems and reasoning strategies of 'process' cosmology and the relational ontology of ubuntu exhibit, and can yield, productive meaning through 'transversal lines of force that issue from that which is other' (Schrag 1994:74)

This present conversation presents each occasion of human dystopia – even evil – as a proper candidate for his 'interdisciplinary space' between Whitehead's philosophy of organism and ubuntu as understood outside of its foundationally-understood utopian boundaries:

Would it be possible to identify between radically diverse disciplines something like a common issue a shared problem a kind of mutual concern or even a shared overlapping research trajectory that might benefit precisely from interdisciplinary dialogue? (Van Huyssteen 2005:1)

Utopic views of the concept and relationships inherent within and reflected by ubuntu must expand the boundaries of what it is to be the fullest 'ubu-' community of which each 'ntu' is a part. The community of the welcomed must share the same world as the unwelcomed if their interplay is to be acknowledged. The inclusion of the creaturely unwelcomed within a post-foundationally understood ubuntu respects its context and expands its application beyond its origins.

Such an expanded understanding and application of ubuntu 'acknowledges that human knowledge is contextually shaped, but recognizes that human rationality is not contextually bound.' (Loubser 2012:85). Occasions of misery and unwelcomed occasions can provide the conduit for this 'process-ubuntu' conversation, in a 'postfoundationalist approach' which reinforces and supports:

1. the role of context
2. the epistemically crucial role of interpreted experience
3. the way that tradition shapes the epistemic and non-epistemic values that inform our reflection about God and what some of us believe to be God's presence in this world
4. the need to point creatively beyond the confines of the local community, group or culture toward a plausible form of cross-contextual and interdisciplinary conversation (Van Huyssteen in Loubser 2012:85).

We suggest that a postfoundational understanding of ubuntu assists the type of transversality that can be deployed in healing the divide between 'him' or 'her' from 'us'. Accepting that a relationship of true ubuntu 'overcomes, and corrects, many of the effects of radical dualism between self and other' (Forster 2010b:6 of 12), then it must surely be irrefutably counter to the indivisibility of the existentially and epistemologically conjoined ubu and ntu to place outside of its epistemological and existential boundaries even the personally and socially unwelcomed among us: brokenness and wholeness are bound together. To cleave the unity of ubuntu by exclusion of some diversity of '-ntu' is to limit ubuntu to the 'confines of the local community, group or culture' (Van Huyssteen in Loubser 2012:85).

The whole includes all of its parts: '[T]he African approach [is one through which] one cannot reduce identity simply to the experiences of the individual, or the perceptions of the group' (Forster 2006:6, n. 7) and in the 'mutual implication of extensive whole and extensive part. If you abolish the whole, you abolish its parts; and if you abolish any part, then that whole is abolished' (Whitehead 1978:268).

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A postfoundational ubuntu takes seriously that any definition of parochialism is not the fullest possible reflection of the African ethical demands of ubuntu. On the contrary, a foundationalist identity, that is to say, a foundationally-limited category of knowledge, mistakenly presumes all individual qualities of identity ‘mean the same thing to me as they do to you ... [h]owever, identity is no longer a matter that is so easily verifiable’ (Forster 2010b:2 of 12).

This chapter’s discussion of a postfoundational ubuntu considers as a question the verifiability of identity and ‘personhood’. The ‘African cosmology’ (Kanu 2013:533) of ubuntu must be inclusive by its own definition, as noted in Forster (2006).

An admittedly oversimplified definition of the ethic of ubuntu can be found if its translation is limited to – however admirable – humane care (Forster 2006:15 of 29, n. 14). It is conceded, with Nkhata (2010:34), that ubuntu bears in itself a ‘lack of amenability to an all-embracing definition.’ That being said, ‘[t]he significance of *ubuntu* becomes much clearer when its social value is highlighted’ (Nkhata 2010:35). The ‘social value’ of such ‘humane care’ comes under a special postfoundational examination when the unwelcomed are excluded from the definition of a person or human. This occurs whenever the opposite of a person having ubuntu is proffered:

‘*usibani bani ungumuntu*’ (meaning ‘that person is a human’ or, ‘that person has “ubuntu”’) is proffered in phrases such as ‘*akamuntu walutho lowo*’ (‘that one has no use or help’). (Forster 2010b:8 of 12)

A postfoundational (and processive) understanding of ubuntu frees itself from communal xenophobia, which is also part of the human condition:

Evolution has made *Homo sapiens*, like other social mammals, a xenophobic creature [who instinctively divides humanity into two parts, ‘we’ and ‘they’ leading us – especially when encountering some other ‘them’ – to claim that [w]e are all responsible for each other, but not responsible for them [i.e. the unwelcomed]. We don’t want to see any of them in our territory, and we don’t care an iota what happens in their territory. They are barely even human. (Harari 2014:195–196)

A pre-postfoundational understanding of ubuntu fails to account for those that those unwelcomed and dystopic occasions among the many ‘-ntu’ that comprise the One ‘ubu’. There is cultural transversal congruence in xenophobic impulses noted from broader research. An revealing citation of Harari’s research is pertinent to this current search for an inclusive ubuntu:

In the language of the Dinka people of the Sudan, ‘Dinka’ simply means ‘people’. People who are not Dinka are not people. The Dinka’s bitter enemies are the Nuer. What does Nuer mean in Nuer language? It means ‘original people’. Thousands of kilometres from the Sudan deserts, in the frozen ice-lands of Alaska and north-eastern Siberia, live the Yupiks. What does Yupik mean in Yupik language? It means ‘real people’ (Harari 2014:196).

The existential presence of the unwelcomed includes occasions of suffering, even evil(s), and the unwanted, the ‘non-persons’, the one of ‘no use’. The inclusion of the personally and socially unwelcomed within an expanded ubuntu boundary, as voiced by De Beer (2015:4 of 12) is a ‘demand of respect for persons *no matter what their circumstances might be.*’ (emphasis added).

It is the unwelcomed that present to this process-ubuntu conversation its ‘specific transversal issue’ (Loubser 2012:97). This specific transversal issue ‘provides moments and spaces of convergence within which productive interdisciplinary discourse can occur’ (Reynhout (2011:2). We now address that discourse.

Entities, events, and persons are not static and – in addition to the process-ubuntu transversal touchpoint between the welcomed and the unwelcomed – these three prove a congruent relationality between ubuntu and ‘process’ that is found in each discipline’s paradoxical ontology of the juxtaposition of each moment at the nexus of the stability of presence and the creative lure of the ‘not yet’.

The essence of ubuntu, from Louw (2001:26) is its ‘perception of the other [as] never fixed or rigidly closed but adjustable or open-ended. It allows the other to be, to become.’ This relational conduit finds transversal concurrence in one of Whitehead’s definitive categories of explanation. In this it is explained that every single living event has the potential to be part of a larger concrescence of events, data, impulses or occasions. It is this potential that is ‘the one general metaphysical character attaching to all entities, actual and non-actual; and that every item in its universe is involved in each concrescence’ (Whitehead 1978: 22).

This transversal conversation acknowledges that it is also true in the cosmology of ubuntu that the aphorism ‘denotes both a state of being and one of becoming’ (Louw 2001:26); so too in Whitehead (1978):

[H]ow an actual entity becomes constitutes what that actual entity is; so that the two descriptions of an actual entity are not independent. Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming’. This is the ‘principle of process’. (p. 23)

■ Evil and suffering as a mutual concern between ubuntu and ‘process’

The portrayals of human evils and dystopic manifestations reflect congruent definitions of the unwelcomed parts of human interaction in each of Whitehead’s ‘processes’ systematically and in ubuntu. Acknowledging the best-case impetus of ubuntu as an African gift to the world does not remove the reality that peaceful interactions are, regrettably, ‘often not the first activities that spring to mind when one reflects on

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Africa' (Louw 2010:2). The relational 'because' and 'through' of the ubuntu does not protect the collective nor its constituent members from harm. Neither does the relational ontology of ubuntu provide a protection from societal and/or personal dysfunction as a healthy body cell might retreat from an infectious presence, lest it be contaminated.

Ubuntu, as the 'relational ontological approach to individual identity' (Forster 2010b:7 of 12) must by definition include all that it is to be fully human – the 'blessed' and the 'sinful'. Forster (2010a) appears to support (unintendedly?) the inclusion of unwelcomed tendencies of human interaction within the rubric of ubuntu in as much as the human community includes persons:

[W]ho help one grow through affirmation, nurture and care, and others who help one grow through conflict, disappointment and struggle. (p. 250)

Definitions of ubuntu which seek to present a prophylactic to protect a relational intersubjectivity from unwelcomed factors of human behaviour do a disservice to the reality of the panoply of human interaction, including both live-giving and of destruction. For example, the glue of the societal norms of traditional relations (and in this example of intergenerational relationships) has been used, infamously, in the context of child soldiers. Former commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda Romeo Dallaire (2011) observed:

In traditional African societies, age always and still is greatly respected, and children simply do not disobey or cause trouble without risking instant discipline from elders. This feature of typical society has been ever more instilled in the child soldier through training, socialization and combat experiences. (p. 145)

This 'perversion of social norms' (Dallaire 2011:145) is certainly an example of the Whiteheadian observation (1933:259) of the ontological 'intermingling of Beauty and Evil.'

Impediments to wholeness must be included in the lived definition of ubuntu relational ontology if it is to account for the fullness of humanity. It is our thesis that such accounting extends an understanding of ubuntu past its foundationally-historic utopic impetus to also account for a noble sacrificial impetus, although welcomed, which bears unwelcomed collateral destruction, as, for example, witnessed in Kruidenier (2015):

Women experience several traditional practices of hospitality that are accompanied by risk of disease and violence and economic strains. These acts of hospitality and caring are acts of ubuntu in the community. (p. 5 of 7)

In the language of ubuntu, a true postfoundational unity of humanity includes, by definition, the paradoxical conjunction of welcomed and unwelcomed, moral and immoral, relations. Coetzee (2003) observes:

[T]here is no African philosophy which is not a product of cultural construction [and that] the moral domain admits a multiplicity of moral orders (there is no single moral order for all human beings). (p. 322)

The inclusion of unwelcomed behaviours and consequences in a postfoundational definition of ubuntu is a matter of integrity, wholeness of the application and relevance of the aphorism. A postfoundational claim for ubuntu is that it can, and must, include in its ontology and cosmology the unwelcomed and dystopic influences in a society or individuals that can find support in 'the very concern with authenticity in African philosophy [which] *presupposes* a background of crisis'. (Wiredu 2007:73; emphasis added)

Whitehead's (1978) relational category of 'conrescence' is:

[T]he process in which the universe of many things acquires an individual unity in a determinate relegation of each item of the 'many' to its subordination in the constitution of the novel [meaning the singularly newly-felt experience as] 'one'. (p. 211)

Process thought and ubuntu converge, again, on this following point. The coalescence of welcomed and unwelcomed experiences under the postfoundational epistemological umbrella of ubuntu into a unified experience presents intersubjectivities which 'blur the sharp distinction between what is universal and what is particular' (Whitehead 1978:48). The previously noted etymological study of both conjoined and distinct meanings of ubu and -ntu offers a free-standing independent yet concurring epistemology from the formative culture of ubuntu in this way: The nexus of the universal (ubu-) and the particular (-ntu) is the nexus of our 'morally ambivalent natures ... [m]oral awareness, [and] the depths of depravity' (Stone 2006:86).

This scene of personal collision bordering on elimination reflects the interdependence of wholeness and brokenness, of welcomed and the unwelcomed occasions – and persons – and reaches into the Whiteheadian observation of the existential prehension of the extended (i.e. extensive) transversality of the external (public) and the internal (private) datum of life. Such interrelatedness of conjunction and disjunction of external and internal, public and private, data is the experience of their nexus as the 'co-ordination of [those] prehensions' (Whitehead 1978:290).

The Whiteheadian 'concurrent realisation of a purpose towards elimination' (Emmet 1966:269) is the definition of evil and describes – with ubuntu-esque echoes – 'how disturbingly intimate [is] the relationship between the oppressed and his or her oppressor, the self and the other' (Brink 1998:199).

We have seen congruent ontological and categorical harmony between 'process' and ubuntu. A closing example follows of the ontological intimacy that exists at the nexus of individuals and their communities of both relation and distance, prehensions

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of interlocking positive (inculcated) and negative (held in abeyance) natures, and ultimately that 'there is no element in the universe capable of pure privacy' (Whitehead 1978:212).

One of many such nexus was recorded by Gobodo-Madikizela²⁰ which occurred at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Committee on Human Rights Violations (TRC 1998). At one point of the proceedings, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, once the 'embodiment of suffering, resistance, survival, and all the images associated with the fight against apartheid, was questioned as a perpetrator.' (Gobodo-Madikizela 2004:101).

It is in dystopic experiences that the reach between ubuntu and its transversal interlocutor of the philosophy of organism renders its most profound and unavoidable conduit for unwelcomed experiences. The presupposition of crisis in the formation of personal authenticity in the 'because' and 'through' of ubuntu was revealed in no less a scenario than during one particular 1997 prison interview with former South African Police Colonel Eugene de Kock by clinical psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (2004):

Standing there stunned, in conversation with a broken man who had been an angel of death, I felt as if I were in the midst of a collision of scattered meanings within these prison walls that had enclosed our conversations. (p. 114)

At the TRC, Gobodo-Madikizela reported having experienced another a powerful example of the ubuntu-process relational ontologies' paradoxical co-mingling of 'relation and distance' (Louw 2001:26).

According to Gobodo-Madikizela:

[S]he (Madikizela-Mandela) approached Stompie Siepe's [*sic*] mother while the cameras rolled. With a triumphant smile and open arms, she embraced her. I watched the moment of contact between the two women: the mother's humble smile and return of the gesture, and Madikizela-Mandela's triumphant smile, enacting her imposing power through her embrace. Two smiles: one symbol of power, and the other a symbol of impotence. (Gobodo-Madikizela 2004:102)

Conclusion

The intimate relationship of oppressed with oppressor, the welcomed and the unwelcomed, is but one proof of the demand for a postfoundational ubuntu whose ontology and epistemology reflect the unity-amid-diversity that is the human condition.

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20. Gobodo-Madikizela was a member of the TRC Committee on Human Rights Violations, established 16 December 1995, with public hearings beginning April 1996; its reports were presented to President Nelson Mandela 29 October 1998. Reports of open public hearings can be found in Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC 1998).

Whitehead speaks of the spectrum of truly human nature that cannot be neatly subdivided to the welcomed and unwelcomed:

Nothing can be omitted, experience drunk and experience sober, experience waking, experience drowsy and experience wide-awake, experience self-conscious and experience self-forgetful, experience intellectual and experience physical, experience religious and experience sceptical, experience anxious and experience care-free, experience anticipatory and experience retrospective, experience happy and experience grieving, experience dominated by emotion and experience under self-restraint, experience in the light and experience in the dark, experience normal and experience abnormal. (Whitehead 1933:226)

Transversally spoken, a postfoundational ubuntu offers a language and experience in life that draws a community and each of its members into the fullest of being and becoming - where brokenness mingles with wholeness. Expressed in yet another translation: 'Your pain is My pain, My wealth is Your wealth, and Your salvation is My salvation' (Nussbaum 2003:21).

■ Summary: Chapter 6

This examination of ubuntu is engaged in a conversation with the speculative philosophy of organism ('process') to acquire an extended tool by which to engage within its ontology the widest possible range of human interaction. The engagement by ubuntu's relational doctrine of the speculative philosophical cosmology of A.N. Whitehead placed portions of the latter's constructs at the service of ubuntu's transversal capacity to examine and apply the deepest understanding of its own etymology. It has been a challenge to understand occasions of injustice and suffering which have manifested within the same African culture which has given to the world the language and concept of ubuntu. It has been commonplace to isolate the utopian relational ontology implicit in the aphorism from occasions of the worst of human nature. It was the premise of this study that an understanding of an ubuntu which excludes dystopian occasions has done a disservice to the breadth, depth and height of what is to be fully human – including occasions of suffering and anti-social behaviours.

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