**An Evaluation of Mogobe Ramose’s Concept of *Ubuntu* as the Basis**

**of African Ethics and Value System**

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**ABSTRACT**

Africa’s problem lies in corruption. The concept of *Ubuntu* as an African holistic humanism elicits the need for African brotherhood and the common good of the people in Nigeria. Africa as a continent and Nigeria as a country have been bedeviled by a myriad of problems such as weak institutions of government, corruption, lack of religious tolerance, electoral malpractices, lack of independence of the judiciary, police brutality, abuse of human rights, lack of respect for human dignity, poor welfare of the Nigerian people, political godfatherism and gangsterism, ethnic chauvinism, lack of cultural integration, lack of environmental sustainability, poor economic development, poor value system, get- rich- quick- syndrome, poor leadership structure, poor road networks, poor health care system, brain drain syndrome and the problem of crisis of identity. This paper proposes that the concept of *Ubuntu*, if well-natured and nurtured, could serve as a springboard for responsible governance in Nigeria. This paper adopts the analytical framework to discuss Ubuntu's contemporary and politico-epistemological relevance to the Nigerian democratic setting. The findings of this paper are that the concept of *Ubuntu* requires democratic sustainability and accountability, everyday engagement, and an effective people-oriented leadership structure. It is a reflection of African holistic humanism. This paper concludes that the concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes an ontological, metaphysical, and politico-epistemological imperative for African politics.

**Keywords: African Politics, Good** **Governance, Nigeria, Ontology, Philosophy**, **Society, *Ubuntu***

**Introduction**

The concept of *Ubuntu* as an African humanism elicits the need for African brotherhood and the common good of the Nigerian people. Africa as a continent and Nigeria as a country has been bedeviled by a myriad of fundamental problems such as weak institutions of government, corruption, lack of religious tolerance, electoral malpractices, lack of independence of the judiciary, police brutality, abuse of human rights, lack of respect for human dignity, poor welfare of the Nigerian people, political godfatherism gangsterism, ethnic chauvinism, lack of cultural integration, lack of environmental sustainability, poor economic development, poor value system, get- rich- quick- syndrome, lack of hard work, poor leadership structure, poor road networks, poor communication system, poor educational system, poor water supply, epileptic power supply, high inflation, poor health care system, brain drain syndrome and the problem of crisis of African identity. This paper proposes that the concept of *Ubuntu*, if well-natured, could serve as a springboard for responsible governance or effective and visionary leadership in Nigeria. This is aimed at discussing Ubuntu's contemporary significance and politico-epistemological relevance to the Nigerian democratic system. However, the concept of *Ubuntu* requires democratic accountability, everyday engagement, and an effective people-oriented or action-oriented leadership structure. It represents a form of African ideology or holistic humanism. The concept of *Ubuntu* is not based on the Western notion of individualism but is fundamentally inspired by the principle of African communalism. The concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes an ontological, metaphysical, and politico-epistemological imperative for African socio-political emancipation and economic progress.

Moreover, this paper is divided into five subsections. Section one is the introductory remarks. Section two is anchored on the conceptual clarification of *Ubuntu*. Section three discusses the concept of *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system, and good governance. Section four reflects on the evaluative appraisal of *Ubuntu* as an epistemological imperative for African liberation. Section five is the concluding considerations. This paper concludes that the concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes an epistemological imperative or praxiological implication for African liberation or human emancipation.

**The Concept of** ***Ubuntu* as the Basis of African Philosophy, Value System, and Good Governance**

# The fundamental question to ask in this theoretical discourse is: has Africa been liberated from the shackles of poverty, ethnicity, economic deprivation, political instability, ignorance, illiteracy, under-development, ritual killings, secret cults, diseases, poor road networks, poor health care facilities, and corruption? The answer is an emphatic 'No'. As a concept, Ubuntu should address some of these fundamental human challenges, epistemological quandaries, and ethical quicksand facing the African continent. It should not just be a theoretical construct but a practical demonstration of African liberation that should characterize it. *Ubuntu* as a concept has something to offer if it is well-natured and nurtured. Politics is all about thought and action. Africans need "radical open-mindedness, social change, and social action. A lot still needs to be done in Africa. The concept of "*Ubuntu*" as a traditional African political culture reflects the need for human emancipation and holistic humanism. It is entirely at variance with the Western style of democracy because its basic tenet depends on African communitarian principles. Ramose argues that many prominent African political philosophers have strongly favored Western-style democracy (Ramose, 2002, 1). *Ubuntu* showcases the decolonization of Africa and African democratization of shared common objectives, value systems, and the self-reliance of the African continent. It reflects on the material, practical, and spiritual restoration of the African's right to life or existence (Ramose, 2002, 3). Thus, the forcible impoverishment of Africa introduced a new law of economics that undermined the African peoples' socio-political development and economic survival. This forcible impoverishment of Africa was caused by irresponsible or mystifying leadership structure due to massive corruption by African political leaders. The philosophical foundation of the struggle of the African person showcases the culture of human rights and shared common destiny (Ramose, 2002, 3-4). It is worth noting that *Ubuntu* brings about the smooth foundation of African democracy and African brotherhood. This form of shared common destiny has surrreptiously eluded the people of Africa due to the evils of corruption in the African continent. Many African people are wallowing in abject poverty because some of their political leaders are busy stealing public funds for their selfish aggrandizement. It is germane to note that corruption in Africa is antithetical to our humanity. Corruption in Africa is closely connected to lawlessness and social disorderliness. Many African countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Central African Republic, Somalia, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Lybia, Egypt, and Cameroon have been characterized by various socio-political logjams and poor economic systems. Many African countries are on the verge of collapse in terms of socio-political upheavals and poor economic reality. This has led to hunger, underdevelopment, and poverty in Africa. Environmental sustainability and sustainable development are unique among many African countries due to the evils of massive corruption and incomprehensible leadership structure.

Furthermore, the Ubuntu situation requires a leitmotif test for African democratization (Ramose, 2002, 5). The philosophy of Ubuntu is a clarion call for African objectivity and moral rebirth or value reorientation. The teaching of Ubuntu in Africa was to decontextualize the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonized Africa (Ramose, 2002, 29). Ubuntu showcases the experience and refinement of an establishment of the philosophical tradition of the African people. It reflects on their African humanness. The indigenous Africans have not abrogated their humanness on philosophical grounds (Ramose, 2002, 35). Thus, the concept of Ubuntu advocates African oneness or African wholeness. It is deeply rooted in African philosophy, African holism, or humanism. The concept of Ubuntu is not merely an abstract term but has practical demonstration. Like the concept of Ujaama, it tells the African continent that it is not all Uhuru. African philosophy should be more practical rather than theoretical. For Ramose:

The philosophy of *Ubuntu* advocates the need for African wholeness. *Ubuntu* is the root of African philosophy. The being of an African in the universe is inseparably anchored to *Ubuntu*. Similarly, the African tree of knowledge stems from *Ubuntu*, which is connected indivisibly. *Ubuntu*, then, is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. *Ubuntu* reflects a 'family atmosphere,' a philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa. *Ubuntu* is simultaneously the theoretical foundation and the edifice of African philosophy. Just as the environing soil, the root, stem, branches, and leaves together as a oneness give meaning to our understanding of a tree, so is it with *Ubuntu* (Ramose, 2002, 40)*.*

The foundation, the soil on which it is anchored, and the building must be continuous wholeness rather than independent fragments of reality. Accordingly, African ontology and epistemology must be understood as two aspects of the same reality. The philosophy of Ubuntu demonstrates the meaning and import of the existential condition of interrelationships or human interaction (Ramose, 2002, 41). Ubuntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. Placide Tempels started the whole idea of Ubuntu philosophy. As espoused by Ramose’s work, the concept of Ubuntu is deeply rooted in Placide Tempels’ work “Bantu Philosophy."

On the other hand, Ramose is greatly indebted to the Bantu philosophy of Placide Tempel. It is the indivisible oneness and wholeness of African ontology and African epistemology. Ubuntu means inter-subjective recognition and relationships of the African peoples characterized by the need for a shared common objective or common destiny and sense of belongingness in African communitarian consensus. Ubuntu philosophy affirms one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establishes human existential relations with others (Ramose, 2002, 43). It reflects the Sartrean being-for-itself and the being-for-others. However, these philosophical underpinnings of Ubuntu have great theoretical affinity with Levinas’s and Aristotle’s ethical metaphysics and political philosophies. It recognizes the need for hospitality and moral answerability or ethical responsibility. The philosophical concept of Ubuntu as a theoretical reorientation is invariably against the fragmentation of being (Ramose, 2002, 45-46). Ramose argues that the logic of Ubuntu is distinctively tripartite in character. He asserts that it is the logic of and for the preservation of being as wholeness (Ramose, 2002, 46). Ramose, however, further argues that:

Ubuntu's rhetoric (triadic) character underlies the widely recognized view that the African philosophic view of the universe is holistic. Africans are persistently in search of harmony in all spheres of life. The conclusion that Africans persistently search for harmony in all spheres of life is pertinently true of African thought. The concrete expression of African thought is the continual quest for rational consensus to establish harmony. Harmony gives excellence and beauty to music (Ramose, 2002, 48).

Worthy of note is that Ubuntu is founded on the triadic relationship of being – the living, the dead, and the yet-to-be-born. The concept of Ubuntu as the onto-triadic-structure of being reflects on the critical understanding of an established harmony. For Ramose, the concept of Ubuntu reveals African spirituality and metaphysics (Ramose, 2002, 50). Ramose further stressed that:

One can point to no metaphysically distinct entity as African spirituality. African spirituality is a concrete expression; it is the lived experience of the reality of the feeling of immanence and transcendence in the life of African people. African spirituality then is worldly; it is here and now in the sense that it is the manifestation of the subject's concrete expression engaged or cognizant of the reality of the experience of transcendence. However, concrete subjective expression is unique and homogenous throughout and for Africa. Africa is a heterogeneous cultural entity, although similarities are observable in the lives of the African people. To some extent, there is an underlying unity (similarities) in the diversity of African culture (Ramose, 2002, 63).

Nevertheless, Ubuntu, as a comparative approach, recognizes or takes seriously the history of the subjugation, colonization, and acculturation of Africa, as well as the subsequent restoration of sovereign independence (decolonization) and the ongoing tension between African indigenous culture and Western European imperialism or culture. An existential imperative of social relations and holistic humanism characterizes the reality of African personhood. African personhood is more mystical, metaphysical, ontological, or existential rather than theoretical. The human-individuality or the African philosophy of the human person is a necessary but insufficient condition for being a person (Ramose, 2002, 65). Ubuntu recognizes the freedom of the human person. From the African perspective, the human person is deeply rooted in the principle of communitarian consensus. In other words, the African person is deeply communitarian because he does not live in total isolation from others. His freedom is realizable when he identifies with others in the democratic community. Human freedom was a living reality in the democratic political culture of traditional Africa. The same cannot be said about contemporary African politics contrary to the Western tradition of democracy – a concept that is not alien. Ubuntu recognizes an emancipative political paradigm of inter-subjective recognition.

Furthermore, this is precisely why the search for emancipative politics must be obeyed by all African philosophers who wish to see the indigenous conquered people of Africa as liberated and dignified people within their continent and beyond (Ramose, 2002, 116). On this theoretical premise, Ramose explains that in politics, the ideal is not only in communication but also in tension with the real (Ramose, 2002, 97). It is worth noting that Ubuntu reflects on the relational dimension of the common good. For Asouzu, this relational dimension is essential to critically understanding the contemporary relevance of the common good in existential situations of life in the African person (Asouzu, 2004, 382). A philosophical analysis of Ubuntu represents a search for a collective identity of a whole people (Ruch and Anyanwu, 1984, 20).Ubuntu reflects on the true Africanness of the African as an individual and as a member of a societal group and continental expanse. Oyekan Owomoyela holds that a genuine African philosophy would aim to reconcile Africans to Africanness, not to advocate dissolution in a European cultural mélange (Owomoyela, 1996, 37). Ubuntu aims at African normativity. This African normativity necessitates a better understanding of African phenomena in all their differences and specificities (Owomoyela, 1996, 95). Ubuntu thrives on consensus, mutuality, cooperation, and accommodation rather than a conflict of interests, for it reflects on a communalistic ideal (Owomoyela, 1996, 117). Ubuntu recognizes the unity and diversity of African peoples and cultures. This is why Owomoyela argues that Africa is diverse, and so are its peoples and their cultures.

Moreover, it is also a dynamic continent that bears the marks of its passage through time. Ubuntu is aimed at the heart of the vaunted African principle of communalism, which is based on African kinship (Owomoyela, 1996, 167). Therefore, this summation is a reconciliation between the philosophy of Ubuntu and that of Ujaama, which are both indigenous to the African continent and peoples. However, some scholars have argued that Julius Nyerere’s concept of Ujaama was more pragmatic or realistic than that of Ramose’s concept of Ubuntu. It is worth noting that both concepts, "Ujaama” and “Ubuntu," represent a form of African ideology. Ideology is simply a set of belief systems that form the habits or behavior of a group of people in society.

On the other hand, ideology as a set of belief systems is simply people-oriented and action-oriented. Ubuntu is the normative foundation of African philosophy. This anthropocentrism is "community-based" in so far as the African person is perceived as a member of a specific community; that is to say, his or her being with others is always the paramount one (Owomoyela, 1996, 178). In the contemporary world, everyone must come together to determine their destiny (Donohue, 1994, 4). Those who prefer to remain in a private world cannot, of course, be compelled to join the mainstream of humanity. However, such a choice would condemn them to permanent stagnation and deprive them of the material benefits that all men need and to which all should have access (Donohue, 1994, 4-5). African philosophy comprises the basic principles that underlie African values, behavior, belief systems, and customs (Odhiambo, 1995, 42).

Worthy of note is that Ubuntu philosophy should be seen partly as a search for African ontology, African epistemology, African metaphysics, African ideology, a political strategy, and a methodology that would work for Africans in their quest to reclaim their dignity and rightful place among other members of the human race (Imbo, 1998, 14). The notion of being is articulated around the concept of Ubuntu (Asouzu, 2007, 206). Ubuntu is the indivisible oneness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology. The idea of ontology is characterized by specific injustice or difficulty (Asouzu, 2007, 207). However, there appears to be a moment of arbitrary opposition between diverse regions of being where diverse regions constitute themselves unduly to such a stumbling block that makes a holistic understanding difficult. The notion of 'Ubuntu’ could be successfully weaved into African political thought through the process of honest communication and holistic cum humanistic understanding amongst the African peoples (Asouzu, 2007, 209). On the other hand, Asouzu affirms that:

There appears to be an arbitrary moment of dubiousness introduced into this type of African ontology, which upholds the silence of being, no matter how hard diverse regions of being try to communicate with each other. This hitch needs to be resolved to make the hearing linguistic slant of this ontology manageable. We cannot be speaking and not be speaking at the same time. If the ontology of *Ubuntu* should be understood as "being human (humanness)," then it should first resolve its tendency to isolate itself and not constitute an obstacle for honest communication to take place (Asouzu, 2007, 209-210).

This difficulty might arise when ontology has no sufficient inbuilt mechanism that checks excesses from within its theoretical formulation. For this reason, there is the need to give a broader spectrum or a wider connotation, failing which there will be instituted an ontology that is at war with itself and with everyone, its lofty claims notwithstanding (Asouzu, 2007, 208). The goal set by an ontology of Ubuntu is very praiseworthy; however, the mechanisms to attain these objectives must be re-examined, re-defined, or refined to permeate the community-based thinking and acting subject through and through. Such difficulties may arise when there is a conscious effort to build ontology on worthy maxims (Asouzu, 2007, 209).Ubuntu reflects on the normative basis of African philosophy and the liberation of Africa. It reflects the emancipatory political agenda, democratic paradigm, and democratic traditions of the indigenous peoples of Africa. Ubuntu, as the basis of African philosophy, value system, good governance, and the liberation of African people, re-emphasizes the return to African traditional society, which is antithetical to the Western system of society. This antithetical relationship between the African traditional society and the Western culture presupposed an alien culture injected into the indigenous African traditional society. This alien culture has become part and parcel of the African politico-existential experience (Ramose, 2002, 108). Worthy of note is that the emancipative epistemological paradigm of Ubuntu subscribes to a specific concept of the human being and proceeds on that basis to organize inter-human moral, political, and existential relationships, as well as relations between humans and other nonhuman entities in the universe (Ramose, 2002, 106). For Ramose:

*Ubuntu* reflects the basis for the preservation or retrieval of African tradition. *Ubuntu* assumes the contemporary significance of practical realism. However, it has been emphasized that the alien European culture has become an African way of life in the sense that most Post-colonial sovereign independent African states have finally accepted the view that the Western-style democracy, symbolized by the existence of plural-political parties, is the best answer to the problem of political organization in Africa. *Ubuntu*, as the basis of the liberation of Africa, reflects the sufficient condition for the political emancipation of Africa. This line of argument presupposes an inauthentic expression of African political culture precisely because it is an imposition that continues to resist dialogue with traditional African political culture (Ramose, 2002, 106-107).

It is worth noting that Ubuntu is based on indigenous democratic politics in Africa. Ubuntu emphasizes the enunciation of African politics and the emancipation of Africa. Ramose argues that traditional African political culture is, at the very least, unlikely to make any meaningful contribution to the quest for a fundamental solution to the political problems of the African continent. Ramose argues that Gyekye and Wamba refute this normative assumption by showing that traditional African political culture can still speak authoritatively on finding an emancipative paradigm of African solution to African political problems (Ramose, 2002, 111). Ubuntu emphasizes the philosophical basis and establishing a humane relationship with other human beings. Ubuntu is logically understood as being human and having a humane (respectful and polite) attitude towards other human beings, constituting the central meaning of African wholeness.

Nonetheless, it presupposes that for a human being to be truly human, it must be in the African context of actual relationships with other human beings in the indigenous African traditional society. The relational context always conceals and reveals the potentialities of the individual human being (Ramose, 2002, 111-112). Thus, the concealed potentialities become revealed whenever they are actualized in the practical sphere of human interrelationships. Ubuntu enunciates the significant elements of traditional African political culture of oneness and the expression of human equality, human rights, moral reciprocity, and communitarian consensus. The pivotal sphere of human relations is predicated on the principle of social solidarity and politico-existential relations. This principle of social solidarity and politico-existential relations reveals the infinite request for rational or communitarian consensus in traditional African political culture (Ramose, 2002, 112-113). However, the concept of Ubuntu, championed by Ramose in his book, "African Philosophy through Ubuntu," is the normative basis of traditional African political culture that was communally based and geared towards oneness rather than division or fragmentation. Ubuntu emphasizes the unrelenting quest for African oneness. Ramose further posits that the reincarnation of the indigenous African traditional principle of communicative solidarity in contemporary African politics can be a significant step towards the emancipation of the indigenous people of Africa (Ramose, 2002, 113).Ramose’s concept of Ubuntu is a theoretical construct of a mode of politics responsive to the political problems of contemporary Africa (Ramose, 2002, 115). According to Ramose, from the African point of view, life is an incessant drift and egress of forces. In this process, the individual is necessarily placed in a position to receive from others and give to them. The conceptual analysis of Ubuntu guarantees the normative possibility of universal moral order and radical openness to being (Ramose, 2002, 114). Ubuntu reflects on the mutual understanding and care for one another as human beings. It precedes concern for the accumulation of wealth and an end in itself (Ramose, 2002, 114-115).Ramose’s concept of Ubuntu reflects the ethical principle of sharing as the regulative element of African social organization. As the ethical and normative principle of sharing vis-a-vis the contextualization of African communalism, Ubuntu animates the regulative element of social organization.

Furthermore, communalism is a philosophy that provides an institutional framework and expression in the social structures of traditional African societies. The principle of communicative solidarity and sharing has also been undermined in contemporary African multi-party politics. It is essential to underline that this communitarian principle covers a broader spectrum and the whole range of human politico-existential relations (Ramose, 2002, 117-118). Ramose succinctly observed that now that the principle of communitarian solidarity is undermined in contemporary African multi-party politics, nepotism, corruption, and lack of sympathy for the other have become widespread.

African politics has been bedeviled by ethno-religious crises, Islamic fundamentalism caused by terrorism and terror, greed, godfatherism, political gangsterism, electoral malpractices such as vote buying and vote selling, weak government institutions, massive corruption, human sufferings, and oppressive governments in Africa. For Ramose, the sufferings and oppressions characterized by these existential conditions are well-known in Africa. In order to reverse and correct this politico-existential tension, it is crucial to re-incorporate the ethical principle of sharing in the ideological construct of an emancipative mode of politics in contemporary Africa. Good governance is a fundamental element of traditional African culture. Human freedom was a living reality in the democratic political culture of traditional Africa (Ramose, 2002, 117). Ubuntu assumes the true liberation of Africa and the traditional principles of sharing; oneness, consensus, and radical openness are guided by the emancipative epistemological paradigm of Ubuntu as the fundamental element of traditional African political culture.

**The Concepts of *Ubuntu* and Good Leadership Structure**

Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* could serve as an ideological template for African democracy. His concept of *Ubuntu* envisages the need for good governance or democratic accountability for the peoples of Africa. The African man is not only emotional but also perceptive. He believes in African brotherhood. The concept of *Ubuntu* could serve as a veritable platform for effective leadership and the notion of the common good. It is germane to note that leadership in Nigeria is an abysmal failure. Leadership in contemporary Nigerian society has been identified with manipulative tendencies and the evils of corruption. Corruption in Nigeria is endemic, and it is invariably against our humanity. Corruption is against humanity and antithetical to effective leadership structure and sustainable development. African leaders ought to imbibe the spirit of *Ubuntu* as a springboard for the common good of the people. It is quite unfortunate that the concept of the common good has eluded the people of Nigeria due to the evils of corruption and the manipulative system of democratic governance. The concept of *Ubuntu* is transnational, cosmopolitan, and international. Worthy of note is that the concepts of *Ubuntu*, leadership and good governance are interrelated. The concept of Ubuntu fundamentally inspire*s leadership,* and the concepts of *Ubuntu*, leadership, and good governance are tilted towards the public good of the people.

**Evaluation**

It is germane to note that his theoretical reconstruction has both strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of his emancipative political paradigm is that his integrative philosophy is built on African culture, customs, and tradition. His African political philosophy showcases holistic African humanism and the need for radical openness. One of the areas for improvement in his philosophy is that it needs to grapple with the present complexities of our contemporary times. His conceptualization and contextualization of *Ubuntu* philosophy advocate the need for national integration and the spirit of African brotherhood. As postulated by Ramose, the concept of Ubuntu advocates the need for human emancipation, equality of opportunities, a national paradigm, sustainable development, and a beneficial scheme of social cooperation. It guarantees the normative assumption of peaceful coexistence or social relationship, social coordination, harmonious relationships or complementation, a sense of goodwill, and purity of intention or honesty of purpose in African societies. For Asouzu:

The reality of goodwill, as a bulwark against self-interest, must not be postulated only as a theoretical necessity but must be seen as the consequence of any efforts toward liberating the ego from the limitations of its laws. In this way, the principle of harmonious complementation finds its consummation and completion as a principle of progressive transformation. Where now, in the principle of harmonious complementation, one says that anything that exists serves as a missing link of reality, this is an attempt of the mind to seek the unity linking being in the most harmonious complementary manner, their limitations notwithstanding and indeed towards a total synthesis in the one eternal and true absolute reality that gives all things their being and ultimate joy. It is this joy that the principle of progressive transformation demands (Asouzu, 2003, 155).

In light of the above, Asouzu and Ramoze shared many things. There is a solid theoretical affinity between Asouzu’s concept of *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy and Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu*. Both concepts represent the need for harmonious African relationships that are deeply community-based. Asouzu’s and Ramose’s theoretical reconstruction has pedagogic implications in African societies. Nigeria has much to learn from Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy because it could serve as a veritable platform for a practical or visionary leadership structure. For Denis Venter:

Leadership is a political and relational concept involving the rulers and the ruled. Politics is about leadership; conversely, leadership is a critical dimension of everyday political life. Leaders must have the charisma to provide their people with a national vision and purpose- and the ability to galvanize their efforts toward and sustain their enthusiasm in pursuing those objectives. Leadership is essential in all social, economic, and political human activity. The general perception is that Africa needs strong, dedicated, and self-confident leaders who are creators of great ideas, command the loyalty of their people, and are committed to developing their countries. Skillful, visionary, and capable leadership is the key to the reforms Africa needs and the policy actions required for the continent's development; a true leader must have the courage and ability to communicate reality to his followers (Venter, 2004, 258).

In the light of the above, the Nigerian leadership structure is in a sorry state. There must be more connection between leadership and followership in contemporary Nigerian society. It is germane to note that corruption reigns supreme in Nigeria. Many leaders and followers are corrupt. Corruption flows in the veins of many Nigerians. Many Nigerians see corruption as a sign of smartness. Anybody who shuns corrupt practices is seen as a failure. Corruption has become a norm in contemporary Nigerian society. Nigerians celebrate political thieves even when it becomes glaring that these thieves have looted the national treasury for their selfish aggrandizement. Corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society.

Many Nigerian leaders have become self-centered, corrupt, and manipulative when given political positions. They are fond of looting the national treasury to the detriment of the Nigerian populace. Nigeria has become a laughing stock in the international community due to the evils of massive corruption and many other social vices that have become prevalent within the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government has become an oppressive government, and this has led to the stifling of the fundamental rights of the Nigerian people. The courts, supposed to be the last resort of the Nigerian people, have become very corrupt and manipulative. The judiciary in Nigeria is no longer independent. This shame has placed the Nigerian government as a colossal failure in our contemporary times. The Nigerian State could no longer be regarded as a welfare state due to its oppressive nature of government. The Nigerian people are subjected to all kinds of dehumanization. Many Nigerians are currently experiencing economic hardship and abject poverty. Poverty has become very endemic today due to a lousy leadership structure. Poverty has reduced the humanity of Nigerians due to oppressive government. The Nigerian government is not a normative government due to certain inherent contradictions that have characterized the Nigerian State.

These inherent contradictions are poverty and hunger, sicknesses and diseases, ethnoreligious crises, inter-tribal wars, farmers-herders clashes, terrorism and terror caused by Islamic fundamentalism, electoral malpractices, massive political and economic corruption, high inflation, police brutality, bad road network, poor educational system, bad democratic governance, poor health care system, and poor power supply. It is worth noting that the magnitude of massive corruption in Nigeria has led to the emergence of weak government institutions. The judiciary, the police, the mass media, and other institutions are all at the mercy of the Nigerian government. In other words, these government institutions have been stifled by some tyrannical laws that are at variance with the objectives of these establishments. The courts and the mass media, for instance, are not objective enough in their legal verdicts and reportage due to the whims and caprices of the Nigerian government. They tend to bend their knees to the tyrannical tendencies of the Nigerian government. The Nigerian State has become an instrument of oppression and economic subjugation of the people. The Nigerian government has used poverty as an instrument or a ploy to enslave the Nigerian people perpetually. This has made the people easily fall prey to the evils of bribery and corruption during electoral promises and campaigns in Nigeria.

Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy demonstrates the critical importance of African value systems and moral reevaluation of the African peoples. It advocates the ontology and the epistemology of the common good as “a spiritual metaphor” in Africa’s quest for leadership responsibility and democratic accountability. Worthy of note is that the theoretical proposition and the conceptual clarification of *Ubuntu* could bring about a liberal-humanist ideal of African personhood (Horowitz, 2002, 213). Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy advocates African personhood, familyhood, and value system. The African value systems include respect for human life, respect for custom, culture, and tradition, the comprehensive conception of sound, harmonious relationships, we-consciousness, a sense of belongingness, rational/communitarian consensus, and a sense of shared common destiny in African society.

Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* elicits the need for the decolonization of Africa. It demands the clarion call for the rationalization of African society. It represents the African worldview. However, he advocates the struggle for reason in Africa. His theoretical reconstruction is built on the solid bedrock of the social ethos of African communities and societies. His work upholds the entire process of the decolonization of Africa through his conceptual clarification of *Ubuntu*. Decolonization has neither abolished nor diminished the will to dominate on the part of the condescending, and the will to dominate currently manifests itself in the name of "democratization," "globalization," and "human rights"(Ramose, 2002, 1-2). The concept of *Ubuntu* is just like every other African ideological construct, such as *Ibuanyidanda*, *Negritude*, *Ujaama*, *Consciencism*, and *Neowelfarism*. These ideological constructs or theoretical templates were seen as the most viable tools and veritable platforms for the decolonization of Africa. It stipulates the need for African freedom. Dukor asserts that:

Freedom is an ideal and dream of individuals, groups, societies, and nations, no matter how primitive. It is a metaphysical term translatable into concrete historical reality. It is arguably a free and liberal gift from nature to man for his self-creative process. It enhances and nurtures distinctiveness, creativity, and originality in man's intellectual, aesthetic, and material undertakings. Freedom, when perscoped within the African context, is a philosophical problem, and the fact that it is so presupposes her 'unfreedom’ (Dukor, 2009, 36).

Furthermore, thequest for African freedom has led to the miasma of socio-political and economic subjugation of the African peoples in our contemporary times. Many Africans are in chains due to a lack of political and economic freedom caused by oppressive governments in Africa. There has been a wide gap between the rich and the poor in most African countries, and this led to the disappearance of freedom of the African peoples. Freedom goes with human rights. These human rights are rights to life, equality of opportunities, and rights to primary material and economic needs. As a continent, Africa faces poor leadership structure and poor democratic governance. The indices of good governance include the promotion of human rights, good road network, high per capita income, sound tax system, good health care facilities, effective legal system, sound economic policies that are ideological-driven and people-oriented, legal sanctions for corrupt officeholders, strong institutions of government, employment opportunities, high life expectancy, portable water supply, regular power supply, sustainable development, and ecological sustainability.

Worthy of note is that Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes the notion of an African value system, and values showcased the critical importance of "the idea of inherent normativity" (Alan, 2006, 54).Ramose’s views on *Ubuntu* philosophy postulate a comprehensive, reflective account of moral reasoning and the social ethos of African personhood (Alan, 2006, 53). Ramose’s philosophy of *Ubuntu* showcases the evaluative, the normative, and the practical idea of the comprehensive conception of the good life in African society. As postulated by Ramose, the Ubuntu philosophy offers normative governance of the collective will of the African people. *Ubuntu* philosophy foregrounds the motivational internalism of African society; morality demands are necessarily and overridingly motivating (Alan, 2006, 54). Ramose’s African political thought resonates with an emancipative political paradigm and democratic realism or liberalism, and liberalism depends on a moral background culture in a society; it demands the duty of self-restraint required of citizens in a practically liberal society (Alan, 2006, 295).However, the concept of *Ubuntu* ought to be given an accrued political currency and used as a tool for social inclusion in Africa (Howie, 2009, 5-6).Ramose has left his footprints in the sand of time through his theoretical reconstruction of *Ubuntu*. It is germane to note that Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* envisages the need for African holism or humanism. It is invariably African socialism. The common denominator of all proponents of African socialists is this: African socialism must express the African experience (Ruch and Anyanwu, 1984, 58). Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* is another form of African ideology, and an ideology is essentially a value system in theory and practice (Ruch and Anyanwu, 1984, 342).

On the other hand, the concept of *Ubuntu* reveals the flowering of humanist and ethical thinking in Africa (Oguejiofor, 2001, 87). The concept of *Ubuntu* could be understood as a practical guide to Africa's quest for normative governance (Alan, 2006, 294-295). Venter, in consonance with Thomas, asserts that:

Governance has normative solid overtones. It is the practice of good government, and it remains a fragile process that depends on the ruler's restraint and the ruled's tolerance. The normative outcomes of governance call for liberalization and democratization: development will take place only if political leaders abandon their authoritarian practices. Governance is also the conscious management of natural resources or regime structures to enhance the democratic legitimacy of the public realm (Venter, 2004, 234-235).

Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system, and normative governance envisages the need for an established harmony, lived experience and ethical immediacy, and African unity in their diversities, and it assumes the contemporary significance of the radicalization of democratic realism and the decolonization of the African continent. Africa is a paradox. As in other regions of the world, the base of African society is the family. A critical element in promoting and sustaining development in Africa is to keep African families intact. Achieving this will involve what we might call the "reintroduction" of the African man to his family (Maathai, 2009, 274-275).Itis germane to note that Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy demonstrates that the liberation of Africans from foreign identity and regaining African identity can only be done by Africans themselves. Only Africans can save themselves. This is in finding oneself in oneself, not someone else (Dukor, 2009, 316). Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* philosophy is a clear pointer to the call for African familyhood, which is communally based. African pedagogic community has become a form of internal colonialism in our contemporary times, and internal colonialism as the highest form of imperialism is, however, more subliminal in Nigeria (Dukor, 2009, 323). Dukor succinctly observed that:

Nigeria's unique case is that of a structure well laid and protected jealously by the former colonial masters for sustaining the dependence of the component units or nationalities through the empowerment of the hegemonist group holding the awful and all-powerful statecraft: an internal colonialism that hardly brooks no disintegration or true democracy. The failure of all forms of democracy ranging from communism, socialism, and the West minister to the Presidential system in Africa and the low conception of identity and citizenship is nothing but one of the vestiges of colonialism as an *agent provocateur* aiding and abetting internal colonialism. To a large extent, it could be correct to characterize Africa as a colonial society still, the politically independent status of the states notwithstanding (Dukor, 2009, 323-324).

Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy could be described as African familyhood or theistic humanism (Dukor, 2009, 325). Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* does not give room for egocentric calculation or the pseudo-interest of the individual human in African society. Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* discloses the epistemic, metaphysical, ontological, and ethical significance of the place of Africa in the world. For Levinas and many other thinkers, questions of place and dwelling are central concerns of ethics and political philosophy.Philosophers have been devoted to understanding our emplaced condition and how this situatedness influences the production of philosophical inquiry (Edelglass, 2009, 74-75).However, African communalism is deeply rooted in the normative assumption of harmonious situatedness (Bloom, 1986, 71). The community-based pedagogies of our African politico-existential situations define African society. Ramose’s philosophy stipulates that the Nigerian State aims to educate the citizens into a community based on moral principles, and the inordinate ambition and unwillingness to make necessary sacrifices for the unity of the country, crass ignorant and inexperienced leadership, corruption, greed and inability to learn from history and turn a new leaf are some of the ills of the African elites and these are responsible for our inability to govern ourselves (Aigbodion and Idjakpo, 2010, 5-6). Ramose’s concept of *Ubuntu* is not just another form of African ideology but African existentialism or "theistic-holistic-humanism" in African society.

**Conclusion**

It is germane to note that Ramose’s *Ubuntu* philosophy advocates African personhood, African familyhood, African holism, African humanism, and the African value system. It demonstrates the need for "normative governance ."Governance requires managing the State's resources to ensure the public happiness of the people in society. Good governance requires an effective leadership style and the promotion of human rights and politico-economic freedom of the people. The concept of *Ubuntu* can serve as the panacea for good governance in contemporary Nigerian society. Therefore, this paper concludes that the massive socio-political and economic corruption in Nigeria brings to the foreground the need for moral rebirth or reevaluation in Nigeria. The concept of *Ubuntu* as an African holistic humanism reflects the need for a shared common objective and the common good in Nigeria. Africa as a continent has become paradoxical due to its incomprehensible leadership structure. Many Nigerians are wallowing in abject poverty and economic hardship due to bad democratic governance.

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