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**„Human Dignity as Basic Foundation for Morality
in Perspective of ‘Bantu’ African Ethical Theory
(With Specific Moral Challenges in Tanzania)“**

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I lovingly dedicate
the effort I used for the accomplishment
of this dissertation,
first and foremost to my parents,
then to all of my Salvatorian confreres
and the Salvatorian family at large,
to all those cherishing human dignity and humanity
as the ethical principle for human conducts and morality,
as well as to all the people of good will.

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0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION: The Need of a New Bantu Ethics Based on Dignity

Human Dignity is one of age-old concepts that might have been held for speculation in a number of scholarly discussions. It is a concept that has always been involved not only in the philosophical thoughts and considerations but also in various other academic fields and schools-of-thought; like for instance, in the socio-anthropological studies and in the theological inquiries and investigations. Moreover, it is, in our contemporary epoch, a concept featuring mostly in the discussions involved in moral, ethical, and legal issues; and even more in the socio-political debates and discourses, as foundational loose-leaf folder for human moral value and ethical status. The discussion on the concept of human dignity has, especially in the twentieth century, turned out to be one of the central floorboards of modern moral and political philosophy.¹ Discussions and discourses involving the concept of human dignity have been made especially on themes of human rights, social justice, peace and reconciliation in conflict zones, medicine and bioethics, as well as in many other similar issues and themes of such similitude.

Why should one, therefore, add another study on human dignity, with a special respect to Tanzania and especially to Bantu ethics? Because it is needed. The presupposition from which this study departs is that the existing concepts of human dignity, especially in their emphasis on the foundation of human rights, do not suffice to establish a sound society with appropriate moral guidelines in the context of Tanzania. The reason for this is that the Tanzanian society, as it can be in many other African countries or societies, has been shaped by communal moral practice, it is not embedded in a long

¹ Cf. T. Christiano, "Two Conceptions of the Dignity of Persons", in *Jahrbuch für Recht und Ethik / Annual Review of Law and Ethics* (eds. B. Sharon Byrd and Jan C. Joerden), Berlin: 2008, Dunker and Humblot, p. 111.

tradition of emphasising individual autonomy and individual rights, as is the case in the European context. Without withstanding the importance of human rights issues, the perspective of moral theology, as far as it regards individual moral behaviour, cannot rely on this approach alone, but needs to provide support for individual moral attitudes and acts in a form that is plausible in the given context of African culture. This is the reason why a more traditional African starting point for developing an ethics acceptable by the Bantu African people is needed. Enticingly, this work recommends the utilization of traditional ethical principles in the development of the abundant human and material resources for moral values in modern Africa. These traditional sources can furnish a background and security, especially in this age of globalization and continuous change; in which time, people have to re-increase themselves into thinking globally but acting locally.

The dissertation will therefore show, as a starting point, why it makes sense to start to develop a universal ethics from a Bantu-African approach. It will argue that, even from a pragmatic point of view, Bantu African ethics is a good point of departure, since it provides the largest shared common ground for such an endeavour. In a second step, then, and beyond this pragmatic reason, it will explain in which way Bantu ethics can provide the necessary conceptual basis for a universal ethical approach that can serve all people in Tanzania and beyond. This requires several steps of argument that will shape the chapters of this thesis until it will be embedded and corroborated by Theological-Ethical reflections. But, first of all, what are the ethical issues that make the development of a new ethics for Tanzania so urgent?

0.1 Statement of Problem: Tanzania as a Pluralistic Society in Transition

Today's overview portrait of Africa, south of Sahara, is actually one of an area fairly imbued with Christianity and relatively influenced by Western civilisation. I dare say this with regard to the time we are all now living – the age of globalisation and advancement in science and technology. Following this fact, therefore, one might then think that life of the people in this particular region goes relatively well; meaning, just like it is in other continents where Christianity and Western civilization is for centuries long well established, like for the most part of the continent of Europe. But in reality what is happening, is somehow the contrary of it all. It means, there is kind of mixing-up difficulties

and generally speaking in the mentality of the people, especially on the way of perceiving vital matters on meaning of life and communal living that goes even further to the point of leading a very unstable life or rather call it a life without proper moral direction or ethical guidance.

Those people in the continent of Africa south of Sahara, for instance who are living in the cities, are as equally influenced by globalisation and development in science and technology, just like anyone living in the Western world civilisation. Hence it happens from time to time that they try to imitate living a modern life in accordance with the Western style of living. Sometimes they find themselves ending up into leading a life mixed up of both, the African way of traditional thinking (which is in accord to their culture) and the Western way of life (which actually introduces new elements and aspects of life). And thus keeping this in mind, I now arrive into a point of affirming the statement of problem, that: despite the evangelisation and Christianisation of the people living in the expanse of the African continent there are yet a number of apparent moral decadences in daily life's conduct, which would actually need be given elaborative explanation. People seem to be in need of clear moral guidance or ethical direction fitting their ethical environment and signs of the time both allowing to maintain the traditional characteristics and to keep pace with the new developments.

With careful analysis and critical surveillance, thus, one cannot fail to find a full range of questions facing the African continent today, but the described situation creates difficulties to solve such moral concerns like injustices and offenses against human rights, maintain peace and freedom, solve all controversies surrounding specific issues, like sexual matters, respect for human life, wars, economic justice, to mention but a few. Other issues of concern are corruption, social and political injustices, gender inequalities, lack of freedom of expression, discrimination of the minority (like people with albinism and physically hindered ones), terrorism, ethnic and religious conflicts just to mention but a few among others. In addition, the continent is ravaged by diseases like AIDS, malaria and Ebola, hunger, marginalisation, corruption and plundering of her resources, along with spiritual and moral intoxications.

To find common grounds for a new ethical approach that is suitable for the whole society will facilitate and indicate, to a great extent, ways of providing resolutions on quite

a number of these issues. Generally speaking, therefore, the main concern for this dissertation is to make an analytical survey and speculative examining of the Bantu African ethical pattern and moral tradition, so as to find more or less way of helping moral guidance to such incidents of moral indiscretion that have become commonplace in Africa south of the Sahara and in particular on the moral challenges in Tanzania. Such an approach will make it possible to formulate in Bantu cultural terms what has been formulated in a language of rights by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), namely that it is necessary and obligatory to make “available to all humans everything necessary for leading a life truly human, such as food, clothing, and shelter; the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family; the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one’s own dignity and conscience, to protection of privacy, and to rightful freedom in matters of religious too.”²

Arguing from moral grounds found in Bantu ethics can resound with people’s minds and can find acceptance because it comes close to their context of culture and tradition. Among the Bantu Africans, human dignity has been perceived and regarded as ideal rod measure or criterion on which moral judgement of a person’s moral conducts in a community is enacted and ratified.³ However, given the change of structure of society and its pluralistic composition, it is not enough to search for already established patterns of behaviour.

0.2 Objective and Significance: Develop a New Ethical Approach Fitting for All

Observing the moral pattern of Bantu communities will not entirely be able to serve as a basis for moral living outside the community, e.g. in the large cities, and for those who have not grown up in a Bantu culture. Therefore as a first question we need to ask, whether on the grounds of the practice of Bantu morality a moral principle can be detected that may also serve as basis for a universal ethical approach that can encompass also the new circumstances of living and non-Bantu Tanzanians.

² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 26.

³ For a more detailed analysis, please see chapter 3.

For such reason, this dissertation is going to enquire in which way the Bantu African ethics does entail a universal concept of morality, and will try to show that this underlying universal concept is the concept of human dignity, which can serve as principle for a universal ethics. However, this argument needs some cautious elaborations beforehand. On focusing around the concept of human dignity *qua* foundational moral principle for morality, this dissertation needs to examine, in a first place, the way in which the notion of human dignity is conceptualized as basis for morality in context of the African Bantu people's socio-ethical setting. It starts, thus, with a study-work set to highlight the African Bantu ethical perspective and explore it to exhibit whether the Bantu Africans' ethical system compatibly includes an element expressing that Human Dignity plays a central role as basis for virtuous moral living in the Bantu community', and what references and presuppositions are enclosed in this statement.

So far, then, this study work is significant in the sense of providing kind of hermeneutical analysis of 'how is human dignity comprehended in the African ethical structure and pattern and what role does such a concept play in *traditional Bantu morality* for virtuous moral living?'

Obviously, it is not an easy undertaking, but as one appears dealing with such questions, one may also realise that, through an acute researching and keen consideration of the Bantu peoples' ethical pattern, there is found in the Bantu Africans moral tradition, what is referred to as a pattern of moral values, seriously held by the Bantu Africans as they strive for virtuous moral living and communal life, while also practically observing them in day to day life conducts with one another in community. These patterns, even in situation of misery and despondency help human beings and strong-willed persons to keep moving on with a smile despite the great ordeals and misfortunes. That means, there is always kind of vital force, which keeps people alive and moving with moral courage and willpower to strive to be good and for what is good, both for oneself and for the community or society at large.

The Bantu African societies, as organised and functioning human entities and communities do have, undoubtedly, established ethical patterns or systems, of which they use to guide and control their life in communities – such are surely systems as those being employed to articulate moral values, ethical principles and normative ethical guidelines or

moral norms – intended to provide guidance on socio-ethical conducts and moral behaviour.

Among the intrinsic moral values is the human dignity, which is indeed not only referred to as a moral value amongst others but also as a foundational moral principle.

In the course of analysing the Bantu people's perspective of human dignity as basic foundation for virtuous moral living, therefore, the use of coherent terms referring to a constellation of ethical value claims and normative moral requirements, are significantly going to be employed. There are such ethical terms, which for all intents and purposes, are drawn from traditional 'Bantu' ethics, as in Kiswahili the term "*Utu*" (meaning: human dignity) and in a number of African Bantu language in South Africa, the word "*Ubuntu*" (meaning: humanness, humankind or humanity)⁴. These are conceptual terms basically forming the fundamental structure of 'Bantu' African ethics.

In fact, I am equally indebted to make it clear that, these two Bantu conceptual terms are unquestionably cognate concept with each other – meaning, they have linguistically the same source or etymological origin – not only in Kiswahili and Zulu languages, but also in many other Bantu ethnic languages. That is to say, considering the vast extension of the Bantu ethnic group in the Eastern, Central and Southern part of the continent of Africa, one may certainly come across such terminologies, like for instance the term '*umuntu*' for the Nguni people, '*botho*' in Sotho-Tswana language, and '*hunhu*' in Shona language.⁵

But as for now I would only prefer to raise a point that, following the criterion that, there are implications that the concept of human dignity, in particular among the Bantu

⁴ Let it be well understood that, these two Bantu African terms namely, *Utu* and *Ubuntu* are actually anthropo-philosophical terms, which are almost in brainstorm applications in the medium of communication via the languages of Kiswahili and Zulu respectively. Both terms are carrying with them, such socio-ethical connotations as referring to human dignity (*Utu*) and humanity or humankind (*Ubuntu*). In Kiswahili, the word "*Utu*", is actually the right term referring to the concept of "human dignity". Indeed, there are two conceptual implications, in the language of Kiswahili, correlating to the concept of (human) dignity in terms of "*Utu*". That means, the word *Utu*, as it is applied in the language of Kiswahili, means both as implicating that *dignity that a human person possesses by virtue of his/her being member of humankind* and as that *dignity which a person acquires as one's status in the community or society*. On the other hand, thus, I would assert that the term, "*Ubuntu*" fits well to its cognate meaning in English as an implication to the notion or concept of: "humanity", "humankind" or "humanness". Furthermore, the term *Ubuntu* appears to be mostly used and applied in the philosophical realm and thoughts by scholars and the Bantu speakers in Southern part of Africa, namely: the Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele.

⁵ Cf. J. Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life lessons from Africa*, Pretoria: 2002, Ubuntu School of Philosophy, pp. 14 and 31.

African people, does to a certain extent, imply virtue based obligations for all human persons. In addition, human dignity is to be considered also as foundational principle for morality and for a justice-based life of all human beings. Human dignity stands, in this sense, as source for guidance to moral conducts and as vital moral principle binding the community into leading virtuous moral living.

0.3 Question of Investigation: Bantu Ethics as Foundation for a New Ethics?

In addition to this research into the connectedness of Bantu moral patterns and human dignity as a principle, a second question follows, which will state as: Are there aspects of the concept of human dignity, as it is perceived by the African ‘Bantu’ people, that can be ethically interpreted and consequently get presupposed as basic reason and foundation for virtuous moral living in the *universal context, valid beyond the traditional Bantu community*?

As we know from other contexts, universally valid features of human existence and acting can undergo variations in different cultural settings. To illustrate this, I would like to recall the example from the medical-ethical context that: “... the general agreement that there is more to human beings than their biophysical nature does not already provide a common vision of the human being with regard to the details. This is due to the differences among the cultural and religious backgrounds of anthropological visions, which are especially apparent in multicultural modern societies.”⁶ Therefore, conversely one can argue that “... even if the interpretations of illness that are given and the means that are chosen to heal can vary according to culture, we can suppose that the existential dimension of feeling sick is common to all human beings in all cultures.”⁷

Understandably, the attention of Prof. Müller, in the quoted explanation right above, is more on matters of medical ethics, yet I convey her message in my study work to actually imply that, despite the cross-cultural differences that we humans have on perceiving things, yet it does not change the existential meaning or significance of the concept in concern. We

⁶ S. Müller, “Towards Integrative Approaches in Medicine” in *The Conception of the Human Person in Medicine: Exploring Boundaries between Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine* (eds. Ulrich H.J. Körtner – Christian Kopetzki), Schriftenreihe Ethik und Recht in der Medizin, Vol. 9, Vienna: 2013, Verlag Österreich, p. 148.

⁷ S. Müller, “Towards Integrative Approaches...,” p. 148.

have to bear in mind that the concrete conceptions of humanness and personhood among various large ethnic groups in Africa are as well far from uniform. Of course, the general conception remains the same to all, but when it goes to details, basing especially on the cultural mentality of the people, it may appear different as it manifests itself in the peoples' culture and the way they talk or speak about it.

While aiming to conceptualize the notion of human dignity as it manifests itself in non-Western contexts, and particularly from the African Bantu ethical perspective, I should as well make it clear at this juncture that what has been said with respect to the varying African expressions of human dignity, can be extended to the differences between continents. Equally important, I actually have to emphasise from the very beginning that, although it can be said: the African peoples' basic world-view is somehow distinct from that which is discernible in the Christian and European tradition,⁸ yet the issue in question of this dissertation is not whether one world-view is more innovative or unconventional than another, but rather how the different traditions can be interpreted as to contribute to each other in the context of the Bantu people.

While taking all this into consideration then, I intend, in this dissertation, to make a coherent analysis of the concept of human dignity and show its relation to morality in terms of foundational principle in perspective of, and beyond the Bantu African moral tradition and ethical theory.⁹

⁸ Of this point, see for instance, J.N.K. Mugambi, *God, Humanity and Nature in Relation to Justice and Peace*, Geneva: World Council of Churches, Church and Society Documents No. 2, September, 1987, Chapter 3. Also, J.N.K. Mugambi, "The African Experience of God," in *Thought and Practice*, Vol. I No. 1, Nairobi: 1974, E.A. Literature Bureau.

⁹ The expression 'Bantu African ethical theory' as it will often appear in this dissertation, should be understood as denoting a principle purporting to indicate, by appeal of, as few properties as possible, what all moral actions have in common as distinct from wrong or evil ones. For more details as to what exactly the expression means, one can also confer and see: T. Metz, "Ubuntu as moral theory and human rights in South Africa," in *African Human Rights Law Journal*, Volume 11(2011), Pretoria: 2011, Pretoria University Law Press, p. 536.

0.4 First Hypothesis: Some Aspects of Bantu Ethics can Serve as Foundation for a Universal Ethical Approach

The hypothesis of this thesis is that Bantu ethics can provide the basis for a universal ethics as it is needed in a pluralistic society in Tanzania because it does not entail only communal moral behaviour, but is based on the principle of human dignity.

It often appears that, ideas associated with African ethical backgrounds and wisdom, like for instance with the concept of human dignity in the terms of the Bantu African words, such as *Utu / Ubuntu*, are deemed to be inappropriate basis for a widespread morality in today's global human society. Obviously, there might be some reasons for such perceptions like, let's say: first, they are said to be lacking of that convincing logical explanation and so they remain being too vague; secondly, they seem to merely fit to the traditional, small-scale culture more than to the modern, worldwide or global society, fully advanced in science and technology; and thirdly, they are viewed as ideas mistakenly purported to fail in acknowledging the value of individual freedom.

Therefore, the question needs to be raised as, if there are Bantu African ethical values, can they be related to human dignity as their moral source, and if so, in which way? Is Bantu ethics limited to communal moral behaviour, or is it possible to detect a normative principle that can serve as basis for unfolding ethical behaviour and guidance as well in a different context, as is the growing modern society with its lifestyle in the cities? Can, in this context, human dignity signify more than an abstract principle? In which way can the Bantu understanding of human dignity as source offer a broader approach to ethics than the human rights discourse does? The challenge of this study therefore consists in raising cognizance of readers to a deep-thinking interpretation of such African 'Bantu' ideas, as of which are not vulnerable to the objections as mentioned right in the preceding paragraph above. In consequence, then, a speculative proposition, like the apparently presented here by this very dissertation's hypothesis, is significant for developing an intelligible and articulated interpretation of the Bantu African moral theory and ethical pattern.

All those Bantu African conceptual terms and terminologies are therefore applied or utilised in this dissertation so as to help evolving an elaborative analysis of the concept of human dignity *qua* normative moral principle and the way it is related to the practice of

virtues; following the African context and in as far as the Bantu socio-ethical pattern is concerned. The perception and analysis, thus, will take cognizance of promoting the Bantu African moral tradition and ethical theory as heritage rich of genuinely positive attributes corresponding to those typically observed in the Kantian moral tradition and particularly in the Christian theological ethics.

0.5 Second Hypothesis: Theological Ethics as Complement to the Bantu Foundation of Ethics

Yet, when approaching this question from a theological-ethical point of view, another question follows: Does acknowledging human dignity in Bantu ethics as point of departure for a new universal ethical approach not lead to a contradiction with Christian ethics? This raises again questions, as: Is the concept of human dignity as expressed in Bantu tradition compatible with the Christian understanding of human dignity? If so, what can the contribution of Christianity be for the development of a new universal ethics in Tanzania? To answer this question, it will be necessary to explore the conceptual link between the Christian understanding of human dignity and the African moral theory and ethical instructions on dignity.

This dissertation's hypothetical premise therefore also points out that: *Supposed that African moral theory is set up on the concept of human dignity as basis for moral living, then, the practice of it can be strengthened and enhanced by the application of the universal vision of Christian moral theory into the African ethical concepts and traditions.* To better understand this second hypothesis it is necessary to explain that Christianity has amalgamated in many respects with the local culture and therefore is not felt to be an external factor to the culture, at least for most of its part. Specifically, the intention is to highlight the other side of the fact that, what Christian morality teaches about the concept of human dignity and virtuous moral living is to some extent already observed in African moral theory. Such legacy, nevertheless, will need to be refined if it is to carry on into present day's African generation in as far as the Christian epoch in the continent of Africa and even beyond the continent's boundaries is concerned. In view of that, the traditional ethical patterns and moral instructions of the African people are to be examined and

analysed alongside ethical values of the African peoples, yet today with consideration of the Christian theological ethics and moral instructions.

However it needs to be emphasized that the special contribution of Christianity that is important for this thesis, is the universal aspect of its ethics, Since our analysis will also take into consideration of the reality of globalisation currently prevailing all over the world, and also in Tanzania, the Christian call to treat all persons equally presents an important stimulation for a concept of a universal ethics.

Additionally, following such view, then, I can say, the objective of my study-work is to provide kind of springboard for a universal ethics based on a clear grasp and comprehension of the Bantu African ethics and morality in integration with the universal aspect taught in Christian theological ethics. In a way, it is also a study-work aiming at making an analytical comparative investigation or analysis of the influence of Western civilization and culture, alongside the advancement in technological science and the influence of globalisation, as well as of the effects they introduce and enforce on the smooth functioning of the Bantu African traditional ethical teaching and moral directives. I mean, making a comparative analysis on such things like the moral principles which are actually good for the people in the Bantu African societies while matching well with the '*Sitz im Leben*' fitting to the moral tradition as well as to their cultural ethical values and moral conducts. And that is further resulting to the need of rediscovering within Christianity an African vision of humanity and of the inherent dignity the human person is endowed with.¹⁰

From an explicable perspective, then, I can sensibly assert that: the novelty of this study work, is rather centred in view of the concept of human dignity, from the conjectural standpoint of the Bantu Africans' moral tradition and ethical theory. Nevertheless, such speculation in vision of Bantu African ethical pattern and moral tradition, does not in whatsoever mean, it is the exploring of the concept in exclusion of other non-African traditions. In fact, it might only mean that, the treatise will mainly be drawn and developed from vision and the perspective of an African ethnic lingual family, widely spread in the continent of Africa. That means, the Bantu Africans who are mainly found in the Central,

¹⁰ Cf. J-M. Éla, *My Faith as an African*, (trans. by John Pairman Brown and Susan Perry), Eugene, OR: 2009, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p. 25.

Eastern and Southern region of Africa.¹¹ But let us also notice it quite well that, my dissertation is, by all intent and purpose, not intending to limit its exploration to only that areal extent and scope, because this would present an artificial separation of the Bantu from their common convictions with other African ethnicities and cultures.

Nevertheless, there is already in the European tradition the notion of human dignity as foundational for morality; such notion as it has been once established by the famous thinker, Immanuel Kant in philosophical perspective which goes beyond the cultural perspective. Actually, it can credibly be affirmed that, this notion of dignity is a result of development of philosophical thinking and the strive for the understanding of the concept of human dignity, which have been carried out from time immemorial as topic for discussion in the history of human civilisation. And, in fact, in the ancient tradition the philosophical discussions encompassed also search for the understanding of dignity as social status; which was indeed not universal but rather associated with particular functions in the society. However, the discussions also included the understanding of human dignity as a moral status that cannot be lost from a person, in whatsoever way, by acting against the standards of the human dignity itself. The understanding of the European tradition therefore, as it will be denoted in this study-work, is to help relating the components of the Bantu understanding of human dignity to the Christian vision that has been influenced, among others, by the Kantian vision of dignity as foundational principle for morality.

The clear indication, is therefore, as of late, human dignity is one of concepts that has figured prominence even in the thought of Catholic moral theologians, including the Catholic magisterium when dealing with matters of faith and morals. Obviously, there are disputes, debate and discussions on what exactly human dignity is to be perceived and what role does it have at all, especially in the intellectual and academic spheres. This treatise on hand, is thus, set to be one of contributions to the discussion and exchange of ideas. I will later bring the argument and establish my point and contribution especially in chapter 3 and chapter 4 of this treatise.

¹¹ For clear illustration of the Bantu ethnic lingual family's locality in the continent of Africa one can refer to Fig. 3 *General Ethnic Distribution in Africa* under section 1.1.2. of this study-work with sub-title: Socio-Cultural Cohesion in Tanzania.

For all intent and purpose, therefore, this dissertation is in position of promoting and supporting the harmonization of the positive moral elements found in the Bantu African traditional ethics with what is already existing in the Western moral patterns and civilization for the better reconstruction of a universal moral perspective in contemporary Africa. In other words, it is a study work in pursuit of conceptual reconstruction for a firm and principled moral society fitting to our time and age.

0.6 Methodology: Hermeneutical Elaboration, Systematic Analysis, and Theological-ethical Reflection

The methodology involved and employed in this dissertation is mainly a hermeneutical and analytical methodology appropriate for the coherent analysis I am going to conduct in my thesis. My analysis will mainly be based on literature that reflects the Bantu tradition, meaning, it is distinct from an empirical project of trying to accurately replicate what the traditional Bantu Africans believed about morality or ethics; of which it would have been something in aptitude of theological anthropology rather than theological ethics. Yet, the written scholarly sources sometimes need some interpretation to make its context and meaning understandable to those readers who are not familiar with the Bantu-African background, because terms can be misunderstood when they are perceived from a Western hermeneutical background.

Provided, that the crucial study for this dissertation hinges mainly on African accounts of moral theory and ethical values, I am, thus, going to rely chiefly on the resources which are for the most part consisting of African viewpoint, such books and academic papers, as those written by some prominent African scholars or are in one way or another related to the African context. Especially I will here refer to Thaddeus Metz, John S. Mbiti, Mogobe B. Ramose, Laurent Magesa, Richard N. Rwiza, Bénézet Bujo.

0.7 Scope and Limitation: A Viewpoint from Africa

There are several limitations to the endeavour of this thesis. One of the problems in studying or making academic research on African themes or subject-matters, like for instance, researching on the subject-matters about African Bantu morality, is the problem

of sources. This problem derives from the fact that, traditionally there was no written record. Unlike in modern Western ethics, the African school-of-thought were chiefly transmitted from one generation to another through oral tradition rather than via written tradition. Moreover, we also should be aware that, the African ethical tradition or pattern does not regard ethics as a separate discipline or entity out of people's daily shared or communal life, because morality is indistinguishable from the rest of African social life. Thus, attitude was always that, morality is something that man lives and learns through living with others in the community, and not something for professional learning in schools.

Unfortunately, it shows that, until recently, there is, really few literature on which a researcher in such subjects as this one on concern of theoretical principles can rely, as wholesome sources from the Bantu African traditional societies. Seldom literature, required for substantial bibliography to consult for a thorough research, can actually be found as being clearly spelled out or jotted down without influence of Western mentality and interpretation. Obviously, such situation owes to the fact that, to a great extent, the continent of Africa, and so the African societies and their cultures, too, have been predisposed to a number of foreign cultures and traditional influences, ranging from East to West or rather say, from the Asian cultures to the European cultures, from Islamic cultural influence to Christian cultural ones. Therefore, "original" African culture can be rarely found in written sources. In fact, it should be straight away stated and well noted that, most of the sources of knowledge referred to by a number of African scholars, especially as it comes in search for African ethics, are not based on the written records but rather on customs and the rich African oral tradition. Thanks that such tradition still exists in many of our people's way of life even as of today. Thus, setting out to discover and understand African ethics via abstract moral principles is somehow like embarking on a journey of obstruction and hindrances in the research courses and treatises on such themes. In view of that, then, to determine what constitutes moral behaviour of a certain group or community of people and/or the moral principles and ethical norms they abide to, one has to observe and reflect upon the social life of the people – their rituals, customs, practices, events and relationships.

Moreover, it is apparent that, the scope and limitation for the themes involved into academic research on subject-matters and topics, such as the one in concern of this dissertation, do arise from the breadth and complexity of debate about the exact

comprehension of the concept of human dignity itself. I come to this affirmation, because it is evident and notable that, human dignity as a concept “has acquired great prominence in recent years, both in public discourse and in the philosophical literature. And where there is prominence there is often also notoriety.”¹² And despite the fact that, there are many ardent devotees committed for the clear elucidation of the concept of human dignity, still there are also some vocal detractors for the same. And that means, even further that, though both these opposing sides do use the same vocabulary and expression, “it is not clear that they always address the same topic or have in mind the same concept.”¹³ And so then, the concept of human dignity ends up being utilised to imply different connotations to different people and scholars.

Since the European discussion on dignity covers a very broad field reaching from the foundation of human rights to special questions in the health care system, it would not meet the scope of this thesis to describe all the present definitions and applications of human dignity.¹⁴ Instead, only the form of Western discussion about dignity that has reached and already at least partially been integrated in Tanzania and other African countries will be looked at, namely the Christian concept of dignity, which, of course, has been shaped by some Western philosophical lines of thought.

Stipulating from the background, therefore, this study work echoes from a contextual question, as it keeps resiliently being asked by some African scholars, now for at least a decade or two, in pursuit for a consequential consensus from the African ethical tradition in connection with Western civilisation and Christian theological ethics. There is a growing awareness that a one-sided reception of Western thought in Africa is not enough; rather, African philosophy and theology needs to find its own voice and bring its own tradition into play. For example, in Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator’s work, one can obviously and truly perceive and discern of the richness of theology ‘brewed in an African pot’ as the

¹² M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subjects: Self and Collectivity in Morality and Law*, Oxford: 2016, Oxford University Press, p. 142.

¹³ M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subjects...*, 2016, p. 142.

¹⁴ See M. Düwell et al. (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook on Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge: 2014, This book provides a broad overview about the concept of human dignity. It explores the history of the concept or the notion of human dignity and also includes to a large extent the way in which human dignity is conceptualized in the non-Western contexts, while also considering the theoretical and legal conditions for human dignity in their different fields of application.

title of the book manifests. In fact, this Orobator's book contains of not only the analysis of the ingredients of inculturation in African theology, but also it offers readers the fundamentals and essentials of African wisdom and theology. Orobator has engaged himself in his book in utilizing the framework of excerpts from Chinua Achebe's well-known novel, *Things Fall Apart*,¹⁵ to acquaint with major Christian issues on matters of faith and morals, especially as they are dealt with in the African societies or communities and tradition. In a way, therefore, Orobator's work attempts raising a systematic clarification of the differences between an African outlook or view of living the Christian faith and the perception or understanding of the same in a more Eurocentric mentality. In his own wording and phraseology, he gives hint that his book, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, "is thus also an invitation to explore the compatibility between Christian faith and African cultures."¹⁶ And he goes on saying: "It also aims to inform readers from outside the continent [of Africa] who are interested in learning more about how theology is done in Africa."¹⁷ His book shows the need of a self-reflective African approach to current problems also in theology. While he understands his work as a general claim, it encourages also this thesis to engage in discussing what makes the foundation for African ethical norms.

0.8 The Foundation and Character of African Morality – the State of Research

There are already several authors who have dealt with aspects of African ethics. In order to situate my own research, I will offer here an overview of the study and scholarly works which have already been done to see on which grounds I can base my own argument, and where I will try to develop further the existing ethical reflection.

An important voice regarding African ethics is Bénézet Bujo. The list of his writings or publications is long.¹⁸ With keen observation of Bujo's scholarly works, one can clearly

¹⁵ Cf. A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, Nairobi: 2008, Paulines Publications Africa, pp. 13–14 and 20–21. Orobator claims that, what he has found intriguing in reading and rereading Chinua Achebe's novel "is the fact that it contains such a profound source of wisdom, narratives, and events that can enrich, structure, and enlighten theological reflection from an African perspective." See especially p. 20–21.

¹⁶ A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 10.

¹⁷ A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 10.

¹⁸ I mention only a few of his publications: *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (trans. by Brian McNeil), New York: 2001, Reprinted 2016; *African Christian Morality at the Age of Inculturation*, (1998); *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and*

see that he attempts laying the theoretical groundwork for an elaborate African ethic and theology.¹⁹ Explicitly in his book entitled, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, thus, while “skilfully drawing on themes from African life,”²⁰ Bujo portrays the comparison between “Western theories of natural law, discourse ethics, and communitarianism with the African emphasis on community and remembrance.”²¹ In his comparison of an African ethics with the Western ethics, he however intends to reveal the fact that traditional African ethics is actually constructed not on the basis of any system outside the African customs and habitual way of living. In other words, that is to say, his intention is to uncover clearly the autonomy of the world of African thought and demands that it has to be taken seriously as a dialogue partner to the Western school of thought. And that means, “African ethics seeks no self-legitimation. It accepts confrontation with other ethical systems because it hopes for a reciprocal give and take that can enrich both sides. Nor do Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis need to fear any kind of loss; for if they honestly enter the debate about that which is good, true, and right in other non-Western cultures, they will harvest a rich yield and have available a wider and deeper reflection on the treasure of the faith.”²² As for endorsing this point, another theologian, from African, emphatically commented that, “Bujo’s inculturation theology elaborates on the foundations of an African Christian theology, and in particular on an African Christian ethic, to create a better understanding of the realities that from a genuinely black African context can help Africans connect with and live their Christian faith as well as engage in meaningful dialogue with the rest of the world.”²³

Lest I prolong so much the review of Bujo’s scholarly works, especially on his search for an African ethics, I would like therefore at this instance summing up to assert that, it is obviously found in Bujo’s works that for him the foundations of African ethics are categorised into two: the vital force (human life) and the community. Actually, in his

the Dialogue between North and South (1998, trans. by Cecilia Namulondo Nganda); and *African Theology: The Contribution of the Pioneers* (2006).

¹⁹ Cf. B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African Ethic: Beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality* (trans. by Brian McNeil), New York: 2016, Crossroad, p. xiv.

²⁰ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African ...*, 2016, see the review comment on the back-cover of the book.

²¹ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African ...*, 2016, p. xiv; see also the review comment on the back-cover of the book.

²² B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African ...*, 2001, p. xiv.

²³ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly Christian, Truly African: Foundational, Methodological, and Theological Considerations*, Notre Dame, IN: 2014, University of Notre Dame Press, p. 153.

scholarly writings, even when he sounds as mentioning of the anthropological concern in the traditional African ethics, yet he does not seem to include directly and straight the notion of human dignity as one of basic foundational principle for morality. This is a point of departure for my own research. As I have already mentioned, the urbanization of parts of the Tanzanian life shows that traditional communal morality does not suffice to encounter the ethical problems of today. Therefore I think that it is necessary to search for the foundation of traditional morality in a way to be able to develop an ethics for today which is based on an underlying principle, but not restricted to the moral norms that were developed in communal life.

Laurent Magesa also takes the African moral traditions as his starting point to analyse and present the African convictions on matters of faith, ethics and morals.²⁴ Hence, in his book he explores the African insights in an endeavour of trying to perceive in mind the moral viewpoint and the ethical perception of the African people. He holds to the outlook that the African moral universe and ethical perception is considered to derive from the Creator, and so he concludes that the foundation for African morality is the promotion of human life as well as the promotion of his/her dignity as the human person.²⁵

In his book, however, Magesa tackles comprehensively the exploration of the moral and ethical imperatives of the African convictions and beliefs that treat the moral tradition of African societies as an equal among the universal convictions in the Western civilisation or elsewhere. He argues that, just as in Christianity or in Islam, the traditional African moral conviction defines as well how people or human beings ought to live. Thus, Magesa's book plays an instrumental help, to a great extent, to all those thinking of reconstructing the African peoples' moral pattern from resources of the African ethical tradition. In words of Michael C. Kirwen,²⁶ as he made a review of this book of Magesa, he wrote: "By integrating the natural, the human, and the spiritual, the moral teachings of African Religion [, as it is denoted by Magesa himself,] delineate distinctive values, norms, and principles to follow so that life might be abundant for all, infusing community life with meaning and

²⁴ Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa 1997.

²⁵ Cf. L. Magesa, *African Religion ...*, 1997, pp. 231–232.

²⁶ Michael C. Kirwen is the founder of the MIAS program and a professor of interdisciplinary studies at Saint Mary's University, Minnesota, USA.

harmony.”²⁷ Yet again, Magesa emphasises the concrete norms that constitute communal morality in Africa, which is helpful for understanding, but still leads to the question of to which degree traditional patterns suffice to deal with the new situation of Tanzania with its change of societal structures.

It is especially Richard N. Rwiza who has developed his scholarly work with an emphasis on new societal structures, as he deals with the formation of Christian conscience in modern Africa. I find it to be a work well researched and presented as “it combines an excellent presentation of the main aspects of conscience formation with a clear insight into the contemporary African context.”²⁸ Rwiza, tackles the main concern of his research via a sociological review on the conspicuous fact of urbanization in modern Africa, and thereafter he presents a theological reflection on matters of ethics and morality, while explicitly taking the concern of conscience to an extra perception; i.e. a mixed perception from Christian and African outlooks. Accordingly, he also indicates in this book, some pastoral as well as ethical/moral challenges facing the African communities and the Church in Africa at large; particularly those in the urban centres with influence of globalisation and modern advancement in science and technology.

Even more significant and essential in this book of Rwiza, in relation to my dissertation, is the observation that he “makes the recommendation that African realities should determine the priorities in inculturation and should provide the context for a move towards African Christian conscience.”²⁹ And he finishes in his general conclusion with words that: “The need here is to identify also the extent to which the classical theory of conscience itself is valid in today’s African experience of the human person.”³⁰ Rwiza’s approach is of large significance, since it shows that in modern African societies more emphasis needs to be laid on personal responsibility. But how can, beyond the claim for personal responsibility, a general ethics be developed that can serve as orientation for the whole society and for individual conscience?

²⁷ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, see especially at the back-cover of the here referred book.

²⁸ These are words of Prof. Dr. Johan Verstraeten of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, as they appear in the Book’s Foreword of Richard N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian Conscience: in Modern Africa*, Nairobi: 2001, p. 7. Also see at the back-cover of the book in concern.

²⁹ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, see review comment on back-cover of the book.

³⁰ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 134.

A step forward in the direction of a solution to the research question of this book can be made by building up on the philosophical writings and contributions from Thaddeus Metz.³¹ In fact, there is no need to say, Metz is one of the scholars in Africa, himself being based in the University of Johannesburg, in South Africa, who now and then, has sought with fortitude and endurance to advance enquiry into philosophical ethical concerns and demands of the African concept of *Ubuntu qua* moral theory in virtue of what human beings are endowed, as dignity of the sort, which grounds virtuous moral living and claims for human rights.³² In other words, Metz attempts in his writings to spell out the conception of human dignity as it is grounded in the African ethical thinking, does indeed provide readers of his efficient works, with a plausible philosophical foundation for human rights and moral philosophy. Of course, his focus is more on the particular concern of human right than in morality, yet I find his writings or paper work to be more or less the related literature to my study work, though I would contend human dignity is more a foundational principle for virtuous moral living as a whole, rather than only about the human rights concern.

However, I have preferred to use Metz's scholarly works as one of main sources to my study-work, following the reality that, his writings draw the argument not only from one major strand of the Afro-communitarian school-of-thought to develop theoretical propositions on the conception of human dignity³³, as to the observation of what is special and inviolable about the nature and dignity of the human person, but also from the Kantian

³¹ Most of Metz's writings, I have used in this dissertation, are articles presented in different journals and edited handbooks. I have used not less than 12 of his paper work or articles as one can see them in the bibliography of this work at hand. I prefer, therefore, to make a general survey, in short, of all his works of which I have found related to my doctoral work and have utilised them in the course of research.

³² Cf. T. Metz, "African Conceptions of Human Dignity: Vitality and Community as the Ground of Human Rights", in *Human Rights Review* 13 [1] (2012), pp. 19–37; Also see the following works: T. Metz, "African Ethics", in H. LaFollette (ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013; T. Metz, "African Moral Theory and Public Governance...", in M.F. Murove (ed.), *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, 2009, pp. 335–336; T. Metz, "An African Theory of Dignity and a Relational Conception of Poverty", in J. de Gruchy (ed.), *The Humanist Imperative in South Africa*, 2011, pp. 233–242; T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu..." 2014, pp. 310–318; T. Metz, "Human dignity, capital punishment, and an African moral theory: Towards a new philosophy of human rights", in *Journal of Human Rights*, 2010; T. Metz, "The Motivation for 'Toward an African Moral Theory' (and) Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics", in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2007), pp. 331–335 and 369–387; T. Metz, "The Virtues of African Ethics", in *The Handbook of Virtue Ethics*, by Stan van Hooft and Nicole Saunders, 2013; T. Metz, "Toward an African Moral Theory", in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (2007), pp. 321–341; T. Metz, "Ubuntu as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa", in *African Human Rights Law Journal*, Volume 11(2011), pp. 532–559.

³³ See, e.g., T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu Tradition", in M. Düwell et al. (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook on Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 310–318.

school-of-thought, i.e. from Kant's autonomy based view. In any case, both of his methodical speculation on African conceptions of Human Dignity are significant for they equally play role as to our capacity of self-control and for harmonious relationships and moral conducts in community. Thus, he holds to the argument and conclusion that, "of plausible theories of human dignity with an African pedigree, the field ought to favour a community-based view and critically compare it in future work with the Kantian, autonomy-based view that dominates Western thinking about dignity."³⁴

While Metz's intention to strengthen African ethics and to integrate Kant's view are very helpful and milestones for the development of African ethics in dialogue with Western culture, a difficulty can be seen with regard to limiting dignity with human rights alone, thereby maintaining a bias between communal moral culture and human rights discourses, both covering special fields of ethics in society. In order to avoid tensions and to offer a perspective for a society more and more influenced by global word views, it is necessary to ask further, namely how the two aspects can be combined and how an ethical approach can be developed that allows coherence between human rights, communal forms of morality and life in a modernizing society beyond communal approaches. It is necessary, therefore, to explore more aspects of the African concept of dignity to examine in which way it can serve both for strengthening individual moral practice and developing universal normative guidelines by examining the socio-ethical, religious, political, theological and the philosophical dimensions of *Ubuntu* and its foundation and emphasis on reciprocal, moral responsibility that flows from interconnectedness and common humanity.

0.9 Structure of Dissertation

To develop the thesis of this work, it is necessary to start firstly by explaining why it does make sense, from a pragmatic and systematic perspective, to embark on the question of a universal ethics for Tanzania from the starting point of the Bantu moral tradition. Also, it needs to be shown that the concept of dignity is present in Bantu ethics and also that there are aspects of ethical universality present in Bantu ethics, even if they need to be developed further. These initial insights will be offered in the first chapter that deals with preparing

³⁴ T. Metz, "African Conception of..." 2012, in <https://philpapers.org/rec/METQCO-2>. Accessed on 05.06.2019.

the way for a universal Bantu ethical approach by looking at its pragmatic and systematic presuppositions.

The exposition in the second chapter involves in discussion about the different layers of morality that play a role in African ethics. It will explain in which way the notions of ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ are used in the African context and the way how they are going to be applied and implicated in this dissertation. It will especially explain which elements of an ethical theory are important for describing Bantu ethics, namely the obligation to virtuous moral living, the habitual way of conformity to righteousness, as well as human dignity as conceptual link between the different elements of African ethics. Describing these elements will help to understand the interplay of ethical values being held by the African people with ethical instruction to the society, and to make visible that such ethical values are and have been basically founded on the understanding of the concept of human dignity, and so they help to ground morality in the community and contour or characterise the moral formation in the concerned society.

The third chapter encompasses the discussion on moral foundation in accordance with the Bantu African ethical pattern and goes more into detail to detect where the Bantu ethical theory needs to be developed further, and where this development can depart from. To do so, it needs to argue which role the communal understanding of morality plays, that dominates the current accounts of Bantu African theory, and which other elements need to be built up and corroborated for creating a universal ethical approach. It is specifically looked at the role that the concept of human dignity, that is central to Bantu ethics in its account of *Utu* and *Ubuntu qua* African moral theory, can and needs to play for the foundation of a universal ethical approach in Tanzania. On the other hand, it will be necessary to ask whether a universal knowledge of the concept of human dignity is enough, and in which way the elements of a virtue ethics that are characteristic for Bantu ethics are needed and therefore must form an integral part of a new universal ethical approach that is being looked for.

The fourth Chapter then is dedicated to ask which resources of recent Catholic ethical tradition can be used to strengthen a universal Bantu ethical approach. It is thus denoting the convergence of the two traditions: Christian and African; and so, the link between human dignity and virtuous moral living from the point of view of Christian

morality and from the cultural-traditional view of the African ethical instructions and experiences is in this chapter been tackled. It will search especially for such elements that can support the different layers of Bantu ethics, from its foundation to its universal aspect and its emphasis on virtue ethics. At the end is the general conclusion. It consists of the concluding review of the argument of this thesis, besides the proposal for consideration of further research and study-work.

The crucial concern of this study work, therefore, can be summed up as falling keen on three aspects: Firstly, on a challenge arising from the general life situation and moral conduct of the people in sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, while considering Tanzania as study case in particular; secondly, on an attempt to revitalize and promote African ethical instruction and moral values as it is manifested in the Bantu African ethical pattern because this can provide a stable and well known point of reference for all people in the country of Tanzania and beyond;³⁵ and thirdly, on an endeavour to establish a point about the many elements in common between the Bantu African concept of human dignity in relation to Christian theological ethics and the Western moral tradition especially since Vatican II.

³⁵ This second motivation actually comes only as subordinate to the first one that I have mentioned. I am of the outlook that although Africans might have benefitted from the Western culture and used it to enrich their indigenous culture, they have unfortunately yet neglected some vital aspects of their own cultures which could otherwise have been helpful to humanise and enrich their moral stand, as well as contributing for the enrichment of western culture and Christian moral teaching.

1. PREPARING THE WAY FOR A UNIVERSAL BANTU ETHICAL APPROACH: Pragmatic and Systematic Presuppositions

To embark on developing an African ethics always requires to take roots in a tradition of the African people themselves, while being aware of the many common convictions shared by the different regional cultures. As for Tanzania, a choice between the many different ethnic traditions needs to be made where to start with. And that is the reason I have chosen the Bantu African ethnic group to be my standing point for reference in this dissertation. The first part of this chapter intends to show that taking the Bantu ethnic community and the ethics it has developed as starting point does make sense, already from a pragmatic point of view because the majority of Tanzanians belong to the Bantu tradition. The following parts of the chapter will show that taking Bantu ethics as starting point does also promise to be fruitful from a systematic point of view, namely because it contains the elements that are needed for developing a universal African ethical approach: a fundamental principle to start with, human dignity, and the roots of universal ethical thinking. With regard to this first chapter, then, Bantu ethics will be shown to be a *locus ethicus*, a place where ethical wisdom and knowledge can be found. That can, therefore, serve the described purpose of this thesis, namely to lay the grounds for a universal ethical approach in Tanzania, which will help living without prejudice or bias against any ethnic group or community in the country.

1.1 Bantu Ethnicity as *Locus Ethicus* for Developing a Universal Ethics

The reason for the inclusion of the African Bantu ethnic distribution in this dissertation is nothing else than handing provision of a more elaborate picture, for the reader, as of the African Bantu societies' whereabouts in the continent of Africa and a bit as of their historical background. It will, then, help the reader to clearly grasp in mind, a flawless picture of the *locus ethicus* in as far as the moral conviction of ethnic Bantu

Africans forms essentially and predominantly the core of moral convictions in Tanzania. I find that this move helps also in strengthening and supporting the acquaintance of idea and a more augmented perception of Bantu Ethics in the region; meaning, also beyond the boundaries of Tanzania at large.

Given that, the Bantu speaking ethnic people are counted of holding the majority of the Tanzanian population, then, I have figured out that it is important to include in my dissertation this section of dialog on the ethnic distribution, so as to make good clarification of the social-cultural cohesion in the country. Notably, it will help flaring up the understanding the righteous peoples' mentality in the region as a whole, particularly with regards to the ethical questions and moral issues.

Instantaneously, the concern at this section is, thus, highlighting the existing ethnic population image and the way various ethnic groups relate or differ from each other in the afore mentioned country and the entire region at large. While the significance of such highlighting is to bring a clear picture of the whereabouts of the Bantu ethnicity in the continent of Africa, yet it is also about casting light on the way of life and the social mentality of the people, particularly, with respect to the their moral tradition, ethical values and patterns of ideals. With no doubt, any researcher, passing through keen observation on the same or similar subject-matter, may not fail to notice that individuals in Tanzania are identified and/or are themselves self-identifying to a large extent with ethnicities in kind of complex and uneven ways. That means, one can easily detect that the Tanzanian population is multi-ethnic with a plurality of ethnic groups, each with its own distinct cultural identity, yet sometimes with similar or related elements in each of them.

One may even further observe that, the Tanzanian people live in a pluralistic society with not only numerous ethnic groups, but also with diversity of religious beliefs and convictions, as belonging to either of the following main-stream faiths as to: Christianity, Islam, African-tradition-religions, Hinduism and Buddhism. And that is the reason, sometimes it appears more difficult drawing out a clear and elaborate identification of complex social interconnection of a multitude of ethnic communities such as this than attempting to highlight only the common elements among them. Of course, as of currently, the noticeable large number of the population is of those belonging to the Christian faith and Islam.

On the other hand, one has to bear in mind, the fact that, there are in Tanzania more than 120 languages and dialects officially listed that go hand-in-hand with the ethnic groups present in the country. This fact tells us that, Tanzania is, for sure, a nation consisting of not less than 120 ethnic groups or tribes,³⁶ some of them bigger in terms of subjects' number and more dominant than others, though certainly not on ideological influence. The dominant ones are, thus, such as: the Sukuma, Nyamwezi, Hehe, Chagga, Haya, Ngoni, Mwera, Makua, and the Maasai. These are consequently understood to have for centuries some sort of socio-ethical establishment and patterns of ethical values, which have been chiefly applied to provide guidance and governing of their day-to-day life-conduct with one another; meaning life conduct among individuals within the concerned tribe besides those persons of neighbouring tribes.

Among the nine dominant tribes, here mentioned, it is only the Maasai tribe which does not belong to the ethnic Bantu. They, instead, belong to another ethnic family called the *Nilotic* people. So, all the other remaining eight tribes, as they are mentioned above, do belong to an all-encompassing ethnic group referred to as, the *Bantu* people; and therefore, it is certainly affirmed that, those eight tribes are, in one way or another, shareholders of common moral rules. But even when the majority of tribes in Tanzania do belong to the Bantu ethnic family, yet it remains manifest that: the socio-cultural mentality and way of life of the Tanzanian people is, somehow, complicated and apparently incomprehensible following their assortment on ethnicity and linguistic families.

Indeed, there are such diversities concerning not only tribal matters of communal life in general, but also that some have to do with specific moral values; like those moral or ethical values considered central in the socio-cultural fabric of the people's distinct day to day life conduct. Following a reason such as this, then, I fancy it will suffice, for the time being, simply recalling that there is an extremely sophisticated and complex ethnic nature which, subsequently, makes the Tanzanian society one of pluralistic society per se.

³⁶ It is claimed that, there are more than 125 ethnicities in Tanzania; like for instance, it is stated in the World Fact-book of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) Library that: The mainland Tanzania ethnicities are in terms of percentage distributed as following: "African 99% (of which 95% are Bantu consisting of more than 120 tribes), the remaining others are all together making only 1% (consisting of Asians, Europeans, and Arabs)" while Zanzibar consists of African, Arab and mixed Arab and African population. See in: <<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2075.html>>. Accessed: 27.01.2018.

1.1.1 Characteristic Distinguishing Ethnic Groups

Before the ascertainment of characteristics distinguishing ethnic groups in Tanzania, I would like first setting and seeing that the definition of ethnicity stands clear, straight, and profoundly, at least as it would fit for the clear understanding of the theme under discussion in this discourse. As a concept, thus, ethnicity refers generally to a tribal group of people with all-encompassing shared way of life, perspectives, cultural practices and distinctions, in function of setting apart one group of people from another. Such shared way of life, which can also be referred to as culture, can be reflected in such things like: people's language, their conviction or beliefs, ethical patterns and moral values, as well as socio-political traditions, material culture (such as clothing and food), cultural products such (as music and art), if only mentioning but a few among other commonalities. There can, obviously, be some other common characteristics distinguishing various ethnic groups in Africa, and particularly in Tanzania, such as ancestry and historic sagacity.³⁷ Yet, conferring to one of African authors, G. Tusabe in his article "Ethnicities and the Challenge of Social Cohesion in Contemporary Africa", ethnicity is described as:

a subjective conviction of commonality ... a psychological community whose members share a persisting sense of common interest and identity based on some combination of shared valued cultural traits. Its members distinguish themselves from other groups by such characteristics as language, social customs, physical appearance, and region of residence, or by a combination of these features.³⁸

Likewise and conceivably, Byaruhanga highlights the moral relevance of ethnicity better when he articulates in his article "Ethnicity, Culture and Social Reconstruction" that an ethnic group is the initial psycho-social network we enter and acquire at birth, and that it is "so fundamental that it later determines our values and goal priorities, our beliefs, perceptions, conduct and consciousness."³⁹ And so, while being an attempt to elaborate the meaning and features of ethnicity, this research work might hereby also include a question

³⁷ A. Crossman, *Ethnicity*, in <http://sociology.about.com/od/E_Index/g/Ethnicity.htm>. Accessed on 28.11.2017. Also see in: Cliffs-notes, *Race and Ethnicity defined*, in <<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/sociology/race-and-ethnicity/race-and-ethnicity-defined>>. Accessed on 28.11.2017.

³⁸ G. Tusabe, "Ethnicities and the Challenge of Social Cohesion in Contemporary Africa," in George F. McLean (Gen.ed.), *Cultural Heritage and Contemporary Change*, Series II, Africa; Volume 8, Washington: 2002, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 85. See also: J. Milburn Thompson, *Justice and Peace: A Christian Primer*, New York: Orbis, 1997, p. 115.

³⁹ A.R. Byaruhanga, "Ethnicity, Culture and Social Reconstruction," in Edward Wamala (*et. al.*), *Social Reconstruction in Africa*, Washington DC: 1999, The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 56. See also: G. Tusabe, "Ethnicities and the Challenge...", 2002, p. 85.

as of: what then is the position of a Christian Bantu in the socio-cultural relations and perception of ethnicity in Tanzania? Of course, this is not the key question to this dissertation, yet, being given kind of hint even in a nut-shell, will help sufficing for clear elaboration of the Bantu ethnicity as *locus ethicus* for a universal African (and Christian) ethics.

So, just for the sake of recalling; the first paragraph of this section, provides us already with an implication that ethnicity is referred to as: ‘a way of life’ which entails the setting of social identity of one group of people from another. For this reason, then, it appears praiseworthy to also grasp an idea close to this insight that it is the in the same way, of which the position and aspect of the Christian Bantu holds in perception, while taking into consideration that an individual Bantu African is always inclusive in the community’s way of life and on the other hand s/he is being set apart by his/her Christian faith from the other Bantu people who are not Christians. Having observed, comparatively, a situation such as this, one author, Samuel P. Huntington, in his book entitled: *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order*, worked to set his point clear and straight forward as wrote: “The central elements of any culture and civilization are language and religion...people define their identity by what they are not.”⁴⁰ Hence, in combining both views, from Byaruhanga and Huntington, it can thus indisputably be asserted that: the Christian Bantus in Tanzania though claiming to belong to their traditional ethnic group, yet in mind they conceive with no doubt that, their contemporary and primary identity is basically laid on in terms of national and religious criteria – i.e. on language and religion.

Christianity as one of mainstream religion in Tanzania, claims, therefore, to hold and bear recognition and acceptance of an identity; meaning, in the modern Tanzania, the Christian faith stands as one of principle object of unity, which is just as fundamental in nature as the language or the racial category.⁴¹ In other words, this is to say: Christian moral teaching, plays as well significant role on forming the foundation for virtuous moral living

⁴⁰ S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remarking of World Order*, London: 1997, Simon & Schuster UK, pp. 59-67.

⁴¹ The meaning of the term “racial category” at this point does not strictly have a negative connotation of racism in whatsoever way it might be thought of. Hence, the connotation of such phraseology in this research work should not be taken as object of prejudice and discrimination. A community can, of course, be distinct from others in many ways like: following the people’s native origin; it may distinguish itself from others by way of a particular or distinctive culture, language, religion, convictions or even in a combination of these.

to the Tanzanian people, even when the society seems, in general, being a pluralistic one. Furthermore, it denotes that, it is indeed, for the majority of Tanzanians, one of intelligible and compelling when presented as the completion and perfection of common human experiences and fully understood in the context of grace. That means, when it includes the spiritual side of its moral teachings and authority as from the law of Christ.

But besides the three characteristics distinguishing ethnic groups as I have already mentioned above – meaning, the religion factor, the stimulus of language and the racial category – still, there is in our contemporary age and time, great influence as of urbanization and globalisation. The world is today, more or less, looking like a global village, where the people living in it, are conspicuously predisposed into thinking globally while acting locally. The urban characteristics, thus, can be defined as: that way of life in a qualitative analysis adequately captured as a widespread socio-ethical phenomenon.⁴² It, thus, even prompts some scholars to assert that, in a number of African societies, today, it is not easy to make a clear-cut distinction between ethnic groups. And this is following the reason that, the socio-ethnic differentiation demands relationships, which are more of impersonal, superficial, transitory and segmental.⁴³

As a result, in entering social relations that arise from kinship, customs, commonality of language and Christianity as a religion, then, a Christian Bantu in Tanzania, is provided with an epistemological, cultural and emotional base which somehow identifies and places him/her in a more distinct and wider ethnic entity.⁴⁴ And so, besides, probing to understand the basic aspects of the life of the Bantu Africans in their socio-political and cultural-ethical spheres, it is necessary also to have a deeper knowledge of their Christian moral basic stand-point as well as their ethical system and pattern of relationships among others. At the same time, it is clear that taking Bantu ethics as starting point does, right from the beginning, include an attitude of openness for a wider community, far beyond what stereotype pictures of ethnicity might portray.

⁴² Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 25.

⁴³ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 25.

⁴⁴ Cf. A.R. Byaruhanga, "Ethnicity, Culture..." 1999, p. 56.

1.1.2 Socio-cultural Cohesion and Disparity

In this section, I would like to briefly indicate and describe about the socio-cultural cohesion and disparity in Tanzania; that means, pointing out on how the various and numerous African ethnic groups are either related to one another or diversely disported from one another. Of course, one needs to bear in mind that, these ethnic group of people, which are sometimes also referred to as tribes, were actually confined as chieftainship or little kingdoms before the partition of Africa, as it was that time conducted under guidance of Chancellor Bismarck, in the so famously known as 1884 Berlin Conference. That is to say, it is only after the 1884 Berlin Conference, that almost all nation-states or countries in the continent of Africa appeared with borders the way we see them today. Thus, it is well known fact that a substantial number of the nation-states of the contemporary Africa are ethnically and culturally heterogeneous societies. Each nation-state of contemporary Africa is in fact constituted by a medley of ethnic groups. However, our concern at this juncture is not more of the country borders but rather on the ethnic groups confined in these new borders. In this particular section then I would like by and large directing our prospect towards those ethnic tribes in Tanzania, as well as indicating the origin and the whereabouts of the Bantu African ethnicities in the continent of Africa as a whole. And indeed, it is in the same way important to notice that, in conjunction with ethnicities are the various other linguistic families as the settle in that vast region of Africa south of Sahara. With keen surveillance of these linguistic families one can easily grasp the socio-cultural and historical relationships among African tribes⁴⁵ by tracing the commonality of the structure of their languages.

In addition, I would like right away, at the present, making clear that, this discussion about social cultural cohesion is surely not going to avoid throwing a glance on general knowledge of the peoples' ethnicities, especially the Bantu speaking people outside the Tanzanian boundaries – that means, it will also involve those Bantu ethnicities having presence in all other countries of Africa south of Sahara. But we start with a glance on the

⁴⁵ Being quite aware that some scholars would, right away at this point, prefer using the technical term “*ethnic group*” rather than “*tribe*”, yet the term “*tribe*” is in this work elaborately used for a purpose of acquiring a wider and extensive implication of what it means by the term “*ethnicity*”. It, therefore, makes sense when applied to: Subgroups within a larger cultural or social order distinguished from the majority and from each other by their geographical locality, ancestry, convictions or beliefs, linguistic, cultural, and sometimes racial background.

The ethnic divisions, as they are already mentioned in the paragraph above and indicated on the map presented by Fig. 1, are indeed considered in Tanzania to be major ethnic branches of the four principal linguistic families,⁴⁷ namely; the *Bantu*, the *Cushitic*, the *Nilotic*, and the *Khoisan* people. From historical standpoint and socio-anthropological perspective these linguistic families' origin, and particularly those of Bantu origin, can in this thesis be only briefly described, in accordance with an account of their main category and identification as:

– First, there are those people belonging to the great Niger-Congo family, whose largest branch is the Benue-Congo. The Benue-Congo is actually the family which includes the *Bantu* speaking people. In view of this, it is thought that the Bantu peoples' original homeland was on the Cameroon-Nigerian frontier and therefore, from that region, they expanded to fill the Southern half of the African continent. Accordingly, the presumption is that, the Bantu started their expansion from their original homeland towards East and South of the African continent in about 5,000 years ago (that is, in about 3,000 BC).⁴⁸

After their migrations from original homeland in Niger-Congo region, the those Bantu people who landed in East Africa also encountered in this Eastern region of Africa peoples of Afro-Asiatic ancestral origin (namely Cushitic) and of Nilo-Saharan (namely Nilotic). As a result, the Bantu migrants acquired some linguistic terminology as well as some customs and socio-cultural practices from their new neighbours, and especially from the Cushitic ones.⁴⁹ Further interactions between Bantu people and those of different ancestral origin resulted in Bantu groups with significant ethnic admixture. For instance, a mixed Bantu community developed, on the coastal section of East Africa, through contact with Arab and Persian traders. It is also obvious that the Swahili culture is one of the emerged culture from such exchanges and it evinces a number of Arabic and Persian influences not seen in traditional Bantu culture. The Bantu Kiswahili language contains, therefore, like 30 percent of its vocabulary, Arabic loan-words as a result of these interactions.⁵⁰ Besides the Bantu, the other three linguistic families are:

⁴⁷ Cf. R.O. Collins–James M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan Africa*, Cambridge: 2014, Cambridge University Press, p. 44.

⁴⁸ Cf. Mathilda's Anthropology Blog. *The Bantu People*. Uploaded online on the 29th of April, 2008. In: <<https://mathildasanthropologyblog.wordpress.com/2008/04/29/the-bantu-people/>>. Accessed: 07.02.2019.

⁴⁹ Cf. J.D. Fage, *A History of Africa*, London: 1978, Hutchinson, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Cf. D.D. Nanjira, *African Foreign Policy and Diplomacy: From Antiquity to the 21st Century*, Santa Barbara: 2010, Praeger Publishers, p. 114.



1.1.1. the Afro-Asiatic (*Cushite*), the Nilo-Saharan (*Nilotic* people), and the *Khoisan* (of which in Tanzania this last group's linguistic descendants today are clusters of San known as the Sandawe and Hatsabe people and they are in fact the minority in comparison to the largest linguistic family of the Niger-Congo, referred to as the *Bantu*).

← Fig.2. *the Bantu Migration*⁵¹

This map image on the left points out how did the Bantu migration take place and

spread from the original habitat in the Niger-Congo territory the cover the most region of eastern, central and southern part of the continent of Africa. Following this place of origin for the all the Bantu speaking people, then one can hardly deny the fact that there should surely be also similarity of certain cultural elements with the rest of African folks in that region and those who likewise migrated westwards.

Fig. 3. *General Ethnic Distribution in Africa*.⁵² ⇒

This other map, therefore, shows that general distribution of ethnic group as it stands currently. One can surely notice that the widely spread group is the Bantu African family, covering the the almost all of the Central, Eastern and Southern Africa. So there are different ethnic



⁵¹ Image from: Mathilda's Anthropology Blog. *The Bantu People*. Accessed: 07.02.2019.

⁵² Image from: *ibid*.

group in Africa; at the bottom line, however, all these groups are ordained to the common racial category as “Africans”.

1.1.3 Socio-ethical Heritage and Tradition

In this section, I am set to highlight the Bantu African socio-ethical pattern, so as to help learning and noticing, though in nutshell, what one could more or less call ethical or moral legacy, as it unveils itself in the socio-ethical tradition of the Bantu African people. It is a discovery going to be done, however, through tracing ethnic background of the people living in the concerned and afore mentioned part of the Africa continent. This comes due to the fact that, whereas ethnic background usually denotes the attributes of a group such as: physical features, languages, customs, common ancestry or any myth of common ancestry, as well as common place of ancestors’ origin; the socio-cultural identity and the traditional ethical instruction system of the people, do both signify conceptual autonomy plus innovative response of a group of people who consider themselves confined in specified margin of human society. In other words, that is to say, it requires a number of factors and features to observe, so that a scholar may be able to clearly perceive and make right refinement of the socio-ethical heritage or moral tradition of any specified group of people. In this study work, therefore, the language factor is as well playing crucial role since the whole works is more or less in concern of the conceptual understanding of human dignity as intrinsic moral value and foundational principle for morality and virtuous moral living. Actually language should be considered as one of most important aspect in conducting treatises about institutionalized ethical patterns of any human society. And that is the reason, there are in this study work, a terminological use of some Bantu African ethical terms, namely *Utu* and *Ubuntu* and whose explanations and elaboration is already provided though in a nutshell in here and in some other scholarly works contained in the bibliography of this same.

So then, while the classification of languages, like the Kiswahili in Tanzania, highlights the concerned folks’ great diversity as well as the relationship existing between socio-cultural groups to one another⁵³; identification of the socio-cultural groups *per se* is

⁵³ Cf. R.O. Collins–J.M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan...*, 2014, p. 44.

accordingly defined from combination of emotional and mental behaviour patterns arising from the encounter of human with nature and with his fellow-human, *vis-a-vis* with cultural elements of another human community. It is thus through this way that one can somehow identify and categorize an ethnic group, like for instance the Bantu African ethnic group from among many other ethnicities, in spite of already existing integration of some cultural elements due to migration, intermingling and co-existence of people with one another. In order, thus, to be well acquainted with the socio-ethical heritage and moral tradition of the people, like say the Bantu Africans living in Tanzania and in the vast extent of the Southern part of the African continent, then, identity of ethnicities is, in effect, taken to be culturally, socially, mentally, emotionally, morally and even spiritually, quite important for a member or members in that community or society.

Despite the fact that ethnicity contrasts fundamentally with the concept of racial category or background, which also concerns shared physical characteristics, yet ethnic differences in terms of cultural characteristics are not inherited; they are learned. And this is the reason people can indeed maintain or lose their distinct ethnic identities, like for instance when it comes for the people living in a culturally diverse society. It is in that way then, there is possibility of social cohesion between various ethnic groups existing in a society which together they make one country or nation, like for instance, Tanzania. Such kind of social cohesion is described by Tusabe as group solidarity. He wrote that:

It is the tendency of the persons of a given society to identify with their society, that is, to feel that they are to society as parts to the whole. ... It is the communitarian-like spirit that animates the people of a given country to appreciate the need for mutual togetherness. It is the consciousness (though most often unconscious) of a desire by a particular people to belong together and affirm their condition of mutual dependence. Social cohesion, as manifest in the spirit of nationhood, promotes solidarity and subsidiary relations among the peoples who have it and has the merit of promoting creative harmony even in complex areas of social differentiations. Social cohesion as manifest in the spirit of nationhood, neutralizes negative divisions and carries with it the bridging idea which echoes in the hearts of men and women: "we belong together," or "they are like us." When realized, it endows the individual person with the ability to see beyond differences, not only of ethnicity, but even of religion and political thought.⁵⁴

Through intermarriages and migrations, each of the tribes in Tanzania today comprises a variety of cultural combinations from multiplicity of ethnic backgrounds: Bantu, Cushitic, Nilotic, Khoisan, Asian, and more. This illustrates, therefore, the

⁵⁴ G. Tusabe, "Ethnicities and the Challenge..." 2002, p. 84.

complexity and overlapping of socio-cultural identifying standards, but in fact, there is still kind of healthy social cohesion among the existing ethnic groups in Tanzania. Actually, this is one of the necessary socio-ethical factors for justice and peace of the Tanzanian people. And although, ethnicity continues to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use until today in the whole of Africa (and in particular Tanzania), yet “one of the most desirable fruits of a people who live by the spirit of group solidarity or nationhood is that they identify that which is human in others, hence, giving them the capacity to dialogue with the others and to be enriched by their good qualities.”⁵⁵

Visibly, such identification or classification is essentially practised through national information gathering and statistics or fact finding, affirmative action initiatives, non-discrimination laws, or simply in personal day-to-day relations. They nonetheless help to establish vivid understanding of the ethical mentality of people in accordance with their socio-ethnic background.

It is as well established by some scholars, for instance, that cultural diversity and convergence of the people in a nation like Tanzania can best be understood by the common denominator of language, like for instance: Kiswahili, which is the national language and originating to a large extent from the *Bantu* linguistic family. Language remains the ultimate cultural marker, its basic structure enduring despite changes in socio-economic life and society.⁵⁶ And this reveals the fact that, language is one of the most inflexible aspects of human culture and consequently the key to the cultural classification pertaining to ethnicities and significant means of providing ideological concepts crucially used for instruction and people’s formation, be it intellectual wise or ethically or spiritually. Yet, even though, like any other country in Africa or in any other continent on this earth globe, Tanzania strives for a pluralistic society, where people of all ethnicities and races remain distinct but have social equality. Apart from the ethnic diversity which one can apparently notice in the nation, yet the Tanzanian people live in harmonious relationships owing to various socio-cultural factors, such as: the already mentioned Kiswahili language and the largest percentage of her population is comprised of the *Bantu ethnic group* – those belonging to the major linguistic family of Benue-Congo and originating from the principal

⁵⁵ G. Tusabe, “Ethnicities and the Challenge...,” 2002, pp. 84-85.

⁵⁶ Cf. R.O. Collins–J.M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan...*, 2014, p. 44.

family of the Niger-Congo. The understanding of these linguistic relationships provides the framework and the structure that reveals the historical relationship of the various ethnic groups of people in Africa and in particular the Tanzanian people.⁵⁷

We cannot deny, however, that elements of conflicts and misunderstanding do sometimes manifest themselves among different ethnicities. Some ethnic groups, like for instance the Maasai people, who actually belong to the *Nilotic* ethnic family, have distinctive traditional conflicts with their neighbours over cattle's ownership, for instance. And of recently, there are also farfetched tendencies of some tribes trying to elevate themselves as being important or worthy and well-off than others. Such tendencies are in fact not good signs in a pluralistic society such as of the Tanzanian state. Hence, if attention is not promptly taken on such concerns and right effort to handle conflicts such as this with right remedy, the situation may hardly allow meaningful co-existence amid neighbouring tribes or ethnic groups.

Above and beyond, when one examines carefully the various ethnic groups, one comes to identify some core narratives held by each of the ethnic groups which might also contribute to instigating inter-ethnic conflicts and ethnic marginalization, and which in turn, may culminate in violent ethnic clashes if attention and remedy are not given beforehand.⁵⁸ That means, biased narratives existing among some tribes may initiate ethnic prejudices, hatreds and ethnocentrism which have stood in the way to realizing social unity and solidarity on the level of nation-state as a whole. Such prejudiced narratives may likewise lead to serious ethnic downgrading by some communities holding the convictions that they are more important or "human" than other ethnic groups, a feature that leads to the abuse of the humane principles of human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*), human equality and the mutual respect of other persons. This then stands out as one of the major sources of gross violations of human rights, and may be the most serious barrier to peace in many areas of contemporary Africa South of Sahara.

One has to bear in mind that such features are evident in many Sub-Saharan African countries. It is in the limelight that Africa has witnessed many ethnic conflicts and violent

⁵⁷ Cf. R.O. Collins–J.M. Burns, *A History of Sub-Saharan ...*, 2014, p. 44.

⁵⁸ Cf. Stephen E. Nikolov, "Ethnic Conflicts: East Africa," in Thomas M. Leonard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Developing World*, Volume 1, New York: 2006, Routledge - Taylor & Francis Group, p. 600.

clashes deriving from such situations and one vivid example is the Rwandese and Burundian experiences in 1990's.⁵⁹ And the greatest moral problem in all such experiences is the undeniable verity that atrocities by one ethnic group provoke atrocities by the other group, thereby unleashing a spiral of violence.

The official authorities, thus, are to intervene and help if conflicts like this emerge, but also spiritual leaders, especially Christian leaders are supposed to help a lot by providing moral guidance and instructions. Religious leaders, especially Christians, should in fact, always insist on moral teachings like: we have to love one another and respect one another, for we all are created in the same image of God, the Creator of all creation and provider of all that we own. Such moral guidance, surely clicks much easier in the mind of the majority of the people, following their traditional background of their ethical pattern as it consists of similar teachings and guidance such as this, while being set on basis of the universal moral value of our humanity, and the intrinsic moral value called human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*).

Of course, the uneasiness such as what happens in times of conflict between the Maasai and their neighbour, in case I just cite this as an example, might as well be helped by supportive and instructive ethical ideals with an insight that, as human beings, we are actually more than possessors of cattle and land. Such guiding instruction, I am sure they will understand it with no doubt even if they themselves are not belonging to the Bantu ethnic group, yet the conception of human dignity and humanity as it consists in the *Utu* and *Ubuntu* tradition will easily click to their mind as Africans and get well acquainted with. And for that reason, they always need to live and reconcile their conflicts and anxieties through dialogue and respect of each one's dignity; consistent with the fact, we are all human beings belonging to same humanity and of same humanness. Stephen E. Nikolov has inscribed this concern in the EDW (2006) in such wording as:

Cattle rustling and land clashes are the main ... manifestation of conflicts (between rival ethnic groups). (However), elders in the involved communities form dominant component of the traditional mechanisms of conflict management. They command authority that makes them effective in maintaining peaceful relationships and community way of life through networks (and ethical principles) that go beyond the clan boundaries, ethnic identity, and generations. ... There should, therefore, be enhanced collaboration

⁵⁹ Cf. G. Tusabe, "Ethnicities and the Challenge...", p. 90.

and networking between state governments and the customary institutions of governance.⁶⁰

This paragraph quoted above, tells also something more that, it means, customary courts are capable of managing to a large extent when it comes into solving problems in their localities and societies by means of traditional ethical methods and system. Official authorities, thus, should recognize and support such customary courts to enforce their rulings; whereas, the traditional community elders should be trained in modern ethical methods of arbitration, so as to enable them be more sensitive to the universally accepted human ethical principles of respect for every human being as a person with dignity.

1.1.4 Moral Challenges in Concern

It will obviously be unrealistic for one to claim that, in a nation with so many ethnic groups like in Tanzania, people are living without ethical or moral challenges. There is a famous proverb in Kiswahili, the language widely-spoken by the people in the eastern, the central and the southern part of the continent of Africa, which says: “*Penye wengi, pana mengi.*” – Meaning: ‘Where there are many people, there also are many issues to deal with.’ In view of this proverb, therefore, I assert that, there are, surely in Tanzania, a number of noticeable moral challenges arising from significant socio-ethical issues and which are actually, in one way or another, raising questions in as far as the whole ethical or moral facet is in concern. There are concerns, like for instance, on the issue of basic human rights, such as: the right to life, liberty, and security of person (this was the case especially with those people with albinism); political and economic corruption, such as: freedom of thought, conscience, expression and of peaceful assembly; poverty and the marginalization of some people, and many others of the like. Such is a reality and no one can deny it, for it is clearly manifested in every day’s life of the people, and even it is setting itself noticeably on indicator lights, especially for the lately period of about three decades now.

Of course, such challenges can as well be found in many other countries or say, world-widely in almost all states, and no human society can claim to have an experience of existing without ethical or moral challenges. Yet, even though, they are concerns to be tackled and to be given moral and ethical attention in search of some kind of remedy so as

⁶⁰ S. E. Nikolov, “Ethnic Conflicts...,” 2006, p. 600.

to somehow curb moral degradations in the society, while also working to enhance virtuous moral living for an adequate standard of life and better living in our societies and for humanity at large. In other words, moral challenges are not only lived or witnessed in Tanzania, but they are also experiential reality in many other African countries in Eastern, Central and Southern regions of the African continent, and in case of this dissertation, as I have already stated earlier, the focus is where the Bantu speaking people are the majority. Unquestionably, however, it is kind of state of affairs which can happen, even where positive socio-cultural cohesion among various ethnic groups exists; unfortunately it doesn't matter, whether the *Utu / Ubuntu* is well-thought-out as normative ethical principle in such societies or not. Yet, important to keep in mind, at this juncture, is what resolves in the element that: it is learning from the dictates of *Utu / Ubuntu* as an ethical theory or principle, and endeavour to practice it in our life as virtuous moral guide for humanity and ethical foundation for all human beings as moral persons and entities. And that is indeed what this dissertation is on motive to induce and enlighten it by means of academic forum or discourse and study-work.

I am also distinctly quite aware that, Tanzania is still one of the few countries in the continent of Africa that has been enjoying, for quite sufficient period of time, the atmosphere of socio-political peace, and since her socio-political independence, there was neither civil wars nor tribal or ethnic conflicts. Nevertheless, there are now some traits of pride and barring that some ethnic groups have a feeling, for instance, of being superior to others, or their people being convinced of their tribes having intrinsic superiority over others. By appearance of such indications it, thus, gives out an impression that the Tanzanian people cannot anymore claim to be completely exempted from socio-ethical challenges, which may patently arise from socio-ethnic assortments or even from individual human go astray. The awareness of this fact is to be in the sense that: as people do actually live in an inter-cultural society of different ethnic groups, there are times they go wrong, particular when it comes to perception of others, and in daily life-conduct as they relate with the neighbour. Basing on this ground, therefore, one of Bantu African scholars and authors, namely Byaruhanga, once mentioned and stated in his article: *Ethnicity, Culture and Social Reconstruction*, that:

It is assumed by the members (of some ethnic groups) that their values, achievements, goals or even their physical features are better, while at the same time holding others'

ethnic qualities including their beliefs, values and organisation to be inferior and not to be preferred. This involves dislike and contempt for other groups.⁶¹

With such observation, one cannot fail to assume that, in a society⁶² with vast variety of ethnic groups, also convictions are found, which can act as bases for conflict and ethnic hostilities that are never conducive to promoting cohesion in any multi-ethnic nation-state. Of course, as I have already mentioned earlier in this section that until today, the Tanzanians are proud to say that such convictions are less strong in Tanzania. Yet, there exist, in some way, such concerns like of: disrespect for diversity, social prejudice and political dominance of one group of people over the others. It can also be implicated that, on one hand there is the question of ethnic tension; while on coming to the other hand, there is sometimes, potentiality of danger of ill relationship or tension between religious ideological differences manifesting itself and surely that can lead to religious conflicts if not well curbed beforehand.

The Tanzanian people, largely being comprised of the Bantu ethnic groups, are used to live, and hopefully they adhere until now to that moral element of living with one another, as one people. Their culture entails respecting every human individual as a person belonging to the same humanity; that moral element or value of which all humans are considered to have equal basic human rights and duty. Today, such ethical or moral environment is somehow disappearing and is now and then kept on threat. Of recently, it appears that, there is a number of serious issues and concerns taking place in Tanzania, especially with regards to the question of human rights. There are all signs that basic human rights are violated. Such basic human rights like, for instance, the rights to decent existence, the rights to freedom of speech and expression, rights to assemble and associate with others – like belonging to socio-political institutions of one's own choice – and many other rights of the like. But even worse, there are people today, just disappearing, and no one knows why and where they are brought to; some are even found dead and no one, not even the government security and judicial institutions, attempt making any investigation on such criminal events on people being murdered and killed. This is completely against the

⁶¹ A.R. Byaruhanga, "Ethnicity, Culture...", 1999, p. 58. See also: G. Tusabe, "Ethnicities and the Challenge...", pp. 85–86.

⁶² By the term "society" here, I mean the (sovereign) state or country's population as a whole. So, in case of this dissertation, it's specifically the Tanzanian population at large, all ethnic groups inclusive.

traditional ethical values that the Bantu people did respect and adhere to, namely the respect for human dignity and humanity at large.

Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the founder of the Nation and the first president of Tanzania, definitely did neither like nor entertain any sort of unethical tactics of politics which would have led to human discrimination, or ill-treatment or even cruelty to the citizens in whatsoever way it could have been thought about. Instead, he himself cherished the inherent moral value of human dignity and endeavoured to adhere to the practice of basic human rights in so far as he could do and manage it. And in conjunction with his own life example, he also taught and willed that all Tanzanians live in accordance with the dictates of natural moral law and respect for the inherent moral value of human dignity (*Utu*). Thus, one can even find that, in his own words, he cautioned and exhorted his fellow Tanzanians on such words as saying:

Let not the world point a finger at us and say that we gained our freedom on a moral argument – the argument of the fraternity of all humanity and dignity of the human person – and then threw that argument overboard, and began ourselves to discriminate against our brothers [and sisters] on the grounds of colours [or tribes, political ideologies, religious beliefs]; I pray, sir, that Almighty God will save us from committing such a sin against His justice.⁶³

It means, therefore that, although one can proudly claim that Tanzania is still one of the peaceful countries in the continent of Africa, yet there are fonts of ethical and moral challenges facing the Tanzanian people like. Among these are the maltreatment of people and the violations of human rights such as those I have already mentioned in the paragraph above, also the continuation of death penalty in the country's civil law and the constitution of the state, insensitivity to sin, killing of people with albinism (albinos) for superstitious reasons, and the growing number of street children and marginalisation or mass poverty, to mention but a few. Indeed, such are the main concerns posing a moral challenge for the Tanzanians to strive into being good and doing good for each other.

To deal with such moral challenges, it is necessary to recall and reflect upon the foundational principles of moral living, to bring them back into the awareness of all Tanzanians, and to build up an ethical approach that can serve to establish and maintain consolidation of peace and unity of the society as one people. cherishing human solidarity,

⁶³ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity (Uhuru na Umoja): Essays on Socialism*, Oxford: 1969, Oxford University Press Tanzania Ltd, p. 79.

mutual dependence, sincere charity and love of each other, national unity and peace, and last but not least the fraternity/sorority of all people.

But still, there are various facets of moral challenges in our societies, ranging from the socio-ethical spheres to the inculturation quests on matters of faith and morals. Thus, for sometimes it goes without saying that, in the course of evangelization of the people in Africa and through socio-economical progression and advancement in science and technology – the situation of which, in effect, is “made more ubiquitous by globalization and modern popular media”⁶⁴ – there might have been some kind of distortion and misinterpretation of some ethical stands or moral instructions; and that could be a reality that happens not only on one socio-cultural side but rather in both cultural directions; meaning, the effect might have not only happened towards the African moral tradition but also towards Christian moral teaching itself. In fact, such a situation is neither health one for the sustenance of those righteous African moral values and ethical tradition nor for Christianity itself; as both to the moral instructions and to the faith message it carries with. Conversely, even though, this challenging situation should not be perceived wrongly, but rightly and positively as one author puts it that: “if the good news of Jesus is to make its home among every people, it cannot identify itself with one specific culture, not even a global monoculture.”⁶⁵ For a detailed explanation of what I am trying to point out as portraits of such challenging circumstances, thus, I prefer citing to what has already been recounted by an African author, who wrote that:

“... to recall my days as a catechumen preparing for reception into the church, during the class on creation the catechist would ask: ‘who made you?’ The response was brief and straight to the point: ‘God made me.’ ‘Why did God make you?’ The honest answer would have been ‘I don’t know!’ An answer like that would have resulted in my instant disqualification as a candidate for the new faith. So, I would answer faithfully: ‘God made me to love God, to serve God, and to be happy with God forever in this world and in the world to come,’ as stipulated in the *Catechism*. This answer suggested a certain kind of necessity. As I understood it, God made me because God *needs* me to love God in return. Thus, creation appeared as a selfish act. God could do it, so God did it for God’s sake. The truth is very different, even though the catechist did not quite grasp it. The ultimate end that God intends in creating us is our intimate participation in the life of God; creation is a loving, saving event. Therefore, many theologians would argue that God does not create out of a necessity; God does not seek to acquire or gain something for God’s self

⁶⁴ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 153.

⁶⁵ B Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. xii. Also see P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, p. 153.

by creating us other than the desire to generously and abundantly share with us the glory of the divine life. In other words, *God creates freely out of love.*⁶⁶

This account reveals two important aspects: The first is that wrong conceptions of the human being and of morality partially have been caused also in Christian teaching. Therefore, to solve moral problems, it is not enough to look at Bantu culture, but rather it is necessary to look at how Bantu culture and Christian interpretations jointly can be integrated to strengthen a universal approach to ethics. In this line, and following the rationality of this account, then, one can clearly assert that, since *God creates freely out of love*, and the *human being is created in the image and likeness of God* (Gen 1:26–27), then, it is also quite reasonable to conclude that the human being who is created in the image and likeness of God is intrinsically endowed with such basis to sustain him/her into acting freely out of love. In such an expanded vision of the human person to a degree that is truly universal, which Christianity provides when it is not distorted, the Christian tradition can be related to the Bantu African's ethical pattern with regard to the human person.⁶⁷

1.2 How to Understand Human Dignity in Relation to the Foundation of Ethics

It is comprehensively important that, I start right away at this juncture exposing also the systematic reasons why a universal ethics for Tanzania can be based on Bantu ethics. It is my conviction that this will, then, enable a flawless establishment of systematic inference from the already presented hypothetical premise. That means, ensuing the hypothetical premise that: following the African school-of-thought, and in as far as ethical values are concerned, the concept of human dignity is essentially and predominantly conventional in African 'Bantu' ethical theory and moral tradition.

In order to be able to raise the question in as far the Bantu concept of human dignity can serve as point of departure for a universal ethics, it needs to be shown first which kind of significance it has in Bantu ethics. Before going into the details of the Bantu concept of dignity, however, and in order to understand better its moral significance, it is helpful to start from the cultural-lingual perspective and the etymological derivation of the term.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ A.E. Arobator, *Theology brewed...*, 2008, pp. 45–46.

⁶⁷ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 235.

⁶⁸ The use of the word 'human', to designate what pertains to the human race, apparently also is of relatively recent date. Various etymological dictionaries affirm that the word was in use only from the 17th

For this reason, the preferable clarification of the concept in pursuit of a comprehensive description of human dignity, is to a large extent going to be in channel with Mette Lebech's discourse,⁶⁹ as she herself had largely worked and sufficiently written on the same subject-matter, namely: *On the Problem of Human Dignity: A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation*. Though Mette Lebech develops her theory starting from the English language, it is most adequate to explain what can be found also in the Bantu language. Then later in the course of this dissertation will come forth the analytical discussion of Thaddeus Metz and other African thinkers, as of what they elaborate about human dignity from an African perspective in a systematic moral theory.

1.2.1 Etymological Trace and Cultural-lingual Milieu: the Inseparable Relationship between Dignity and the Human Being

In her book, Mette Lebech has pointed out the grammatical tracing of the entailed connotation of the concept of human dignity. Of this approach she actually brings in an innovative methodology on seeking to understand the meaning of human dignity as a concept in vision of its etymology and cultural-lingual milieu. It is an approach on a perspective, which, more or less, helps us to the knowledge of the fact that, from the linguistic standpoint, the expression 'human dignity', as it is found in English, consists of two predicates: the adjective 'human' and the noun 'dignity'.

The adjective 'human' qualifies the noun, thus to determine the kind of dignity in proposal as human kind. That same adjective has likewise similar function in the expression 'human being'; and here it qualifies the noun 'being', to determine the kind of being in question as a being of human kind.⁷⁰ It is on this linguistic investigation, thus, Lebech

century onwards. Before then the term 'humane' was used, with a more normative sense. The expression 'human dignity' occurs, and human dignity is a prominent theme, even in the papal encyclicals from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. Cf. also see footnote number 1 in M. Lebech's work presentation on "What is Human Dignity?" in the PDF: *Towards a Definition of Human Dignity*, online: < http://eprints.maynoothuniversity.ie/392/1/Human_Dignity.pdf >, p.1. Accessed on 10.09.2018.

⁶⁹ Mette Lebech is a professor and lecturer of the National University of Ireland, Faculty of Philosophy. I find her treatise on the question and subject matter of human dignity, to be helpful for me to present my African exposition in relation to the European tradition on the understanding of human dignity.

⁷⁰ Cf. M. Lebech, *On the Problem of Human Dignity: A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation*, Würzburg: 2009, Königshausen & Neumann, p. 21.

soundly and resolutely enforces her discourse on the problem of human dignity, as she put it:

Because of this qualification ... we cannot say, without doing violence to language, the 'human dignitiness' of someone (or 'human dignifiedness' of someone), any more than we can say the 'human beingness' of someone. ... This is because we refer, by the expression 'human dignity' to a value we by the expression designate as fundamental.⁷¹

Hitherto, we might be well acquainted that, etymologically, the term 'human' is related to the Latin word for earth, *humus*; and it follows, consequently, that 'human' means what is 'earthly' (as an adjective), or an 'earthling' (in terms of a substantive). All in all, however, it means what is proper to the kind that 'we' are, or to the species of rational and moral animals, referring in particular to their kindness (humanity) and their fallibility ('all too human').⁷² When the two terms – 'human' and 'dignity' – are, therefore, used in conjunction, they then form the expression 'human dignity', which subsequently brings the implication that, human beings are created with an ethical reputation which entitles them to respect; that means, an ethical reputation warranting to all human beings a unique moral status related to their moral capability which is of foremost and is to be taken for granted.

For this reason, it refers to the highest value of human beings, or to the fact that they are a presupposition for moral character or reputation, as they are the ones to whom value makes sense.⁷³ Having this insight and perception in mind, hence, Lebech asserts that: "A fundamental value is not essentially a quality; it is essentially fundamental, and thus it does not call for an adjectival use, only a substantive one."⁷⁴ Of this outlook, one can, in fact, clearly observe and realise that, it correlates to what the African 'Bantu' perception of human person holds. For the Bantu traditional ethical philosophy holds that: all human beings, by virtue of their being humans, do have the same dignity inherently endowed to all; and this is because, they are all created in the same way, by the same stuff, and gifted or presented with the same intrinsic value, differentiating them from other creatures.⁷⁵ This perception can well be found in the Bantu ethical and legendary tales of moral wisdom.

⁷¹ M. Lebech, *On the Problem...*, 2009, p. 21.

⁷² Cf. M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 1. Accessed on 10.09.2018.

⁷³ Cf. M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 1. One need here to note it well that: about the term value, as it is mentioned at this point, it should actually be clear that, this is none else than the implication that it refers to the notion of 'moral value' in as far as this study work is concerned.

⁷⁴ M. Lebech, *On the Problem...*, 2009, p. 21.

⁷⁵ Cf. A. J. Bwangatto (ed.), *Africa is not Destined to Die: Signs of Hope and Renewal*, Nairobi: 2012, Paulines Publications Africa, p. 86.

1.2.2 Comparative Sense of Dignity

There has not only in the ancient time, however, also existed an inclination to tie the concept of dignity with decorum and decency. Such is a perception which generally was from discernment often persistent of the term “dignity”, as it is once again expounded from its etymological viewpoint by some authors like Mette Lebech, who points out that:

‘Dignity’ comes from the Latin noun *decus*, meaning ornament, distinction, honour, glory. *Decet* is the verbal form (which is impersonal), and is related to the Greek $\delta\acute{\omicron}\nu\acute{\iota}\mu\acute{\iota}$ – to seem or to know. The Latin participle form *decens*, *-tis*, has survived in the English language in the adjective ‘decent’. But dignity means, generally speaking, the standing of one entitled to respect, i.e. his or her status, and it refers to that which in a being (in particular a personal being) induces or ought to induce such respect: its excellence or incomparability of value.⁷⁶

An analogous relation of the Latin term ‘*dignitas*’ to the English word dignity is yet another word contributing to the clear implication of the notion of human dignity as from its etymological derivation or source. In the ancient Roman Empire, *dignitas* was implicitly the standing of the one who commanded respect, whether because of his political military or administrative achievements. The expression *dignitas* might have been correlated in sense to the Greek term $\alpha\chi\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*axía*) whose functional meaning was to imply the worth whereby someone or something is essentially significant or taken for granted. So just like its counter word in Greek, the Latin term *dignitas* is, in words of Mette Lebech, “at the root of our *axiom*, because it denotes a claim to have other claims follow from it, and also of the discipline of *axiology*, the theory of value.”⁷⁷

The term *axía* was, on the other hand, defined in the ancient Greek society as virtual and comparative term; meaning a term of relation. It denotes having a claim to goods external to oneself.⁷⁸ It turns also that *axía* depends both on character and on evaluation by society; and it therefore tends towards equalisation within the relationship of friendship, as it both enlightens more of the person’s character and appreciates the equal worth of the other. For this reason, then, the concept of human dignity is defined in relation to the characteristics and the abilities of which human beings have in themselves.

⁷⁶ M. Lebech, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 1. See also, M. Lebech, *On the Problem...*, 2009, pp. 138ff.

⁷⁷ M. Lebech, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 3.

⁷⁸ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123a18, (trans. David Ross, Revised by J.L. Ackrill and J.O. Urmson), Oxford: 1980, Oxford University Press. See also: M. Lebech, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 3.

This is the perception, which was even highly held and aired in ancient Greek philosophy, as it was then taught about *axía*. The ancient Greek philosophers, like Aristotle who is actually one of prominent in philosophical thoughts, did not seem to consider the idea that all human beings, simply because they are human, thus they possess *axía*. Instead, they kept holding that: *axía* is precisely what distinguishes human personalities among them; for according to their school of thought, human beings are and could not be regarded as equal, or even be entitled to the same status, and indeed, their perception was that, moral justice consists in making distinct distribution according to the people's different *axía*.⁷⁹

Pertaining to the comparative sense, we need to understand, there had been always a tendency to connect the concept of human dignity with the perception of human status in terms of socio-political positions as it is already hinted in the previous section above. That means, in the course of human history and civilisation, beginning from when the human mind came to the point of conceptualising concerns from the world of ideas, there were always attempts of linking human dignity primarily to human status of nobility or upper class, which involved ranking of people in a society. In such case, dignity of the person is then perceived to some extent as a concept that marks distinctions among human individuals in the community, rather than constructing an aspect of equality among people. And that means, therefore, that, dignity of the human person is, in a comparative or subjective sense, referred to as that self-image or self-esteem of a specific human or particular personality. In this context, then, the human person's dignity is observed and adjudicated as that very person who appears in comparison to and with distinction from others. Those individuals in the community who have ranks and honour are perceived distinct from those who do not possess such qualities.⁸⁰ A perception such as this, does indicate that, dignity is understood to be unequally distributed; meaning, it can be more or less given, or acquired or even be taken away (i.e. be lost).⁸¹ This connotation is more apparent, for instance, when one speaks of the dignity of a human being in order to characterize one's own status position and validity in a society he/she belongs – especially when one tries to set oneself in comparison to other individuals in a community or society.

⁷⁹ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1123a18. See also: M. Lebeck, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 3.

⁸⁰ Cf. M. Düwell, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 25.

⁸¹ Cf. G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch...*, 2014, pp. 241–242.

Following this cognitive, then, the concept of human dignity is unfairly defined in relation to characteristics and abilities of which human beings have in themselves. Essentially, what appears to be meant and insisted in this sense of understanding dignity, is more of the social esteem of a person because of his/her high-ranking position, acquired (in “office and/or status”) or one’s own outstanding achievement, which is acknowledged, like for example: bishops, senators or ministers, judges or queens; or the status acquired by a Nobel Peace prize award or even by an academic degree, like doctorate. Such individual esteem is, henceforth, attributed to a person who radiates explicitly the mentioned composure through one’s own personality or performance while being exalted by one’s own distinguished action. And usually, the ordinary people tend to show special respect for these ‘dignitaries’, in various appropriate ways in honour of their elevated standing, and the office holders, therefore, are expected to behave in a manner worthy of their position. But related dignity to the social ranks does not in whatsoever imply universality and it is neither intrinsic nor inalienable.

Distinctly such perspective, as it is elaborate in the comparative sense of dignity, appears to give an indication of human dignity further in a sense that: a person’s judgement is apparently a very subjective one, for it is founded on the artificial perception of the person’s life quality. And thus, human dignity in this sense is associated and/or likened to the so-called subjective appreciation of one’s own life. However, one has to be careful in justifying and adhering to this mentality, since it is an outlook, which can possibly lead a person into negative thoughts of oneself; and especially when the person is in permanently burdensome living conditions, such as serious illness or unemployment, and thus regards oneself, as “unworthy”, “undignified” or “with no dignity at all”.⁸²

In reality, however, this perception does not reflect that essential element, needed to help comprehending the precise meaning of human dignity. Relatively, it appears to manifest about only the outside view of a person’s status than the inherent value that he/she possesses by virtue of one’s being human. Falling into such a generalized understanding as this, is more of entertaining and entrusting partialities than of grasping the essence. The reason here for the difference of opinion is that, such a view centres and bases more on considering certain life conditions of some people as better-off than others. But then

⁸² Cf. G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch...*, 2014, pp. 241–242.

perception like this do often lead into wrong interpretations which are in one way or another far from objective understanding of human dignity as a moral value and status per se. We just have to bear in mind that, for all intents and purposes, we humans cannot decide what we should do, as for instance, by assigning sort of a ‘dignity-value’, or even an equal dignity-value, to each human being independent from others and then make calculation like: two are worth more than one, three more than two, and so on; for that will be surely wrong.⁸³ This would destroy the fundamentals of society in concern since some people would think like they have no rights.

Generally speaking, the clue one can grasp from the Greco-Roman understanding of human dignity is that, for them dignity was sort of meritorious status in the society, mainly regarded as a social value. Following such a perception, then, human dignity was considered as simply a matter of the respect humans do accord to one another.⁸⁴ But later on, the conception and the expression ‘human dignity’ seems to have emerged gradually from a context of being regarded as simply a basic set of social ranks and positions in the community to where the term ‘human dignity’ is mainly used nowadays in appreciation of the importance of human individuals as such. And probably, it became more and more part of current usage, at the same time and for the same reasons, as the expression ‘human person’ does.

In light of the increasingly universal understanding of the dignity of the human being, one can argue that the use of dignity of the person like it appears in the comparative/subjective sense, can only be legitimate as far as it already presupposes the concept of “human dignity” in view of the unchanged moral worth and value belonging to all and nothing precisely of personality specificity. The aforementioned viewpoint disposes an indication that: such elements like personalities and dispositional characters, by which humans are distinguished from one another, in accordance with social position, descent, belonging to a state, power, gender, and even developmental

⁸³ Cf. D. Cummiskey, *Kantian Consequentialism*, Oxford: 1996, Oxford University Press, pp. 110–122. See also: T. E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 217.

⁸⁴ Cf. J. Ober, “Meritocratic and civic dignity ...,” 2014, p. 54.

stages, need to be regarded as secondary, subordinate qualities or subsidiary properties with respect to the alienable form of intrinsic dignity.⁸⁵

It means, therefore, that the appropriate comprehension of the concept of human dignity, *per se* is inference grasped in context of that dignity of humans as usually ascribed independently of the comparative sense or relative legal frameworks. It is the establishment in which dignity of the human person is primarily considered in its absolute and unconditional importance.⁸⁶ In such context, therefore, dignity is accounted to be inviolable and no provision is made for its limitation by, or in terms of, social status or legislation.

1.2.3 Inherent Value of Human Dignity

In contrast to the understanding of dignity as *axía*, the Latin term '*dignitas*' was adapted so as to deal with sense and reasoning, thus indicating that dignity of a person, despite its majestic connotation and impressiveness or 'showiness', is really something to be taken for granted, like the most important principle. This new perception that entered European history with the growing influence of Stoic philosophy and Christianity, thus, introduced an insight quite distinct from the former one as it suggests that human dignity is more than a majestic status of the human person, for it is an intrinsic value that generalizes to all humanity that high standing human value, which was formerly reserved for the privileged.⁸⁷ That means, rather than conceiving human dignity as merely the expression of human value in relation to the context of social status, it is recognized as inherent value of each human person. Consequently, then, *dignitas* is, from this perspective, bound to bear the connotation quite significant and which is essentially self-imposing and imperative by virtue of itself.

The term *dignitas* was, therefore, in viewpoint of Latin lingual-milieu carrying the connotation of something qualified to be considered and regarded as of primary

⁸⁵ Cf. K. Hilpert, „Menschenwürde“, in Walter Kasper (ed.) et al., *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, 7. Band, Freiburg: 2006, Herder, p. 133.

⁸⁶ Cf. G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch...*, 2014, p. 242.

⁸⁷ Cf. J. Ober, “Meritocratic and civic dignity in Greco-Roman antiquity,” in M. Düwell et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge: 2014, Cambridge University Press, p. 53.

significance and of highest value. At the same time, experience and also the possible understanding of dignity as *axía* makes clear that the intrinsic dignity of a human person still requires the active recognition by all human beings as a complement in order to find expression in concrete day-to-day life. This means, even further, that human individuals are actually properly secure in their dignity as human persons only when all humans are willing and able to defend it.

In divergence from the subjective or relative sense of human dignity there was, therefore, in the European tradition, the development to understanding human dignity to be an ‘unconditional’ status of worth or value, which does not fall on the standards based solely on what is useful or desired. And “this implies that human dignity is independent not only of office, social class and citizenship, but also of ethnic heritage, religious affiliation, gender, race, sexual orientation and any other factor except the basic human capacities and dispositions necessary to being a rational and autonomous person.”⁸⁸ Through this conceptualisation, then, one is able to arrive to the recognition that all human beings are created equally and of the same intrinsic value. This conception, therefore, surfaces consistently as a key element on understanding the internal link between the concept of the human being as a being with intrinsic value and the moral duty to respect each human being, without specifying in this moment how exactly the two are related.

Despite its complexity, human dignity, is unquestionably one of significant moral values, which should be considered, in all intent and purpose, as one of essential moral principles, especially when it comes to ethical concerns or in moral issues. The idea that, human dignity is inherently possessed by all human beings is the most important one, for by virtue of such perception, then, one is able to conceive in mind that, it is inappropriate to whimper with such moral values which are intrinsically endowed to the human person. Surely, it might appear that the concept of human dignity as highly perceived moral value is sometimes twisted from its real implication following some social and general views of the concept, such as we have already come across as the comparative sense of dignity was on discussion. All in all, however, the concept should to be understood as self-imposing,

⁸⁸ T. E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 216.

significant and essential by virtue of itself, even if it appears to rely on something else that has given it, or that guarantees its prominence.⁸⁹

1.3 How to understand Human Dignity in Relation to the Foundation of Ethics in the Context of Bantu Culture

In the language of the Bantu, human dignity is expressed by two words. In order to be able to grasp its cultural significance and its connotations, an overview over the etymological basis of the terms can provide help with regard to the comparison of the described meaning of the term in the English language, and the Bantu significance.

1.3.1 Etymological Insinuation of *Utu* / *Ubuntu* as Anthropological Terms Signifying a Human Being in Relation

Despite the appearing of little variations of some letters, found to these two words preferably employed as ethical terms in wide-ranging Bantu tribes, the meaning and implication remains essentially and steadfastly the same, following the reason that, the root word ‘-ntu’ remains the same all through. This root word ‘-ntu’ stands as core word for both *Utu* and *Ubuntu*, and actually it is that very same core word, found by the same token in another Bantu term pronounced as ‘*mtu*’ or ‘*muntu*’; while both referring to the ‘human being’ or the ‘human person’, in translation so to say. It is from this point of view, therefore, that *Utu* / *Ubuntu* is found grasped as inferring on to that core element of the human person, which we call it: human dignity. Furthermore, the stem –ntu, is an expression of the concept of vital force in many Bantu-languages.⁹⁰

As it is already indicated above, both words originate from the largest African linguistic family named the Bantu people. Moreover, in unfathomable interpretation of the meaning of both *Utu* and *Ubuntu* and the implication they confer, one finds out that both

⁸⁹ Cf. M. Lebech, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 1. Since it cannot be reduced to what is contained of its foundation, it is then comparably associated to the implicit theological connotation as about ‘creation in the image and likeness of God’ (*imago Dei*) as it is derived from the biblical narrative of creation (Gen. 1: 26– 27 and 5: 1–2). For more elaboration and clarification, see the elucidation given in Chapter 4 of this dissertation, section 4.1., under the discussion that the *imago Dei* plays role of the theological basis for human dignity.

⁹⁰ Cf. H. Kimmerle, “Ubuntu and Communalism in African Philosophy and Art,” in H. van den Heuvel *et al.* (eds.), *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Global Management*, Amsterdam–Pretoria: 2006, Rosenberg Publishers – Unisa Press, p. 79.

terms are directed to one and the same ethical connotation that: they are concepts presenting resounding affirmation about what it means to be human as well as acting in human-like.⁹¹ And although it is usually claimed that in the Bantu African school of thought abstract concepts or ideas are hardly fathomed, yet the two ethical terms of *Utu* and *Ubuntu* are actually not perceived as concrete substances but vital forces of life, which are immaterial and intangible but grounding the human person's character and personality in concrete way or in reality. And all in all, these ethical terminologies are often associated or even bound to other vital forces like life itself, community bound and the spiritual world.⁹² Consequently, one can sustain that, in Bantu African customary demeanours and ethical system, therefore, the two terms of *Utu* and *Ubuntu* are both carrying a significant normative implication concerning, especially, with the subject-matter of morality or goodness and virtuous life.

At this juncture, therefore, it is important to bear in mind the point that, in order to be well acquainted with the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* as it is perceived in the Bantu African ethical pattern and tradition, one needs to also consider that, there is also interconnection of identity on the personal, communal, and global levels, in as far as human dignity is the intrinsic moral value endowed to all humans by virtue of their being humans; and such interconnectedness is indeed inescapable, in as far as the Bantu ethical concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* is concerned. In other words, I would prefer emphasising this argument in this way: Although in the Bantu African school of thought, the person is not perceived or defined as an ontological entity nor are his/her conducts explained as in an abstract way as acts by means of self-realisation, yet it is essentially perceived that the human being is a person by means of 'relations' to other humans. And "this means that the human person in [the Bantu African mentality] is from very beginning in a network of relationships that constitutes his [or her] inalienable dignity."⁹³ And for that reason, the concepts of *Utu* and *Ubuntu* are profoundly entailed with 'human dignity' and 'humanity' or 'human nature' respectively.

⁹¹ Cf. M. Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You...*, 2009, p. 1.

⁹² By this phraseology of 'transcendental' or 'spiritual' dimension, it implies that the Bantu Africans are actually of strong conviction that the human person is more than the bodily or physical appearance that he or she looks like. I can say that, it is in fact, at this point that the Bantu African mentality merges the Christian outlook on the theological teaching that the human person is created body and soul; the body is from clay while the soul is from the breath of God, the Creator. And that breath of the Creator is what makes the human being distinct from all other creatures and gives him/her that intrinsic value, which can be termed as human dignity.

⁹³ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African ...*, 2016, p. 88.

In this respect, then we inevitably are brought to comprehend that, the Bantu school of thought on human dignity differs greatly from what the Western mentality is accustomed to.⁹⁴

It can, thus, be assumed of this concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* that a socio-ethical principle is constructed for the Bantu people's daily moral conducts in society and the whole human community at large. That means, it articulates an ethical principle essentially perceived from the Bantu understandings of *Utu / Ubuntu* and the way it applies to people's everyday life and ethical conducts as they encounter and deal with one another. It can, in effect, be referred to as normative concept, which consequently accounts plainly for significant ethical ground of virtuous moral living. It is for such discernment, I present in this dissertation, therefore, that the concept of human dignity (in expressions of the Bantu African terms: *Utu / Ubuntu*) is viable to stand as readily applicable theory in addressing socio-ethical challenges not only in Tanzania, but also in other African societies, as well as beyond the African precincts, transcending the communal norms that are linked to the understanding of human dignity.

There are indeed quite a good number of African scholars and thinkers, among whom are included some political figures and some religious leaders in Africa, who have for a number of decades worked vastly to bring about and set forth clearly the philosophical as well as the socio-ethical understanding of *Utu / Ubuntu qua* foundational moral principle, in the African societies, understood as a communal way of living together, yet though such a concept should not end up there but be conceived as the universal one. It is obvious, the work out started from analysing the socio-cultural meaning and traditional ethical concept, as it is categorically implicated in the real sense of the terms by the Bantu people themselves. Mentioning but a few, such scholars and authors are such as: John S. Mbiti, Mogobe Ramose, Thaddeus Metz, Mark Tschaepe, Laurent Magesa, Bénédet Bujo, as well as some political leaders and philosophers like Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. All these personalities, named but a few, have indisputably lion's share contribution to the effort of defining the *Utu / Ubuntu* concept from the Bantu African point of view.

⁹⁴ Cf. H. Kimmerle, "Ubuntu and Communalism..." 2006, p. 80.

So far then so good, and of all their efforts to describe the meaning and establish significant inference of this concept, it then has come further to a quest of establishing a precise and condensed common understanding of *Utu / Ubuntu* as it is basically perceived by the Bantu Africans that, it bears indeed the connotation: ‘humanity to others’. That means, ‘one’s self understanding that he/she shares in humanity with others and therefore should do what is human not only to one’s own self but also to others’. Likewise, in undertone of the concept, the person is said to have dignity when he/she understands the fact that: ‘I am what I am because of who we all are’ or ‘a human person is a person through other human persons’. Once, there was even a hint from Henk van den Heuvel that, besides the contextualised association of *Utu* and *Ubuntu*, as connotation of human dignity and humanity respectively, these Bantu ethical concepts, do express “a strong sense of community, collective morality and unconditional solidarity.”⁹⁵

The research’s motivation is, then, from an awareness that, the concept of human dignity *qua* basic moral principle is undoubtedly central notion in the Bantu people’s moral system and ethical instructions and it is steadfastly grasped as pivotal concept for moral foundation *and* virtuous moral living, as a principle and as a set of communal norms (?). At this juncture, then, it is appropriate rendering the supposition that, if we are timely given a chance to be well acquainted with the concept of human dignity and the role it plays as basis for morality, it might indeed help bringing awareness to a number of socio-ethical and moral issues packed up in our daily life conduct. Indeed, there is already such awareness, but it is to be more as of the exalted dignity proper to the human person than of mere customary talk. And surely the reason for exalting the concept of human dignity has to be clearly clutched on basis of the moral truth that the human person stands above all things, and his or her basic rights and duties are universal and inviolable.⁹⁶

Of course, the challenge is not only to the Bantu African scholars, but also to all the African people and to humanity at large, for it is like setting up a critical study analysis and observation of the morality of being alongside the morality of doing from perspective of the African Bantu ethical insight.

⁹⁵ H. van den Heuvel, *et.al.* (eds.), *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, p. 12.

⁹⁶ Vatican Council II, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, Vatican: 1965, n. 26.

1.3.2 *Utu* and *Ubuntu* as Bantu African Ethical Terms Referring to Communal Life

The context of the words *Utu* and *Ubuntu* is certainly the living in community. The word *Utu* – an African term in Kiswahili language⁹⁷ – refers to the concept of human dignity, and it is in fact closely related to another term, namely: *Ubuntu* – preferably used among Bantu speakers in Zulu⁹⁸, Xhosa and Ndebele of South Africa – which literally means humanness, humanity or personhood.⁹⁹ Intrinsically, they are concepts evidently standing for the essence of being human, shared humanity or humaneness.¹⁰⁰ In wording of one scholar and author, Dirk J. Louw, the contextual meaning of the concept is articulated as:

It is both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It not only describes human being as ‘being-with-others’ but also prescribes how we should relate to others. i.e. what ‘being-with-others’ should be all about.¹⁰¹

Categorically, these terminologies – *Utu* and *Ubuntu* – are both deep rooted in the socio-ethical imperative and are fully engrossed in the customary moral system of the Bantu speaking people. They characterise the Bantu people’s conception of how one ought to live with neighbours in a community. To a large extent and reliably they provide moral reflection and enlightenment among the Bantu people and to all of us as humans.¹⁰² The concept behind both terminologies is from a discernment which depicts the image of how a human person is supposed to behave and live virtuously as a moral being. A discernment

⁹⁷ Kiswahili is a language largely used as the medium of communication in Tanzania, and indeed it is officially the first national language. It is also the language practically spoken in mostly the whole region of Eastern Africa, that is: Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and eastern Burundi; including also the East and Southern part of Democratic Republic of Congo, the north-eastern part of Zambia, northern Malawi, northern Mozambique, and southern Somalia near the border of Kenya. Kiswahili is, thus, an African language that has been spoken for 1000s of years, originating from the Bantu tribes of Tanzania and Kenya and through Bantu people’s contact with foreigners along the eastern coast of Africa, the language’s vocabulary is as well of 40% from foreign languages: Arabic, Indo-Asiatic, Portuguese, German and English. Currently, Kiswahili is as a common language by many African ethnicities and thus is one of the unifying cognitive factor – linguistically, culturally and socio-ethically.

⁹⁸ The Zulu people are ethnically related to the tribe of people residing in Tanzania namely the Ngoni tribe; thus, both Zulu of South Africa and Ngoni of Tanzania, are branches of the common original family called the Nguni.

⁹⁹ Cf. T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 310.

¹⁰⁰ H. van den Heuvel, *et.al.* (eds.), *Prophecies and Protests: Ubuntu in Global Management*, Amsterdam–Pretoria: 2006, Rosenberg Publishers – Unisa Press, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ Dirk J. Louw, *Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-apartheid Africa*, Utrecht: 2002, EZA/Centre for Southern Africa, University of Utrecht, p. 5.

¹⁰² Cf. T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 310.

highlighting the human image, especially in the way he/she relates with other human members in a community or society. It is on this acquaintance, Christian B. Gade acknowledges the perception of *Utu / Ubuntu* as a normative moral concept, pertaining to the interdependence, or mutual provision, of people living with love and respect of each other within a community.¹⁰³ And this normative moral concept is even further elucidated by Pieter H. Coetzee in connection with life in community and with regard to morality in Bantu African thought as: “an ongoing association of men and women who have a special commitment to one another and a developed [distinct moral] sense of their common life.”¹⁰⁴

I would like, at this point, accentuating such a concept with an instructive alert that: the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* should not be confused or mixed up with the notion of community or society as some thinkers, like the anthropologist and intercultural philosopher, Wim van Binsbergen¹⁰⁵ assert to bear resemblance. Neither is the concept to be conceived as it is described by Dirk Louw¹⁰⁶, concerning especially the notion of *Ubuntu*, as he remarks of the concept, ending up only to imply that the concept has no further inference than membership of a human person in a community. As it happens, however, in its implication and in keeping with the Bantu people’s conviction, *Utu / Ubuntu* denotes neither the community system nor membership of the community. Thus, even when some thinkers like Ramose¹⁰⁷ and others do emphasise the concept’s inclusiveness into community and family, what they actually convey the significance of that dignity of the human person as an intrinsic moral value basically for sustenance of virtuous moral conducts in communal life. Erroneously, holding to the perception of *Utu / Ubuntu* as merely community or membership of the community, or even sameness, is rather comprehending it wrongly and far from the Bantu people’s conviction. Mogobe Ramose, let’s say, deals with this concept through the family, yet he is so quite aware of the deeper

¹⁰³ Cf. C.B.N. Gade, “The Historical Development of the Written Discourses on Ubuntu,” in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 30 (3), 2011, Rhodes University, p. 317.

¹⁰⁴ P.H. Coetzee, “Particularity in morality and its relation to community,” in P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (eds.), *The African Philosophy Reader*, Second Edition, New York: 2003, Routledge, p. 274. Words in brackets are my personal insertion in the quotation.

¹⁰⁵ See W. Van Binsbergen, “Ubuntu and the Globalisation of Southern African Thought and Society,” in *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 15(1–2), pp. 55–56. Online in: <http://www.quest-journal.net/access_to_volumes.htm>. Accessed on 24.08.2018.

¹⁰⁶ See D. Louw, “Power sharing and the challenge of Ubuntu Ethics,” *Centre for Applied Ethics*, Stellenbosch, South Africa: 2009, University of Stellenbosch, pp. 4–5. See also in: <<http://uir.unisa.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10500/4316/Louw.pdf?sequence=1>> Accessed on 07.03.2017.

¹⁰⁷ Cf. M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare: 2002, Mond Books, p. 81f.

implication and the connotation behind it, and he makes it very clear that: even when among the African Bantus, the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* seems to mark ‘basis of the family’, it plays still a more significant role within family members and is comprehensively taken as decisive value for formation of family and community¹⁰⁸ and as normative ethical principle of life conducts.

In the scholars’ forum, the concept and the concerned theme has been embraced by some moral philosophers in Africa, and they hold that: the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* does significantly express African ethical anthropology as such and by itself. Moreover, it is vividly a concept expressing an ethical anthropology which entails: ‘to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on this basis, establish respectful human relations with them’.¹⁰⁹ And like a coin, this is one side of the concept’s implication; while, the second side points out to the meaning of *Utu / Ubuntu* in such a dictum as: ‘if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life.’¹¹⁰

Expressively, the human person with his/her life is invaluable in comparison to things or wealth because of the dignity that the person inherently possess. It is on this sense then the concept of human dignity among the Bantu people is with conviction connected to the subject-matter of moral conduct. And it is, in view of this, then understood that self-importance differs from self-satisfaction, because self-satisfaction is concerned with “not yielding anything of one’s dignity in comparison with others.”¹¹¹ Accordingly, it is then asserted that, human dignity, so understood as *Utu / Ubuntu*, is the reason for virtuous moral living. That means, it is because of the humanness and the dignity inherent in the human nature, that a person is capable of legislating the moral law unto oneself.

To summarize, *Utu* and *Ubuntu* denote several aspects of the living together of the Bantu which combine communal, ethical and spiritual aspects. Comprehensibly, there are times that this Bantu perception of *Utu / Ubuntu*, is expounded by some African thinkers

¹⁰⁸ Cf. M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy...*, 2002, pp. 49–60.

¹⁰⁹ M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy...*, 2002, pp. 52–60 and 193–194.

¹¹⁰ H. Kimmerle, “A New Approach to African Philosophy”, in *African Philosophy*, Vol. 13(2), August 2000, p. 189.

¹¹¹ M. Lebeck, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 6.

like Kwasi Wiredu, Ifeanyi Menkiti and Barry Hallen, as an ethical perception of personhood.¹¹² They all, essentially, stand on a single viewpoint that *Utu / Ubuntu* is meant to emphasize the spiritual, communal and ethical dimension of human identity. All in all, however, it remains to be an ethical concept that poses a bountiful edifice of concentric circles of ethical obligations and responsibilities; implying, those obligations and responsibilities matched by virtuous living which reflects justice in the community, basic rights for all and privileges and/or freedom of compartments in moral conducts.¹¹³

1.3.3 The Universal Connotation of the ‘Bantu’ African Perception of Human Dignity

Obviously, there are thinkers who would tend to argue that human dignity does not stand as an entity by itself, for it depends on other entities like say human life and existence (Magesa)¹¹⁴ and community (Bujo)¹¹⁵ following the perspective of African ethical patterns. And in this case, I would rather say that though in Bantu culture different aspects as the Creator as an authority behind the concept of the human being, the importance of existence and the community are related to the idea of human dignity, it still has a component that is self-standing and allows a universal interpretation.

In contextual comprehension of the human person, such as this, one notices that, the concept of human dignity apparently signifies that a human person has an innate moral right to respect and to a fair treatment and esteem of one’s own life. This perspective should, however, also take into consideration the aspect of the social nature of the human being, that there is no human being who is an island; meaning, being able to live without existence and presence of other human persons. With no doubt, it is on this ground that the ‘Bantu’ Africans authenticate their ethical insights in respect of the human person and for every

¹¹² Cf. K. Wiredu, “Custom and Morality: A Comparative Analysis of Some African and Western Conceptions of Morals”, in *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, Bloomington: 1996, Indiana University Press, pp. 61–78. See also, Ifeanyi Menkiti, “On the Normative Conception of a Person” in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2004, Blackwell, pp. 324–331.

¹¹³ Cf. K. Wiredu, “Moral Foundations of an African Culture,” in *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies*, I, Washington D.C.: 1992, Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, p. 199. See also: M. Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You...*, 2009, p. 1.

¹¹⁴ L. Magesa, *African Religion ...*, 1997.

¹¹⁵ B. Bujo, B Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016; *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, (trans. Cecilia Namulondo Nganda), Nairobi: 1998, Paulines Publications Africa.

individual human in community. Indeed, this ethical insight is vividly portrayed by a good number of African moral philosophers and theologians, namely: Thaddeus Metz, John S. Mbiti, Mogobe B. Ramose, Laurent Magesa, Richard N. Rwiza and Bénédzet Bujo.

In these important contributions, however, a main emphasis has been laid on the fact that in the Bantu African moral tradition, human dignity is playing a role because it is referred to as moral and ethical guiding rod on people's daily moral conducts in the community. For Bantu Africans dignity of the human person is, as it is often described, realised as one is in disposition to behave and act in accordance to the community's prerequisites and moral norms. The implication is, at this point, thus raised that to the Bantu Africans for a human person to be virtuous and dutiful, he/she should be communally bound; for there is no human being who is an island.

However, how can these claims that people should act according to their dignity, which are often made with respect to many different situations, be interpreted in the light of the described different concepts of human dignity? Is there an element that goes beyond the moral norms of the community? Does a truly universal claim follow from human dignity, or is it limited to communal behaviour?

A first argument that shows that there is a fundamentally universal aspect in the Bantu concept of human dignity can be argued on basis of the anthropological foundation that describes human beings as endowed with intrinsic value. It is consistently held and maintained in the Bantu African ethical pattern and moral tradition that all human beings are created in the same way and by the same stuff, and therefore by virtue of their being human, they all possess that same dignity, which is worth all human beings with no exception. It is an implication of which one can clearly observe even from the Bantu people's traditional narratives on creation of the universe and of human beings. That means, it is factual element evidently found even in the cosmological and anthropological viewpoint of the Bantu Africans.

Therefore, it is vital to see that beyond the moral elements that can be distinguishing features of an ethnic community, there is a basic conviction of human dignity that belongs universally to each and every human being. Even those authors who in their work are

engaged with stressing the communal character of Bantu ethics¹¹⁶ would not deny that through keen observation of the African literature, and especially of the Bantu people's prevailing mentality, one can easily discover and realize that the Bantu Africans are of the conviction that all human beings are from the very beginning of their nature created to be of moral status and esteem. And such perception falls on the ground that: by virtue of being humans, all human beings are inherently the possessors and proprietors of the highest intrinsic moral value that we call human dignity.

With such comprehension that, all human beings are endowed with intrinsic dignity, then, it is set clear that, the Bantu Africans are of the perception and conviction that there is in essence something distinctive and innate of every human person, which makes us all belong to the same human nature and so we should all have same moral character. In other words, we can say: human beings are the proprietor of the inherent dignity by virtue of their being humans, and for this reason, then, it roughly raises an awareness of the untouchable and the inherent non-physical moral value of all humans. Meaning: the intrinsic moral value, which essentially places all humans in an uncompromising position of deserving respectful treatment from one another, both in terms of moral treatment and ethical behaviour, as affirmation of claims for rights and abounds to responsibility or duty.

This moral duty leads to the basic foundation of morality in Bantu ethics. Namely, based on this conviction about an inherent moral value, in Bantu ethics a moral claim is made which binds and obliges them to live and act in accordance with the state of humanness as of their nature and of their highest moral status, which makes them different from animals, from trees, and from things or non-living objects. Likewise, one can quite vividly observe that: the Bantu African school of thought, soundly holds the perception that, human dignity is not only well-thought-out as the highest value intrinsic of every human person but also that it stands to be the moral index for humanity, since it equally serves as the highest countenance of human intellectual capacity and his/her ability on the use of reason.¹¹⁷ And it is understood that, it is due to such ability on the use of reason that the

¹¹⁶ Here I would like to refer to such academicians, involved into writing issues in concern of the African tradition in South of Sahara, as Thaddeus Metz, John S. Mbiti, Bénédet Bujo, Laurenti Magesa and Kwame Gyekye, to mention but a few.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Liboire Kagabo, "Alexis Kagame (1912 – 1981): Life and Thought" in Kwasi Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, MA: 2006, Blackwell Publishing, p. 235. See also: Alexis Kagame, *La Philosophie Bantu Comparée*, Paris: 1976, Présence Africaine, pp. 120–124.

human being has dignity which in turn also plays the indispensable nature of being human person, especially when it comes in context of discernment for right judgement, decision making and for righteous guide of our human conducts.

In fact, it is at this standpoint, whereby one can assertively point out that, the perception of human dignity in the Bantu African ethical patterns does not as such totally fall apart far from the universal perspective of the concept of human dignity. However, it is a specific feature of this understanding of dignity that the anthropologically based value of the human being is intrinsically linked, even if it can be systematically be distinguished from it, the idea of an existing obligation to live according to one's dignity, to live up to one's status.

In line with anthropological foundation and its ethical interpretation, therefore, it is acknowledged that "a human being has duties that are implications of his status as a human being – a being endowed with rational capacities."¹¹⁸ This relationship between the human dignity that is founded in the anthropology and the moral obligation to act according to one's duty, has been expressed as a relationship between the foundational principle and its dependent duty, and by the unalienable dignity and the alienable moral status that can be lost in case of lack of moral responsibility, as is explained by Marcus Düwell:

The content of these obligations [or call it duties] is simply to exercise one's rational capacities: a being with dignity should behave in a way that is appropriate to her rational capacities, it should exercise rational control in action, it should master the emotions, it has to stay sober in order to stay in control of himself, in short, it has to behave like a rational being should behave. In that sense, human dignity formulates duties to ourselves, but it is not concerned with the protection of the dignity of the other. These are some obligations towards other human beings involved, but the core of this concept are the duties of the agent to behave according to his status – not the respect for the dignity of the other. This concept is universal but not inalienable: a human being can lose his or her dignity by not living according to his or her duties and it can hardly be reconstructed as the foundation of rights.¹¹⁹

Consequently, one then realises that, there is some facet of characteristic human nature which is good for its own sake to a greater degree than anything else in the physical world, and that is what essentially gives ground for virtuous moral living. Indeed, that is the life meant for all humans by virtue of their dignity as human persons. This vision is apparently prevailing in the Bantu African writings but it is explicitly held by scholars like Thaddeus

¹¹⁸ M. Düwell, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 26.

¹¹⁹ M. Düwell, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 26.

Metz and a number of learned proponents of *Utu / Ubuntu* in Africa south of Sahara.¹²⁰ In addition, the Bantu perception of human dignity upholds a definition of the concept as: an individual or group's sense of self-respect and self-worth, referred to as the socio-ethical, moral and psychological integrity, of which essentially counts to the empowerment of the human person. This perspective is, for instance, well noticed and aired out by a renowned South African law professor, Linda Hawthorne, who once wrote:

The pre-eminence of human dignity can be viewed as a reaction against the socio-political affairs of a human society, but is in essence a reflection of the fact that human dignity is the most important human moral value from which all other fundamental rights derives. ... [In fact, it] is inherent to every human being, inalienable and independent of the state.¹²¹

By virtue of its role as an intrinsic moral value, thus, human dignity is certainly perceived as methodically implying that dignity of the human person, which is essentially disclosed in the moral sense, with consideration that the human person, in his/her nature of 'being and doing' is a moral being and ethical person. And such intrinsic moral value as human dignity, then, affects actually all humans deeply communally and personally. This is what, in the Bantu African moral tradition, is referred to as *Utu / Ubuntu*.

It is a perception, which sometimes appears to be mixed-up with the concept of personhood, though actually, when one is totally imbued into the Bantu culture one will find that, it is not exactly the same in implication. Intrinsically, human dignity, in the sense of *Utu / Ubuntu*, is on occasion also used to emphasize the communal and spiritual dimension of human identity, and of necessity the concept poses a challenge to persons accustomed to thinking of themselves as individuals¹²² rather than belonging to the human community, i.e. to humanity. From an ethical point of view, then, it is taken for granted that, being one of highest values, human dignity is supposedly displayed in terms of human feeling and sensitivity, and that means, it has enormous influence and effect on the human person's life at the deepest possible level; communally as well as personally and emotionally. In other words, one can say, like it is also stated by Lebech:

As I recognise the other, his value is experienced as equivalent to mine, because it is a presupposition for his valuing activity, just as mine is for me. Love, kinship and

¹²⁰ Cf. T. Metz, "African Conceptions...", 2012, pp. 19–37.

¹²¹ L. Hawthorne, "Human Dignity Definition" in *Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai Jurisprudentia* (2011), cf. Duhaime's Law Dictionary. <<http://www.duhaime.org/LegalDictionary/H/HumanDignity.aspx>>. Accessed on 10.10.2016.

¹²² Cf. M. Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*, New York: 2009, Seabury Books, p. 1.

friendship are the human relationships in which I am enabled to explore these depths, and to realise that this highest value is constitutive of personal identity, simultaneously in myself and in the other. The *idea* of human dignity conceptualises or embraces this experience of recognition, and the *principle* of human dignity is the affirmation that the experience is possible in relation to all human beings.¹²³

In such formulation, the universal aspect of dignity in general becomes visible. It is therefore conveyed that human dignity is basic foundation for virtuous moral living, following the reason that it is one of the highest ethical values, not only as perceived by the Bantu African societies, but also by all humanity. As an ethical concept, therefore, human dignity stands as a principle affirming the fundamental value of every human being, or of all human beings as such. Certainly, that is to say, it enjoys general acceptance not only to the Bantu African communities, but also all-round the globe at least as far as the proclamation of human rights can show.¹²⁴ An apparent insight is clearly conveyed in the fact that: as a basic ethical and normative principle, human dignity draws essentially upon the universal experience of the dynamics of recognition. And undoubtedly, therefore, it is in everyone's interest and concern to be respected as a person or human with dignity; that means, as a person partaking the highest value due to an inalienable nature of his/her humanity.¹²⁵

It is with regard to this respect for humanity that the universality of the basic foundation of Bantu ethics comes to the fore. From the described perspective, we are consequently enhanced to a competence of grasping that, the Bantu African approach recognizes the dignity and integrity of the human being as a created creature with intrinsic highest value. And accordingly, it is as well indicated in this acumen that: our common brotherhood is intrinsically linked with our common humanity. Indeed, the mentality here is that: there is only one universal family, to which all human beings belong. This family is fragmented, however, into a multiplicity of peoples and cultures. The recognition of all human beings as brothers and/or sisters in the light of our common membership in one human species is a lofty ideal; meaning, it is, indeed, of great importance to the Bantu African people. And I fancy, this makes and says a lot about the divergence of the Bantu African's perception of human dignity from the Western school of thought.

¹²³ M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 1.

¹²⁴ Cf. M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", pp. 1–2.

¹²⁵ Cf. M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 2.

So, one can, if we take the ethics of Immanuel Kant as example for a Western approach, for instance, say with certitude that, the difference between the Kantian conception of human dignity and the conception of dignity in the Bantu ethical theory is mainly that: the Kantian conception is more inclined or based on the so-called autonomy by virtue of practical reason that relates a personal decision to its universal justification, while the Bantu African's conception is more or less based or founded on the human person's nature in its complexity encompassing social relationships, which are expressed by a close link between individual moral praxis and communal resolution or decision making. Besides the communal orientation and perception, however, the Bantu African's moral tradition holds even further that, the appropriate understanding of the human person's nature and dignity consists also of a variable number of natural components and the vital forces, such as life and the community; – i.e. such natural components and vital forces whose presence makes the human person not only alive but also the being of moral nature and therefore the absence of it would make him/her dead and like brut¹²⁶; meaning, not worth of his/her nature as human person with dignity.

Moreover, there is an element that links every member of the community to his or her ancestral history and the history of the community. For the Bantu Africans, then, human dignity is actually perceived as inclusively of an extensive anthropological nature, e.g. in its distinction from animals, and of cultural and traditional historicity of the generations and the whole community. It is, thus, that moral principle in the human person, which makes him/her as moral entity who “is supposed to be responsible for the unique impression that he or she communicates to others. And there is also an element that is thought of as the basis of lineage or clan identity.”¹²⁷

One can assert that the Kantian conception of human dignity differs from Bantu African viewpoint, since it is more of an ‘abstract’ perception of dignity and more related to the practical reason, while for the Bantu Africans, the mind, though not completely excluded, is in actual fact more considered as only the capacity to think and it is hardly understood in terms of human dignity. However, as will be explained in chapter 4 of this work, there are very close structural similarities between the two concepts of dignity and

¹²⁶ Cf. K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2006, Blackwell Publishers, p. 16.

¹²⁷ K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African...*, 2006, p. 17.

the deontological ethical approach that follows from it. Therefore, in spite of the described differences, the two traditions can be brought to a fruitful interaction.

2. CONCEPTUAL SURVEY OF VIRTUOUS MORAL LIVING

The previous chapter has given an introduction to the concept of human dignity in Bantu ethics, as part of the argument that Bantu ethics contains elements that can serve as basis for developing a universal ethics. However, since Bantu ethics provides different layers of ethical theory, it is necessary to offer a conceptual survey of those ethical elements that are needed to explain the Bantu ethical approach to virtuous moral living. All in all, however, the resounding discussion, at this juncture, will for all intents and purposes be, of the morality principally headed and heartened in both traditional and modern African cultural stands and modalities, but especially among the Bantu ethnic family and their ethos or moral beliefs. And just like it is already mentioned earlier in this study work, the Christian aspect is likely going to be involved so far as the discourse continues, i.e. it is in whatsoever not going to be set aside.

Prior to the pursuit of a comprehensive conceptual survey and clarification, we need to bear in mind that, virtuous moral living should first and foremost be understood as a universal notion and it requires a number of aspects and criteria to be properly grasped in mind. Also we need to be well acquainted with the fact that, virtuous moral living is indeed an essential prerequisite for the human person, because it is the human person who can in reality live the virtues and who by the use of reason is capable of properly making judgement for what is good and what is evil, and from such judgement he/she can decide to act on what is morally right or what is wrong or bad. So we can assert that morality vis-à-vis virtuous moral living is essentially and profoundly human judgment of actions and conducts by use of ethical criteria and principles. It is a typically human task, therefore, to always search for human wisdom about the morally right human conduct or correct human affairs. It is in the course of such exploration from human wisdom, then, the human person

develops his/her awareness to a better comprehension of one's own nature as human person and appreciation of the principle guiding his/her moral conducts.

Such awareness and recognition should then be in terms of cherishing the strategy of love to one another on basis of the general vision of humanity and human dignity, which in Christianity it finds its perfection on the vision of Jesus Christ as the true image and revelation of the deepest meaning of life. We can find this claim from the Pauline literatures in the New Testament as it is perceived that, "in Paul's texts dignity consists mostly in the relationship to Christ"¹²⁸ and accordingly "ethical aspects shift from the observance of the Tora in pre-rabbinic literature to faithfulness to Christ, which means to a more direct and personal relationship."¹²⁹

For the reason of pursuit for the human wisdom, however, I am also going to embrace in this treatise the moral conviction of the Bantu people, particularly on its aspect as one of socio-ethical and communal rather than one of personal and subjective or individualistic morality. Nevertheless, I am not intending to argue against the Pauline perspective as it is indicated in the paragraph prior to this, but just to make a comparative analysis and by so doing to add some new flavour in the realm of theological ethics from the Bantu African perspective as a whole. We also need to keep in mind that, the Bantu Africans' moral conviction is actually understood as that type of moral perception and morality, which, in essence, holds and enjoins the sense of communal bond strongly established on the people's socio-ethical life as such. However, the criteria of communality and social choice is only one of the criteria selected to get involved in this dissertation so as to let the reader well acquainted with the Bantu people's moral conviction.

This realism, thus, enhances even more, what I can call: firm counter-argument for the general assumption of some thinkers claiming that: for the Africans, there is no other ethical principle used on guidance to their moral conducts than the traditional spiritual beliefs or religion. Meaning, it is mainly and merely the spiritual or religious beliefs which

¹²⁸ S. Müller, "Dimensions of human dignity and the imago Dei paradigm," Draft paper for Vienna Workshop on *Theological Ethics: Beyond the Imago Dei Paradigm 2019*, Vienna: 2019, p. 4.

¹²⁹ S. Müller, "Dimensions of human dignity ...", 2019, p. 4. On further clarification for this point, Sigrid Müller's paper work refers us to see for more details from: Stephan Schaede, "Würde – Eine ideengeschichtliche Annäherung aus theologischer Perspektive," in Petra Bahr – Hans Michael Heinig (Hg.), *Menschenwürde in der säkularen Verfassungsordnung. Rechtswissenschaftliche und theologische Perspektiven*, Religion und Aufklärung 12, Tübingen: 2006, Mohr Siebeck, pp. 8–69, especially p. 11.

constitute the foundation of morality for almost all African societies south of Sahara.¹³⁰ And although, for sure, such views cannot be completely dismissed – yet even when they abide and sustain their strength in some people’s mind, especially with those enduring to the Western mentality –, they should rather be partially endorsed on condition that, one grants conducive space for moral constructions which can be well-adjusted to an open global mentality prevailing the pluralistic societies, like for instance, between Christianity and indigenous convictions or beliefs. And yet again, in asserting this, it does not in whatsoever imply boosting up of any practice of syncretism, but rather exposing the fact that humans have always possessed a supernatural destiny and consequently spiritual beliefs are inevitable to all human beings short of discrimination.

However it needs to be emphasized that the spiritual beliefs do not furnish directly the grounds on which ethical decisions are being made; rather, they furnish criteria that explicate what needs to be respected in a morally good way of life. The discussion about the role of spirituality after the Second Vatican Council has, e.g. brought forward the proposal by Alfons Auer that Christian belief provides a „horizon“ in which moral decisions are made, while the moral decisions themselves are based on reasons. This „horizon“ contains ideas offered by Christian faith of what makes sense in life, of the future of human beings, and contains anthropological insights. This shows in which way the spiritual aspects of Bantu ethics can be understood and integrated in a Bantu African Ethics without considering them to be the foundation for moral living.¹³¹

It is important to mention this because there are other ethical theories that claim that morality can be part of religious revelation without the intermediation of human reasoning. This has been portrayed under the term rational ‘*faith morality*’; the discernment that revelation has special contribution in knowing the concrete content of what morality

¹³⁰ Cf. J.S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, New York: 1970, Praeger Publisher. See also: E.W. Smith (ed.), *African Ideas of God*, London: 1950, Edinburgh House Press; And also see: A. Shorter, *African Culture and the Christian God: An Introduction to Social and Pastoral Anthropology*, Maryknoll, NY: 1974, Orbis Books, pp. 53–56.

¹³¹ Alfons Auer, *Autonome Moral und christlicher Glaube: 2. Auflage, mit einem Nachtrag zur Rezeption der Autonomievorstellung in der katholisch-theologischen Ethik*, Düsseldorf: 1984, Patmos Verlag, p. 184: „Sittlichkeit ist eine autonome Größe, die durch ihre Einordnung in den christlichen Sinnhorizont und durch die Aktualisierung der in diesem Sinnhorizont implizierten Motivationen ihre volle Integrierung findet.“ Cf. also p. 178: „Das christliche Proprium des Sittlichen liegt also nicht in neuen, nur dem Gläubigen zugänglichen Verhaltensnormen, sondern in der Integrierung des natürlich-sittlichen (autonomen) Handelns in dem Vollzug seiner religiösen Verbundenheit mit Gott.“

requires; it creates a form of denominational entity counter-productive to those in critical dialogue with people of good will and in solidarity with genuinely human concern.¹³² The spiritual element of Bantu ethics, however, can much better be explained and understood in terms of Auer's account of understanding belief in spirits as "horizon" of action, while concrete actions need to be guided by reason and practical wisdom.

Then, one could, henceforth, from an outlook like this ask: which ethical principle, therefore, besides the spiritual or religious belief, is then employed by the Bantu Africans to establish moral foundation, that can also serve in the globalised world as it is of today? Of which in answering this question, one should start by taking into consideration the fact that: morality in the Bantu African societies, besides being based on religion or spiritual beliefs, is just as equally and even more perceived as being founded on the "beneficiary values of collective family and community well-being, without dissolving the individual's character."¹³³ And indeed, one of great and substantial moral value, in such discernment, is the normative moral value here referred to as: human dignity; the irrevocable inherent moral value possessed by all human persons; meaning, that dignity of the person to whom an action is conducted upon as well as that of the doer or actor.

In addition, one should not ignore the fact that, though the perception of morality is one of communal, there is still, in the Bantu African moral conviction and ethical practices, besides the communal dealings, yet more of preoccupation with individual well-being as a human person with autonomy or inherent self-rule. It means, therefore, that such elements like autonomy of the human person, his or her solitude as well as personal human freedom, are not completely set aside or ignored. Particularly, freedom of the person, as an independent being and entity, is under no circumstances ignored.

With keen observation, one can with no doubt even remark that, such concern as respecting an individual's freedom vividly and equally manifests itself to the Bantu African world view, but inactively experienced in every day's life compartments, differently as it is observed by the people in the Western societies and civilization where individual decision making is standing in the centre of attention. However, its variance from the

¹³² Cf. R.M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Christian Morality*, New York: 1989, Paulist Press, p. 1.

¹³³ P.J. Nel, "Morality and Religion in African Thought", in *Acta Theologica*, (2) 2008, Centre for African Studies, University of the Free State, Bloemfontein, South Africa, p. 1.

Western culture is not enormous, for the only difference existing, is only the angle of perception that in the Western thought it starts with the individual, while in the Bantu thought the individual and community are all perceived in one light or wink. And that is the reason it is even not easy to make a clear cut separation of the notions of *Utu* and *Ubuntu*. I am going to discuss of this with a bit more detailed elaboration in section 3.2.1. on the Dictum: ‘I am because We are’, so as to manage presenting a clear picture on this point in discourse.

Following from this line of thought, then, one is in good position to claim that the Bantu people’s moral system pinpoints its ethic of collective or communal responsibility adjoined with the ethic of private or individual right and duty; this two-sided ethic, is indeed taken with due respect as one of single coin. And still, sometimes, one can have an instinct that in some way the latter is somehow given a little more due recognition than the former. That is to say, though in the Bantu African societies a community can be judged responsible of something morally going wrong, yet it is the particular individuals who are accountable for concern and reprimand or retribution. Hence, what makes this mentality peculiar from the other, like for instance, from the Western mentality, is none other than its aspect that: even when it is the individual who is accountable for any wrong or right deed of one’s own behaviour or actions, yet, it is the shared dignity of humanity, manifested in the communal facet, which is felt to be actually tainted or injured. It is then and there, that the *Utu / Ubuntu* acquires its deeper meaning and significance, and as a result being perceived as basic foundation for morality and ethics and subsequently of virtuous moral living.¹³⁴

In view of this, the concept of human dignity grips apparently vital element of socio-ethical life system of the Bantu people. An explanation of this is even more amplified by some African scholars in such words as: if and when one is faced with a decisive choice between one’s own personality and the preservation of the dignity of another person, then one should opt for the preservation of human dignity. That means, every human person has, in all the time, the obligation of treating others as humans with dignity and respect. It is in the *Utu / Ubuntu* that Bantu African ethics is embedded in the ideas and convictions about

¹³⁴ In case I have to add more clarification on this, then I would rather say: virtuous moral living does, actually, in this particular dissertation imply: that practical and concrete life which is humane and in accordance to the principles given in morality and ethics standing as system of principles guiding our daily conducts as we live with other humans in society.

what is right or wrong, what is good or bad character; besides it is also embedded in the conceptions of reasonable and objective social relations and attitudes held by the members of the society; it is embedded, furthermore, in forms or patterns of behaviour that are considered by the members of the society to bring about social harmony and obliging living, considerate behaviours, justice, and fairness. Definitely, the ideas and beliefs about moral conduct are articulated, analysed, and interpreted not only by ethical principles, but also by moral legends in the society. And this is the reason that, even in view of the fact that Bantu people do live in community and do esteem communal life, one cannot however deny completely that the importance of individual character as engine of moral life in practice, is likewise well accentuated among the Bantu people's ethical and moral patterns.

Correspondingly, it is significant, at this point, to explore a distinction between personal/individual and social/communal morality. It is important that I right here explain it though in a nut-shell, so that we get a clear picture of the forthcoming arguments. Personal morality, therefore, deals with individuals' obligations or duties, or in other words, with what is required of them from a moral point of view. As we have already noticed above, it is in fact, not quite correct to say that personal morality is not practised among the Bantu people, besides the fact that, one cannot fail easily noticing that this type of morality is rarely preferred as *prima facie* in the Bantu African societies than it happens in Western civilisation.

The question is, however, how individual morality finds orientation and what the grounds of individual responsible action are. In Western ethical tradition, the difference has been made between individual convictions and actions oriented by one's personal moral insights ("Moralität" in terms of Kant) and social actions oriented by the moral standards of the society (as long as they are morally justified and not merely customary) ("Sittlichkeit" according to Hegel).¹³⁵ What I understand here by individual ethics in the Bantu context is acting according to one's personal insight, which, in the social Bantu context, needs justification, but is accepted if it can provide reasons.

¹³⁵ See Christian Schröer, „Moralität“, „Sittlichkeit“, in: Gerfried W. Hunold – Jochen Sautermeister (eds.), *Lexikon der christlichen Ethik (Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche kompakt)*, vol. 2, col. 1210-1211, 1610-1611. For Hegel's critique of Kant with respect to the „emptiness“ of morality without its social context, cf. David Couzens Hoy, „Hegel's critique of Kantian Morality,“ *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 6 (2), 1989, pp. 207-232, especially p. 210.

In contrasting to the Western societies where personal morality is of more emphasis, it appears different when it comes to the ethical patterns, way of life and the mentality in African societies. That means, without doubt, personal morality appeals to have more emphasis in the Western civilisation following the rationality that, in the Western outlook, individual's desires, satisfactions, decisions and accomplishments do take precedence over those of the community. In distinction from the Western outlook, then, the Bantu ethical tradition prefers the practice of social morality, which deals more with community morality while emphasising more on communal values and interpersonal relationships. However, such emphasis on the communal values and interpersonal relationships, in the Bantu African's ethical pattern, is not to be perceived, as it usually happens, that it is practised at the expense of the individual's desires and decisions.¹³⁶ In actual fact, it is rather a practice for the good of the individual with claim and assertion that 'a human person is a person through other persons',¹³⁷ and this is a judgement that one ought to develop one's moral character in a community where one lives with other fellow humans.¹³⁸ This is a type of morality more likely set in focus and favoured by the Bantu people, than personal morality, following the reality, as we have already noticed that, the Bantu people do emphasise more of the vitality of the person in the community rather than the individual autonomy out of community.

Taking everything into account, however, the Bantu African's ethical pattern holds that, the private life of people in a community is not endangered and neither are the individual persons in society neglected, as some thinkers would have thought. Individuals are instead cared by the community, and in return, therefore, they are expected to fulfil their roles in a way that fits with the ethical instructions and guidance of their society.¹³⁹ It means, therefore that, primarily and relentlessly it is communal morality, which is expected to regulate and control the individuals' conducts in the society. And this communal morality is non else but the one in relation to the common standard that binds and treats all people as humans inherently endowed with higher value in them. For instance, a person is expected to be good and do what is good for the community not because of one's own

¹³⁶ Cf. S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, Nairobi: 2008, Hippo Books, pp. 67–68.

¹³⁷ A translated phrase from an aphorism among speakers of Zulu, Xhosa and Ndebele in southern Africa, which sounds: *Umuntu ngu muntu nga bantu*. or in Kiswahili they would say: *Utu ni kuwa mtu wa watu*.

¹³⁸ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, pp. 310f.

¹³⁹ S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, pp. 20–25.

wishes or because he/she wants to but because his/her community sees that vital dignity in him/her as a human member among them and so suppose that he/she lives on the basis of that vitality.

Though I am not trying affirming it as definite criteria, yet I figure out that it is from such perceptions as this that causes a number of African scholars and thinkers to generally speak and write of the preservation of community as standing to be central ideal of the moral life in African ethical theory. This would seemingly allow the interpretation that the individual needs to act according to social standards, in complying with the moral rules of the community irrespectively of one's moral conviction.

There are, however, scholars like Laurenti Magesa, who would tend to differ to some extent from this perception and argue that the achievement of abundant life is actually what plays role as central goal and moral principle in the African ethical theory and moral reasoning.¹⁴⁰ For Magesa, therefore, it is perceived that in the African moral tradition and ethics, it is observed that, "at all times in a person's life, ... [there is] in no way, is any thought, word or act understood except in terms of good and bad, in the sense that such an attitude or behaviour either enhances or diminishes life."¹⁴¹ In this sense, personal responsibility is not directly oriented toward the community, but rather the individual and the community are aiming at the same goal, which is the fulfilment of life. In the line indicated by Magesa, I will argue later that communal moral patterns cannot be simply equated with what has been described as customary morality, as "blind" orientation on what the standards of the society require.

Hence, in view of the demands of morality being equally accessible to all through reason, then, this morality is, in accordance with natural wisdom and cultural traditions, an assertion that: the distinctive character of morality lies on something inherent within human persons, considered to be of higher moral value; while bearing in mind that a human being in all his/her daily moral conducts, is indeed limited to norms and ethical values. The observed variation between communal moral patterns and individual morality shows the

¹⁴⁰ For more detail on this assertion, one should read the whole book authored by Laurenti Magesa with the title: *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant life*, Nairobi: 1997, Paulines Publications Africa. See also: P.I. Odozor, p. 249.

¹⁴¹ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 60.

need for a further reflection on the relationship between personal moral principles and communal moral guidelines.

2.1 ‘Morality’ and ‘Ethics’ in Parallel Connotation

It is significant that, in this dissertation, surveillance of essential notions, namely, ‘morality’ and ‘ethics’ be as well highlighted and clarified. These two terms or notions are, indeed, well-thought-out as two realities of sometimes identical significance and reasonably thought appropriate for the discussion in this study-work. In effect, they seem to be relatively correlated notions, and for that reason, I am actually going to employ them interchangeably and in a verbose manner all through this treatise. Accordingly, I would say, the two expressions are not merely significant in terms of implication, but also in conviction that, they play vital role to elucidate what it really entails of talking or writing about virtuous moral living. I would like to comment in a nutshell of their etymological source which will shed a little light for us to get acquainted with the implication they connote at present use in the day to day life and especially in the academic field.

Thus, from etymological standpoint, we arrive to some details and we learn that, the meaning of ‘morality’ is in point of fact derived from the English adjective “*moral*”, whose connotation is actually being traced out from the Latin words ‘*mos*’ and ‘*mores*’, whereas conveying their meaning as: customs, or habitual ways of doing things.¹⁴² It is from these Latin words, thus, one is in good position to discern that: the notion of morality is often considered as habitual or customary way of a person’s choice and conformity to the ‘correct’ behaviour or conduct learned in contact with family and community or society. Likewise, it is indeed perceived of the Greek term ἦθος (*ethos*) that is almost the same as those Latin words for the term ‘morality’ – customs or habitual ways of doing things in accordance with the traditional lifestyle of a certain society and the environment the people live in. Actually, I don’t intend now going to the detailed explanation of the two terms, but I have just found it significant for a little clue of their etymology which shows why some authors use the two terms interchangeably.

¹⁴² This is my interpretation as understood and tried to translate it from what is written in German language in the New Theological Dictionary edited by Herbert Vorgrimler; cf. H. Vorgrimler, *Neues Theologisches Wörterbuch*, Wien: 2000, Herder, p. 434.

Important and appropriate as for the time being, therefore, is to denote and clarify the classification of the two terms as they generally and often appear in some scholarly works, especially in those works involved with African themes on subject-matters of ethics and morality. As to my conviction, I find it is important having the sorting or classification of the two terms been noticeably pointed out. And such sorting is indeed helpful to a point of clarifying some thoughtful connotation in as far as academic matters in terms of ethics and morality are concerned in this study work, because in studies on Bantu African ethics often the different connotations are not paid due attention.

That means, the identification or the classification is, in the first place, helpful especially into taking seriously the study of people's moral conducts and behaviour as reasonable field of inquiry and/or analysis.¹⁴³ It further helps finding "what are the core elements of a society's moral beliefs? What principles undergird the moral choices people make, either in their individual lives or as a group? What constitutes right and wrong choices, good or bad conduct, and on what grounds?"¹⁴⁴ This can lead to the insight that different customs may refer to the same basic moral convictions. In the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, hence, it is denoted that: "The comparative study of ethics, which is apt in its earlier stages to impress the student with a bewildering sense of the diversity of moral judgments, ends rather by impressing them with a more fundamental and far-reaching uniformity."¹⁴⁵ And so, via the paramount extent of time and space over which humans have records, we discover the reappearance of common features of ordinary morality, which to the understanding of a number of scholars, at least, it does not give the impression to be less remarkable than the variations which do also appear.¹⁴⁶

At the outset, we need to be well acquainted with the fact that, in terms of definition, 'morality' and 'ethics' are notions, as it is already indicated, so closely related in their meaning and inference, to the extent that they sometimes appear more or less having identical connotation.

¹⁴³ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 50.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 50.

¹⁴⁵ In the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, hence, it is denoted that: "The comparative study of ethics, which is apt in its earlier stages to impress the student with a bewildering sense of the diversity of moral judgments, ends rather by impressing them with a more fundamental and far-reaching uniformity." Cf. G.H. Joyce, "Morality" in *Faith Database* [CD ROM], USA: 2008, Limited Liability Co. Also see in: <<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia/morality>>. Accessed on 11.05.2017.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. G.H. Joyce, "Morality". [CD ROM], 2008.

While being convinced by the *Encarta Dictionary*, an African scholar and author, Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, for instance, has in his book, *African Christian Ethics*, tried to provide a definition of ethics in relation to morality and considered it as: “a system of moral principles governing the appropriate conduct of an individual or group”.¹⁴⁷ In fact, one can just put it in summary that morality and ethics are two terms not seldom employed synonymously; it means, therefore that, by implication, the two terms often bear similar connotation and for that reason it sometimes seems difficult to set them apart, especially when it comes into elucidating precisely of their connotation and significance in scholarly works such as this. Pertinent to this point of view, I can, then, say there are even some further difficulties relating to the specific elucidation of the term ethics in general and to what is called African morality in particular.¹⁴⁸ Consequently, many African authors whom I quote in this work would rather prefer using the two terms, namely *ethics* and *morality*, interchangeably as it manifests itself in most of their scholarly expositions and treatises. Yet, even though, there are those moral philosophers who would prefer using “the term *ethics* to refer to the articulated systematic thinking that underlies society’s moral codes and associated moral behaviour.”¹⁴⁹ And so, “*morality*, on the other hand, is said to refer to a set of social rules, principles, norms that guide or are intended to guide the conduct of people in a society, and as beliefs about right and wrong conduct as well as good and bad behaviour.”¹⁵⁰

There are, however, some authors in moral philosophy, who would still prefer holding to the conviction that, *morality* is the practical aspect of the ethical enterprise, which implies an uncritical acceptance or assimilation of societal values¹⁵¹ and for that reason they have always chosen to characterize all their scholarly works in the realm of moral philosophy as simply ethics rather than morality. Morality, in this sense, would be the behaviour that is the object of study of sociology without regarding moral questions of motivation and intention of actions and their moral justification.

¹⁴⁷ S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, pp. 49ff.

¹⁴⁹ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 50. See also: Barry Hallen, “African Ethics?” in *The Blackwell Companion to Religious Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Oxford: 2005, Blackwell, p. 412.

¹⁵⁰ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 50. See also: Kwame Gyekye, “African Ethics,” in <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/african-ethics/>. Accessed: 10.09.2019.

¹⁵¹ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 50.

In accordance with such standpoints on classification of the two terms, then one can without doubt comprehend that, some scholars would, therefore, prefer using the two terms with slightly separate implications that: *ethics* relates to the theoretical study of right and wrong, good and bad, while *morality* relates to actual behaviour; meaning, the “living out of what one believes to be right and good.”¹⁵² In the *Catholic Encyclopaedia*, then, George H. Joyce simply explains it in following words:

Morality is antecedent to ethics: it denotes those concrete activities of which ethics is the science. It may be defined as human conduct in so far as it is freely subordinated to the ideal of what is right and fitting. This ideal governing our free actions is common to the race. Though there is wide divergence as to theories of ethics, there is a fundamental agreement among men regarding the general lines of conduct desirable in public and private life.¹⁵³

In fact, it seems to me that George Joyce was, in such words as they are quoted right above, trying to affirm that, despite the apparent existence of not only the conflicting elements in our societies but also the variances of our perceptions, there are still kind of agreement and uniformity on the way of life and moral conducts for all human beings irrespective of their differences in cultures. In fact, it is even perceived that such uniformity does normally regard principles rather than applications. And that is the reason, actual rules of conduct do differ extensively.¹⁵⁴ For further remark on this, we can discern also from Arthur H. Jentz and, thus, utter that, while “morality refers to social orders; ethics is the intellectual scrutiny of such orders and of the reasoning which articulates, supports, or opposes them.”¹⁵⁵

Of more surveillance for the closely related meaning of the two terminologies, James McClendon, in an attempt to clarify the meaning of morality, affirms that:

It is hardly surprising that today, as earlier, these two words (morality and ethics) are often used interchangeably. When a distinction is made, “morals” nowadays refers to actual human conduct viewed with regard to right and wrong, good and evil, “ethics” refers to a theoretical overview of morality, a theory or system or code. In this sense, our morality is the concrete human reality that we live out from day to day, while ethics is an

¹⁵² S.J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest...*, 1997, p. 23. cf.: A.H. Jentz, “Some Thoughts on Christian Ethics”, *Reformed Journal* 30 (1976): p. 52; also see: S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, pp. 3–4.

¹⁵³ G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008. N.B.! My perception to what George Joyce refers when he says, ‘... is common to the race’, is that, he implied, in one way or another, to raise out a connotation more inclined to be of mankind in unity or as a whole, rather than the skin colour differences of humans.

¹⁵⁴ G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008.

¹⁵⁵ A.H. Jentz, “Some Thoughts...,” 1976 p. 52.

academic view gained by taking a step back and analysing or theorizing about (any) morality.¹⁵⁶

Strictly abiding to the separation of meaning between the two terminologies, in this perception, it might encourage the tendency of people to assume that theoretical issues are good only for the scholar, teacher, student or professor in the classroom, while the practical is what is real, useful and true in life situations. It is for such reason, then, I opt and prefer using interchangeably, in this dissertation, both words “morality” and “ethics”. Nonetheless, even when I opt to use the two terms interchangeably, it surely does not hinder any attempt as of elucidating clearly the separation between the two notions though with slightly different theological and philosophical connotations as they may respectively exist. On such outlook and purpose, then, both terms – ethics and morality – ought to be assumed as referring to principles and motivations for conduct and behaviour that are being reflected at a personal or academic level.

Yet, the every day use of the terms does not follow the academic separation of ethics as reflection about morality from morality as lived practice (in the sociological sense) or as personal moral standards. For example, the conception of the term ‘Ethics’ can be defined and/or summed up as the reflection about ‘standards of behaviour’; however, the meaning referred to as ‘being ethical’ connotes to the application and realization of standards of behaviour to the way we live and lead our lives. And this covers both our personal lives and our working lives. The many widely agreed standards of behaviour are certainly enshrined in the law: for example, about not cheating and not stealing things. Whereas other standards of behaviour are enshrined in professional standards: like for instance, avoiding conflicts of interest and respecting confidentiality; most organisations in the public and private sectors have codes of ethics setting out the behaviours expected from their employees. Outside of such formal frameworks, standards of behaviour are often agreed on an informal basis between like-minded people: for example, in sporting clubs, cultural societies or religious communities. The standards of behaviour set by governments, professional bodies, organisations and community groups can vary across different countries and cultures. This is because societies in some parts of the world value some types of behaviours more highly than others. Bear in mind though that for every difference, there

¹⁵⁶ J.W. McClendon, *Systematic Theology. Vol. I: Ethics*, Revised edition; Nashville: 2002, Abingdon, pp. 45–46. cf.: S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, p. 4. Words in brackets are mine.

are likely to be many similarities, that one may even say: the common voice of mankind affirms that, it is always right for a human person to revere his/her parents; to care and provide for one's own children; to be in control and master of his/her lower appetites; to be a person of integrity, who is honest and just in his dealings, even when it may lead to one's own agony and/or physical damage; to manifest benevolence and good will to his/her fellow humans in time of distress; and to bear discomfort, misfortune and pain with fortitude.¹⁵⁷

Such principles and rules are usually acquired by imitation, as moral learning takes place in the age of children. In this sense, morality comes before ethics, practice before reflection. In such view, a person who allows oneself to be guided by prevailing custom in a particular human society is, in fact, regarded to be moral in that society or community. Prevailing customs may reflect the more or less well-founded confidence that tradition and society are the best guides to the knowledge of the good. And thus, observing prevailing customs can gradually become an expression of responsibility for the community if the concept of morality and the way it is experienced are broadened and deepened.¹⁵⁸ From this point it obviously brings us to a deduction that, a morally good person is the one responsible for the community rules and customs. In order to take responsibility – in a moral sense –, customs do not only need to be cherished and continued, but also reflected and understood with regard to the underlying moral principles that govern the day-to-day practice, and it needs to develop a consciousness and sensitivity for their correct application.

For Christians, however, showing 'responsibility for the community' is clearly one of the ways in which we 'do unto others as we would have them do unto us'; meaning, it is the means towards observing the golden rule of morality. We also find that, it is indeed a sense emphatically expounded by the prominent theologian Bernhard Häring when he points out that: "The fundamental value is always the human person with his or her capacity for love and the relation between the person and society."¹⁵⁹ It is thus the inherent value of his or her dignity, as the human person, which provides place and vitality for the virtue of love to overflow with small gestures of mutual care and respect for the other humans. This

¹⁵⁷ G.H. Joyce, "Morality," [CD ROM], 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. K. Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology*, 1986, p. 981.

¹⁵⁹ This quotation is from Bernard Häring as presented by Peter M.J. Stavinskas, in *Our Sunday Visitor's Catholic Encyclopedia*, in [CD ROM] Huntington: 1999, Our Sunday Visitor.

love is indeed communal and social, in the likeness of the Trinitarian divine nature, and thus, “it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.”¹⁶⁰ Christian ethics therefore takes into account that dimensions are to be observed in terms of communal life, respect of the other human person, and love of the neighbour.

In the Christian theological ethics there also has been a development from understanding itself as moral theology in the sense of presenting the sum of true teachings about right and wrong, good and evil, as understood through *natural reason* and through fidelity to the teachings of Christ expressed in *Scripture* and the theological *Tradition*¹⁶¹ of the Church. When it is named “Theological ethics”, it denotes the reflective side of ethical theory in the context of Theology. This reflection is necessary, when moral rules somehow are put into doubt or new situations arise and the question of moral justification is being asked. Subsequent to this understanding is an explanation of one great theologian, Karl Rahner, who quotes another prominent theologian, Bernard Häring, and says:

The derivation of the word “morality” as a comprehensive term for the human good, from the *mores* (customs), reflects a historical situation in which a uniform social milieu was universally recognized as setting the standard.¹⁶²

The Tanzanian society is situated in a process in which the uniform social milieu is gradually being dissolved. In this sense, reflecting on Bantu morality is reflecting on the crisis of a behavioural standard of communal life. To analyse Bantu morality in order to detect and describe its ethical structure and to develop it further therefore means also taking a step back from Bantu morality, in order to create the necessary theoretical structures that can help then to renew its practice.

2.2 Foundation of Morality, Universal Claim, and Habitual Conformity to Righteousness

I prefer at this juncture to extend the survey in search for a clear implication of what it means by virtuous moral living in relation to the concept of human dignity as foundational

¹⁶⁰ Francis, *Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home, (Laudato Si)*, Vatican: 2015, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 231.

¹⁶¹ *Tradition* (From Latin: *handing over*): In the religious sense, the teachings and practices handed down, whether in oral or written form, separately from but not independent of Scripture. So, the teachings said to be kept in tradition can as well be manifest and communicated through customs, institutions, and practices that express the Christian Faith. See also in the Documents Vatican Council II, *Dei Verbum*, n. 10.

¹⁶² Karl Rahner (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Theology*, London: 1986, Burns and Oates, p. 981.

principle for morality. It is also good to keep in mind that, the analysis and argument of this treatise is all based on the criteria, which appear to be distinctly designated in both: the Bantu African moral tradition and the Christian theological ethics. And by all intent and purpose, I would say, the latter is for the fulfilment of the former, yet without prejudice of the significant values which can be found in the former for the progress of the latter. This means that with regard to the relationship of Bantu ethics and Christian ethics, one can easily apply the model proposed by Aquinas that “the natural” is being transformed and fulfilled in the light of grace, which means more concretely that Christian morality can build upon Bantu morality.¹⁶³

This implies even further that, just as it is perceived of the concept of human dignity in Christian morality, so likewise it is connoted in the Bantu Africans moral theory and ethical patterns that: in order that we human beings are judged to be virtuous or morally righteous, it requires that we realise who we are, in the sense that we respect our own inherent dignity and that of others. To be aware of one’s dignity helps that we behave and treat ourselves in the way fitting to our dignity and similarly we should, as Kant has formulated it, treat others also as ends in themselves and not as mere means to an end. Following a perception such as this, then, the concept of human dignity, should be considered to play significant role for setting the foundation as basic principle for morality and accordingly for virtuous moral living. I will actually come back for more discussion on this point in the coming chapters of this treatise, so as to provide more explanation and thorough analysis for clarification, especially with regard to the Bantu understanding of human dignity.

In addition to Kant, the discussion on dignity as property of the human being also refers to the topic of natural moral law, for which in the tradition of Moral Theology the approach of Thomas Aquinas was especially influential. That is due to the fact that, alongside the concerns dealt with in discussions on the subject-matter of human dignity, one cannot avoid the associated aspects of the human nature and the natural moral law¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Theo Kobusch, „Grace (Ia IIae, qq. 109-114): trans. Grant Kaplan and Frederick G. Lawrence,“ in Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Washington, D.C.: 2002, Georgetown University Press, pp. 207-218, especially p. 214.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Karl-Heinz Peschke, *Christian Ethics I: Moral Theology in the light of Vatican II*, Manila: 1996, Divine World Publication, p. 96, explains this in the following way: „Natural law doctrine is of fundamental relevance above all on two accounts. First, it is the basis of the moral order of universal character and

and so also the fact that, there is in our contemporary time quite a huge number of neo-Kantian moral philosophers adopting the notion of human dignity as a fundamental moral theory for virtuous moral living. And that includes also Bantu African thinkers and scholars.

From the etymological viewpoint we have already briefly noticed in the previous section that ‘morality’ implies customs, or habitual ways of doing things.¹⁶⁵ From this understanding, therefore, one is set in a position to discern and comprehend that: morality is understood to imply and call attention to the habitual way of a human person’s choice and conformity to the ‘correct’ behaviour or conduct learned in contact with family and community or in the society in which one lives. And with this notion, it furthermore means, therefore, that, when for instance people say, something is ‘moral’ they generally mean it is ‘good’ or rather ‘rightly done’ in accordance to the standards of that certain community in concern. But even when we get in acquaintance with this inference, we still need to be cautious and aware that customary ways of doing things can as well be right or wrong, good or evil, depending on whether or not they conform with the coherent moral dictates of the natural moral law and are in accord with the dignity of the human person. . Certainly this is due to the reason that, “every society has its own particular understanding of virtue and of the definition of a virtuous person and of what makes one so.”¹⁶⁶ There can be, for instance, some communities or societies that may regard justice as the cornerstone virtue or moral value of their ethical life, while also there can be others that might consider love to be so. Such variation of perception is even evidently observed between the Christian tradition and the ancient Greek tradition. The Christian tradition does, for instance, include “in its list of virtues such qualities as humility and meekness – virtues that were unknown or not highly regarded by Aristotle or his compatriots.”¹⁶⁷ And, in case I likewise throw a glance to the Bantu African societies, for example, I observe that, to a large extent, the perception of their moral tradition falls on the criterion that, the good of the community is the principal determining factor in moral situations; while by contrast, in the Western

constitutes a resource of ethical wisdom which Christians share with all mankind, for it rests upon that reality which is shared by all humans: their common humanity and existential conditions. Secondly, natural law is the only adequate safeguard against arbitrary exercise of political and legislative power.“

¹⁶⁵ See also, H. Vorgrimler, *Neues Theologisches...*, 2000, p. 434.

¹⁶⁶ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 255.

¹⁶⁷ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 255.

societies – meaning, in Europe and Northern America – more of moral decisions are focused on the good of the individual person. In order to find the common grounds of different cultural sets of morality, then, it is necessary to look for the common basis of morality that all human beings share.

At this juncture, and following this argument, I need to discuss briefly on concern of natural moral law as in terms of personal and situational character in relation to morality. We are certainly well acquainted with the knowledge that natural moral law derives from the human nature and human's ultimate end or goal. Inasmuch as this nature as well as the ultimate end are common to all human beings, then one can justly conclude to the universality of moral law and conception of morality. But beyond their common nature and their inherent dignity, humans do likewise possess individual properties and talents, which play role into instituting of their personal, unique nature as individuals in the community. It helps to contribute to the realization of the ultimate end as individuals with a unique calling in the community. Such features can equally be counted as part of the basis for moral obligations, yet obligations of a personal, unique kind, which need also to conform to the moral and ethical standards of the society they live in.

The awareness of these realities has led, in post-conciliar Christian theological ethics, to a noticeable shift of accent from “human nature” to the “human person.”¹⁶⁸ In the past one was easily inclined to the opinion that moral instructions present the sum total of moral obligations and that persons who just fulfil these rules already have done their full duty. Moral instructions, however, can only provide a framework of obligations derived from the common nature of all humans, insofar as this nature is more or less the same in all human beings. But they are not in a position to define those moral obligations which derive from the concrete uniqueness of each person. That means, the moral claims addressed to the individual person are not just limited to what is written in the Church's ethical or moral instructional books. In other words, that is to say, all morality has therefore situational elements of historical, cultural, social character and other human elements of human nature. Moral principles, for that reason, may not be applied mechanically to situations which are similar and yet not entirely equal. It requires, therefore, that before drawing moral conclusions, situations have to be studied carefully. It is necessary to gather relevant data,

¹⁶⁸ Cf. K.H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics* (1), 1996, p. 117ff.

recognize facts and do analytical research before making a moral resolution or inference. Different circumstances may call for different answers. A good example for this can actually be given from the image of parents raising up children in the family. Any parent who has brought up two children knows that the accomplishment of the same goal often requires some modification in approach because of differences in personality. Sensitivity is, therefore, demanded for each particular situation, which makes the finding of the moral norm more difficult than one is generally ready to admit.

Following these highlighted examples, one can then comprehend the reality that, customary or habitual tradition “has a tremendous effect on shaping one’s moral dispositions, the stable tendencies that mark the character of the person as a moral agent.”¹⁶⁹ And this tells us even more that, moral behaviour cannot be limited to a legalism, faithful to the mere letter of any law by itself, but rather must be directed towards the realization of the comprehensive human moral values as well as to human person’s destination and calling, both as an individual and as part of the community.

Having taken all this into consideration, then, one gets to be well acquainted with the characteristic implication that: the expression ‘virtuous moral living’ might, therefore, be defined as that practical habit or steady disposition of the human person and as actions that follow from it. And by disposition it means, the person’s “readiness to act in a particular way.”¹⁷⁰ It even implies further and more explicitly signifying, that distinct moral disposition which inclines the human person to do what is good and avoid what is evil without defiling one’s own dignity nor going against the natural moral law. It is, thus, by habitual ways of perceiving and doing things that the person’s moral behaviour and ethical conducts are shaped. That means, as a person tend to act in a certain way over a period of time, there is a certain moral quality which is formed in that person and which henceforth disposes him or her “to act on subsequent occasions in a similar way, or in a way that the quality of which has formed is expressed in those actions.”¹⁷¹ Thus, a person “could, on account of what one believes, act consistently in a morally upright way (virtue) or in a morally wrong way (vice).”¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 256.

¹⁷⁰ P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 255.

¹⁷¹ J.M. Gustafson, *Christ and the Moral Life*, Chicago: 1968, University of Chicago, p. 141.

¹⁷² P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 255.

I fancy that is the reason Thomas Aquinas' formulated the definition of virtue as "a good quality of the mind, by which we live righteously, of which no one can make bad use, which God brings about in us, without us."¹⁷³ So we can notice that Aquinas understood virtue as that *good quality of mind by which we live righteously*, and he finally asserts that, no one should make bad use of such good quality of mind, for it is intrinsically endowed us, even without us to have demanded it or requested for it. Kant might have gone more precisely to have called that good quality of mind not virtue but rather the capacity of reason of which it is also intrinsically endowed to the human being, and that it has to be correctly applied for the purpose of acting righteously and virtuously.

Since customs, practices and even habitual ways of doing things do vary from culture to culture, it can, thus, be expected that there will be varying approaches to understand what really it means by *morality* with regard to actual practice. Still, if we make keen observation of this fact, we come to realize, it still poses a challenge as on what exactly we can ostensibly say that, this and that, in our societies' habitual ways of doing things is morally good conduct with certitude. The fact that, there are varying traditional and cultural approaches to discern on what is ethically good and what is not, and so of morality, then, there will always be instances in which some misunderstanding will be rising and they can even come into expressing indignity. Certainly, this can happen, not only among those cultural-traditional societies without any knowledge of Christian theological ethics, but also among a number of societies in the Christian civilisation as well. So then, we need to bear in mind that, there can be clear distinction of perceiving morality in its concrete practice as from differences of cultures and traditions.

For instance, one can observe that a number of various authors and scholars, on African theological subject-matters and ethics, have been insisting that, the most important moral principle for the Bantu Africans, and even some putting it in a generalised way as of applying to all Africans¹⁷⁴, is that of community-bound ethics. This does, however, not only describe that the specific way of living is culturally determined. Rather it also points at the fact that it is understood as in itself not making a universal ethical claim, but rather

¹⁷³ S.T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 554, a. 4.

¹⁷⁴ Such tendency of generalising that all Africans are of the same culture and traditions as if they are also of the same ethnic origin is actually wrong and inappropriate, since the continent of Africa is vast and consists of numerous ethnicities with numerous cultures and traditions, which can never be the same.

confining the validity of its moral rules to those who are members of the community. It is constitutive that all individuals in the community are described from their acquaintances to the concerned community and they are all in that certain community regarded as brothers and sisters, following the reason that they possess a common origin and ancestral heritage or tradition. It is, thus, by virtue of their acquaintance with the community that they are given rights and duties. They have the right to be protected by the whole community or better call it family lineage. And for the ensuring of rights and duties, they have to avoid anything that could cause evil to any one of the community as a whole. One can observe that this approach poses limits to rights and duties, namely by making a clear difference between those belonging to the community and those who do not belong to it.

Yet, as is the task of this work, despite of all this perception that the community is the focal principle for moral action in the Bantu African moral tradition, there is still a foundational principle on which the whole commencement of the perceived as communal principle is actually laid upon. And this foundational principle is nothing else but the dignity of the human person and human life – which are mostly regarded as vital forces and basic principle for morality and for virtuous moral living; the universal claim is tainted by the idea and conception of community strongly emphasized by scholars. It is, thus, the duty and responsibility of each individual member in the community to ensure respect for human dignity so as to reinforce virtuous moral living and life as a whole.¹⁷⁵ Even further, one need get it clearly in mind that, being characterized by stability, a virtuous moral person, will always strive not only to be a good person, but also seeks and pursues for what is good and chooses to act in accordance with those norms leading into virtuous way and uprightness in the course of life. So, then, it is in living virtuously and acting morally that a person is unveiled as one who abides righteously to both his/her moral disposition of being and doing; of one's formal status and concrete actions or conducts.

Once again, while trying to go back to the point I have already raised in the paragraph above, that, there are in fact varying traditional and cultural approaches to discern on what is morally good and what is morally bad or evil, henceforth, I would like to point out that the criteria for morality and virtuous moral living should therefore be one

¹⁷⁵ Cf. L. Kagabo, "Alexis Kagame (1912–1981): Life and Thought" in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2006, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, p. 238.

of universal character, in whatever human community or institution that criteria would apply, to encompass all humanity. Even when we may sometimes get inclined to think that there are institutions or communities holding an absolute authority on provision of moral teachings and dictates, yet we should not be biased or prejudiced of the universal criteria that are in one way or another also found in some other people's cultures, customs and traditions. Timothy E. O'Connell, has pinpointed that this universal moral claim is to be more highly regarded than mere obedience to existing rules, even if these rules are proposed by the Church:

The Church's role in moral matters is limited by possibility of inadequacy. [...] It is distinctly possible that what once was good, truly helpful to persons, truly serving their humanization and spiritualization, may someday become the opposite. [...] The Church, therefore, has an important and responsible role in the process of moral education. But it is a limited role. It is limited by the possibility of error, the possibility of incompleteness, and the possibility of inadequacy. The prudent person acknowledges this, yet seeks from the Church whatever wisdom it is able to give her or him.¹⁷⁶

A significant point raised by O'Connell in the above quotation draws, thus, the implication that, even when we have to abide to our faith convictions, yet there is always something inherent in all humans, which remains always true guidance of moral conducts, regardless of our beliefs, culture, or even time. He in fact, does not deny that the Church has nothing to do with matters of morals, but rather he puts forward an analysis that, "the wisdom and the judgement of the Church are important, but they are not supremely important."¹⁷⁷ He even adds to his argument a relevant question as he asks: "Is a Catholic who finds himself or herself able to agree with the judgement of the Church a better Catholic than one who cannot? We must never say so."¹⁷⁸ Ultimately, he ends up his critique while raising an alertness that, we should not see the moral teaching of our religious convictions or institutions as a sole test of our moral consciousness or even as foundations of our moral living; for actually doing so, is to violate against the nature of humanity and surely the nature of our dignity and moral conscience.¹⁷⁹ In view of that, it is discernibly and evidently true therefore that, morality is not simply a matter of following Church teaching without the so-called interior response. This interior response should also not only be restricted to the comprehension of conscience, as the majority of us would get inclined

¹⁷⁶ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 117.

¹⁷⁷ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 118.

¹⁷⁸ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 118.

¹⁷⁹ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 118.

to do so, but it should also tag the inherent value of the human person as a whole. In words of Timothy O’Connell, thus, this point is clearly spelled out that:

As human persons, and all the more as Christians who understand something of the dignity and destiny of our world, we are called to goodness and responsibility. We experience ourselves as accountable, as challenged by ourselves and our world, as worthy of praise or blame depending on how we respond. Whether this phenomenon is viewed as conscience [...or as ...] experience of importance, it is a central aspect of existence.¹⁸⁰

Hence, by virtue of being humans, we human beings are all guided by the innermost facet of our existence, which inclusively, it is like taking hold of our human dignity, our conscience and the natural moral law in one. That means, therefore, it is not only Christians, whom we can say, they are urged that they should be continually growing in being keen on the values of the kingdom of God, but indeed also all humanity. It is all humanity called to be keen of the moral and ethical values, so that those values become heartfelt responses to the good that can be achieved and for the rejections of doing evils that is rampant not only in the world around but also as temptations in oneself, as weak human made of clay.

All in all, we are for that reason, called to live in accordance with the dictates of our inner response, thereby make a reasonable distinction between what is good and to be followed or done and what is evil and to be shunned. For Christians, faith motivates to taking moral responsibility by teaching that true morality should be lived ultimately out of love for the beautiful good of Christ Himself and a desire to love others as He himself did. For that reason, Pope Francis also teaches that: “Creation is of the order of love. (And thus) God’s love is the fundamental moving force in all created things.”¹⁸¹ For more clarification, the theologian Benedict M. Ashley would put it as: “The Christian lives in God’s kingdom, God’s community, as part of the very ‘*body of Christ*’ (Rom 12:5). Hence morality is always a communal morality, a morality of liberation from the enslavement of sin in all its phases, individual and social.”¹⁸² This illustrates that the good that a Christian should seek is regarding the whole world and all human beings, and therefore has a universal focus.

¹⁸⁰ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 184.

¹⁸¹ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, 2015, n. 77. Words in brackets are my personal addition to the quotation.

¹⁸² B.M. Ashley, *Living the Truth in Love: A Biblical Introduction to Moral Theology*, New York: 2008, Society of St. Paul, p. 7.

2.3 Moral Values, Virtues and the Human Moral Nature

After all that has been discussed in the previous section as of habitual ways of conformity to righteousness, I fancy it is now significant to bear in mind that, in as long as human beings do exist, i.e. the created beings who by virtue of their dignity are endowed with the capacity of reason, then, there are indeed certain fundamental norms and moral principle concerning good and evil, by virtue of their nature and dignity, which we should understand that they remain constant and unchanged. There are some aspects and elements following the human persons' dignity and nature as human beings, which do remain throughout all historical and cultural changes. Because of human nature, therefore, it is understood that the human person is of one's own self "the measure of culture and the condition ensuring that man does not become the prisoner of any of his cultures, but asserts his personal dignity by living in accordance with the profound truth of his being."¹⁸³ And it is by use of reason that humans are capable of arriving to the moral knowledge, and so are also capable of judging between what is good and what is evil, while by the faculty of will they are capable of making decision and act according to the dictates of natural moral law, without prejudice to the dignity of their nature as humans.

To be human is, in fact, being by nature capable of defining and deciding that some things in life are important and some other things are not. And surely we do not find all things important for the same reason. There are some of the things, we cherish and carry out, and we find them to be significant to us, simply because they are subjectively satisfying us. We feel good and comfortable doing them and therefore we tend to like them. There are other aspects of life, however, of which we consider important because of their usefulness and convenience to all humans. And following their utility and convenience to all humans, then, they are objectively good for all human beings. Truth, for instance, may be mightily difficult to swallow when we are told it. It may even oppose our best interests, but in all cases as it might come and be, we cannot bring ourselves to consider the truth as unimportant one in our life. And the same can be said for justice; one may not be in a mood to do or practice it, yet one would for sure consider it tragic if the world would eliminate justice as a reality to life and practice.

¹⁸³ *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 53.

It is therefore that we can follow the distinction between material values that can be said to be of an individual and therefore pluralistic character, and moral values that refer to how we do what we do, or how we pursue our aims.¹⁸⁴ These moral values can be described also in terms of virtues, as has been the case in different ethical systems in the past, as in those of Aristotle, the Stoa, and Aquinas that all have influenced Christian ethics at different times, and those that are currently developed further in the Christian ethical context.¹⁸⁵

Among the moral values like honesty, solidarity, fairness, compassion, charity, and all those realities we have traditionally named ‘virtues’ belong to virtuous moral living. As humans, we may not always succeed in embodying them, but that does not mean we really consider them not to be important. They are indeed all important in themselves as moral values, which are universal; and they must have universal criteria or principle behind them, a foundational principle on which they are all grounded. To all such realities falling under the category of objective significance it is thus given the name ‘moral values.’¹⁸⁶ We need to bear in mind that, a value is not a moral value unless, in principle, it is universal and it could be upheld by all mankind.¹⁸⁷ Independent importance and objective significance is actually the common characteristics of moral values. Moral values are there, present in daily life’s conduct and experience, whether humans like it or not. “In day-to-day life we justify actions by reference to what are generally accepted as moral values in the society to which we belong.”¹⁸⁸

And although it does not mean that all moral values are the same, yet if people are found to have no sensitivity to the significance, like say, of justice or fidelity, they are considered to be poor human beings. That means “they are failure not only in a certain respect, but also in the central meaning of their humanity. So for all values, moral values are by far the most important not because we say so, or even because we wish it so, but

¹⁸⁴ Stephan Ernst, „Was sind sittliche Werte?“, in: Sigrid Müller, Stephanie Höllinger, and Bettina Baldt (Eds.), *Werte im Beruf*, Münster 2020 (in print).

¹⁸⁵ Cf., e.g., Joseph Selling, *Reframing Catholic Theological Ethics*, Oxford: 2016, Oxford University Press, and „Reframing Catholic Theological Ethics: Summary and Application, religions,“ 8 (10) 2017, 203 (9 pages) www.mdpi.com/journal/religions (accessed 06.11.2019); Daniel J. Harrington, James F. Keenan (eds.), *Jesus and Virtue Ethics: Building Bridges between New Testament Studies and Moral Theology*, Lanham, Maryland: 2005, Rowland & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁸⁶ Cf. T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 132.

¹⁸⁷ M.M. Agrawal, “Morals and the Value of Human life,” in E.C. Eze (ed.), *African Philosophy: Anthology*, Oxford: 1998, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., p. 151.

¹⁸⁸ M.M. Agrawal, “Morals and the Value ...,” 1998, p. 151.

simply because phenomenologically we find it so.”¹⁸⁹ To be noted even further is the cognizance that, moral values are considered to embody some or other aspect of an ultimate human value. Thus, in effect, moral values mediate between particular actions and an ultimate human value. Hence, it can be asserted that, the sum total of the moral values of a certain society, for instance, is its image of humanity – that the individuals in the community are living in accordance to their intrinsic moral value, which is their dignity; and humanity is what actually constitutes the society’s conception of human realization and perfection.¹⁹⁰

Thus, it is not sufficient to say that the human person is a located being in this world; meaning, the human person is a ‘*Dasein*.’¹⁹¹ In other words, that is to say, it is not adequate to notice that we exist ‘within a world,’ but rather we should further realise that, “our world has a certain objectivity, a certain intransigence. It has a certain quality of self-existence that we cannot dominate. Instead, it demands our acceptance and affirmation and, indeed, appreciation.”¹⁹²

My interest here is to draw a point that the world in which human beings live is a moral world; the world of responsibility and accountability, the world of obligation and duty, the world of challenge and opportunity, the world of values, and just to say in specific, it is the world of moral values. Such (moral) values are real and actually they should not be misunderstood as figments of our imagination. Instead they are to be taken in mind as part of the real world to which we humans are ultimately accountable and dutiful. As a result of this understanding, then, that moral values are real, we are hence brought to the position of understanding the natural moral law even better. That is to say, we should therefore understand natural moral law as the pursuit of moral values, realizing that moral values are real, and yet in conflict, susceptible to change, but also firmly grounded.¹⁹³ In addition, moral values do point at those qualities which are absolutely essential for virtuous living.

To be noted is that, the purpose of virtuous living is to be both sincere and correct in our moral judgements and decision making. So when it comes to virtuous moral living,

¹⁸⁹ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 132.

¹⁹⁰ M.M. Agrawal, “Morals and the Value ...,” 1998, p. 151.

¹⁹¹ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 133.

¹⁹² T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 133

¹⁹³ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 173.

in accord to the inherent dignity we are endowed, then, we should be honest when it comes to interpersonal communications, we should strive to practice justice when it comes to mutual rights and duties, and we should strive for doing charity when it comes to dealing with people in need, helping them and giving them due respect and equal treatment as humans with dignity. Thus, no one would call a human individual a morally virtuous person, who decidedly refused to help a person in need or to alleviate anybody's suffering, even if the person himself or herself did not injure that other suffering person (call him/her one's neighbour) by direct acts of violence. The moral reason or motive, both for abstaining from inflicting injury and for rendering help, is actually, only positioning itself like the two sides of the coin, but in reality it is one and the same – namely, a recognition of the right of others to live and to enjoy life.¹⁹⁴ And that means, even further, therefore, that for people to be taken as virtuous moral persons, they must maximize the goods and minimize the evils, for only in that way can they fulfil themselves and their world. If they are sincere, for instance, then, their life is safeguarded. But for moral persons, precisely because they are sincere, sincerity is not enough. They yearn also to be correct. To be correct, not in order to be self-righteous but that good may truly flourish, that they and their neighbours may be treated as they deserve, that moral values may be protected and evil be avoided, that the situation they encounter may be better as a result of their presence and their determination to live virtuously and morally.¹⁹⁵

And so, when moral consciousness on respect for the dignity of the human person and observance of moral values in the human community reaches a certain level of development, then it can be that even the refusal to help a stranger or an enemy will be condemned not only by the communal ethical standards and norm but also by the individuals' conscience as directly wrong. Of this point, it is therefore logical to say, if I understand that we all humans share the same inherent dignity as human beings, then I ought to help my neighbour, and surely then I wrong him/her for not extending help to such a person in need.¹⁹⁶ Thus, the point is, if at all justice, charity or mercy demand recognition of the dignity inherent to the human person by nature, then, it is clear that those moral values cannot be virtues by themselves, distinct from respect for human dignity. To value

¹⁹⁴ Cf. V. Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, trans. by N.A. Duddington and ed. by B. Jakim, Grand Rapids, MI: 2005, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 85.

¹⁹⁵ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 186.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. V. Solovyov, *The Justification ...*, 2005, pp. 85–86.

the dignity of the human person is, thus, to have respect and care for persons as ends, i.e. caring for them for what they are, and caring for their life and their existence.¹⁹⁷

2.4 The Object of Obligation to Virtuous Moral Living

The inner voice calling for all humans to be moral and live virtuously, “makes itself heard across the length and breadth of our lives.”¹⁹⁸ In a number of survey and search from socio-ethical anthropology, Christian and African scholars have reasonably come to ascertain the fact that, no one can deny acquaintance that, a human person is, indeed, bound to essential moral value inherently instituted to his or her nature as a human, and so to stand for the reputable characteristic of the Supreme Good and abide to the interests of one’s own community, as they would be his/her own. Indeed, it is even asserted that the progression of morality into virtuous moral living depends, for any human person, not so much on invention of new principles than on better application of those already recognised in the innermost nature of the person and communally accepted. That means, on application of such principles, as in the recognition of their transcendent foundation and their ultimate sanction, with regard to the wide expanse within which they are held to bind, as well as in exclusion of the inconsistent corruptions with their observance.¹⁹⁹ By ‘new principles’ I hereby mean those ethical principles being acquired by the process of learning in a certain cultural environment, taking into consideration the socio-ethical pattern and moral values of any human community as such.

Being aware of this reality, thus, George H. Joyce raises a point resonant of implicating the extant object of obligation to virtuous moral living as it appears established from the stand point of religion or rather call it, from the spiritual convictions.²⁰⁰ His argument starts from the standpoint of some misleading perceptions that appeared to manifest from his contemporary scholars, especially in the ethical philosophical realm, when it was maintained that right moral action would be altogether independent of religious

¹⁹⁷ Cf. M.M. Agrawal, “Morals and the Value ...,” 1998, p. 151.

¹⁹⁸ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 184.

¹⁹⁹ Cf. G.H. Joyce, “Morality” [CD ROM], 2008.

²⁰⁰ The term ‘religion’, as it is applied in this section, should not be confused with the term ‘revelation’. The term religion here is used to denote all those efforts of human beings to touch the transcendent, to contact and appease the divinity; while on the other hand, ‘revelation’ would have been used to indicate divine initiative, the actions by which God approaches and touches us. For further reference see also: T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 3f.

influences. There were also attempts of substituting the independent morality for the morality based on the beliefs of Theism. Yet there were some affirmation by some Christian theologians that the two aspects are essentially connected, otherwise it would have been difficult to exactly comprehend of the moral law – its nature as well as the way it functions. So then as to nature of morality he arrived – by contrasting it to morality shaped by Christian faith – to the assertion that:

[The Church's moral stand and theological ethics] admits that the moral law is knowable to reason: for the due regulation of our free actions, in which morality consists, is simply their right ordering with a view to the perfecting of our rational nature. But she insists that the law has its ultimate obligation in the will of the Creator by whom our nature was fashioned, and who imposes on us its right ordering as a duty; and that its ultimate sanction is the loss of God which its violation must entail. Further, among the duties which the moral law prescribes are some which are directly concerned with God Himself, and as such are of supreme importance. Where morality is divorced from religion, reason will, it is true, enable a man to recognize to a large extent the ideal to which his nature points. But much will be wanting. He will disregard some of his most essential duties. He will further, be destitute of the strong motives for obedience to the law afforded by the sense of obligation to God and the knowledge of the tremendous sanction attached to its neglect – motives which experience has proved to be necessary as a safeguard against the influence of the passions. And, finally, his actions even if in accordance with the moral law, will be based not on the obligation imposed by the Divine will, but on considerations of human dignity and on the good of human society.²⁰¹

This paragraph, cited right above, tells us of a crucial notion, namely: the object of obligation as it applies to human dignity in relation to morality. For it establishes that: where the object of obligation is inadequate or defective, then, a human action does actually lack an element essential to guide him or her into praxis of true morality; consequently, what follows would surely be moral degradation, which might be displayed on the person's life as not being virtuous or not being upright. It means, then that, there will be kind of moral deprivation in one's own conducts and ways of life, and especially with regard to the communal living. And this shows further that, there is actually something more in concern about morality than just its relation to religion or religious instructions and principles, namely fundamental respect for human dignity.

In the Bantu African ethics, therefore, the religious laws and regulations are related to dutiful communal bans and prohibitions (i.e. taboos). Such laws and regulations have the characteristic that they are normally formulated in the negative statements or declarations. They consistently require from people not that they should do something, but rather that

²⁰¹ G.H. Joyce, "Morality" [CD ROM], 2008. Words in brackets are my personal addition.

they should abstain from doing something. That means, they are typical interdictions with more of outlawing and illegalization character. Only such laws and regulations can thus be said to have moral significance and to generate moral obligation.²⁰² For that reason, the transgression of interdictions is understood as something, which is absolutely bad, even if done unwittingly. In order to avoid such kind of transgressions, then one is supposed to always strive to be good. Actually the important thing in a conception of ethics such as this, is that the sanctions pertaining to those laws and regulations are immanent in terms of both reward and punishment. And they are, indeed, sanctions deriving from the conception of the meaning of human existence, nature and dignity. Thus the most important reward to the human person moral conducts in the community are good is, first and foremost, the strengthening of personal dignity and communal life, while on the other side of the coin, the most important punishment is the weakening or tainting of one's own dignity as the human person or, even worse the extinction of his life. The realisation of meaning in human life and the dignity inherent to him or her, then, is the first principle of Bantu African ethics.²⁰³

In other moral traditions, however, and especially in Christian theological ethics, as such, it has consistently been taught that, the object of obligation to virtuous living and acting morally is as well bound to the reasoning capacity with which the human being is endowed, and the natural moral law, as it has been presented right in the previous section above. Thus, in accordance with Saint Thomas Aquinas: "Human reason is the norm of the human will, according to which its goodness is measured, because reason derives from the eternal law which is the divine reason itself."²⁰⁴ Going even further, Aquinas stayed to the argument that: "It is evident then that the goodness of the human will depends much more on the eternal law than on human reason."²⁰⁵ Nevertheless, the treatise of Aquinas on moral law, explains without bias more or less one of the foundational principles of moral living, though for him virtuous moral living is always explained with reference to Christian life. Yet a significant point from him is the remark he makes to determine that, moral law is a principle placed in human nature to guide and put everything in life into order, including human conducts. And reciprocally, it is through the moral law that we humans are, thus,

²⁰² Cf. L. Kagabo, "Alexis Kagame ...," 2006, p. 239.

²⁰³ ²⁰³ Cf. L. Kagabo, "Alexis Kagame ...," 2006, p. 239.

²⁰⁴ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 19, a. 4; see also a. 9.

²⁰⁵ T. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Ia-IIae, q. 19, a. 4; see also a. 9.

being helped to be aware of the inherent dignity we possess. For both, the moral law and the dignity of our humanity (which we possess not by virtue of our own potency but rather by God's gracious kindness to the humankind) emanate from God and so, we can say, from a source outside humankind. The point emphasised here is actually that: it is not the human person as being under the law but he/she as a being desiring self-realization. Hence, it tells us further that, human nature implies not only the deontological accomplishment but also a search for teleological fulfilment or a finality; that means, an inner movement toward self-fulfilment. And so, the difference between the human being and other creatures, lies in that, the human person needs to reflect upon the fundamental moral desire he or she has to fulfil in life, in search of self-realization. In other words, that is to say, the dignity of the human person is indeed recognised and appreciated following the fact that he/she is endowed with intellect and will.²⁰⁶ As an intelligent and free being, therefore, the human person is called to make critical examination on what he/she desires for self-fulfilment, as one prone to self-deception of one's own real image and value, as well as when he/she is easily discouraged to pursue such moral or ethical ambition by the difficulties he/she encounters on the way of life. It is via what we humans do that we actualize our potential – for good or evil. Both elements – the deontological element of duty and the teleological element of an inherent desire of self-realization do play a role in Bantu ethics.²⁰⁷

2.4.1 Christian Contribution: Engrossing the Inherent Value for Virtuous Life

In accord to the understanding and connection between the object of obligation and the essential element of morality, thus, it is constantly insisted and taught in the Christian theological ethics that: “in our present state there is a certain obscurity in reason's vision of the moral law, together with a morbid craving for independence impelling us to transgress it, and a lack of complete control over the passions; and that by reason of this

²⁰⁶ Cf. Timothy P. Jackson, “Evolution, Agape, and the Image of God: A Reply to Various Naturalists,” in Frederick V. Simmons – Brian C. Sorrells (eds.), *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, Washington, D.C.: 2016, Georgetown University Press, pp. 226-249, especially p. 227.

²⁰⁷ Kant also speaks of the deontological philosophical (duty) and teleological element of his ethics, where he explains that Christian belief in resurrection and God's reward for good act can provide hope or consolation, and thus motivation for morally good acts. The true foundation of morality, however, remains in the fulfilment of duty. Cf. Dieter Witschen, *Kants Moralthologie. Ethische Zugänge zur Religion*, Studien der Moralthologie 41, Münster 2009: LIT Verlag, pp. 111-120. In comparison to this, the Bantu understanding of self-development points rather at the experience of personal fulfilment, not at the question of reward.

inherited taint, man, unless supported by Divine aid, is unable to observe the moral law for any length of time.”²⁰⁸ In such case as it appears at this instant, then, it means, virtuous moral living should be in all intent and purpose guided by that image of God²⁰⁹ inherent to all human persons, and by which the moral law is as well channelled. It means, therefore, leading a virtuous moral life needs a person to be basically aware of one’s own nature and dignity and so being well conscious of the rational understanding of one’s own nature as a human being with that dignity inherent in oneself, while also being supplemented by the divine exposure.²¹⁰ In the moral perspective of Bantu African ethical pattern and system, the Creator of the universe (God) “stands as the ultimate guardian of the moral order of the universe for the sole, ultimate purpose of benefiting humanity. Humanity, being central in the universal order, is morally bound to sustain the work of God by which humanity itself is in turn, sustained.”²¹¹ Thus, humanity is the principally most significant moral value intrinsically endowed by God’s action for moral guidance.

While captivating on this view of which we now hold in mind, we still realise even clearer that, there is yet another side of the coin, with which a depiction for what actually provides us with a specifically significant impression is urgently need, and that, additional observations are to be considered. For the understanding of ethics is by some thinkers perceived to indicate that morality derives from people’s perception of the vital forces. For this reason, therefore, George H. Joyce calls additionally for an alert that:

In dealing with this subject, however, it is further necessary to take account of the historical argument. Various facts are adduced, which, it is alleged, show that morality is, in point of fact, capable of dissociation from religion. It is urged (1) that the most [traditional] peoples do not connect their religious beliefs with such moral code as they possess; and (2) that even where the moral consciousness and the religious system have reached a high degree of development, the spheres of religion and morality are sometimes regarded as separate.²¹²

This tells us, therefore that, it does not merely depend on the religion and the religious moral codes or guidance, for a person to practice virtuous moral living, but rather on the natural dignity intrinsically enjoyed by the person, as a human being and in one’s

²⁰⁸ G.H. Joyce, “Morality” [CD ROM], 2008.

²⁰⁹ This implication of the ‘image of God’ is going to be further discussed in chapter 4 especially on section 4.1.

²¹⁰ Cf. D.J. O’Brien–T.A. Shannon (eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: Encyclicals and Documents from Pope Leo XIII to Pope Francis*, 3rd Edition, Maryknoll, NY: 2016, Orbis Books, p. 13.

²¹¹ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 50.

²¹² G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008. Word in brackets is mine.

own connection with the neighbour in the community or society, where he/she lives. But certainly, I would rather at this point firmly say, such perception, as it is right above described, does not throw away the idea or conjecture of the divine presence in a concerned society or community, nor even does it deny the vital extant of that personal grasp of the image of God categorically intrinsic in every individual human person – i.e. in oneself and in others. Only what we can bear in mind is the fact that, in the Bantu African ethical pattern and system, the central moral value is focused on the dignity of the human person. And this is because, “Africans tend in practice to speak about human beings rather than about God; this is due to the view that one who pays heed to the dignity of the human person also pleases God, and that one who acts against the human person offends precisely this God.”²¹³

For the Christian believers, therefore, it is understandably held and clearly made known that, the inherent divine presence in the threesome nature of God, is the one that endows humans to live in communion with each other. It is also this same divine threesome nature that bestows or grants humans to live with respect of one another and with love and charity for one another. It is, thus, this inherent presence, which can be established as the one providing ground for humans to live in communion with one another for the realisation of the good and significance of humanity. This, then leads furthermore to a clear comprehension of the image and likeness of God in all humans; and that, it further leads to the esteem and respect of every human person and live virtuously and uprightly.

Here is actually where one can detect the significance of what is implicated in Christianity as being created in the image and likeness of God as regards virtuous moral living. It is also important keeping in mind that this comprehension is discerned to us via Christianity as the religion that gives and provides us with moral and ethical guidance. From Christianity as religion we are informed and kept aware of the bond that exist between human beings and the divine Creator. More even, in an attempt to trace the meaning of religion, one can actually come across the fact that: the term ‘religion’, by itself, comes from the Latin *religare*, which means “to bind together.”²¹⁴ The axis around which all of virtuous moral living and all of ethical and moral teaching revolve is this mystery of being bound together with and in God, the Creator. And this binding, we know, is not something

²¹³ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. 2.

²¹⁴ Cf. T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 47.

we do at all; it is something God does. That is what is indeed represented by the moral teaching and the ethical instructions by any community believing on the existence of God and presence of the divine moral Authority: the final, irrevocable, infinitely loving act of God.²¹⁵

That means, the religious component or the human contribution is utterly essential as regards to the way of life and the person's moral conducts towards his or her neighbour in the community he or she lives. It is the encounter of the human person with regards to religious belief that, the human person did not just appear by accident, rather that human being falls consequent to the divine order, and which in one way or another he or she needs to abide to it. Such encounter, therefore, initiates a virtuous moral life, and it is the attempt to be faithful to the loving, graceful gifts of that divine Creator, whom we Christian call God, that comprises the ongoing conduct of the human person. Only in the context of an awareness of this divine initiative can any theory in consideration of virtuous moral living be worthy and meaningful. That is to say, only after one has acknowledged the fact that human actions are not initiatives but responses to the empowering call of the divine Authority, only then can one truly understand the reality of virtuous moral living. And it only when one has grasped the peculiar quality of the divine initiative, that it is an inner reality, a matter of the heart, only then can one comfortably accept and confidently live the fact that even morality is primarily a matter of interiority – in this study work referred to as the inherent value of human dignity. That means, it is not the outward appearances, not even the shape of our communal ethical systems and behaviour, which ultimately counts, but the inherent value namely human dignity and particularly the one characteristically portrayed in the Christian religion. And this is because such commencement somehow participates in the primeval interior intention of God's own self.²¹⁶

Even in natural communities where the theological perspective was not quite well developed as it is evident to the Christians in our contemporary time, yet there was some kind of guidance they had to follow knowing that it keeps them intact and connected to the Creator of the universe. It is actually such a conviction, seemingly to be quite well affirmed by George H. Joyce as he puts it in words as:

²¹⁵ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 47.

²¹⁶ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 47.

[T]he Greeks of classical times were in moral questions influenced rather by non-religious conceptions such as that of *aidos* (natural shame) than by fear of the gods; while one great religious system, namely Buddhism, explicitly taught the entire independence of the moral code from any belief in God.²¹⁷

In addition, up till now, all indications and data gathered from such societies, where the human person has developed normally, is indeed overwhelmingly in favour of the contention that the inherent moral value in depiction of the image of God and the human reason proclaims the essential dependence of morality on divine revelations or on what one can call it religious belief.²¹⁸ There are of course some other thinkers like, for instance Robert A. Sharpe, who, now and then, have attempted to deny the reality of this fact that, virtuous moral living does not depend on religious beliefs.²¹⁹ Yet, on keen observation of such thinkers' arguments and standpoint, one can easily detect that, an affirmation they simply avoid is nothing but the absoluteness of religious instructions on morality. This school of thought adheres to the general claim that, virtuous moral living should be thought of widely, as to some degree that, "it is connected both with what we should or should not do and with what it is to flourish or live well."²²⁰ In words of Robert Sharpe, it is even more revealed as he wrote that:

We have been thinking of what we should or should not do. These are matters of judgement and action. But religion also prescribes for us an ideal of a good life. To live well is, *inter alia*, to live morally, and on this atheists and religious people need not disagree. [...] The good life is a moral life, and any other is a life which is not worth living. To live a good life also requires love. To flourish demands above all that love should have a central place in my life, that I should care for others and have passions and interests which are not self-centred.²²¹

The inference drawn from Sharpe's assertion in the very way as it is quoted above is that, in every persons' innermost, there is indeed an inherent value which provides guidance for the human person's conducts and way of living with others. And this guidance is purported in form of moral law, vis-à-vis vital force of love and respect for each other's state of life and disposition, in words and deeds. It is a vital force which does not really make any differentiation between people as believers or non-believers in any of the religious faith.

²¹⁷ G.H. Joyce, "Morality," [CD ROM], 2008.

²¹⁸ Cf. G.H. Joyce, "Morality," [CD ROM], 2008.

²¹⁹ Cf. R. A. Sharpe, *The Moral Case against Religious Belief*, London: 2012, SCM Press Ltd., pp. 1–22.

²²⁰ R.A. Sharpe, *The Moral Case...*, 2012, p. 10.

²²¹ R.A. Sharpe, *The Moral Case...*, 2012, p. 14.

Apparently, this inference is so far insufficiently appraised, following the argument in this school of thought, which tries to eliminate God's existence and the significance of religious belief as being of any impact to the whole concern of virtuous moral living. That means, in Sharpe's treatise, there is an attempt to "keep the question of moral values and of God's existence separate."²²² And for such reason, it even manifests itself, as it obviously appears in the quotation above, that, all thinkers in same line with Robert Sharpe, do mostly fail in reality to express clearly that piercing divide on the relation existing between what is understood to be the natural moral law and the existence of God. By that effect, it is considered that proponents of this school of thought fail to come out with laudable comprehension of the existing connection between the human and the divine presence. This leads to a further failure of perception that can figure out well and properly of the inherent value of a person as an image of God. In this school of thought, it is, however, agreed that: what a person judges to be good or bad behaviour and what is judged to be the good or virtuous life is a matter of value.²²³

With regard to the conflicting instances purported as in the above two paragraphs, it might, therefore, be hardly convincing or be established that the morality of the pre-Christian societies, for instance, was unconnected with religion. In fact, though they might not have realized that their ethical norms, mostly prescribed by natural shame, were derived from a divine order they virtually and certainly believed that, the violation of such norms would undoubtedly be punished by an existing spiritual authority or divine power. It can hardly be denied that in some of the pre-Christian societies – the Bantu people in Africa being also among them – that, there was the belief that: there are two 'after-death destinations', where people ends up after earthly life – one being for those who lead a virtuous life and the other being for those who did not lead morally good life while in community with the living people. Such is actually, what in Christian terms, referred to as: heaven and hell.

Yet, let it be clearly born in mind that, the Bantu people did not actually think of the existence of heaven and hell as places existing far away and separately from this world's precinct; rather they understood it as stilling existing but spiritually in this same earth and

²²² R.A. Sharpe, *The Moral Case...*, 2012, p. 17.

²²³ Cf. R.A. Sharpe, *The Moral Case...*, 2012, p. 16.

very world. One could not see them but they were even able to interfere in people's activities and life in the living community. It is in beliefs and convictions like this that one can say, they help bearing witness to the universal consensus that the moral law is based on supernatural sanctions.²²⁴ We may, nonetheless, readily admit that where the religious insights and the moral or ethical code were comparable immature and inadequate, the relation between them was, in reality, less clearly grasped in mind, and less intimate in practice, than it became when human beings found themselves in possession of a fuller truth regarding such insights and the moral code.²²⁵ A certain healthiness of moral tone, might have as well been preserved by the pre-Christian Bantu African communities, even though it might seem that the religious obligation of ethical and the moral law was but obscurely felt, while ancestral precept and community obligations were viewed as the dominating motives. Nevertheless, there were always some kind of recognition of the image of divine Being behind the community motives and on control of the human conducts. And this was in fact put in practice through guidance of the elders and leaders of the community or Society. Clear acquaintance of this portrayal is well described by the Bantu African scholar and theologian, Laurent Magesa, as he wrote:

These arise out of the ethical interpretation of the dual participation of human beings in the human and ancestral community, on the one hand, and in the sacred forces of the universe, on the other. Furthermore, the world represents in various ways the being and personality of the Divine Giver who always has the final claim on it. As all human beings are children of God, no one can claim to have a monopoly of ownership over those aspects of creation that are deemed to have been placed by God's will in public trust for the public good. Perhaps a good way to describe this understanding is to see goods and resources in terms of the image of the lender, the borrower and the article lent or borrowed. In African ethical thought, the universe has been lent by God to humanity through the ancestors and the living leaders to use on the condition that it must be kept in good order and used by all for the promotion of life, good relationships and peace, at least within the clan or ethnic group. If those conditions are broken, humanity forfeits the right to it and often deserves chastisement if reparations in the form of sacrifice or offering are not offered.²²⁶

Of course, this description given by Laurent Magesa is not by any means trying to say that the Bantu African theology or ethical instructions is superior or any better off; not at all. It is just a presentation of the view that existed in those societies before Christianity and today, there is indeed an enormous number of Bantu people have been converted into Christianity and now they adhere to Christian moral theology, which is intricate yet more

²²⁴ Cf. G.H. Joyce, "Morality," [CD ROM], 2008.

²²⁵ Cf. G.H. Joyce, "Morality," [CD ROM], 2008.

²²⁶ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 63.

elaborate. At this juncture, therefore, George H. Joyce also goes further holding that: “A broad distinction must be made between such cases and that of those [people] which having once accepted the Christian faith with its clear profession of the connection between moral obligation and a Divine law, have subsequently repudiated this belief in favour of a purely natural morality.”²²⁷ Certainly, the most conviction for this is the argument that: there is no parity between “Fore-Christians” and “After-Christians”.²²⁸ Yet, it should be well noted, by the fact that, it is understood, all human beings are of the same divine origin, then there are for sure some identical perceptions on matters of religious beliefs and moral perceptions virtually depicted in all human societies as well as some distinctions; depending on the level of intellectual grasps and the socio-ethical environment.

It is in most cases established as certain that, where Christianity has already plunged deep roots in the peoples mentality and traditional customs, then, it is notably difficult for the people in such a society to return to the inadequate grounds of moral obligation. The inadequate grounds of obligation which might have sometimes sufficed for those people living on dependence of natural beliefs, and who are still in naivety of knowledge they could easily access. For the Christians, therefore, the rejection of religious sanction is invariably understood to be a rejection of God, and thus being followed by a moral decay, leading rapidly to the corruptions of the degraded periods and pertinacious age of our history and humanity at large. In addition, that is to say, wherever such a rejection is found – be it of the existence of God or of the religious influence on matters of morality – there it has also in varying degrees aroused the manifestation of moral decadences. It so happens in such a way that, “the unprejudiced observer can draw but one conclusion, namely: that for a [people’s society] which has attained maturity, morality is essentially dependent on the religious sanction, and that when this is rejected, morality will soon decay.”²²⁹ The reason for this, is the fact that, it is from the connection and communication to the true human innermost, via religious beliefs and patterns, that the human persons come to understand that there exists the Supreme Being, and this Supreme Being is the actually the perfect model of moral authority as well as divine model of the human person and

²²⁷ G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008. Word in brackets is mine.

²²⁸ Cf. G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008.

²²⁹ G.H. Joyce, “Morality,” [CD ROM], 2008.

humankind as a whole. Such perfect model is none else but what is referred to as image and likeness of the divine Creator, and it is termed as the dignity of the human person.

2.4.2 Ethical Consistency of Human Dignity as Moral Value

In this section, I would like to focus on the concept of human dignity, and correspondingly on the notion of moral values with respect to the concept of human person or personhood, “which signifies the most abstract, and so the universal aspect of human identity.”²³⁰ Actually, humans have to admit the fact that, even when it is postulated by scientific findings that, human beings undergo the process of evolution, yet, it remains also fact as it is clearly stated even by Pope Francis that, there is in all humans:

A uniqueness which cannot be fully explained by the evolution of other open systems. [For] each of us has his or her own personal identity and is capable of entering into dialogue with others and with God himself. Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology. The sheer novelty involved in the emergence of a personal being within a material universe presupposes a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship on the part of a ‘Thou’ who addresses himself to another ‘thou’. The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object.²³¹

I have actually decided to cite this remark of Pope Francis, at this juncture, so that when I come to the perception of the Bantu Africans on the same, I will be in good position of establishing my argument also in relation to the theological instructions being taught in the Christian theological ethics. For in reality, besides the Bantu African perspective on the subject-matter of this dissertation, I am, as well, quite aware of the standpoint about the similar concern, which prevailed and it still prevails, in the Western civilisation as well as in the Christian tradition. That means, I understand that, the immediate idea which arrives to the mind of any reader of my study work, is the undertone that: linking morality to such abstract conceptions as the “abstract self [of the human person], is one of Kant’s central ideas, as is his related conception of human dignity as the core or foundational value for a universal morality.”²³²

²³⁰ M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subject*, 2016, p. 138.

²³¹ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, 2015, n. 81.

²³² M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subject...*, 2016, p. 138.

And it is undeniably that, there are also theologians, like for instance, Timothy E. O’Connell, who are of the outlook that, in reality and to be open, it is obvious that:

Christian ethics know nothing that all people cannot know. It reflects on human experience, it searches for the human good. It attempts to articulate, in a way that is helpful, the demands of human living. For right human living is precisely what is demanded of the Christian.²³³

That means, the issue is actually not more on the question of what is the then new in all that we can discuss about the theme at hand, but the perception and the angle that one uses for perceiving the whole concept is what matters and certainly that is what distinguishes the understanding of issues owing to the cultural angle the person or the scholar stands on. All in all then, I can claim that, the concept of human dignity is certainly not an exclusively Kantian notion. Thus, although the development of my treatise in this study-work might seem like resembling to the Kantian views and the Christian vision, still I maintain tracing those abstract ideas – like *Utu / Ubuntu* – from the ‘Bantu’ African ethical pattern, in interest of exploring the relationship between moral value, referred to as human dignity as basic foundation for morality and virtuous moral living. And to support my argument, I therefore prefer using words of Meir Dan-Cohen, whose point of argument reads as following:

The notion of human dignity has a long history, much of which precedes the writings of Kant ... But Kant’s writings are by far the most influential attempt to formulate a moral theory grounded in this notion. [However, there have emerged significant discourses on the] dignity-talk that has been taking shape in recent years on the deontological side of the normative divide, with an increasing emphasis on respect for persons as the preeminent concern. Seen in this context, the merits of a dignity-based morality are to be assessed not only as against those of a welfare-based utilitarian approach but also as against those of an autonomy-based Kantian approach. ... This invites, even if it doesn’t quite mandate, a consideration of dignity as an appealing foundational value on the basis of which a moral theory can be constructed.²³⁴

It is what is referred to as inherent value in all human beings; meaning, the dignity which is a resounding characteristic of the human person, and of which one can truly claim and assert that: it ushers the connection between human moral values and human moral conducts or behaviours; whereas, the predominantly human moral values being named as: solidarity and charity, sociability and hospitality, peace and justice, just to mention but a few. These moral values are all, therefore, being well-thought-out by the Bantu Africans

²³³ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 33.

²³⁴ M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subject...*, 2016, pp. 138–139. Words in brackets are my own addition.

that, they are essentially linked with the intrinsic moral worth or value of the human person, here referred to as the human dignity.

In the Bantu African ethical pattern, thus, it is understood that, human beings are created to associate and cooperate with one another and with charity to each other. The idea of human dignity and the related notion of respect for humanity, thus, is from this perception ushered in that: every human person deserves to be treated with respect and justice. Any evil deed or immoral action towards a human person – be it in concern of the victim or of the doer – is the paradigm of moral decadence because it denies people's equal moral value or worth and thus treats them with disrespect and injustice.²³⁵ It is clearly denoted and substantially insisted in the Bantu African ethical pattern that, there is significant connection between human dignity and the moral values such as those already mentioned above. The significance of such connection between human dignity, as an intrinsic moral value, to the other moral values and to virtuous moral living, is basically based on the perception of the reality of the human person that he or she is, by nature, different from other creatures. The human person, therefore, is naturally bound, by his or her dignity, to act humanly with respect and love to the other persons, so as to portray that core moral value he or she inherently possess.

It is further grasped that, the human person is created to be moral and live morally by the dictates of his/her nature, following the ultimate end of the Creator. That means, living in accordance with the ultimate end that the Creator intended in creating human beings; which actually ushers in that, we humans with our human actions intimately participate in life worth of perpetuating what He has established in the creation event.²³⁶ The African theologian and author, A.E. Orobator, elucidates this by a beautiful African example as he wrote:

The image that comes to mind here is that of a boiling pot of okra sauce. As the proverb goes, a good okra sauce cannot be confined to the pot. Anyone who has seen okra being cooked in [...] Africa knows that it is in its nature to bubble over and overflow the cooking pot. It is its unique way of showing or manifesting its abundant goodness. This is an apt imagery for God's generosity, which overflows as creative, boundless love. It is in the nature of the okra to overflow abundantly.²³⁷

²³⁵ M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subject...*, 2016, p. 141.

²³⁶ Cf. A.E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 46.

²³⁷ A.E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 46.

Thus, since it belongs to the essence of God to overflow love and goodness abundantly to all his creation, and whereas our conviction is that we are urged by nature of humanity to intimately participate in the love and goodness of the Creator, then, it is likewise necessary that we express the moral values of love, generosity, solidarity, charity, hospitality, to mention but a few, and make them flow abundantly to our neighbours without reservation. And that is what explains our origin²³⁸, our nature and our dignity as humans. It appears then that, in vision of human dignity as an ethical concept as well as moral value, those other moral values like solidarity and/or charity, for instance, are thought to reflect and go beyond themselves; this also takes specifically into consideration such significant moral dimensions of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. By our dignity as human persons, it hence requires that the human person properly includes “oneself in the sphere of a morality of responsibility, and the realisation of virtue in which focus on oneself is harmonised with a concern for others.”²³⁹ In other words: it is through the right perception of the intrinsic value of human dignity, which sets a human person on rail towards virtuous moral living. A right perception which, in fact, does function, not merely by casting out what is evil and injustice against oneself, but also by living in a way which respects and enhances the dignity of others. In such case, thus, it is cherishing the moral values in the community, especially the social ones. Thus, something is considered as wrong and immoral insofar as it destroys the dignity of the doer and/or the dignity that one shares with the rest of the community and humanity (including nature).²⁴⁰

The moral values in dimensions of gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation, for instance, are very important for accentuation of moral living in any human community or society insofar as they are connected to the intrinsic moral value, namely; human dignity. In any human community with such moral dimensions, one’s neighbour is hence not only perceived as a human being with his/her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but also as a human person apparently taken as the image of God apparently manifested in the human person as the neighbour to be loved and respected. This appears, thus, to be parallel to what is insisted in the Christian revelation and what is taught in the Christian theological ethics. This point is included here thus to denote that there is

²³⁸ Cf. A. E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 46.

²³⁹ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 81.

²⁴⁰ Cf. A.E. Orobator, *Theology brewed...*, 2008, p. 64.

interconnection in many ways between what is grasped in the secular reason, particularly when taking the Bantu African ethical theory in concern, with what is essentially imparted in Christianity, and especially in Christian theological ethics.

We, however, need to set ourselves in a right conceptual position to be able of grasping well of the connection between moral values and human dignity, as the intrinsic value inherent to all human beings. So, we first, have to be well acquainted with the notion of moral values. Generally speaking, moral values are in this study to be understood as those criteria implying ideals in terms of goodness and affluence. They can also be conferred to as those convictions or beliefs of which a person or a social group of persons holds firm, and in which an intellectual or emotional investment is involved, either for or against something. In terms of ethics, however, they are those convictions or beliefs held by a human society as guidance and directory for peoples' day to day conducts in life. Such convictions as tenets helping individuals in community to properly define what's good and right as they live in relationship and connexion with one another.²⁴¹ Explicitly, they are those fundamental beliefs and assumptions taking precedence in moral essentials and socio-ethical matters in order to determine behaviour and conducts in a concerned society or social group. It is presupposed by moral scholars that the intrinsic goodness of an entity is one of genuine property of that embodiment as moral value.²⁴² In words of Timothy E. O'Connell, it is asserted: "The objective of all our moral judgement is to do the good or, more precisely, to do what is right. ... It is not a matter of doing what one feels like."²⁴³

Based on the conception of human dignity, moral values have constantly been considered in terms of morals as character traits, personae qualities, role dispositions and behavioural habits; moral values and virtues are thus desirable while moral decadences and vices are unattractive and disagreeable. "So, without denying the dignity of human persons, the rights of personal conscience, or the importance of inner sincerity, it is still appropriate to speak of moral success and failure."²⁴⁴ Again Timothy O'Connell writes that:

In any situation, in fact, some action is the right action, some action really does maximize the premoral good and minimize the premoral evil. Other actions, no matter how well

²⁴¹ Cf. M.J. Zimmerman, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. Edward N. Zalta), Spring 2015, in <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/value-intrinsic-extrinsic/>>. Accessed on 18.03.2018.

²⁴² Cf. M. J. Zimmerman, "Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Value," Accessed on 18.03.2018.

²⁴³ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 177.

²⁴⁴ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 177.

intentioned, are objective failures of the moral enterprise. Indeed, perhaps the fact that people argue so forcefully about ethical issues proves they know how true this is.

So it is not surprising that, in addition to everything ... there also exists a whole language of moral success and failure, a language of human ideals. We speak of honesty, of justice, of chastity, of reverence for life. And on the side, we speak of cruelty, of lust, of disrespect, of injustice. We speak of those qualities that characterize the person who is both sincere and objectively correct, or who is not. We speak of virtues and the vices they oppose.²⁴⁵

From what O'Connell has listed above, one can observe that some qualities are, of course, good while some others are bad things. And all in all, the good ones are noteworthy and vital in themselves, valuable in their own right, and thus it is surely appropriate to call them values. They are values, then, which do not only describe what we should attend to in our daily living conducts, but also they define things we should, indeed must, possess. They are actually alternative ways of describing moral living itself. And so they are referred to as 'moral values'.²⁴⁶ Moral values for virtuous moral living represent righteousness, goodness and excellence, while moral depravities represent the antitheses. However, both are embedded in the human character and humanity.

That is to say, human values are, therefore, considered universal, as opposed to cultural, societal, institutional or professional moral norms. They are values considered truly essential to proper human living. They include honesty, truthfulness, fairness, compassion, generosity, courage, moderation, to mention but a few; and they are all highly regarded in ethical customs and norms of world-wide human cultures. In one way or another, we can see that the listed values do "describe qualities of moral persons themselves as they confront and correctly deal with their situations."²⁴⁷ That means, "they describe the kind of persons they should be. ... They describe their way of being, they report their success and failure in maximizing the premoral good and minimizing the premoral evil in a particular area of life."²⁴⁸ It should be at this instance well exposed that the reality dealt with here is particularly of those inner actions of a human person, actions like loving one's neighbour, committing sin, reverence to God and respect of others, wickedness, and many others of the like. These human acts can be asserted that they are either always right or

²⁴⁵ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 177.

²⁴⁶ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 177.

²⁴⁷ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 177.

²⁴⁸ T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, pp. 177–178.

always wrong, either moral or immoral;²⁴⁹ always depending on the presented case or occasion but on the whole placing the person's dignity in question, especially in his or her disposition of choosing virtuous actions.

In accordance with the Bantu African ethical theory, the human person with dignity is by intent and content considered to be the virtuous person. And a virtuous person is the one considered to be in disposition of choosing virtuous actions and perform them for one's own sake. That means, choosing to act for the sake of one's own moral nobility called human dignity. The Bantu African ethical account of communal relationship and friendship does take into consideration of the moral worth attached to an action as it reflects that moral value of the person doing the action and the person to whom that action is applied to. The account does equally allow for the concern one person may have for another, in terms of acting on the other person as one would opt that others act likewise to him or her. Thus, what is morally required is what the person with dignity would do in one's own unrestricted settings and circumstances to prove he/she is a virtuous human person. According to the Bantu African ethical theory, human actions are determined to be right or wrong depending on their impacts of producing the largest amount of well-being overall or vice versa.

In chapter four, section 4.1. of this dissertation, it will be more analysed and discussed about 'the image of God' from the Christian standpoint, so as to develop kind of relation of what is perceived by the Bantu Africans of the intrinsic value of human dignity with what is taught in Christian theological ethics. It is, thus, going to be pointed out that Christianity speaks of humans as being created in the image and likeness of God and that, it is from this commencement that the concept of human dignity comes into light in the Christian theological teaching. We can as well observe that, other religions like Islam and Hinduism do have also some more or less similar insights in their religious doctrines or instructions. Islam, for instance, does "speak of the essential equality and freedom of all human beings,"²⁵⁰ while "Hinduism envisages a life where each person brings about goodness and justice in the quest for self-enlightenment."²⁵¹ Apparently, this fact tells us that, even when the devotees of these major religions (namely, Christianity, Islam and

²⁴⁹ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 178.

²⁵⁰ L. Hogan, "Human Rights" in *Christian Perspectives on Development Issues* (ed. Enda McDonagh), Ireland: 2002, Genprint, p. 12.

²⁵¹ L. Hogan, "Human Rights," 2002, p. 12.

Hinduism) may sometimes fail to recognise the significance of the inherent value of human dignity in their ethical doctrines and as part of their religious language and theological instructions, yet they and the other religious traditions enshrine, in their beliefs and practices, the central claim of human dignity theory, which asserts that: “all human beings possess an essential dignity which is part of our makeup and which does not depend on external factors for its validity.”²⁵²

²⁵² L. Hogan, “Human Rights,” 2002, p. 12.

3. BEYOND A PURELY COMMUNAL UNDERSTANDING: Developing the Different Layers of Bantu African Theory Based on Human Dignity

It is in this chapter in which I am going to deal and treat more of the whole issue pertaining to the nature of Bantu African moral pattern and ethical theory, constellations of moral claims, universal moral criteria manifested in the Bantu people's moral tradition and the bases for making moral decisions and judgement as they are perceived in that people's moral tradition and pattern – in short, I am going to analyse and deal with the foundational moral principle and methodology of Bantu African ethical pattern. My aim is to show and to analyse the variety of elements of moral theory that have been described so far, and then to argue in which way such an analysis can be developed further in order to better face the moral challenges of today. By doing so, this chapter will make use of the conceptual survey of virtuos moral living as it is explained in the previous chapter.

Certainly, the theorization and articulation of the concept of Human dignity *qua* foundational moral principle, that means the starting point for the development of moral judgment and theory, as it is in discussion all through this dissertation, might be better thought of in terms of its significance on how one ought to live and interact with other humans. This is especially true from a Bantu perspective, which is, generally speaking, more of practice- than theory-oriented. Then, it is obvious that, such significance is to be considered in connection to practical relevance of our human conducts, as we act towards one another in our communities. That means the way we commence our moral decisions and carry out our moral conducts towards one another should congruently be perceived as conducts and actions worth of the human person's inherent dignity *per se*²⁵³. There are always kind of ethical or moral challenges raised in question of that dignity of the human

²⁵³ Cf. H. Shue, "Thickening Convergence," in *The Ethics of Assistance: Morality and the Distant Needy* (ed. D.K. Chatterjee), Cambridge: 1996, Cambridge University Press, pp. 226–227.

person as he or she lives and relates to other humans as of abiding to the social nature of every human being.

The concept of human dignity has, in one way or another, discernible practical assertiveness on the human individuals as well as on the communal or institutional decision-making entity. That is actually what is purported about the general perception of the concept of human dignity *qua* moral norm, even when its assertiveness is not always superseding or decisive against competing practical considerations, including other ethical values. All in all, however, it prevails that in the Bantu African societies, human dignity as moral value while been considered together with the idea of humanity without prejudice of the communal aspects, is basically and generally dominant in the patterns of morality and ethics.

Such knowledge or insight follows naturally from the idea that it is the dignity of the human person which intrinsically represents normative standards to which our choices and actions ought to conform. Nevertheless, it is clear that the more abstract and universal perspective of human dignity as a moral value and principle is by and large undermined, pertaining to its performance in as far as virtuous moral living is concerned.

This is because this moral concept has always been taken for granted and to the extent that, little has so far been written or discussed as of human dignity *qua* moral norm and principle in African tradition; especially by the theologian scholars, be it in the sense of those theologians and scholars who are experts in fields of moral theology or in social ethics. Let's bear in mind that, the African ethical and nonphysical – cultural and spiritual – heritage was, since time immemorial, conveyed or passed on orally from generation to generation, and the traditional ethical wisdom was conserved not in written books but in songs and oral traditions in form of stories and proverbs.

In order, therefore, that we position ourselves on the right track to understand such moral narratives, then, there should be a systematic and scholarly elaboration of the consisted substance and form of the subject-matter. In other words, there is, in fact, a need for more elucidation of the concept of human dignity in view of the *Utu / Ubuntu* tradition and the African moral theory; its significance concerning the question of moral conducts and the sense of moral duty. This will enable us get more informed and well acquainted

with a meaningful exposition of the concept of human dignity, in accordance with the array of reasons, moral values, and practical considerations, as it can be found in the Bantu African ethical patterns.

The fundamental ethical conviction of the Bantu African moral theory is that: it is on foundation of *Utu / Ubuntu* – in terms of human dignity – that a person is called to be good and moral, and so is strengthened to relate and interact with others as a warm-hearted and affectionate person. That means, more than machinery we need humanity. And the value of human dignity is essentially what sets the ground for humanity; and consequently it's humanity that sets the ground for the virtues and moral values such as kindness, generosity, mercy, charity and love. We all need to cherish that love of mankind in our heart through esteeming and strengthening of our acknowledgement and understanding or recognition of the moral significance of the value of our humanity and our dignity as human persons.

3.1 Metz' Philosophical Account of Bantu Moral Theory

Besides analysing human dignity as it is perceived in the Bantu African moral tradition and ethical pattern, I will also highlight and analyse, in this section of my treatise the intermediate principles following the principle of human dignity as a whole. It is unfailingly important in this dissertation that, the perspective of Thaddeus Metz on the whole discourse about human dignity as apropos moral foundation for virtuous moral living, be looked at from some of his academic treatises and presentations. Actually, all of his works on this very subject-matter are noticeable that, they announce not only a different view, but also some concept of novelty in the academic realm; meaning, an innovative view from an African perspective and approach with regard to the theory of morality.

He himself might have not actually mentioned it that his academic works or paper works are for the establishment of a theological moral principle, yet through a critical speculation and hermeneutical analysis I observe such an aspect in his works, and that is the reason I have landed into making this research so as to make a contribution in the theological side. Surely, there is no need of me repeating what I have already written in the introduction of this treatise, but the important thing is that, this work is new and different from Metz's work in two important ways. One is following the reason that his works are

more of philosophical orientation while I strive to develop a theological-ethical perspective that gives a background for interpreting part of his philosophical analysis of the Bantu African ethical pattern in the light of theological ethics. Second, I will try to show that his approach is important but not yet sufficient for solving the problems of today.

It means therefore that, Metz, being himself an academician and one of the sound African moral philosophers, he treats the concept of human dignity from an angle, theoretically distinctive and to a certain extent unique from Western moral philosophy but not exactly fitting to the theological facet, particularly the one of Christian theological ethics or catholic moral theology, if so to speak.

Being well acquainted with this fact, therefore, I deliberately set forth that, in this section certain moral theological insights be brought to light as they are presented in Metz's scholarly works, regarding especially the Bantu people's school of thought. It is also self-evidently that, the human dignity theme appears quite substantial to him, so in such a way that, he vibrantly has discussed it, in his various academic works, while specifically conferring it from the perspective of African moral theory.²⁵⁴ In other words, he is one of famous African scholars and thinkers who vividly has pointed out, that aspect of the concept of human dignity *qua* normative moral theory in the vision of the African Bantu brainwave and ethical conviction. In his own view, Thaddeus Metz asserts that the concept of human dignity in the *Utu / Ubuntu* tradition is, basically, the establishment and consolidation of the Bantu African moral theory. This view, then, gives rise to the proposition that, the concept of human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*), as it is conceived in the mind of the Bantu African people, does indeed furnish what can be said to be basic foundation for virtuous moral living.²⁵⁵

Certainly, as it is already mentioned above, Metz stands out to be one of the notable African proponents of this conceptual and philosophical implication of the Bantu people's theory of *Utu / Ubuntu*; that is, as to what it really means and what role the concept really

²⁵⁴ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, pp. 310–318.

²⁵⁵ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African Moral Theory", in *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, Vol. 15(3), Oxford: 2007, Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp. 331–341. Also see Metz's other writings like: "The Motivation for 'Toward an African Moral Theory' (and) Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics", 2007; "African Moral Theory and Public Governance: Nepotism, preferential hiring, and other partiality", 2009; "African Conceptions...", 2012; "African Ethics", in *The International Encyclopedia of Ethics*, 2013; "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014.

plays as basic foundation for virtuous moral living in the concerned societies' patterns of life. It is however obvious that Metz himself, does not directly mention anywhere of the related aspects of human dignity to virtuous moral living, yet by implication of what he writes and promotes about human dignity as the foundation for African moral theory, he is in fact, saying it all. It means, in his scholarly writings and papers it is definitely asserted that human dignity as a concept and inherent moral value, is basically considered as a foundation for a virtuous moral living; not only among the Bantu African people but also to the humankind at large. In his own wording and contention, therefore, it is acknowledged that:

A large swathe of sub-Saharan thinking about ethics is summed up with phrases usually translated as '*a person is a person through other persons*' or '*I am because we are*'. [...] Implicit in the claim that a person is a person through other persons is the judgement that one ought to develop one's personhood or humanness, where these come in degrees. From a scientific or descriptive standpoint, anyone who is self-aware and reflective in certain ways counts as a person, and any individual that is a member of *Homo sapiens* is a human being. However, when thinking normatively terms such as 'personhood', 'humanness' and the like in the [*Utu* or] *Ubuntu* tradition refer to finally *valuable* aspects of our nature, *virtues* that can be exhibited to a greater or lesser extent. One's basic aim as a moral agent should be to become a *complete* person or to live a *truly* human life.²⁵⁶

This is to say, that the Bantu concept of human dignity is at the same time a deontological claim for an educational and self-educational aim. However, it is with no doubt admitted that a large swathe of Bantu people's school of thought, on the subject-matter regarding ethics or morality conveys little renditions or significance that can easily be comprehended by European thinkers, who are unfamiliar with the African Bantu's worldviews.²⁵⁷ Namely, there is most of the time, kind of preconception in what the 'Western World' connotes on Bantu African ethical conviction that, it is none other than just the way of relating to the sociological claims; that it is just about individuals always being part of a community or children needing adults in order to survive.²⁵⁸ Of which, it is actually, incorrectly perceived; for it is far more entailing than one can, without keen observation, figure out.

Of course, Metz does not conceal to the predisposition, as it is mentioned above, and so he responds accordingly and he conveys challenges to such prejudgments by

²⁵⁶ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, pp. 310–311.

²⁵⁷ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 310.

²⁵⁸ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, pp. 310–311.

strongly affirming that, the Bantu ethical theory basically and principally embodies the countenance of a certain moral ideal.²⁵⁹ The moral ideal which undoubtedly evolves an ethical system – ethical values, principles, and rules – intended to guide social and moral behaviour in the African way, explicitly applicable and well-functioning in communities and societies. In an article, presented to the *African Human Rights Law Journal*, he provided a scholarly interpretation of *Utu / Ubuntu*, to signify that this African Bantu conception of Human Dignity is not vulnerable to the objections typically arraigned against it by some scholars or thinkers.²⁶⁰ In other words, he is challenging the idea of objecting and deeming the Bantu African concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* as simply being inappropriate basis for morality. In fact, it is even further pointed out by Metz that, those objections are initially patented from three major reasons: *first*, that the cherished human dignity concept by the Bantu Africans seems to be too vague; *secondly*, that the concept fails to acknowledge the value of individual freedom; and *thirdly*, that such notions only fit traditional, small-scale culture more than a modern, developed society.²⁶¹

Nonetheless, Metz does not make concession to the three arguments, as stated right in the paragraph above. It even shows out clearly, in his works that, he chooses to remain on somewhat unlike stand and rather diverse opinion from main stream mentality, which generally seems to be inclined into placing the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* in kind of misapprehension. He subsequently, thus, endorses that:

According to this conception [of *Utu / Ubuntu*, it is better to bear in mind that], typical human beings have a dignity by virtue of their capacity for community, understood as the combination of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity with them, [...] it naturally suggests certain ways of resolving contemporary moral dilemmas [... And if] this jurisprudential interpretation of *Ubuntu* both accounts for a wide array of intuitive human rights and provides guidance to resolve present-day disputes about justice, then the three worries about vagueness, collectivism and anachronism should not stop one from thinking that something fairly called ‘Ubuntu’ can ground a public morality.²⁶²

Having been acquired with this thought in mind, we thus arrive to a position that we can rightly observe the fact that, not only is the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* regarded as

²⁵⁹ Cf. T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311.

²⁶⁰ Cf. T. Metz, “Ubuntu as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa,” in *African Human Rights Law Journal*, 2011, pp. 532–559.

²⁶¹ Cf. T. Metz, “Ubuntu as a Moral Theory...,” 2011, p. 532.

²⁶² T. Metz, “Ubuntu as a Moral Theory...,” 2011, p. 532. Words in brackets are mine.

normative moral concept, but also perceived as an essential moral value and principle; and for that reason, it is apt to ground virtuous moral life in community.

Explicitly, one can make an assertion that, the Bantu African ethical theory is indeed centred on human dignity in the sense of ‘self-realization’, which encompasses both individuation and socialization or of what contemporary thinkers would somehow equate or compare to the ancient Aristotelian *eudaemonist* ethic.²⁶³ When, therefore, this perception does include the notion of human dignity as “combination of identifying with others and exhibiting solidarity with them,”²⁶⁴ then, it should as well and all together, be taken in accordance with “which one’s fundamental goal should be to develop the facets of one’s human nature that are good for their own sake.”²⁶⁵

If an individual person in a community leads a lifestyle which fails to make recognition of that fundamental goal which requires a person into developing those aspects or features of one’s own human nature, then this, for the Bantu Africans, means that “one is living an ‘inhuman’ life or is ‘not a person’, and, indeed, [the African Bantu] often call those who particularly fail to manifest *Ubuntu* ‘animals’.”²⁶⁶ Nevertheless, such derogatory labels for the individual humans with mischievous behaviours in a society are merely meant metaphorically; for evidently a human being remains human, even when he acts with lack of virtue; it does not, thus, literally mean that he or she is no longer a human being. In Metz’s phraseology, thus, it is understood that: “Rather, he is simply not a *real* human being, in the way that a jalopy is not a real car, for failing to function as it should.”²⁶⁷ In other words, this can be stated, therefore, as: those who appreciate and lead their life in accordance to the injunctions of the moral value of *Utu / Ubuntu qua* self-realization, do as well understand that, esteem and good regard of one another in a community is a moral duty rather than mere option. In addition, such people are even better positioned onto grasping to mind and can reasonably make good discernment on subject-matter as

²⁶³ Cf. T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311.

²⁶⁴ T. Metz, “Ubuntu as a Moral Theory...,” 2011, p. 532.

²⁶⁵ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311.

²⁶⁶ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311.

²⁶⁷ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311. In Chapter 4 section 4.3.1. when am going to discuss of Personhood, Dignity and Formation of Conscience, I will still bring further analysis of this point with regards to the Bantu Africans’ perception of those living wickedly in the community. There we will see that such mentality and perception of person doing wicked things being considered as a human being without being a person with dignity is indeed a wide-widely perceived in almost all Bantu societies and acknowledged by a number of African scholars.

significant as, for instance, “sacrificing one’s life for another person would be such a high ‘spike’ in the expression of one’s communal nature than one could not express more of it if one were instead to stay alive.”²⁶⁸ And being able to discern such moral insights as they are dealt with in the Bantu African ethical theory, one needs surely nourishing his or her mind with keen surveillance of the Bantu people’s world view. Manifestly, this theory’s “fundamental emphasis on self-realization has counter-intuitive implications”²⁶⁹, especially, when viewed by means of Western socio-cultural spectacles and mentality.

Being well vested of the Bantu African ethical pattern and traditions, then, Metz prompts a scholarly discernment, which suggests promising new conception of human dignity from the perspective of Bantu ethical tradition. He maintains that, as a constellation of value-claims, the concept of human dignity, in terms of *Utu / Ubuntu*, invites the development of an underlying theory of moral value. And certainly, any one reading Metz’s academic paper, entitled *Towards an African Moral Theory*,²⁷⁰ will not fail to observe that, it comes out clear that his analytic methodology gives the impression to be best suited into developing such a theory.

The constituent for the constellation of value-claims as Metz charts them are to a large extent demarcated and delineated in accordance with the Bantu African ethical pattern and traditional view. In the review of his arguments for the African Moral Theory, it is however easier to discern that, he suggests to explain them, as it is developed initially in his paperwork, *Toward an African Moral Theory*. His view and position on the subject-matter of human dignity as moral theory is, thus, provided with assistance of an elaborate investigation, and it is further clarified in his other paper works, written in later days.²⁷¹ Of

²⁶⁸ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 332.

²⁶⁹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 332.

²⁷⁰ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 321–341.

²⁷¹ See in particular the following works: T. Metz, “The Motivation for ‘Toward an African Moral Theory’ (and) Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics”, in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 26, No. 4 (2007), pp. 331–335 and 369–387; T. Metz, “African Moral Theory and Public Governance: Nepotism, preferential hiring, and other partiality”, in *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, Pietermaritzburg: 2009, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, pp. 335–336; T. Metz and J.B.R. Gaie, “The African Ethic of Ubuntu/Botho: Implications for research on morality”, in *Journal of Moral Education*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (2010), pp. 273–279; T. Metz, “Human dignity, capital punishment, and an African moral theory: Towards a new philosophy of human rights”, in *Journal of Human Rights*, (2010); T. Metz and D.A. Bell, “Confucianism and Ubuntu: Reflections on a dialogue between Chinese and African Traditions”, in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38 (2011), pp. 78–95; T. Metz, “Ubuntu as a Moral Theory...,” 2011, pp. 532–559.

all the alternate accounts by Mbiti, Bujo, Magesa, to mention but a few, however, there might be significant points of which Metz dismisses, following the complexity of the whole ethical system on basis of communal morality. In spite of that he admits that, the proof of the communal aspect remains because it is “probably the dominant interpretation of African ethics in the literature,”²⁷² above all when the all-inclusive *Utu / Ubuntu* tradition is perceived in kind of communal pattern of life.

In fact, in terms of placing this educational aspect of Bantu morality in an ethical theoretical system, it appears to be more concise to comprehend the concept of *Utu* (human dignity) in terms of a virtue ethics approach, since the whole ethical pattern of the Bantu people is commonly articulated in virtue-ethical language. The Bantu Africans, especially elders, would give counsel to the younger generation to live as prudent people, courageous ones, to be patient and tolerant, and strive always keeping the virtue of justice one of their fundamental value as significantly to their moral living as to their dignity as human beings. In comparison with the Western perception and the Christian view it may even appear to fit well with the so-called: “Plato’s Requirement on the Virtues.”²⁷³ It means, for instance, when taken in application with the four cardinal human moral virtues – prudence, courage, temperance, and justice; it is only possible for these virtues to be properly applied by humans because of their dignity than they would have been applied by animals or other creatures.

Yet, even when it is viable that the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* in African ethical theory can be related to the perspective of the cardinal virtues, still it remains of unique conviction to be understood as, in all intent and purpose, rather constituted by the mixture of communal morality and character dispositions of the human individuals. Hence, it is not only an ethical theory associated by personal moral conducts or acts, but it also comprises the significance of communal directions and moral dictates. For this reason, it is a theory necessarily

²⁷² T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 331.

²⁷³ This means, there are at least some indications that Plato could already from the very ancient time make discernment of the significance and need for a holistic conception of good life, of which in this study work, it is referred to as virtuous life; and that fact is apparent in the composition his ‘Socratic’ dialogues. In his perception he attempted defining courage as the ‘knowledge of what is to be feared and what should inspire confidence’ and by doing so he presupposes the knowledge of good and bad. Cf. Frede, Dorothea, “Plato’s Ethics: An Overview,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (ed. Edward N. Zalta), Winter 2017, in <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/plato-ethics/>>. Accessed on 24.05.2018.

accounted for the virtue-ethical aspects that largely involves also the communal facet of moral living.

In some ways, it seems, Metz's approach in his work, *Toward an African Moral Theory*, endorses kind of logical instrument for reflective equilibrium, detailing pattern of moral insights, in which he proposes five principles suggested by the Bantu African literature as justifying them to the constellation of moral values.²⁷⁴ Obviously, he dismisses those principles, which fail to account for relevant insights and discernments – meaning, those insights or ideas seemingly otherwise problematic to comprehend, for his primary intention is not to draw detailed reflections in matters of beliefs of the Bantu Africans or any other particular group of the African people.²⁷⁵ Henceforth, he works out in search of kind of particular principles' account for accommodation of only relevant insights apparently seeming coherent and comprehensible for a logical mind.

A principle emerging from this process might be seen as marking a moral certainty of characteristically Bantu African ethics “that consists of normative theorization with regard to right action, that is, the articulation and justification of a comprehensive, basic norm that is intended to account for what all permissible acts have in common as distinct from impermissible ones.”²⁷⁶ For this reason, Metz's implementation serves as a rationalization for the account of an “African moral theory” of which he endeavours to develop and to elaborate it in all his subsequent work. His effort, thus, forms a proper point of departure on the discussion of his account on human dignity in the *Utu / Ubuntu* tradition and the Bantu African ethical pattern altogether.

In addition, Metz's account on the constellation of the Bantu African moral claims seems to provide the most clearly and articulated description of what is meant by the ethical tradition of *Utu / Ubuntu* in the context of normative ethics. It is an outlook and view, which reasonably, ought to be set as a springboard for any scholarly or academic study-work on the subject-matter of *Utu / Ubuntu* as an ethical theory of ethical and moral value

²⁷⁴ Cf. T. Metz, “The Motivation for...,” 2007, pp. 331–335 and 369–387.

²⁷⁵ Cf. T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 311.

²⁷⁶ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 321. N.B.! While observing that it is only little extant work that constitutes a systematic pursuit of his research project, Metz is correct that such underlying account is preferably presupposed by supporters of a distinctive African moral theory. He furthermore indicates that, such literature ‘construes *Ubuntu* as grounding a normative ethical theory of right action (or at least brings to mind such a construal),’ see p. 323.

appropriate for the virtuous moral living. It is for that reason, I have more or less engaged and yet considered it as a point of departure for the study project of this dissertation as well.

3.1.1 Universal Basic Moral Judgments in Bantu Ethical Theory

As it might appear to any ethical or moral outlining, the account of *Utu / Ubuntu* as an ethical imperative that emphasizes human moral values, is necessarily, fitting to appeal to a set of moral claims held fairly and broadly across a number of African cultures, but especially among the Bantu Africans. However, it should as well be kept in mind that, the difficulty is set on how to characterise the broad spread African cultures and their customary ways of doing things and of living; for as it is already distinguished earlier, casting such values as essentially African, is sometimes problematic in a continent as extensive as Africa. Yet, by contrast, one can easily observe that, Metz's approach is inevitably in search of the characteristically African claims and rationales, above and beyond the Bantu people's assertions. It is, thus, right to affirm that, he goes into attempt of explaining it as he provides such notice that:

I do not mean to suggest that all sub-Saharan societies, let alone all individuals in them, hold them. What I claim are moral judgments more common among Africans than Westerners are values that are more widespread in the sub-Saharan part of the continent than in Europe, North America or Australasia. They are values that are more often found across not only a certain wide array of space, from Ghana to South Africa, but also a long span of time in that space, from traditional societies to contemporary African intellectuals. They are also values that recur more often in the literature on African ethics than in that on Western ethics. So I am speaking of tendencies, not essences.²⁷⁷

By the use of the term "tendencies", which may also have an implication of inclinations, Metz's exploration and analysis of the African moral theory is, thus, being characterised as picking out those predispositions the sub-Saharan Africans hold more often than Westerners.²⁷⁸ In addition, such predispositions are as well claims-like-dispositions characteristically held or espoused mostly among the Bantu Africans. On the other hand, Metz is quite aware of the fact that his survey is merely to set an affirmation that "there is strong epistemic reason to hold <the Bantu moral theory> in relation to certain moral

²⁷⁷ T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 324.

²⁷⁸ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 324.

intuitions common to sub-Saharan Africa and in comparison to other theoretical expressions of African morality.”²⁷⁹

Furthermore, the acquaintance of such phraseology in the discussions of the concerned subject-matter allows us to arrive at point of comprehending the convergence of ethical claims from the various African socio-ethical standpoints without taking for granted the unanimity of an essentially African perspective; which means, in other words that, humans can share with each other a disposition toward some behaviour, without unanimity in all that they do. And such dispositions, which are sometimes also referred to as intuitions (or, in Christian ethical tradition, as natural inclinations (Aquinas), can be characteristic of all humans as a result of convergent conditions, without appeal to some incontrovertible essence.²⁸⁰ Correspondingly, it can as well be thought of from the standpoint that: characteristic dispositions, unlike essential temperaments, may indeed admit of deviation without contradicting or refuting the essence and core definition. Hence, saying that constellations of ethical or moral claims are characteristically asserted by the Bantu Africans will still be valid even if some exceptions do exist. One can, therefore, discern the affirmation for this position from what Metz has argued about the Bantu African moral tradition and literature as he asserted that:

Most of this literature analyses the values associated with the term ‘*Ubuntu*’ and related terms in sub-Sahara Africa and draws out their practical implications for [every day’s socio-ethical life in their societies and ...] the ways that the literature construes *Ubuntu* as grounding a normative ethical theory of right action (or at least brings to mind such a construal), analytically setting aside *Ubuntu* as a comprehensive worldview or a description of a way of life as a whole.²⁸¹

In addition to all, what is mentioned in the paragraph cited right above, Metz recommences even further in another academic project that, this outlook leaves open the prospect that, “what counts as ‘African’ can also be found elsewhere in the world ... intuitively, something can be characteristically African without being ‘unique’ to Africa in

²⁷⁹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 322. Words in the brackets are mine.

²⁸⁰ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 324.

²⁸¹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 323. N.B.! Words in [brackets] are mine. And for further notice: When Metz mentions of “‘*Ubuntu*’ and the related terms in sub-Sahara Africa”, I take his words to imply that, there are cognate terms and ideas associated with them in at least all the other Bantu languages that are found in the African continent south of Sahara, like for instance: ‘*Utu*’ in Kiswahili (Tanzania) and ‘*Nunhu*’ in Shona (Zimbabwe), on which the connotations associated with them are more or less similar. See also: J. Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons...*, 2002, p. 14.

the sense of not being found anywhere else at all.”²⁸² Moreover, this means, although Bantu African ethics seems somehow to be bound characteristically unique, following the fact that, it manifests itself being an ethics which is more interested with communal norms and ethical rules encompassing all persons in a community, yet it is kind of morality that shares many elements in dialogue with various types of ethics from other ethical patterns all over the world; and for this reason it shows also some elements which are universal. After all, when it comes to virtuous moral living, by definition it would surely be understood to apply to all human beings, and so it is to be recognised that the perception of human moral capacity, as what grounds morality, is going to be true of humans wherever they may be found on the planet we are living.

Nonetheless, beyond its communal aspects, the significance for a constellation of supposedly characteristically African ethical value claims is, thus, on search for the establishment of a universal moral principle, which is more likely to stand as the foundation for the Bantu African morality. While being based on *Utu / Ubuntu*, therefore, the Bantu African ethical pattern is likewise manifesting to bestow and to indulge some criteria for an adequate moral theory. The constellation of moral claims, hence, as we going to observe it right here after, comprises of twelve firm moral insights or perceptions, which can also be referred to as ‘moral judgments’. All together, there are twelve moral judgements reflecting ethical insights which are significantly important to guide our human conducts and behaviour. Six of them are actually being considered in both Western and African ethical patterns while the other six, which I will mention and explain in the next section after this one, are indeed more of the Bantu African characteristics and perception than of Western facets. The evaluation of moral theories in the Bantu African ethical pattern, thus, depends in one way or another on the twelve moral insights as they are found in the Bantu people’s constellation of moral claims.²⁸³

²⁸² T. Metz, “The Motivation for...,” 2007, p. 376. This clarification was actually made in response to what Ramose argued that Metz has failed to provide an explicit outline of the relationship between “distinctive” and “African” positions, leaving the contextual content of “African” hanging and being ambiguous. Thus, for a clear picture of this argument, see also: M.B. Ramose, “But Hans Kelsen was not born in Africa: a reply to Thaddeus Metz” in *South African Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 26 [4], 2007, pp. 352–353.

²⁸³ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 328.

Through an acute and profound observation on Metz's scholarly work, *Toward an African Moral Theory*, we can clearly ascertain that the emphasis made in his account for raising awareness of the significance of human dignity is, first and foremost, the setting to alert those six "moral judgments that are commonly accepted by both adherents of *Ubuntu* and Western people in modern, industrialized, constitutional democracies."²⁸⁴

The Bantu African conception of community based moral judgement is thus articulated in purpose of displaying the similarly universal scope between the two ethical patterns, namely of the Bantu people and of the Western people. For both groups, he argues, tend to hold that it is *pro tanto* immoral²⁸⁵:

To kill innocent people for money.

To have sex with someone without her/his consent.

To deceive people, at least when not done in self- or other-defence.

To steal (that is, to take from their rightful owner) unnecessary goods.

To violate trust, for example, break a promise, for marginal personal gain.

To discriminate on a racial basis when allocating opportunities.²⁸⁶

One can at this juncture obviously grasp in mind that, the mentioned above six 'moral judgements' – which are as well being referred to as 'moral discernments for moral decisions' – are to a large extent reflecting what is contained by the moral dictates as we evidently and clearly find them in the Scriptural Decalogue.²⁸⁷ And we know it clearly that, the biblical Decalogue plays indeed substantial role for the foundation of the Christian moral instructions. It is, actually, remarkable to notice that, there is in the setting of the Bantu African ethical pattern also kind of justification of all such moral claims, as they appear to be characteristically contained in the Christian moral tradition so also they do in the African moral tradition and ethical theory. Yet still, in observing carefully the Bantu African moral tradition, one may also discover that, unlike in the Christian moral tradition,

²⁸⁴ T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 324. I hereby prefer taking Metz's use of the term "Western" that, it implies of the common mentality across the "modern, industrialized, constitutional democracies" in "Europe, North America or Australasia" as he himself has already noted it earlier, but in addition and particularly to my pick out also the "Christian civilization and mentality". For we actually cannot avoid that Christianity and its philosophical mentality has big impact in the Western civilization.

²⁸⁵ One needs understand that the phrase '*pro tanto* immoral' is hereby used to indicate that, it is 'to a large extent' or rather 'completely' immoral. I would, however, prefer using the phrase 'intrinsically immoral' or 'intrinsically evil' so as to fit well with Christian theological ethics and cognizance.

²⁸⁶ T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 324. See also: T. Metz, "The Motivation for...", 2007, pp. 379–382.

²⁸⁷ See the Scriptures, especially in the Books of *Exodus* 20: 1–17 and *Deuteronomy* 5: 1–21.

in which moral direction given by reason finds orientation in the teachings of Christ, the Bantu African ethical pattern is based more on the conception of human dignity in terms of *Utu / Ubuntu*. In other words, the Bantu African moral tradition is to a large extent, an ethical pattern which occasions more awareness on the conception of human dignity; the conception which denotes humans as most special beings with whom to commune so as to realise one's own humanness.²⁸⁸ In such a perception, thus, the emphasis is on the appeal "to a certain understanding of human life as being more important than anything in the animal, vegetable or mineral kingdoms insofar as it has a greater capacity for 'life-force'"²⁸⁹ and surely for the use of reason, as one of the African author, Liboire Kagabo, puts that, for the Bantu Africans *Mu-ntu* (human being) means: 'Being with Intelligence' while *Ki-ntu* (Thing) means: 'Being without Intelligence'.²⁹⁰

Based on these reflections, I would like to formulate the principles proposed by Metz as universal principles of Bantu origin but equally representative of the Western world in the following way:

- Principle 1: It is not allowed to murder.
- Principle 2: It is not allowed to practice sexual violence.
- Principle 3: It is not allowed to deceive.
- Principle 4: It is not allowed to steal.
- Principle 5: It is not allowed to violate trust.
- Principle 6: It is not allowed to exercise ethnic discrimination.

These six principles correspond partially to the Christian tradition, especially to the second table of the Ten Commandments formulated in Dtn 5, 17-21, which entail the commandments not to kill a human person (Vs. 17), not to steal (Vs. 19), and not to desire the neighbour's property. These six principles, being already recognized as universal principles, can therefore be used as basis for an ethics that can serve the Tanzanians and beyond, that can be also made easily understandable from the background of Bantu culture, since they are an immediate outcome of the principle of *Utu / Ubuntu* in Bantu tradition.

²⁸⁸ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014 p. 313.

²⁸⁹ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014 p. 313.

²⁹⁰ Liboire Kagabo, "Alexis Kagame ...," 2004, p. 235.

The question needs to be raised, however, whether more than these very general principles can be derived from the Bantu tradition. Therefore, in the next part of this chapter, I will examine the norms that have been portrayed as typically African, and therefore, as could be argued, not universal enough to serve as basis for an ethics that encompasses all different ethnic and religious groups present in a pluralistic society.

3.1.2 Non-universal Basic Moral Judgments in Bantu Ethical Theory

In addition to these principles inherent in Bantu ethics that are universal, there are still other ethical claims seeming to be less familiar to the Western school of thought and persuasion. Hence, having picked out the above mentioned six moral claims, which are comparatively held in common with the Western and Christian civilization, Metz goes further, cataloguing for a complimentary set of other six more ethical claims; which are typically of a mind-set asserted mostly in sub-Sahara Africa, and especially among the Bantu Africans. Nonetheless, the supplemented ethical claims, which are indeed postulated characteristically Africans, hold no less being as plausible as the preliminary list, and so they are in keeping with the Bantu Africans, and indisputably considered *pro tanto* immoral. I will explain them in the order proposed by Metz in his article.²⁹¹ The emphasis I want to lay is, on the one hand, trying to make understandable why Metz portrays them as typically Bantu-African. On the other hand, I also want to point at the possibility of re-interpreting them as expressions of universal principles that are shaped by African culture and therefore can, in the way they are, be understood as intermediate principles that not merely are working on a communal level, but can also serve as basis for an ethical framework in Tanzania.

Principle 7: Seeking consensus is preferable to majority decisions

“To make policy decisions in the face of dissent, as opposed to seeking consensus.”²⁹² It implies, in the account of *Utu / Ubuntu* as moral theory, thus: “*An action is right just insofar as it produces harmony and reduces discord; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to develop community.*”²⁹³

²⁹¹ Metz orders them in an alphabetic order, but I will do so in a numerical order.

²⁹² T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 324–325. In support of this moral insight, Metz makes reference and citations from other African scholars like: Kwasi Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*, Bloomington: 1996, Indiana University Press, pt. 4; and also, M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, pp. 135–153.

²⁹³ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 334.

Basing on the concept of human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*), consensus with regard to unanimity, is in the Bantu African ethical pattern, more prized as valuable prospect and means to mediate conflicting views, though it should be in such a way that a consensus is arrived at through an engaged discussion and dialogue. In other words, one can say, seeking to make decisions, merely on basis of agreement in terms of majority, without full discussion and consideration of minority's reduced position, is typically observed as a morally inadequate way to resolve conflicts of interests or to determine policy decisions.²⁹⁴ The paradigm demonstration of this claim, though it does not vividly manifests itself in contemporary African socio-political conflicts, yet, it appears still that "in many small-scale African communities, discussion continues until a compromise is found and all in the discussion agree with the outcome."²⁹⁵

Of course, there are times that the discussions also fails, unless they firmly stand on reflection of tiny aspects as regards the inherent dignity of all human persons. On this perspective, then, some African scholars, like in particular Pieter H. Coetzee, are of the opinion that: Such "failures are treated as instances of a general failure to live up to a moral precept which enjoins that all action ought to be directed at the harmonization of the interests of the community members, which precept governs all interpersonal relations."²⁹⁶ In other words, that is to say: in the Bantu African ethical theory, a human being is not considered truly virtuous, unless he or she lives and acts as a recognised member of the community and is capable of doing reconciling decisions with others.

It is, thus, on basis of human dignity and humanity, that the normative moral standard of human relations forms the reinforcement of a moral belief, which develops from precepts and edicts patented in a community setting, via a process of consensus. The improvisation of norms from the grass-roots, ensures, as a result, the fact that familial and communal relations remain the most vital social bond and ethical value. It is such socio-ethical bond, in footings of *Utu / Ubuntu*, which counts in constructing groundwork for collective endorsement of the value of 'being-with' or rather the value of belonging to the community itself. In the socio-political realm, then, it is human dignity and humanity,

²⁹⁴ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, pp. 324–325.

²⁹⁵ T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 324.

²⁹⁶ P.H. Coetzee, "Morality in African Thought," in P.H. Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (eds.), *The African Philosophy Reader*, Second Edition, London: 2003, Routledge, p. 326.

which grounds the fundamental entitlements that all human individuals in the concerned community would need and enjoy as protection against communal conducts prohibited by law and customs. It should be, furthermore, noted that in the Bantu African moral constellation policies and decisions that produces harmony are necessary as obligations and rights which deserve and belong to all members of the community not because of the community as an institution but rather because of the dignity that every human individual possesses by one's nature as human. It creates a sense of moral mediation at a level of sociability – such as, the family and other like-institutions – which guarantee ideal effectiveness of moral upkeep by virtue of congruent reciprocity, through a conventional custom. And that means, therefore, that role-identification and a system of revitalising the moral force via applications of practical reasoning, entrenched in the specifics of social edifice and borne of the self-recognition of a specific people, empowers individuals into developing a coherent sense of self-identity as well as of community.

Somehow, one can actually have the perception that this view has same tone as that of Immanuel Kant, especially when he extended his vision from the “political ideal into a moral ideal of all of humanity united by common principles.”²⁹⁷ In truth, however, it is not the same at all, even if it looks more or less alike, especially when it comes to the procedure of determining concrete practice. On the basis the difference is partial, because there is more emphasis of a communal and anthropological element in the Bantu African view, while Kant, “on the basis of his rational analysis, grounds the notion of human dignity or intrinsic worth on the capacity of the person for moral autonomy”²⁹⁸ rather than communal morality. Both the Bantu and Kant share in saying that dignity means that someone has the capacity (and obligation) to act morally. The difference is more laying on the next step when it is asked what is seen as moral. Where Kant would say: what could be a universal law, the Bantu would say: what our social nature in its explication by the elder persons in the community tells us, thus referring to a kind of natural and communal law. In this way in Bantu tradition, one starts from the more concrete and proceeds to the more universal, while when working with Kant, one needs to develop a thought starting from the more universal and developing it to the more concrete.

²⁹⁷ T.E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 216.

²⁹⁸ P.H. Coetzee, “Morality in African...,” 2003, p. 361.

Principle 8: In cases of criminal justice, reconciliation is preferable to retribution

“To make retribution a fundamental and central aim of criminal justice, as opposed to seeking reconciliation.”²⁹⁹ The implication here is that: “*An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to enhance the welfare of one’s fellows.*”³⁰⁰

In the Bantu African ethical pattern, justice in terms of retribution is viewed as kind of vengeance; something that one has to do for the neighbour in case all other measures for reconciliation have failed, either because of one of the involved side being really heart-hardening or too wicked to have any regrets at all for the wrong deeds committed. For this reason, thus, it brings rise to a perception that Bantu African morality is more of a function that, first and foremost aims at improving people’s quality of life in the way humans interact with one another in the community rather than totally indulging into castigation of the person from the community or society.³⁰¹ It is, therefore, claimed in the *Utu / Ubuntu* ethical tradition that, such system of backward-looking, retributive version of criminal justice, like the one which was credited in the Roman Empire civilisation – and later being spread world widely – is, among others, uncharacteristic of African ethical claims about moral value.³⁰² The retributive account, in concern, is hence, so to say, none other, than what Metz outlined in expression as: “by ‘retribution’ I mean any consideration that could be invoked to justify punishing a law-breaker fundamentally for, and in proportion to, wrongdoing.”³⁰³ To the Bantu African ethical pattern, however, it is asserted that, in place of backward-looking retributive permissible measures, the Bantu African interpretations of the aim of criminal justice are characteristically forward-looking ones, with expectation of somehow good results while focussing on the dignity of the person, and indeed aiming “to mend a broken relationship between the offender, his victim, and the community.”³⁰⁴ Certainly it is not the case that retributive acumens or rulings are never affirmed by Bantu Africans, yet Metz is

²⁹⁹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 325. Also see: K. Wiredu, “Moral Foundations...,” 1992, p. 204; See also: D. Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: 1999, Random House.

³⁰⁰ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330.

³⁰¹ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330.

³⁰² Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 325.

³⁰³ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 325.

³⁰⁴ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 325; See also in the work of Desmond M Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 1999, in which one can clearly observe that, the South African TRC, being Chaired by Tutu, is the most familiar example of this preference for reconciliation. N.b. The Archbishop Tutu is by ethnic belonging to the Bantu speaking family; a South African social rights activist and retired Anglican bishop winner of *Nobel Peace Prize* in 1984, the *Albert Schweitzer Prize for Humanitarianism* in 1986, the *Pacem in Terris Award* in 1987, the *Sydney Peace Prize* in 1999, and the *Gandhi Peace Prize* in 2007.

right to note that the forward-looking appeal to communal and mutual reconciliation is, as one would expect, the one preferred by Bantu Africans – be them, socio-political thinkers or local jurists (also named as: elder counsellors). And this is even the reason that, “the South African Constitutional Court have uniformly judged *Ubuntu* to be incompatible with the death-penalty or any retributive reasoning that could underwrite it.”³⁰⁵

Further presumption is that: reconciliation brings more harmony among the people than vengeance; and so, “the harmonization of interests as the *means*, and the securing of human well-being as the *end* of all moral endeavour”³⁰⁶ are considered vital for virtuous moral living. It is also taken as gracious that “norms, ideals, and moral virtues can be said to include generosity, kindness, compassion, benevolence, respect, and concern for others;”³⁰⁷ and that means, human judgements, actions, and behaviours are considerably supposed to be for the promotion of harmony in the community and the welfare of others.

Principle 9: Acquiring wealth through exploiting other is morally not acceptable

“To create wealth largely on a competitive basis, as opposed to a cooperative one.”³⁰⁸ Whose ethical implication denotes that: “An action is right just insofar as it positively relates to others and thereby realizes oneself; an action is wrong to the extent that it does not perfect one’s valuable as a social being.”³⁰⁹

One side of this claim sustains that an African approach on matters of competition is characteristically based on perception that, in any rivalry, there is significant harm done to the human person, even when it appears that, sometimes, there is, but “success through aggressive competitiveness.”³¹⁰ And such harm is sometimes even worse, especially, when competitors are involved into generating enormous wealth by all cost and means, regardless of their activities’ side-effects to the community or humanity at large.

But viewing it from the other side of the coin, one finds that, it is also revealed that, this claim is basically laid on an assertion that, there is in the Bantu African ethical pattern and tradition, such strong affirmative prerequisite that all human dealings with one another

³⁰⁵ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 325.

³⁰⁶ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330. See also: K. Wiredu, “Custom and morality...,” 1996, p. 65.

³⁰⁷ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330. Also see: Polycarp Ikenobe, “Moral Education and Moral Reasoning in Traditional African Cultures,” *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 32 (1998), pp. 25–42.

³⁰⁸ T. Metz “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 325–326.

³⁰⁹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 331.

³¹⁰ D. Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, New York: 1999, Random House, p. 32.

should be undertaken, first and foremost, in concern of cooperative means and sense of community. In fact, to a great extent, Bantu African's "thought about the nature of community can be analytically clarified by understanding it as the combination of two logical distinct relationships, *identity* and *solidarity*."³¹¹ Whereas, "identification is, at the core, a matter of thinking of oneself as a 'we', that is, as a member of a group, and of engaging in joint projects with its members."³¹² In consequence, it requires that, negotiations are made to ensure association and solidarity is practiced and appreciated. Of course, making negotiations is sometimes difficult following that tendency of each individual needing to gain more or pull to one's own advantage. Julius Nyerere, thus, once wrote that: "Negotiations are not always easy. They demand a willingness to compromise on the part of all participants; an understanding of what is essential, and an acceptance of the fact that no one [human group or community] can hope to get everything it wants."³¹³

It means, therefore, that humans are ordained to work, "neither in order to make a profit in light of demand nor simply to care for one's immediate family".³¹⁴ So like for the claim, already indicated on point G. above, about the value of mutual consensus, it is equally important to bear in mind that, this is obviously not simply an objective of small communities, where such an emphasis can have immediate practical value and implementability, but also that, it is reasonable and ought to be practised in a complex society as well. An affirmation such as this, is indeed easily observed by a number of African scholars and thinkers, who constantly are of the argument that, it is apt, even in the context of contemporary, large-scale economies, to object to the harsh economic competitions,³¹⁵ with "single-minded commercialism"³¹⁶, unbridled individualism, based on purely economic logic, while being morally blind.³¹⁷

Furthermore, one can clearly notice that, in one of his academic paper, Metz has made use of the term 'largely' and that makes a hint that, there may be, in any competition,

³¹¹ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

³¹² T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

³¹³ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development/Uhuru na Maendeleo: a selection from writings and speeches, 1968–1973*, Dar es Salaam and London: 1973, Oxford University Press, p. 21.

³¹⁴ T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, pp. 325–326.

³¹⁵ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 326; cf. J. Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons...*, 2002, p. 54.

³¹⁶ K. Wiredu, "Moral Foundations...", 1992, p. 202.

³¹⁷ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 326.

some scope for one's own commercial benefit or profit-making, but by the very fact of prioritising this above communal welfare, then, it is considered morally problematic. Conversely, he asserts that: "Exhibiting solidarity is basically a matter of helping others for their sake, often out of sympathetic emotional reaction to what it is like to be them."³¹⁸ Accordingly, such a perception introduces us into an insight as another author, Pieter H. Coetzee, puts it that: "The success that must accrue to communal or corporative living depends very much on each member of the community demonstrating a high degree of moral responsiveness and sensitivity in relation to the needs and well-being of other members. This should manifest itself in each member's pursuit of his/her duties."³¹⁹ Such hint, as it is presented by Coetzee, is undoubtedly dominating in interpreting Bantu African ethics, and it prevails strongly in various African literature and numerous academic works.

There is, thus, quite a number of authors and scholars holding in mind that the maxim: "a person is a person through other persons" is indeed a call for an individual human person in a community to realize oneself and so to develop one's own personhood or virtue, as well as cherishing humanity, following the dictates of his/her dignity.³²⁰ This is "something one does insofar as one enters into community with others."³²¹ Augustine Shutte, for instance, in his book: *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, captures this view in this way as he wrote:

[T]he moral life is seen as a process of personal growth. ... Our deepest moral obligation is to become more fully human. And this means entering more and more deeply into community with others. So although the goal is personal fulfilment, selfishness is excluded.³²²

Another African scholar and author, Mogobe Ramose, also shares same attitude in his book, namely, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, as he writes:

To be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish humane relations with them. ... One is enjoined, yes, commanded as it were, to actually become a human being.³²³

³¹⁸ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

³¹⁹ P.H. Coetzee, "Morality in African...", 2003, p. 364.

³²⁰ Cf. T. Metz "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 331; cf. also: T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

³²¹ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

³²² A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*, Cape Town: 2001, Cluster Publications, p. 30; see also: T. Metz "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 331.

³²³ M. Ramose, *African Philosophy...*, 2002, p. 52. See also T. Metz, "Toward an African...", p. 331.

When one makes keen reflection on the remarks of Shutte and Ramose, one can, therefore, assert as Metz puts it that, “instead of others’ welfare being the relevant good for a moral agent to promote, here it is the realization of one’s distinctively human and valuable nature, specifically, one’s special ability to engage in communal relationships.”³²⁴ The bottom line clarification for this, is indeed the assertion that: an assimilated understanding of the moral tradition of *Utu / Ubuntu*, includes the idea that the moral value and basis for virtuous moral living, fundamentally lies not in the individual as an agent separated from other human beings, but rather in a relationship between human individuals.³²⁵ Meaning, that relationship brought about by the common link and value of human dignity inherent in all humans, and with which actually, all humanity are endowed as guidance for moral conducts and way of living.

Principle 10: Wealth is inseparable from social responsibility

To distribute wealth largely on the basis of individual rights, as opposed to need.”³²⁶ Of which in the Bantu African ethical pattern it implies: “*An action is right just insofar as it promotes the well-being of others without violating their rights; an act is wrong to the extent that it either violates rights or fails to enhance the welfare of one’s fellows without violating rights.*”³²⁷

At this juncture, Metz attempts distinguishing between logically distinct, yet easily conflated, two ethical assertions about the question of wealth as a whole. Whereas the previous characteristically African claim asserted about moral harm in generating or creating wealth by means of excessive competition, this other claim asserts of a moral harm in as far as distribution of wealth is concerned; particularly, about distributing wealth primarily with reference to who has rights or claims against it, rather than in the face of significant and existent need by those who might not have access to the same or equal rights. In other words: in principle and by virtue of their dignity as humans, all community members have right to use of, or access to whatever belongs to community and for welfare of humanity. So, Metz puts it, in his work paper, *Toward an African Moral Theory*, as he wrote:

The requirements of an individual to help others are typically deemed heavier in African morality than in Western. People in the West tend to think that individual rights should

³²⁴ T. Metz “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 331.

³²⁵ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 333.

³²⁶ T. Metz “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 326–327.

³²⁷ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330.

largely determine the resources one may possess, for example, one has a right to keep what one deserves for having been productive, a right to shares in virtue of having contributed to a cooperative scheme, or a right to keep what one has received by voluntary transfer from a previous owner. Giving to others what they have no right to is not thought of as upholding a duty but as being generous. In contrast, a greater percentage of Africans think that one is morally obligated to help others, roughly to the extent that one can and that others need, with rights not figuring into the analysis of how much one ought to transfer wealth, time or labour.³²⁸

Thus, for further illustration on the vital force of this Bantu ethical claim and obligation, Metz preferred citing a famous quotation and traditional appraisal from Walter Sisulu, the former anti-apartheid activist in South Africa, who was recalled of using the parable of the two cows owned by a person in a community, as he remarked: “if you have two cows and the milk of the first cow is sufficient for your own consumption, *Ubuntu* expects you to donate the milk of the second cow to your underprivileged brothers and sisters.”³²⁹ In addition to this remark, Metz points out that: “conversely, more Africans than Westerners think that it is permissible to take goods such as food without others’ consent, so long as one does not overdo it.”³³⁰ And such is considered an ethical practice, especially in times of great need or deprivation. Other African scholars, like Kwame Gyekye, do advocate this view and they have even named it “moderate or restricted communitarianism”.³³¹ They hold for an inference that: “Even though in its basic thrust and concerns it gives prominence to duties toward the community and its members, it does not – cannot – do so to the detriment of individual rights whose existence and value it recognizes, or should recognize.”³³² Specifically, this is a position strongly held by Gyekye that he even has strongly defended in another work as he argued for³³³ and claimed that on an African understanding,

the moral life, which essentially involves paying regard to the needs, interests, and wellbeing of *others*, already implies self-sacrifice and loss, that is, loss of something;

³²⁸ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 326. In the footnote under this quoted point, Metz also urges readers of his work paper to refer, for further discussion, as from others scholars like: Wiredu, “Moral Foundations of an African Culture,” pp. 198–202; M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy...*, 2002, pp. 150 – 151; and D.A. Masolo, “Western and African Communitarianism: a comparison,” in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2004, Blackwell, pp.483–498 and especially pp. 488–496.

³²⁹ Walter M. Ulyate Sisulu, quoted in Johann Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons...*, 2002, pp. vii, 1, and 36–39; see also, T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p.326.

³³⁰ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 326–327.

³³¹ Cf. T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 330.

³³² K. Gyekye, “Person and Community in Akan Thought,” in K. Wiredu and K. Gyekye (eds.), *Person and Community*, ICPHS & UNESCO, New York: 1992, CRVP, p. 109.

³³³ Cf. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, Oxford: 1997, Oxford University Press, pp. 35–76.

one's time, money, strength and so on. There is ... no need, therefore, to place limits on the form of self-sacrifice and, hence, the extent of our moral responsibilities.³³⁴

Such mentality of the Bantu Africans, therefore, perceives the concept of human dignity as being compatible with some scope for the fulfilment of one's moral duty and responsibility in accordance with the human person's basic needs rather than rights. Something about our humanity and in particular our human relations, thus, entails a duty to assist others fundamentally on basis of their need. It implies, therefore, that without denying the coherence of some human acts, which cannot be demanded as duties, the characteristically Bantu African claim posits far greater insistence and willpower to help others as being within the threshold of duty than are conventionally asserted in the world outside the Bantu people.

Principle 11: Activities that strengthen social bonds are preferable to personal activities

“To ignore others and violate communal norms, as opposed to acknowledging others, upholding tradition and partaking in rituals.”³³⁵ This claim's other side uprightly imply that: “An action is right just insofar as it is in solidarity with groups whose survival is threatened; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to support a *vulnerable community*.”³³⁶

As this claim indicates, it rightly conveys two *prima facie* distinct positions as entailed by categorically African claim in particular. The first of such positions is that “one has some moral obligation to engage with one's fellows,”³³⁷ and so, it consequently falls to the second position, in which the moral obligation “to support the community's way of life”³³⁸ is apparently involved.

There is even an illustrative narration, typical for this point, presented by Metz from a study recounted in Augustine Shutte's book namely, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for the New South Africa*, that: in a given community, such things as commitment to extracurricular duties are apparently perceived as “objectionably to care more about practical matters than people.”³³⁹ However, when one reads Metz's accounts with a critical mind, whose searching goes a little further beyond the apparent literal sense, then one is able to observe that there is in

³³⁴ K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 73.

³³⁵ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 327.

³³⁶ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 333.

³³⁷ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 327.

³³⁸ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 327.

³³⁹ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 327; cf. A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic...*, 2001, pp. 27–28.

his work, an articulation of distinctive Bantu African ethical claim, on which the moral obligation to support community's way of life is one illustration of a more general moral responsibility to engage with one's fellows. It implies, therefore, that "the combination of identifying with others, or sharing a way of life with them, on the one hand, and exhibiting solidarity towards them, or caring for their quality of life, on the other, is [indeed] what most people mean by 'friendship' or a broad sense of 'love'."³⁴⁰

Additionally, it is that, as we human beings extend friendship or that broad sense of fraternity and sorority that we are as well in position of extending human justice and so, furthering the cause of peace and happiness to all humanity; and that every moment of peace and joy is a moment stolen unless it is used to further justice among humans on basis of the inherent dignity they possess.³⁴¹

Nevertheless, the moral claim which is right here in concern, "does not mean that African [moral] values forbid individuality, creativity or nonconformity, but it does mean that some weight in moral thinking is given to whether behaviour upsets communal norms."³⁴² On the contrary, this claim asserts that a characteristically African perspective takes an ethical value of engaging with others to be morally obligatory. Thus, supporting communal ethical values, especially on matters of caring about the human person, as an end by himself or herself is indeed considered essential, necessary moral value, entailing moral duty in sense of respect for human dignity.

The conception of human dignity, as manifested in this claim, is actually the emphatic idea that we, human beings, "are more special than rocks, plants and animals in virtue of our capacity for communal relationship"³⁴³ and that is the reason why even our personal individual activities should not go beyond violating communal norms for solidarity, friendship, charity and caring of each other.

³⁴⁰ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315. See also: D. Tutu, *No Future Without...*, 1999, pp. 34–35.

³⁴¹ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Development...*, 1973, p. 4.

³⁴² T. Metz, "Toward an African...", 2007, p. 327. See also that there is a footnote indicated here by Metz that, "the standard objection to African ethics is that it is overly restrictive of individual liberty, sometimes called the 'dark side' of Ubuntu," and he calls for further discussion while referring his readers to: D. Louw, "Ubuntu and the Challenges of Multiculturalism in Post-apartheid South Africa," *Quest*, 15 (2001), pp. 19–26.

³⁴³ T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 315.

In fact, Metz has positioned it in short and clear phraseology as he wrote: “So, one way to understand the claim that dignity inheres in our capacity for communal relationship is to say this: we are more special than anything else on the planet because we are capable of being part of a friendly or loving relationship in a way that nothing else is.”³⁴⁴ In addition, that is to say, engaging oneself into personal individual activities while ignoring others and violating communal norms is perceived by the Bantu Africans as practices consisting “of failures to honour others’ communal nature, in part because they are unlikely to be good for others or done out of sympathy with them, but most clearly because they are failures to share a way of life with them, i.e. to enjoy a sense of togetherness and to cooperate.”³⁴⁵

Principle 12: Contributing to humankind by founding a family is a positive value

“To fail to marry and procreate, as opposed to creating a family.”³⁴⁶ In the *Utu / Ubuntu* ethical perception, this does further imply that: “*An action is right just insofar as it respects a person’s dignity; an act is wrong to the extent that it degrades humanity.*”³⁴⁷

An ethical rendition is subsequently derived in this context, following the contention that: “there is value intrinsic to something about human nature that demands honouring”³⁴⁸ and that is none else but the inherent dignity of the human person and human life itself. Yet, such intrinsic value is essentially marked in the family, in terms of community, which plays the nest for the promotion of the value of human life and humanity as a whole. That is the reason why there are moral responsibilities and duties linked to the nature and dignity of the human person.

Similarly, it is from perception and recognition of such responsibilities and duties from which also the notion of natural human rights and socio-political rights emerge. And attending to such rights thus binds the human person to the moral obligation. By natural human rights here it means, those of a human person or one’s potential to claim something that does not come as a privilege from society but from the human nature per se; it is by virtue of human nature that those rights are bestowed naturally to the human person. All in all, let us remain with this understanding that: in the Bantu African constellation it is

³⁴⁴ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, pp. 315–316.

³⁴⁵ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...,” 2014, p. 316.

³⁴⁶ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, pp. 327–328.

³⁴⁷ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 328. Also see the elaboration of this claim as it appears presented in this same work of Metz on pp. 329–330.

³⁴⁸ T. Metz, “Toward an African...,” 2007, p. 329.

perceived that there are such fundamental moral responsibilities and rights that belong to an individual human person as consequence of him or her being human. They refer to a wide range of values that are universal in character and in some sense equally claimed for all human beings by virtue of their human nature and dignity.

All basic moral responsibilities and rights of the human person are, therefore, always considered from the standpoint of the inherent dignity of the human person, who is capable of thinking and deciding in the direction of promotion and support of human life. However, even when he/she is free to make choices and decisions as an individual being, one should still bear in mind that, he/she has to make those choices and decisions without tainting one's own image and dignity as a human person who lives in a community and needs the family and community to remain existing. It actually means, in the Bantu Africans thought, an individual human person is certainly not perceived as isolated person from the human community, of which the family is the nucleus community. It signifies, therefore that, a person is preferably perceived with regard to the way he/she cooperates and interrelates with other humans in a family or community, in which all humans are as of one nature and with same vital essence, and for that reason, they have as well the same ethical principle which guides their moral actions or conduct, rather than being left to act independently of what is characterised as the core of their being humans.

So far, then, it means: collaborating, interrelating and living in harmony with other human beings includes, among others, also the bonding of man and woman via marriage. It is, thus, understood that perpetuation of humanity and the future of mankind passes through the nucleus-community, as referred to as, family. And we all know that, it is indeed, via marriage and family that life is accentuated. It consequently follows, that, respect for human dignity goes hand in hand with promotion of life and family in purpose of advancing humanity and its vitality. Henceforth, this point raises the perception that, Bantu Africans, ascertain and comprehend in accordance with their ethical pattern that, perpetuating humanity is in keeping with the moral obligation, ordained by God for the promotion of life.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁹ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African..." 2007, p. 329. See also: B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2001, pp. 2, 52, 62, 66, and 88.

With such ethical comprehension and assertion, we then come to the grasp of the point that, there is in fact slight demarcation for the Bantu Africans to make differentiation between human life and human dignity. The reason is actually flowing from the understanding that the human person was created and endowed life in a different way from what other creatures were given. And being endowed life in a different way from other creatures, then, it denotes the dignity given to human beings over other creatures. Of course, we may not avoid the fact that, there is in one way or another, in this vision, kind of conceptual distinctiveness among the Bantu Africans, which is hardly perceived by the Western school-of-thought.

That means, the Bantu Africans, sometimes, tend to refer to: respect for human dignity in terms of honouring human life and humanity with no demarcation in between. Thus, human life and human dignity appears, in the Bantu African ethical pattern, being like two sides of the same coin.³⁵⁰ For this reason, when it comes into identifying human dignity as moral value, it is then interpreted as the ethical basis or source from which spring the rules and principles to guide our moral conducts. It is further held that, the adherence for virtuous moral living is vital for the promotion of human life and so it stands by the dictates of the inherent moral value of the human person, which is none else but human dignity. It is, hence, a conviction dependent on the contention that, any adult human person who fails to copiously provide his/her household fails, for that reason, also to make contribution to one's own lineage and so he/she is subject to moral approbation. It is from a perspective such as this, that one clearly grasps that the African ethical pattern, and particularly about the Bantu African socio-ethical interpretation of life, is more or less diffused with principal considerations of affinity relations in terms of kinship.

3.1.3 Developing Metz' Approach Further: the Use of Intermediate Principles for a Universal and a Virtue Ethics Approach

The principles that have been developed using Metz's analysis of Bantu African morality as point of departure, can be summarized in the following way:

³⁵⁰ Cf. T. Metz, "Toward an African..." 2007, p. 329.

Principle 7: Seeking consensus is preferable to majority decisions

Principle 8: In cases of criminal justice, reconciliation is preferable to retribution

Principle 9: Acquiring wealth through exploiting other is morally not acceptable

Principle 10: Wealth is inseparable from social responsibility

Principle 11: Activities that strengthen social bonds are preferable to personal activities

Principle 12: Contributing to humankind by founding a family is a positive value

It is visible that these principles are not as general as the first six principles, because they already have a more concrete field of application in their background: decision making in community, criminal justice, the economic system, the social support for people in need, social activities, and support for families. They can be regarded therefore as intermediate principles that can both be more concretized on a communal level and universalized on a state level, thus serving as a link between the traditional system of ethnic communities and the modern political system of the state. This means that it is worth going beyond Metz' estimation of these principles as (only) African to develop them to be abstract enough to be used on a universal level, yet referring also to the communal level.

On the other side, these intermediate principles also express rules of a tradition-based virtue ethics that serves as aim for education of members of the community, but can also serve as link to a more abstract handling on a political level, for it is expected that the Tanzanians, being educated in the concrete, behavioural way, more easily can grasp what is developed from that basis than what is deduced from an abstract principle. Apart from this pedagogical aspect, this intermediate level is of utmost importance if we want to bridge the situation at a local level and the modern development in the cities, in order to avoid a widening gap between different areas in Tanzania.

In the following parts of this chapter, therefore, I want to show that the theory of Utu / Ubuntu allows both movements: the abstraction of principles, and the development of a virtue ethics approach that can serve as support for living in a globalized society, being at the same time rooted in a tradition-based ethical fundament.

3.2 *Utu / Ubuntu* as Foundation for a Multi-layered Moral Theory

Whenever one searches for the criteria that indicate an ethical concept as one of considered moral theory, then, one ends up finding that the criteria will be that concept's unquestionable capability to convey moral awareness and knowledge of what is said to be right or good as well as the other way round – that is, about what is wrong or evil. It is from such outlook, thus, I am inclined to develop this normative-hypothetical discourse regarding human dignity as the foundational principle of a moral theory, in so far as it is perceived in the African Bantu ethical system and patterns. Nevertheless, this has to be grasped with an awareness, as it was once mentioned by one of South African Anglican archbishop, Desmond Tutu when he hinted that, it might be difficult to render full sense and implication of the Bantu conception of human dignity, here referred to as *Utu / Ubuntu*, into Western understanding.³⁵¹ Yet the significance of the concept of human dignity as normative value and basis of a moral theory, in as far as it is comprehended in the Bantu African ethical pattern, is implicit and easily grasped when this concept itself is pondered and considered from the Bantu Africans socio-ethical point of view.

To the Bantu Africans, it is always certain that, the insights or discernments and the instructional wisdom conveyed when the phraseological expression of *Utu / Ubuntu* is used, do usually exude moral guidance due to the intrinsic relationship of anthropology and moral claims. That is following the reason that, in the Bantu African ethical perception, it is discerned that a person is able and capable to act morally, first and foremost, because of his/her being human, of knowing and understanding that he/she is human, of considering oneself and behave as human, and likewise should the other people see and observe him/her as human with humane behaviour. Such perception of the nature of a person in his/her humanness, or one's nature of humanity in a person, is supposed to be apparently and clearly observed. That's the reason, it is claimed in the Bantu Africans' ethical pattern that, the concept human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*) discloses the very essence of being human and quintessence of doing or acting as human. Inevitable is the emphasis placed to this concept, which is principally on common humanity and how we all act as humans with dignity; it

³⁵¹ Cf. D. Tutu, *No Future without...*, 1999, pp. 31–32.

also raises an awareness about the realism and sense of the connectedness and interdependence of all humanity.

This sense of connectedness and interdependence of humanity is then not just by mere accident but rather contains a vision for the future. It foresees the continuation of humanity via actions of care, love and respect of one another. For such reason, it is first and foremost an ethical concept; it does not express only how human persons are, by referring to anthropological insights, but rather how they and their relationships should be. And though it might seem too early coming out with kind of deduction such as this, at this very point, it is still easier to observe and see that, unquestionably, it plays basic ground of being and doing, and hence ground for morality. Meaning, if a person acts or behaves not in accordance to his inherent dignity, then, he or she is perceived as a person lacking that moral vitality in him or her. And it is such a mentality which is even explicated via the language used by the people.

In the language of Kiswahili, for instance, when one wants to give an appreciative praise to a person who has done something good for him/her, one would say: (*Wewe*) *u mtu mwenye Utu* (literally: You are a human with dignity). This means, the person praised is generous, hospitable, friendly, caring, and compassionate.³⁵² Definitely, the indication is here that: the account of *Utu / Ubuntu* among the Bantu speakers does constitute an ethical insight and moral imperative, inevitably coloured by virtuous values and principles; and consequently contributing to the establishment of moral order as a dynamic equilibrium.³⁵³

So such expression like indicating that a certain kind person is a human with dignity, actually, is more of asserting the humanness of the person in concern than his or her personhood. The expression refers, therefore, to the species of human beings and it implies the universal applicability to moral nature of all humans, whereas at the same, involving a socio-centric view of personhood. It is, even further, perceived that, in reality the humanness and the dignity of the human person cannot change, but the socio-centric view of personhood can vary from one culture to another and from one time to another due to forceful influential aspects in the community and the dynamic nature of culture and

³⁵² Cf. D. Tutu, *No Future without...*, 1999, pp. 31–32.

³⁵³ Cf. M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy...*, 2002, pp. 55f.

society.³⁵⁴ This means that, in spite of the strong connection of moral claim and anthropological interpretation, there is a strong underlying reference to the universal, to humankind, which goes far beyond a merely communal understanding of behavioural patterns. As will be shown when it comes to the possible Christian influence on the Bantu ethics, this universal aspect sometimes is undermined in practice if it is reduced to communal rules, because only the local community is taken into sight.

It is an ethical concept representing formal attempt for deduction of normative moral claims arising from traditional African Bantu conceptions of human persons as interdependent, and from normative claims taken to be entailed by such foundations. The human person is viewed as constituting an individuality within a larger social entity and unit, which in turn is mirrored in uninterruptedly expanding identities such as family, clan, kinship, nation, and at the bottom line the collective humanity with equal basic rights and duties. As an ethical concept, *Utu / Ubuntu* refers to a constellation of value claims and moral normative requirements as they are entailed in social norms, apparently drawn from the traditional Bantu African moral patterns. Moreover, it is a concept meant to emphasize the transcendental (spiritual), communal and ethical dimension of humanity. It likewise provides the real sense and ethical implication of what it means to be and to become fully human in as far as the human moral state and conducts are concerned.

With keen observation and exploration into the Bantu tradition and customs, one can clearly also find out that the *Utu / Ubuntu*, is considered a normative concept. And it is because of the fact that, the concept denotes an essential ethical implication; a rational perception of what it means to be human as well as behaving or acting as an ethical and moral being.³⁵⁵ That means, such supposition as: there is interconnection of humanity, in aspects and traits of being and doing, on the personal, communal, and global levels, is inescapable in the concept of human dignity, hereby referred to as *Utu / Ubuntu*. For this reason, it is essentially considered not only a moral concept based on not violating communal rules (negative principle), but also as a norm that needs to be acquired personally

³⁵⁴ Cf. D.N. Kaphagawani, "African Concept of a Person: A Critical Survey," in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2006, Blackwell Publishers, p. 336.

³⁵⁵ Cf. M. Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You...*, 2009, p. 1.

and applied as active principle, for it poses challenge to persons accustomed into thinking of themselves as individuals while living or acting with no moral concern of others.³⁵⁶

Such supposition, consequently, points and sustains the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* in effect to be considered as foundation of a complex ethical theory that entails both virtue ethical aspects related to moral education and conduct, as well as normative aspects that can be either related to self-realization, or to a universal approach to the development of the society and humanity, thereby building a basis for a universal, socio-political ethical approach.

As it is already stated above, the strong basis of the concept are people's allegiances and relations with each other, first and foremost as humans with humane and compassionate character. Essentially, while being measured as socio-ethical concept at a communal level, it is comprehended to imply moral consciousness and understanding of oneself as a human person living well and acting good in relation with one another and with all humanity at large. Whereas striving to provide clear description of what the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* ethically means, Johann Broodryk wrote that the concept "determines and influences everything a person thinks, says and does."³⁵⁷ And actually, before coming to this statement, there is an explanation that:

[This concept entails a] comprehensive ancient African world view based on the values of intense humanness, caring, sharing, respect, compassion, and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a spirit of family.³⁵⁸

In accordance with *Utu / Ubuntu*, as normative ethical concept: there exists a common bond at the core of all humanity. It is through this bond, and through one's interaction with fellow human beings, that one discovers one's own human qualities and what every other human person is actually supposed to act towards others in a community by doing good and avoiding evil. For this reason, the *Utu / Ubuntu* is perceived as one of classical 'Bantu' African concept, of which the person to determine and judge whether one's own moral conducts are good or evil, as this person lives in relation with his/her neighbour in a community.

³⁵⁶ Cf. M. Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You...*, 2009, p. 1.

³⁵⁷ J. Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons...*, 2002, p. 14.

³⁵⁸ J. Broodryk, *Ubuntu: Life Lessons...*, 2002, pp. 13–14.

A superb attempt to shed light on the ethical implication of *Utu / Ubuntu*, has indeed been made by quite a number of African scholars, especially those from the eastern, central and southern part of the continent of Africa, and in fact some of them I have repeatedly kept mentioning in this dissertation. What they all have in common is the affirmation that: Significantly, *Utu / Ubuntu* is the essence of being human. And it is due to this essence that humans are interconnected with one another. One can't be human all by himself or herself, and when one has this quality – *Utu / Ubuntu* – then one is known for his compassionate and humane character. Humans in a community, therefore, are supposed not to think of themselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas they are connected and what they do affects the whole community and even the global society at large. So when somebody does something good, it spreads out; and it is for the whole of humanity.³⁵⁹

It means, therefore, that by virtue of our humanity and of our dignity as human persons, we humans are all caught up and are indivisibly bound up to one another; we belong to the same nature and are bound by same intrinsic moral value and principle. The moral principle, which guides our conducts as we engage in our daily communal life and action. And that is the reason, the Bantu Africans do say: “A person is a person through other persons.”³⁶⁰

The Bantu people's standpoint is that: the dignity of our humanity is affirmed through acknowledging and respecting that of others. It is for the reason that a person has *Utu / Ubuntu*, that a person is open and available to others, affirming and appreciative of others. He/she does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he/she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he/she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. Every individual human “has an inalienable dignity and may not be discarded as something worthless. Even a handicapped individual has a unique position in the community and becomes a person thanks to other human beings, just as these become persons thanks to the one who is handicapped.”³⁶¹

³⁵⁹ See for instance in the work of Thaddeus Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...;” 2014, pp. 315–316. See also B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, pp. 85–94.

³⁶⁰ T. Metz, “*Dignity in the Ubuntu...*,” 2014, p. 310.

³⁶¹ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. 91.

3.2.1 Searching for the Foundational Principle of Bantu Ethics Beyond its Communal Understanding

In the Bantu African ethical pattern, the moral superlative in principle states without ado in the dictum, as it was originally stated by an African scholar, John S. Mbiti, that: “*I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am.*”³⁶² Actually, this Bantu categorical dictum was primarily formulated by Mbiti, who himself belongs to the Bantu ethnic family, in pursuit of a moral principle which can be universally asserted as a guiding principle to our daily moral conducts and life in community and for virtuous moral living as such. The dictum was henceforth taken into considerations by many other African scholars in search of ethical values and the moral reality in vision of the African people, and so there, it has been developed many other similar formulations like: *I am, because you are*’ or, *I am what I am because of who we all are*’ and without forgetting the very popular one from the Bantu African societies occupying the vast area in Southern part of the continent of Africa, which expressively states: *‘a person is a person through other persons.’*³⁶³

Because of this Bantu perception as it is categorically stated in the formulations we have right seen above, many African scholars and authors have been discussing it in relation to communal life in the African societies. Consequently, they have been tempted to assert that communal life is the foundational principle for virtuous moral living in Africa; an argument of which I differ to a certain extent. I would rather say, the central and vital point of concern in the categorical African dictum as a whole is more based on the inherent moral value, which all human beings intrinsically possess in common; and that is what actually matters in the moral reasoning of the Bantu Africans. In actual fact, the process of becoming a person does not take place only within the framework of the community. It should conversely rather be understood that, the community is indeed formed of persons, and it is

³⁶² J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophies*, London: 1982, Heinemann, p. 141. Of course, this dictum’s formulation might seem to have phraseological similarity to the famous dictum of René Descartes – *Cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am or in French: *je pense, donc je suis*) – but still it will be wrong judging as having the same connotation or implication, for in fact, whereas Descartes used the dictum in pursuit of epistemological truth, Mbiti’s dictum is in pursuit of the moral living reality in community.

³⁶³ In the Zulu language, this maxim states and sounds as: *Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. Cf. A. Shutte, *Philosophy for Africa*, Rondebosch, South Africa: 1993, UCT Press, p. 46. See also: T. Metz, “*Dignity in the Ubuntu...*”, 2014, p. 310.

thus, the human persons who have to live in solidarity to one another in order for them to be able of sustaining and promoting communion among that community's members, who might also be referred to as individuals in the community or society. That means, even the perception of the human community as significant criteria for moral guidance comes because of the inherent dignity possessed by all human persons in the community.

Thus far, then, I would go arguing even further that, it is, in fact, human dignity, in terms of the Bantu ethical understandings of *Utu* (dignity) and *Ubuntu* (humanity/humanness) that counts to serve better as the moral foundation of the Bantu African ethical pattern than simply the communal aspect. Dignity of the human person and humanity play, thus, the ground as the unifying vision or universal view enshrined in the Bantu ethical maxim, as it is already indicated several times in this dissertation: 'A person is a person through other persons.' At the bottom line of such an outlook, then, one sees clearly that, this traditional Bantu aphorism articulates a moral foundation for basic respect and compassion for others. It can actually be interpreted as both an ethical description for virtuous moral living in community and a moral rule and guide of conducts or socio-ethical morality. In other words, it describes the human person as 'being-with-others' while also prescribing, at the same time, what 'being-with-others' should all about be. Following this standpoint, then, one is in a position to assert, the Bantu African ethical perspective of human dignity, thus, adds a distinctly new flavour and momentum to a general assessment and analysis of the speculative or theoretical other. In fact, it remains yet coherent that the various overlaps between such general valuation and the Bantu African way of life as described/prescribed by various African scholars, would, for no reason, make this assessment nothing but an enactment of the African ethical theory.

We therefore have to bear in mind that, all these formulations are bearing an essential insight, which confers with deeper insinuation the sense that: how I behave impacts not only on me and my life alone, but also on others human persons around me and it concerns also their life because we all belong together. And for that reason, then, human dignity is taken to be the founding principle for morality and a guiding rule for our moral conducts. It is, thus, from respect of the dignity of the human person, that even many other subsidiary criteria for virtuous moral living arise from. For instance, when we speak of solidarity as a moral value in the community, it is not because the

community is there so then people have to live in solidarity to one another. Rather humans are to live in solidarity and love one another because they all possess the same inherent dignity, which is to be respected and so to direct us all into doing what is good to one another and shunning what is evil. Of course, I fairly agree that solidarity is only possible where humans are collectively living together as in a community. I will come back to this point once again in some later paragraphs of this section.

That means, we all belong to the same humanity and we all have same dignity; so, we need to respect each other and treat one another with esteem, justice and love. In words of one thinker and author, Placide Tempels, whose work is quoted yet by another Bantu African scholar, Bénédet Bujo, in his work, named, *Foundations of an African Ethic: beyond the Universal Claims of Western Morality*, we are delivered with an elaborate explanation of this dictum, that:

The Bantu cannot conceive of ... the human person as an independent being standing on his own. Every human person, every individual is as it were one link in a chain of vital forces: a living link both exercising and receiving influence, a link that establishes the bond with previous generations and with the forces that support his own existence. The individual is necessarily an individual adhering to the clan [or community].³⁶⁴

And while remaining in the same school of thought, one is still in position to observe that, John S. Mbiti has once made a reflection in the same vein, as he wrote:

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group.... Whatever happens to the 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 therefore I am." This is cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man.³⁶⁵

It is, thus, significant to understand that the insinuation of the dictum and its ethical insight, from the Bantu African perspective, has indeed been interpreted in many ways, but all leading to the connotation of human dignity (*Utu / Ubuntu*), of which I would argue to essentially take this as the true perception of the Bantu Africans on human dignity as the foundational moral value and ethical principle to guide our daily conducts and moral actions in the human community. When one, therefore, reads from

³⁶⁴ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. 86. See also: P. Tempels, *Bantu-Philosophie: Ontologie und Ethik*, Heidelberg: 1956, p. 67.

³⁶⁵ J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions...*, 1982, pp. 108–109.

the Bantu African literature and the school of thought, one surely comes, often, across such phraseologies as: ‘I am because we are; I can only be a person through others’³⁶⁶ and so many other like-expressions.

The connotation mostly insisted and emphasised in such aphorisms or statements can furthermore be summarised and be perceived to stand for the moral virtue and foundational moral value of “solidarity and interdependence which is a key characteristic of African communities of affinity”³⁶⁷ and of moral conduct. At this juncture, I would again rather argue; these are only among key characteristics, and they go unquestionably hand-in-hand with the concept of human dignity and provisions in respect for humanity. This mentality is clearly observed from some scholarly and elaborate explanations of some Bantu Africans as:

It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go that extra mile for the sake of another. We believe that a person is a person through other persons; that my humanity is caught up and bound up in yours. When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms, and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in community, in belonging.³⁶⁸

So it means that, the intrinsic ethical norm allotted for a person in the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* is to be generous, compassionate, thoughtful and respectful towards others. It also plays basic role for person to be appreciative of the unity in diversity of humanity; that means, appreciating the differences that together make us greater than the entirety of our individuality. We can see, therefore, that the moral implication of *Utu / Ubuntu* as connotation of the concept of human dignity among the Bantu African means more than what we sometimes figure out. I say this because there are some scholars and authors on African ethical subjects or themes, tending often to draw out a very simplified inference of the concept of human dignity in as far as the Bantu African ethical theory is concerned. I actually agree with Heinz Kimmerle that, to say: “African philosophy is a philosophy of ‘We’ and Western philosophy is a philosophy of ‘I’” is actually being “too simplistic.”³⁶⁹ And Kimmerle even goes further writing:

³⁶⁶ H. van den Heuvel, *et.al.*, *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, p. 45.

³⁶⁷ H. van den Heuvel, *et.al.*, *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, p. 45.

³⁶⁸ L. Mbigi, “A Vision of African Management and African Leadership: A Southern African Perspective,” in H van den Heuvel, *et.al.* (eds.), *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, pp. 45–46. N.B.! This quotation is here assigned to L. Mbigi, but originally it is from Desmond Tutu, and whereas Mbigi indicated it clearly, yet he did not cite the page number from the source.

³⁶⁹ H. Kimmerle, “Ubuntu and Communalism...” 2006, p. 80.

To reduce Ubuntu to the saying ‘I am because we are’, as so frequently happens, is also too schematic. This saying cannot be regarded as a direct African counterpart of Descartes’ dictum ‘Cogito ergo sum’. Things are more differentiated. We have to take into account that the ‘I’, or the person, is becoming increasingly important in African ontology, too. [...] We thus have to look in more detail to the philosophical impact of Ubuntu and of the African community spirit in order to discover what they can mean in the world of today.³⁷⁰

In accordance with the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu*, though not explicitly and precisely stated, it is yet well acquainted that: a human person is not only social but also moral being, and who by virtue of his/her human dignity cannot be or do in exclusion of humanity as a whole. Here is also the point in time where the saying, ‘No person is an island’ comes out clear in the Bantu African understanding. The implication is decisively that, it is the state of our humanness, which binds us together and provides the basis for us to act morally; doing what is good and shunning what is bad. The connotation that, each human person exists as part of a human community and of humanity (*Ubuntu*) as a whole, signifies, therefore, that: each human person has moral responsibility to be and do what is morally good. And such responsibility springs up from the universal moral source or principle. That means even further that, no human act is without consequence to oneself over and above to other human members. Resolute to a person’s dignity as human, therefore, every human individual is bound to fulfilment of a moral role, responsibility and duties in the community, determined by one’s age, gender, health and abilities. In other words, that is to say, by *Utu / Ubuntu* it implies that an individual’s moral image depends rather crucially upon the extent to which his/her actions benefit others than himself/herself, not of course by accident or coincidence but by design. An individual who remains content with self-regarding successes – so to say, with self-interest – is, therefore, viewed accordingly as circumscribed in outlook as not to merit the title of a real human person’s moral character.³⁷¹ Conventionally established, it stands to be an ethical concept of which the Bantu moral system uses to make explicit part of what is meant by the general ethical requirement of respect for persons.

Acknowledging the human person’s dignity is, thus, for the African Bantu people, same as giving way on how to treat one another with respect. It concedes partaking what is good and what is supposed to be done for or to another person and conversely, getting alert

³⁷⁰ H. Kimmerle, “Ubuntu and Communalism...,” 2006, p. 80.

³⁷¹ Cf. K. Wiredu, “Moral Foundations...,” 1992, p. 200.

of what is evil and should not be done to the other person and for that reason shun from it. It is on ground of *Utu / Ubuntu* that the Bantu moral system holds that moral imperative that: human persons being capable of a sense of justice are equally owed the duties of justice, by virtue of the highest value inherent in them – meaning, their dignity as human beings. For this reason, Menkiti is of the insight that, the general moral requirement as upheld by the Bantu people is within such capability construed in its sense of potentiality which may or may not have been realized.³⁷² It is from this perception, then, the concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* is regarded as a normative moral concept and thus it provides moral guidance as foundational moral principle and normative moral value in almost all ethnic Bantu African societies.

At the beginning of everybody's life, this highest value intrinsic in all human beings, may not be clearly perceived by the person himself/herself, unless the community nurture it by means of customary ethical instructions. And that is where the Bantu Africans find it meaningful to claim that: *a person is a person through other persons*. With respect to moral formation of the young persons in a Bantu society, for instance, Menkiti states that a society tends:

To be guarded in its attitude toward the young, though still continuing to be open-minded until they, the young, show themselves capable of becoming full participants in communal life, through the discharge of the various obligations defined by their stations. For it is the carrying out of these obligations that transforms them from the it-status of early childhood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense.³⁷³

With such a contention as this one from Menkiti, it sometimes prone into argument and discussions, especially to those people who are somehow unfamiliar with the Bantu Africans' worldview. They would actually find it as an assertion merely connoting, on the face of it, not more than a sociological implication and so they find it as only a claim on sociological matters about human individuals constantly being part of a certain society or children needing grown up adults in order to survive. But in case we observe it keenly, we can surely see that in reality the implication of such claim and assertion is not only to be

³⁷² Cf. I. Menkiti, "On the Normative Conception of a Person" in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Oxford: 2004, Blackwell, p. 330.

³⁷³ I. Menkiti, "On the Normative....," 2004, p. 330.

perceived from a sociological point of view, but also that it implies to convey kind of moral ideal, on basis of caring for humanity and on respect of dignity of the human person.³⁷⁴

It is surely, even binding for the same reason, when it comes to the sharing of community's wealth, that the individual will always depend on the affluence of the community, which derives not only from the practice of social ethics, but also from the sense of humanity (Ubuntu) and our dignity (Utu), the intrinsic moral value of which is also an aspect of socio-anthropological morality. It is obvious, that such dependence should in fact go hand in hand with the fulfilment of the moral obligations of people to their fellow human beings. In articulation of some African authors and thinkers, the comprehension of the context such as this, requires employing of such expressions as caring, family-hood, wellbeing, reciprocity, togetherness, human equality, a sense of security, and universal hospitality.³⁷⁵ All these expressions are of a socio-ethical perspective that portrays both the communal way of virtuous moral living, and principles that can serve as basis for universal orientation for the flourishing of persons and a society.

Some of the aspects that are mentioned here have already been covered or spelled out as universal and intermediate principles developed on the basis of Metz: family-hood, wellbeing, reciprocity, togetherness, human equality, a sense of security. To these one can add the universal aspects of hospitality and caring for all human beings beyond communal boundaries, thereby adding one more principle that follows from Bantu ethics:

Principle 13: In the context of a pluralistic society, hospitality and caring need to extend to people beyond one's own ethnic community.

It can thus even further be asserted that human dignity, as intrinsic moral value and foundational moral principle, has moral significance in terms of the moral demands it conveys on us humans, like for instance, on the concern of human solidarity. Thus, one can say, it has vital significance especially to the extent it plays role on nurturing human solidarity. The reason for such claim is actually simple that, it is because human dignity is by itself universal, and it is inclusive of ethnic, racial and social class considerations. It also brings to mind the thought that it is impossible of the people, who have high respect and

³⁷⁴ T. Metz, *"Dignity in the Ubuntu..."*, 2014, pp. 310–311.

³⁷⁵ Cf. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity ...*, 1997, p. 160. See also: J.K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, Dar es Salaam: 1968, Oxford University Press, pp. 1–12.

esteem of the dignity of the human person as the inherent moral value in all humans, to define the characteristics of a human person without linking him/her to the rest of humanity – and to the Bantu African’s perspective and moral tradition, that can mean linking the person to the parents, relatives, the neighbour in the society or community and even to the departed ancestors.³⁷⁶

That means, then, that in the Bantu African ethical pattern, relationship that can be cherished as human solidarity is not simply a way in which the person realizes himself or herself, but it is significantly the manifestation of the essential element of the dignity of the human person in community or society. To consolidate my point at this juncture, then, I would like to refer to what one author namely, Placide Tempels once presented as far back as in 1959, when he wrote indicating that:

The Bantu cannot conceive of the human person as an independent being standing on his own. Every human being, every individual is as it were one link in a chain of vital forces: a living link both exercising and receiving influence, a link that establishes the bond with previous generations and with the forces that support his own existence. The individual is necessarily an individual adhering to the clan.³⁷⁷

It shows, therefore, that, the Bantu African people put more emphasis on the collective or common living of people than on the individuals. That means, there is more emphasis on the communion of persons than on their autonomy. This communion however, is not only understood locally, even when it is expressed on a local level and lived concretely in an ethnic community. Rather it entails a dimension of universal solidarity and therefore is able to be expanded, in growing circles, to the whole state, continent, and the world.

These observations lead to the insight that in Bantu ethics there is always an underlying universal claim present as to respect the dignity of all human persons. It means that the fundamental entitlements of human beings furnish reasons that must be given due weight in the design of socio-ethical systems and of global institutional arrangements³⁷⁸ fitting the human community and moral living. The Bantu African worldview is deliberately of a characteristic emphasis on people and their dignity as humans. In other

³⁷⁶ Cf. P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 210.

³⁷⁷ P. Tempels, *Bantu-Philosophie: Ontologie und Ethik*, Paris: 1959, *Présence africaine*, p. 33; cited in B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2001, p. 86. See also: P.I. Odozor, *Morality, Truly...*, 2014, p. 210.

³⁷⁸ Cf. T. Pogge, “Dignity and Global...,” 2014, p. 482.

words, it is the worldview on emphasis for collective brotherhood of mankind called *Ubuntu*, of which it consequently leads us to the core African standpoint of collective personhood derived from *Utu* (human dignity).

3.2.2 Universal Aspects of Bantu African Anthropology Related to the Foundational Principle of Human Dignity

From the standpoint of African Bantu ethical theory, *Utu* (human dignity) is without doubt what makes the value of a person as a human person. The understanding here entails that, it is via the concept of human dignity that, it brings about the awareness and responsiveness of both the ‘*being*’ and the ‘*doing*’ of the person as a human. It appears, for instance, that the *Utu* (dignity) of a person, insofar as it is abstracted in the Kiswahili language, is conscientiously requisite to be apparent in every action that a person does, in such a way as it is an ethical dimension of one’s own deeds and dignity. It is said in Kiswahili: *mtu thamani yake utu* (meaning: the value of a human person is human dignity). So it is human dignity (*Utu*) that first counts and the rest of one’s deeds follows. In other words, the intrinsic value of human dignity (*Utu*) is perceived as that high-spiritedness which sets criterion-like-measure for the human person to persist on the right rail; opting for virtuous moral living, not merely by casting off what is evil and injustice against oneself, but also living in a way that respects and enhances the dignity of others. That is the reason, it is, in the Bantu African’s viewpoint, brought to a conviction that, humanity (*Ubuntu*) deserves, on its basis namely human dignity (*Utu*), that: what I do for myself is actually what’s supposed to be done to others, and what others do for themselves is actually what’s supposed to be done to me. Likewise, it could be said: ‘what I am doing for myself, I am actually doing it for you; and what you are doing for yourself, you are also doing it for me’. It is practically apparent, for that reason that, to the Bantu speaking African people, a person is somehow alleged to have no *Utu*, if he/she acts against that very human value rooted deeply within his/her personhood, by merely doing something evil to other human persons.

Such perception is actually, even, quite well reflected in the definition of *Utu* in the Kiswahili dictionary, as the dictionary denotes *Utu* as: that dignity of a person due to human nature, humanity, membership in the human race. In relation to *mtu* (human being), *Utu* is used to indicate the finer qualities of humanity, that is: gentleness, goodness, compassion,

goodwill and generosity.³⁷⁹ Indeed, this is as well supported conception even in the Christian standpoint. Hence, we find some theologians like Timothy E. O’Connell presenting that: “The key idea of this vision is that life presents the human person with certain basic goods that demand recognition and respect. These goods are essentially connected to human life as valuable, so that to attack these goods is, by the very nature of things, to act inhumanely and therefore immorally.”³⁸⁰

Of course, there is always critical views, as to whether the person’s dignity – referred to as *Utu* in Kiswahili – can be affirmed as a normative moral value or ethical principle, and whether dignity does increase or diminish in accordance with what a person does as right or wrong action; especially, when it comes in the sense of morally good or bad conducts and deeds towards others in the community. The mentality from the discussion is: although every person is born with *Utu*, by virtue of his/her being human, not every person cherishes it to prosper or come to its real conception in every day’s life as he or she deals with others in the community. By conducts of immoral actions, human beings end up being perceived living or leading a life as brutal as of hard-hearted brutes as they could have been considered being humans without *Utu* in them at all. In the book entitled: *Theology Brewed in an African Pot*, for instance, there is an account written about the traditional African conviction as to how it undertakes and grasps the intrinsic worth and positional status of the human person as of his/her dignity distinct from all other creatures in the creation. The account thus is stated in short as following:

... in creation, the human person holds a place of pre-eminence. ... As human beings, we are conscious of our dignity, (which consists of) our spiritual nature, and the fundamental equality of all (humans).³⁸¹

Still, another African scholar and author, Mogobe Ramose attempted, in his book *African philosophy through Ubuntu*, to appropriately convey an explanation about the concept of human dignity in terms of the Bantu notion. In point of fact, he referred to the concept of human dignity *qua Utu / Ubuntu* and made an implication that, the concept expresses principally that central idea of the African anthropological ethics and morality. That means, it entails more specifically the cognizance: ‘to be human is to affirm one’s

³⁷⁹ Tanzania Institute of Kiswahili Research, “Utu” in *Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu: A Standard Swahili- Swahili Dictionary*, Dar es Salaam: 1982, University Press Tanzania Ltd.

³⁸⁰ T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 206.

³⁸¹ A.E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed...*, 2008, p. 47.

humanity by recognising the humanity of others and, on this basis, establish respectful human relations with them'.³⁸² Unquestionably, this is an assertion that is based on the condition that human beings are never born outside of a community. This fact that human beings are not thinkable without stemming from parents and being part of a family. This is why Africans can say that someone's human-ness is constituted by the human-ness of others, and the vice versa stands true as well. By the same token, it affirms that, human dignity does not fall away from the human nature. For a 'Bantu' African, therefore, social ethical relations between human beings, like for instance, between other persons and me, are primarily characterized by mutual recognition and respect of one's own dignity as well as that of others.

3.3 The Explication of Bantu Moral Theory: Virtue Ethics in the Bantu African Ethical Pattern

I would like that, in this section, we throw a glance on the Bantu African ethical system to see how the moral values are conceptualised by the Bantu Africans and related to the principle of human dignity. Furthermore, it will be asked to what extent moral virtues can be regarded as concrete expressions of human dignity and related moral values on an intermediate or universal level. As has been explained at various stages, the Bantu Africans' moral tradition does, indeed, involve firm concerns on the human person's intrinsic moral values as basis of departure. That is, such intrinsic moral values as: human life, human dignity, human nature (in terms of humanity), human freedom, as well as wisdom and human capacity of understanding and making moral judgement – of which I would prefer calling this last value as practical intellect. These intrinsic values are categorised as essential values, being used nearly interchangeably with the term human dignity, as has been explained before: Some of them relate to the human self-formation with more emphasis on the anthropological dimension of human dignity (human life, humanity), and some emphasize more the moral capacity (human freedom, practical intellect). Human dignity, as perceived interchangeably as *Utu* (in Kiswahili) and *Ubuntu* (in Zulu and a number of other Bantu societies settling in the Southern part of Africa), stands for the

³⁸² M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare: 1999, Mond Books, pp. 52–60 and 193–194.

concept of the human being in all its intrinsic characteristics, with an emphasis on moral capacity.

And it is for this reason, one of the Bantu African scholars and theologians, Laurent Magesa, securely holds the assertion that, it is evidently grasped in the Bantu African system: “The world of humanity is the stage for morality.”³⁸³ That means, it is indisputably clear in the mind of the Bantu Africans that, human beings are, by reason of their dignity as human persons, rationally and justifiably asserted as moral agents. In other words, that is to say: human dignity, as an intrinsic moral value, is logically and sensibly perceived as the universal principle to determine, guide, and play as criteria for judging a person’s moral actions and conducts. It is, thus, perceived in the Bantu African ethical pattern that, human dignity is an intrinsic moral value endowed to all human persons, in order to enforce morality and set guidance for virtuous living and wholeness.³⁸⁴

From this foundation in the moral capacity of the human being, the Bantu ethics develops the education in and practise of other moral values or virtues, such as love, justice, prudence and forbearance, as truly qualifying and signifying the moral person. When people, for instance, speak of a ‘just treatment’ or ‘honest statement’ or even about ‘fair deal’, they do so in implication of the analogous terms used with a cognisant shrinkage of their focus on what they really implicate, namely it is an action that is corresponding to a human with moral capacity; and still one can yet make a farfetched observation that, even in those phraseological usages they do apply the value terms only because human persons are involved. And besides, it is affirmed that the dignity of the human person is always in accord with the dictates of reason and the natural moral law³⁸⁵, which, in general terms, holds also for the Bantu understanding of human dignity. Thus, those value terms used, such as ‘just treatment’ or fairness, for example, are accordingly only appropriate to the dignity and the impact or involvement of a person in the human community.

³⁸³ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 61.

³⁸⁴ Cf. L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, pp. 60–61. Just like this, it is also perceived by Immanuel Kant, this human dignity, which stands as universal basic principle for morality, is repeatedly affirmed as the intrinsic moral value of “any person with the essential capacities to be a moral agent.” See E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 216.

³⁸⁵ Cf. T.E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 216.

From such perception of human dignity then we are also brought to the awareness of other intermediate criteria, such as the acknowledging “of the core of an innate right of freedom and equality attributed to everyone as a basis for and limit on”³⁸⁶ communal orders and rules. In the Bantu African societies, thus, it is sustained that, moral convictions and conventions have often remained for centuries unchanged, even after the conversion of some traditional ethical adherences into Christian beliefs and/or the Western mentality.³⁸⁷ That means, even after the Bantu Africans have gotten into Christian religious beliefs and cultural conversion, they still hold firmly on the dignity of the human person as genuine basic foundation for discernment and judgement of any person’s moral character. One scholar and author, Samwel Waje Kunhiyop, then, asserted of this fact as he wrote in his book, *African Christian Ethics*, such words as:

Thus many African societies may have converted to Christianity or Islam but they still cling to traditional beliefs and assumptions that determine how they act morally. It is therefore critical to know and appreciate the role of values in the study of moral actions.³⁸⁸

Still, this thinking becomes more elaborate and it is stated even clearer in words of a Tanzanian priest and scholar, Richard N. Rwiza, who wrote:

We have to search deeper than the mere appearance of African reality. There are traditional African values, which still persist as foundations in which the Christian faith is accepted. Traditions still have their notable place and play their role in almost every important stage of our societies. In strictly personal issues relating to the passage of life and crises experienced, many Africans regard African traditions as the point of reference. In spite of the culture of modernity, formation of Christian conscience must consider carefully the African imagination because consciously or unconsciously it still has a great influence on people’s norms of judgement. [... and although] the traditional practice [of a number of things may] not continue, but the value does.³⁸⁹

It is obvious that, the observance of traditional ethical values might also have undergone a lot of changes and alterations in many or most modern African societies – in this study-case, among the Bantu African societies – as a result of Western cultural influences due to Christianity and globalization. Yet, in his book, Rwiza remains with conviction that: “Only those who have conceived Africa’s historical roots and can view them in the context of the actual situation can explain most crises pointed out in analysis of

³⁸⁶ T.E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 220.

³⁸⁷ Cf. S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, p. 5.

³⁸⁸ S. W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, p. 5.

³⁸⁹ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 113. Words in brackets are mine. See also: J.G. Healey–D. Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology*, Nairobi: 1996, Paulines Publicans Africa, p. 258.

conscience in modern Africa.”³⁹⁰ Nevertheless, it signifies that Rwiza, following suit to John S. Mbiti’s view, he likewise admits that, those Africans living under the urban influence are drastically imbued with the globalisation and modern culture, in such a way that, they appear being paradoxically involved into modern cultures and change, and yet seeming alienated from it.³⁹¹ And so he wrote: “A tension is experienced between the traditional values, which seem to be fading away and the emerging new urban set of standards.”³⁹² In spite of the obvious changes, however there is still an underlying understanding and even practice of these African values that could be strengthened by a new kind of ethics.

An argument for the persistence of African values is given by some authors who show that traditional ideas have amalgamated with religious faith systems. The noticeable reality is that, there is today quite big number of Bantu Africans, converted either into Christianity or into Islam. Furthermore, the influence of globalization and Western life style in the Bantu African societies is, nowadays, enormous as well. On the other hand, however, even with existence of such external influences in Bantu African societies as a whole, it remains yet somehow as Kunhiyop has acknowledged that, the majority of Bantu Africans still cling to their cultural-ethical mentality as to their resourceful socio-ethical values. They still abide to the traditional convictions and conventions, which indeed do play great role to determine how they behave towards one another on their day-to-day life praxis. That is also the reason Kunhiyop affirms even further that, it is crucial and vital to know and appreciate the role of values in the study of ethical conducts and moral actions in the African ethical system.³⁹³

And we evidently observe the same insight is conveyed by Richard Rwiza that, in the Bantu people’s daily conducts, the search for moral guidance and discernment of what is good or right and what is evil or wrong abides always to the traditional ethical system and values; he even further emphasises in his own wording that: “In spite of the culture of modernity, formation of Christian conscience must consider carefully the African

³⁹⁰ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 113.

³⁹¹ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 28. See also: J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions...*, 1969, p. 226.

³⁹² R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 29.

³⁹³ Cf. S.W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 2008, p. 5.

imagination because consciously or unconsciously it still has a great influence on people's norms of judgement."³⁹⁴ That means, in African societies, via communal life, an individual human is being guided to abide to the inherent moral value, so as to be morally good person and so to acquire virtuous character by associating oneself with morally good people, who themselves do lead a virtuous moral life.

Besides, let us bear in mind that, the inherent moral value is somehow perceived in the Bantu African ethical tradition not so much as an abstract quality or value, but rather as more of a quality or moral value in relationship with one another. It is thus, following this perception that Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, once affirmed that, for the better understanding of the African ethical tradition, it is important that we perceive it as it "rest upon a basic acceptance of human [equality], and involves every [human individual] accepting a responsibility for the dignity and the welfare of every other [human being]"³⁹⁵. Therefore it is regarded as normal to engage in education of children and fellow human beings, and equally normal to expect that every human being makes an effort to develop oneself morally.

In Bantu African mind-set, it is considered even though that, the human competence and experience to confer ethical or moral value depends on the person's strong-willed and indispensable potency ascribed to the dignity of the human person. Respect for such vital potential, thus, requires appreciation for human dignity, as the normative value inherent to all human persons; meaning, one's own dignity and that of others. On respect and appreciation of human dignity, thus, one is enabled to act according to the highest potential of human goodness, and to live a noble life worth the value of being human; meaning, virtuous moral life. A person depriving another person's dignity, is then demeaning not just something valuable in that other person, but he or she demeans likewise that precondition of value inherent of all humanity,³⁹⁶ including oneself. In other words, such conduct

³⁹⁴ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 113.

³⁹⁵ J.K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Socialism (Uhuru na Ujamaa): A Selection from Writings and Speeches, 1965–1967*, Oxford: 1968, Oxford University Press, p. 312. Words in brackets are my personal alteration; e.g. where the original word was 'man' I changed it into 'human individual' or 'human being'.

³⁹⁶ Cf. T. Pogge, "Dignity and Global Justice," in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (eds. Marcus Düwell et al.), Cambridge: 2014, Cambridge University Press, p. 480.

constitutes a denial of that invaluable dignity which stands for the human person's prerequisites for virtuous life.

While appreciating humane and kind-hearted human communities based on dignity of the human person, as an inherent moral value, the Bantu Africans have in one way or another established kind of ethical system with significant consideration of moral values, as foundational endowment for socio-ethical behaviour, with the idea of human dignity at its center. Following, therefore, that the basis of Bantu morality is the promotion of dignity of the human person, then one can as well observe that, the existential ethical duty of every person is to see to it that moral character – in terms of respect of another person's dignity and that of oneself – is not only cherished but also conversed from generation to generation. Virtuous moral living, thus, is an ethical duty firmly constituted on the dignity of human person and observance of the natural moral law and ethical values, which then manifest the person to be fully human. It encompasses the whole life and therefore can also be regarded as world view directing all communication in the community.

Besides the splendour of good behaviours, cheerfulness, intelligence, wit and geniality or friendliness, of which the Bantu Africans greatly appreciate and approve, the inherent value of human dignity takes on added significance and precedence on judgement of ethical character and virtuous moral living, in a way that it produces a kind of virtue ethics. Dignity of the human person is always considered to constitute that vital pattern and principal ethical value in matters of moral authority and character of self-control. A person with dignity is deemed one who can control oneself in one's own conducts – in deeds and in emotions. It implies that, human dignity characterised and embodied in the Bantu people's ethical footholds, stands as illustration of an essentialist ethical and moral value in that folks' ethical pattern or scheme; “as something unchanged and unchangeable, a homogenising concept that supposedly ties all Africans together.”³⁹⁷ Respect to one's own dignity and that other members in the human family, thus means, avoidance of wrongdoings as well as evasion from doing unethical conducts, for indeed such conducts do hurt individual persons in community and humanity at large. It means assurance of virtuous character of individuals in a community, while in turn it reveals and ensures practical

³⁹⁷ H. van den Heuvel, *et al.*, *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, p. 5.

evidence of abundant life³⁹⁸ and that vital compulsion for every human being to lead a life morally accepted as holding to the moral law due all humanity. The category of noble virtues and moral values associated with concept of *Utu / Ubuntu* (in sense of dignity of the human person) “concern cooperation, reciprocity, hospitality, kindness, mutual trust, respect and equality, but simultaneously it seems to be a rather open-ended construct that may serve as a container for a variety of meaning.”³⁹⁹

3.3.1 Human Dignity and Ethical Character Formation

In the Bantu African ethics, a human person is, first and foremost, perceived to be one of good character, by virtue of his or her being human. It is, thus, understood, in the Bantu African ethical thoughts and moral judgements that, by virtue of being human, a person is well-thought-out and supposed to be honest, generous, compassionate, kind and tender or loving to his/her neighbour. And that means, such a person as the one upholding these moral values as he or she lives in community is normally understood as a morally good person. Accordingly, thus, the human person is principally judged as one with possession of moral command of one’s own life in accord with one’s dignity and human moral law; generally summed up as: a human person with dignity and heart.⁴⁰⁰ On the other hand, a person would be arbitrated as having a bad *character* or being unprincipled or acting immoral, if he or she is considered dishonest, corrupt, wicked, or cruel.⁴⁰¹

In order to portray how important character formation is regarded in Bantu culture and how it relates to the underlying principle of human dignity, it is necessary to explain the sayings that are used to make reference to education and character.

One of reputable African scholars, Kwame Gyekye provides an elaboration of this point as he acknowledged in his work *African Ethics* that: “Good character is the essence of the African moral system, the linchpin of the moral wheel. The justification for a

³⁹⁸ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 231.

³⁹⁹ H. van den Heuvel, *et al.*, *Prophecies and Protests...*, 2006, p. 13.

⁴⁰⁰ Of this phrase ‘a human person with dignity and heart’, one can cajole it into what we learn and observe in Christian morality of ‘a human person with intellect and will’. However, in this dissertation I am not intending to deal with further analysis of such reflection. I have just mentioned it here to hint a clue of the broad and wide horizon one can make of speculation of the Bantu African ethical theory.

⁴⁰¹ See K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition). Found online in: <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/african-ethics/>>. Accessed on 31.05.2019.

character-based ethics is not far to seek”.⁴⁰² In other words, one can say, it is the concept of human dignity, of which is, at this juncture, featured in the moral character of the person, and on which the central focus for virtuous moral living is pinpointed and identified. For a purpose of emphasis, I would therefore like to insist that, in the Bantu African communities, when an individual human is known to be morally good person, he or she is, thus, judged as a human person with *Utu / Ubuntu* (i.e. with human dignity and humanity). That is the reason why one who is honest or generous or compassionate, would be considered by the Bantu people as a good person; by which they point towards a person they are convinced he/she has good character and is worth of the inherent dignity endowed to all humanity. Broad observation is here that, human dignity is basic and crucial element for the formation of conscience and formation of good character in Bantu African societies, as it is in general ethics for all humanity at large.

For the general outlook it, thus, appears that, every human person is morally evaluated – whether good or bad – in accordance with his/her moral character.⁴⁰³ To impart moral knowledge to the members of society, about the significance of being a person with *Utu* (human dignity) and making them aware of the moral values and principles prevailing in their ethical system, is then, of crucial importance and all that the society can do regarding individuals’ moral conducts. Generally, a society fulfils this duty of imparting moral knowledge and ethical instructions to its members, satisfactorily, through moral education of various forms, such as: wise expressions, proverbs, and telling folktales imbued with moral guidance to younger members of the society.⁴⁰⁴ However, Kwame Gyekye gives an alert on this as he maintains saying:

But, having moral knowledge—being made aware of the moral principles and rules of the society—is one thing; being able to lead a life consonant with the moral principles is quite another. An individual may know and may even accept a moral rule, such as, say, it is wrong to cheat the customs. But he may fail to apply this rule to a particular situation; he is, thus, not able to effect the transition from knowledge to action, to carry out the implications of his moral belief.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰² K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁴⁰³ Cf. K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019. See also: Segun Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy: Traditional Yoruba Philosophy and Contemporary African Realities*, New York: 1991, Peter Lang, p. 79.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁴⁰⁵ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

Thus, it is always important that every human person struggles to lead a life in his/her community so, in such a way that, after his/her earthly life, he/she would leave behind a continued legacy, which would further perpetuate the moral and ethical lessons as well as counting him/her the honour deserving of good ancestor.⁴⁰⁶ Failing to accomplish such goal is, in one way or another, perceived as an ethical or moral failure. And such moral failure is purported to be lack of good character and consequently kind of tainting one's own dignity and humanity at large. Explicitly, therefore, aptitude to act in concurrence with moral principles and rules of the society requires that a person possesses good character and behaves in accordance with the moral dictates worth his/her dignity as human.

In context of moral conducts and virtuous moral life, including those decisions to obey moral rules and the struggle to do the right thing and to avoid the wrong conduct, the quality of a person's character is of ultimate consequence. The focus being mainly on one's intention to carry out his/her moral duty. Thus, it draws an inference that: it is from a person's character that all his/her actions – good or bad – emanate.⁴⁰⁷ Conversely, therefore, wrong-doing is adjudicated of a person's bad character. Accordingly, then, there are such maxims like the Kiswahili one saying: '*Kipimo cha mtu ni Utu*' (translated generally as: Human dignity is what measures the person's nature as human); there is likewise such

⁴⁰⁶ On this point about 'ancestor' I would actually like to make insightful clarification to readers of my dissertation so that, they all get well acquainted with what it exactly means, when Africans, South of Sahara, talk about 'ancestors'. *Ancestors* are the living-dead, who once led an earthly life like all other humans; i.e. a life with physical and tangible body just like any other living person. They are not ghosts, as it is often misapprehended by the Western mentality. Ancestors, are those people, who while here on earth, have led a morally good life and left behind such good example of life to be imitated and sought out as prototype or ideal for virtuous moral living. They are surely believed to be vested with mystical powers and authority in arrears of life after death. They do hold functional role in the world of the living, and indeed in the life of their living kinsmen. That's how African families and societies are habitually described as communities of both – the living and the dead. The relation of the ancestors to their living kinsmen has commonly been described as ambivalent, as both disciplinary and benevolent and sometimes even as unpredictable. But cutting it short, it is good that we all get it clear that, it is not correct to say that Africans do worship their ancestors. That is wrong understanding of the African mentality and tradition. Rather than worshipping ancestors, the African people do respect and revere them, just like the *Saints* are revered in Christianity and especially in the Catholic Church. The difference being only that, the African emphasis is undoubtedly not on how the dead live but rather on the way in which they affect the living ones. And of course, it is not all, rather only those who in their earthly life had particularly lived morally and virtuously are considered and revered as ancestors; and their behaviour reflects not their individual personalities but rather a particular virtue and status in the socio-ethical domain. For some more details on this theme of ancestors in Africa, see also: L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1998, pp. 70–71, 78–79, 221, and 246.

⁴⁰⁷ Cf. K. Gyekye, "African Ethics," (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

maxim in some other African tribes which sounds with implication that: “Good character is a person’s guard.”⁴⁰⁸

In such a surveillance, one easily encompasses in his/her mind a deduction that, for virtuous moral living, the Bantu Africans do insist strongly on the formation of moral character founded on respect of the human person and his or her dignity. This is the reason that, such maxim as: ‘Good character requires human dignity’, does prevail in large part of all their ethical wisdom and expressions used as instruments for ethical and moral instructions. Every person in a community is therefore, bound responsible for the state of his/her moral character. That moral character which more or less results from habitual actions of a person, which are in accord with normative moral value and dignity of being human.

There is also another African maxim asserting that: “one is not born with a bad ‘head’, but one takes it on from the earth.”⁴⁰⁹ The presented connotation by this maxim is that: “a bad habit is not an inborn characteristic; it is one that is acquired.”⁴¹⁰ Therefore, as it is mostly manifested in African societies, it would be insignificant and worthless making most of moral instruction through moral proverbs and legends or folk-tales, if at all our human bad character or habits were inborn. The Bantu Africans, thus, consider that we all humans are born to be good and so we are imbued with that inherent moral value of our dignity as human beings, in addition to having the natural moral law as guidance, which dictates us to do what is good and avoid what is evil. That is the reason, why Bantu Africans, do indeed understand and are certainly of the belief that, moral or ethical narratives are there for the purpose of helping the young generation, to acquire and internalize ethical values of the society in concern, including specific moral virtues, embedded in those narratives. Moral narratives and all the communicative maxims, full of ethical wisdom, therefore, are intended to raise awareness of the concept of human dignity as an inherent moral value, which further leads into individuals’ maturity and formation of good character. In other words, that is to say, appropriate responses to moral and ethical instruction are projected that they lead into acquisition of suitable behaviours and their corresponding characters, with appropriate moral conducts.

⁴⁰⁸ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁴⁰⁹ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁴¹⁰ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

We have still to bear in mind that, although the Bantu African folks are impelled with awareness of the concept of human dignity (*Utu*) as significant moral value for the formation of the person's moral character and foundation for virtuous moral living, they are as well of the conviction that moral character is developed through human actions, behaviours and conducts. Some African authors, like Kwame Gyekye in particular, do principally hold in mind the outlook that:

Persistent performance of a particular action will produce a certain habit and, thus, a corresponding character. To acquire virtue, a person must perform good actions, that is, morally acceptable actions so that they become habitual. The action or deed that led to the acquisition of a newly good habit must be persistently performed in order to strengthen that habit; in this way, virtue (or, good character) is acquired. Over time such an acquired virtue becomes a habit.⁴¹¹

Thus, because of this conviction and of the expected responses to moral instructions, it is believed, with no doubt, that a person's bad character can, according to the dictates of moral systems, be changed from his/her being a person with decadent character and be reformed into a decent person with good character. The reason behind acquisition of moral character and conducts is essentially due to the perception that, the original nature of human being is from the very beginning morally neutral. That means, moral character of the human person, is from the very beginning, neither good nor bad; hitherto, it enjoys the privilege of judgement to be of goodwill and blameless. As Gyekye explains it in the following words:

A person's original moral neutrality will in the course of his life come to be affected, in one direction (the good) or the other direction (the bad) by his actions and responses to moral instruction, advice and persuasion. The original moral neutrality of a human being constitutes the foundation of our conception of the moral person, for it makes for – allows room for – choice, that is, moral choice. Consequently, what a person does or does not do is most crucial to the formation and development of his or her character, and, thus, to becoming moral or immoral.⁴¹²

Spinning this insight into Christian mind-set, one finds it to resemble formation of Christian moral character on basis of conscience formation. For Christian conscience is, likewise, conceived to be of blameless at the person's beginning in life. Formation of Christian conscience, therefore, does focus on reputation of the acting subject or the human person as a moral agent. Focusing on the importance of the acting subject, then, is an endeavour “to steer clear of the legalistic and extrinsic view of the manuals, which consider

⁴¹¹ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁴¹² K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011), Accessed on 31.05.2019.

moral life basically as actions in obedience to the law.”⁴¹³ This approach, however, includes somehow kind of negative motivational aspects, like drawing more attention to the avoidance and fear of sin. Good manifestation of negative motivational facets well appears, for instance, in the Decalogue, or the six universal principles developed from Metz’ approach. This comparison allows to see how much more than norms the Bantu tradition emphasizes character formation, the development of personal virtues, that corresponds much more to the formation of conscience than to learning how not to get into conflict with laws and rules. One can settle therefore that, the human person’s concept, here grasped by the mind, designates an individual human with capacity for insight or inquiry and capacity for making free choice.⁴¹⁴ In other words, it implies a self-starting capacity, seat of responsibility, or capacity to assess one’s own actions or conducts, and that is the role of conscience as we will see it discussed in chapter four of this study work on personhood, dignity and formation of conscience. Thus, personality is just the bearer of independence, creativity and encounter of the inherent value of the human person.⁴¹⁵

3.3.2 Social Virtues as Explicit Expression of Human Dignity

In his book, *Formation of Christian Conscience: In Modern Africa*, Richard N. Rwiza, wrote with an implication that: African hospitality is one of distinctive moral values on course of changing due to modernization, especially as such fact being brought about by urbanization.⁴¹⁶ Nevertheless, even when there are social changes due to urbanisation and noticeably by the influence of globalisation, yet hospitality and sociability – in the sense of charitable sharing and solidarity – are greatly appreciated and considered by the Bantu Africans as moral values and essentials in cherishing communal esteem and virtuous life. The significance of hospitality in sharing is actually what the African parents expect of their children to grow up with, for that’s the way they manifest to grow in maturity as human persons with dignity that belongs to humanity as a whole.

There are, for example, some Bantu communities, like the Nyakyusa people in South-Western Tanzania, whose parents are gratified and feel very proud if their children

⁴¹³ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 97.

⁴¹⁴ Cf. M. Novak, *Free Persons and the Common Good*, Maryland: 1989, Madison Books, pp. 27–28.

⁴¹⁵ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 98.

⁴¹⁶ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 113.

bring many of their friends home to eat.⁴¹⁷ In general, the mentality of the people is time and again of the judgement that, the more friends a person has, the more hospitable and generous, social and approachable that person is. Hence, it is also figured out that, the more companions, in terms of friends to hang around with, their children have, the prouder the parents will be. For it is moreover also a sign that their children live well with other people; they have good moral character and that is the reason they are able to find love from other people in community. Surely, praxis such as these, might have been greatly affected by globalization and Western life-style as it is of today, but we need to know that, they were cherished in the Bantu African ethical pattern, following the understanding that, as human beings we are social beings, and in accord to our dignity, then we are required always to live in communion, esteem and love with one another.

Again, I would prefer providing an illustrative example as it is already displayed by Monica Wilson as she denoted that, among the Nyakyusa, “if a young man came home often alone to eat, his father would beat him... and when people asked why he would say: ‘This great fool comes alone to my place again and again.’”⁴¹⁸ The conveyed implication at praxis like this is actually the indication that, such a character isolates a person from being generous and sociable; meaning, it makes one inhospitable, selfish or self-centred and greedy. A character such as this is, then, expressly perceived by the Bantu Africans as being a behaviour against the dignity of the human person; for the human being is created to live in communal life and share with others the gift of living he or she obtains in life. It is for that reason, then, that the Bantu Africans have such ethical dictums as: “Humanity is being human for other humans”, which is a consequence of the already explained saying “a person is a person through other persons.”⁴¹⁹ And this implication is even further extended to a judgment and interpretation that: ‘to be human is to affirm one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and on this basis, establish respectful human

⁴¹⁷ Cf. M. Wilson, *Good Company: A Study of Nyakyusa Age-Villages*, London: 1963, Beacon Press, p. 67; cf. also L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 64.

⁴¹⁸ M. Wilson, *Good Company...*, 1963, p. 67; cf. also L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, pp. 64–65.

⁴¹⁹ T. Metz, “Dignity in the Ubuntu...” 2014, p. 311.

relations with them⁴²⁰ or rather one ought to develop one's personhood or humanness, where these come in degrees⁴²¹ with how he/she relates with others.

While being alleged as the antonym of hospitality, greed is likewise perceived, in Bantu African ethical standpoint, as incompatible to sociability; a depravity of good company with no foundation deserving the dignity of being human or worthy of humanity. For, as Laurent Magesa has accentuated, "It goes beyond simply describing unsocial behaviour (and character) in the sense of being outwardly rude or unwelcoming, or rather unapproachable and unhelpful"⁴²² to the neighbour or other fellow humans and the natural environment as a whole. Principally, it is maintained that, greed constitutes the most grievous injustice and inequality to humanity; it is, thus, perceived as morally wrong and unacceptable in a community of humans.

In view of such Bantu African mentality, thus, Magesa attempts making an affirmation to set clear understanding of African ethics and morality as he writes:

Indeed, if there is one word that describes the demands of the ethics of African..., sociability in the sense of hospitality, open-hearted sharing, is that word. Hospitality negates greed. It means the readiness and availability to form community. It means that one remembers and honours God and the ancestors and is ready to share with them through sharing the gift and the power of life with other members of the family, lineage or clan. The purpose of hospitality is to enhance life in all its dimensions. Its foundation is in the very structure of existence itself.⁴²³

Accordingly, it is understandable that being generous and sociable, means to the Bantu Africans that a person remembers and honours the Divine Giver (God), in whose image and likeness the human person is created. It is also clear indication of participating in the uprightness of humanity through sharing in gift and power of life with other members the whole human society. It would, therefore, always mean that, reluctance or utter refusal to share the gift of God, or call it the divine gift, with other persons is actually like tainting that image of God inherent to all humans and imbued in humanity as such. For "every individual person is an intimate part of a larger entity."⁴²⁴ Reluctance and utter refusal to

⁴²⁰ H. Kimmerle, "Ubuntu and Communalism...", 2006, p. 80–81. N.B.! Kimmerle is also critical to those trying to reduce the concept of *Ubuntu* to the mere saying: 'I am because we are'. For him this is non else but schematic, for the concept of human dignity in terms of *Utu / Ubuntu* is enormous than the non-bantu mentality would conceive.

⁴²¹ Cf. T. Metz, "Dignity in the Ubuntu...", 2014, p. 311.

⁴²² L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 64.

⁴²³ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 64.

⁴²⁴ L. Magesa, *African Religion...*, 1997, p. 64.

share the gift of communal love instilled in humanity means kind of destroying the “communitarian” purpose of the universe and accordingly it is immoral.

Likewise, the perception is that, when a person is inhospitable, ungenerous and unsocial, and he/she causes that to happen knowingly and intentionally, then, the entire character at such instance is said to constitute ethical injuries against the dignity of that person as well as against the moral law which in some way it the two are hardly to be considered separately. Moreover, it is an ethical injury against oneself, and against the community or society in general. Thus, in the Bantu Africans ethics there is always attempt of warding off that ill tendency of self-centredness and the mentality of self-importance without care of others. From outlook of Julius Kambarage Nyerere, the first president of Tanzania, as it can be found in the book entitled: *Freedom and Unity* (A Collection of Writings and Speeches from 1952 – 1965), he seemed not to appreciate those people in community, who tend to advocate self-importance and consequently or be doing so mistreating their neighbours because of such attitude. Thus, as he argued against such tendencies and behaviours in our community and nation, he indicated that: “We must begin to treaty pomposity with the scorn it deserves. Dignity does not need pomposity to uphold it.”⁴²⁵

And with regard to the sense of communal sharing as one of moral value flowing from our dignity as humans, Nyerere went even further arguing that: “When only the law of the jungle reigns, the struggle for existence must naturally end up with survival of the fittest. This may be alright when it applies to beasts; as a method of contact between human beings it is intolerable.”⁴²⁶ For Nyerere, then, an ethical system which can facilitate formation of moral character for virtuous life that cherishes harmony in community and brings peace, is a system which is based on recognition of the inherent dignity of the human person (*Utu*) as foundation for morality and “on the fundamental human equality of all the people under its suzerainty, and which aims at reconciling to the greatest possible degree man’s conflicting desires for individual freedom and the benefits of communal life.”⁴²⁷

⁴²⁵ J. K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 1969, p. 226.

⁴²⁶ J. K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 1969, p. 247.

⁴²⁷ J. K. Nyerere, *Freedom and Unity*, 1969, p. 268.

And though the equality of human beings may or may not be susceptible to scientific proof, yet its acceptance as a basic assumption of respect for human dignity in the human society or community is the core and essence of virtuous moral living. Every person needs others and those others likewise need him/her; and so together they form a communion, in which specificity and individuality are not lacking. Therefore the social virtues mentioned above, namely hospitality, sociability, and generosity, are of utmost importance with respect to enlarging traditional Bantu morality into a modern life. These observations allow us to formulate another principle that deserves respect at the universal level of modern living, at the same time being grounded in traditional virtue ethic in the Bantu context, namely:

Principle 14: Hospitality, sociability and generosity have preference over self-centred concerns.

3.3.3 Moral principles Expressing Human Dignity at a Universal and Intermediate Level

So far, we have been trying to examine the scarce sources that exist on Bantu ethical moral theory, and academic studies on Bantu ethics, to find out in which way Bantu ethical theory can lay grounds for a universal ethical approach that can serve all inhabitants of Tanzania and beyond. It has become clear that the Bantu principle of human dignity (Utu) is interrelated strongly with a certain anthropology that is regarded as universal, characterizing every human being (Ubuntu). At the same time, it is of an utmost ethical character, since the anthropological description serves at the same time as ideal for moral action and self-formation. This moral formation is embedded in the convictions of the community about life in general, that entails past and future of the community, and is strongly expressed by the ways in which everybody shares in educating young people to become the moral persons they ought to be. This education is less an education according to rules but rather an education of character that has as its aim the personal responsibility of the person, so that it can be made accountable of his or her good and bad actions.

It is clear therefore and understandable, why scholars as Metz have identified only a fewer number of truly universal principles inherent in Bantu ethics, and some other principles that seemed to be linked more strongly to communal life. Against this latter

assertion I have argued that if one understands these “communal” principles as expressions of virtue ethics, one can interpret them as principles at an intermediate level of abstractness that are sufficiently general and universal as to serve both as guidance for personal virtuous behaviour, and as basis for a universal ethical approach. Through discussing various academic studies on virtues in the Bantu tradition, I have added two more principles to the 12 principles that I have developed by re-formulating Metz’s rules to become more abstract moral principles. I would like to repeat all of them here, in a kind of summary:

Principle 1: It is not allowed to murder.

Principle 2: It is not allowed to practice sexual violence.

Principle 3: It is not allowed to deceive.

Principle 4: It is not allowed to steal.

Principle 5: It is not allowed to violate trust.

Principle 6: It is not allowed to exercise ethnic discrimination.

Principle 7: Seeking consensus is preferable to majority decisions

Principle 8: In cases of criminal justice, reconciliation is preferable to retribution

Principle 9: Acquiring wealth through exploiting others is morally not acceptable

Principle 10: Wealth is inseparable from social responsibility

Principle 11: Activities that strengthen social bonds are preferable to personal activities

Principle 12: Contributing to humankind by founding a family is a positive value

Principle 13: In the context of a pluralistic society, hospitality and caring need to extend to people beyond one’s own ethnic community

Principle 14: Hospitality, sociability and generosity have preference over self-centred concerns.

Especially the second part of the list that contains intermediate principles is far from being complete, since many aspects of life are not addressed directly in these principles. However, all principles together can give guidance in decision making for individuals and also for designing laws and regulations that serve the wellbeing of all Tanzanians. This list shows also that Bantu ethics goes far beyond being a communal set of rules for living in a traditional community. Rather it sets the premise that every human being can acquire these virtues and live a morally good life as well in other, more diverse contexts. The Bantu ethical concepts can therefore serve also at a more abstract and universal level.

Since the overall understanding of Bantu ethics is, however, still very often interpreted only at the communal level, I would like to engage now in searching for Christian explanations of human dignity in order to find arguments and ideas that can help strengthening especially these universal aspects.

4. COMPLEMENTING THE BANTU AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES: The Contribution of Theological Ethics

The foundational source of human dignity, as intrinsic moral value, has been presented, in the previous chapter, from a Bantu African socio-ethical perspective, with some glimpses at its Western philosophical tradition, in the example of Immanuel Kant. It has become clear, that the Bantu perspective is embedded in a communal way of living, being based on interaction between all those who live together. It has also been shown that it is necessary to think beyond the communal realm to establish an ethical approach that can be fruitful for a changing society and new forms of living in Tanzania. Such an approach, it has been argued, needs to be based on more abstract principles, yet remaining based in the Bantu culture. This is why so far 14 principles situated on a universal and intermediate level have been described and proposed as basis for such an ethical approach.

This approach needs to be reinforced for two reasons: one is that the understanding of Bantu ethics to be merely communal is still very strong, which creates an obstacle to understand it as universally valid basis for ethics. The second is that, because of the inculturation of Christianity into the Bantu culture, the Christians can strengthen those universal tendencies in their parochial activities, because the Christian ideas of humankind and of ethics have a strong universal character that can break the limits of communal limitations and therefore of exclusion. Without wanting to reduce Christian faith to an instrument of promoting Bantu ethical standards, a close cooperation could indeed fulfil the very necessary task to provide moral support in changing times in Tanzania.

Dignity as a moral concept has, with regard to moral theory, been so far discussed mainly with respect to the Utu / Ubuntu approach, as it is perceived in the African moral tradition, which has been characterised as a socio-ethical approach. There also have been

some hints to Kant where his concept from the philosophical vision of human autonomy and dignity⁴²⁸ shows similar aspects as those visible in Bantu ethics. Since this chapter intends to analyse which contribution the Christian account of human dignity can make to strengthening Bantu ethics, it is necessary to remark the importance that the Second Vatican Council and its times had on the emphasis which was laid on human dignity in Catholic theological-ethical tradition.

In the context of the Second Vatican Council, human dignity received a focus of attention as a reaction of the Catholic Church to the development of human rights discourse. Its call for a renewal of moral theology by going back to the biblical resources led to an increasing biblical scholarship in relation to moral questions, This brought about interest in search of the biblical origins of human dignity, leading also to studies of the suppositional conception of humanity's resemblance to God.⁴²⁹

Theological ethics that developed as an increasingly interdisciplinary discipline after the Council, engaged in exchange with other academic disciplines, especially philosophy, which made a critical and yet positive reception of Kant in theological ethics possible, jointly with a new reception of Thomas Aquinas who was studied in the original text due to the new editions that were available. Finally, the 20th century also brought about the reception of philosophical personalism that entered the Church teaching and strengthened the importance of human dignity in Catholic Theology.

These fruits of the times around the Second Vatican council are able to respond to a Bantu ethics that is shaped by its concentration on human dignity, and at the same time paved the way for a new openness for its universal character. The following parts will therefore show how the central elements, which have been emphasized in moral theology in the context of the Second Vatican Council, can add to and strengthen Bantu African ethics. The investigation starts with the biblical account on human dignity, continues with

⁴²⁸ Cf. M. Düwell, "Human dignity: concepts, discussions, philosophical perspectives", in Marcus Düwell et al. (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook on Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 23 – 47. See also: T. E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives on the Rational Basis of Human Dignity" in Marcus Düwell et al. (eds.), op. cit., pp. 215–221.

⁴²⁹ Cf. D. G. Shulman, *The Genius of Genesis: A Psychoanalyst and Rabbi Examines the First Book of the Bible*, Lincoln: 2003, iUniverse, p. 29. Cf. also Sigrid Müller, "50 Jahre nach dem II. Vatikanum," in: Jochen Sautermeister (ed.), *Verantwortung und Integrität heute: Theologische Ethik unter dem Anspruch der Redlichkeit*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: 2013, Herder, pp. 141-164.

the reception of Kant into theological ethics, and develops the central teaching on human dignity in the documents of the Second Vatican council and their wider context.

In the preceding elaborations, it has already become clear that during the Second Vatican council, different approaches with slightly different connotations were brought into interplay. The Christian account of creation sees dignity as a special value given to the human being by God because the human being is God's representative on earth. In Kant's theory, it is the moral obligation inherent in human beings and their capacity to obey to it that is the fundament of their dignity. In this way, dignity receives an intrinsically ethical character. Since the ethical appeal in the Bantu account is linked to anthropological ideas and socio-ethical norms for living in a given community, it is, therefore necessary to take careful consideration of all the three perspectives and sources that one is capable of, in order to arrive to a position of constructing a moral theory, which is truly biblical, universal, and human. Therefore, this chapter deals with elements of the Christian tradition on human dignity that can serve to strengthen the Bantu ethical approach in theological ethical and its pastoral context.

As a first step, it needs to be shown that human dignity *qua* moral value is what forms the basic foundation for virtuous moral living not only in the Bantu tradition, but also in Christian theological ethics. It is conventionally admitted from the standpoint of the Christian theological ethics of today that, there is in the rationality of the human person a godlike potency; and it is in vision of this godlike potency that, the human person is considered the created being with superiority of the intrinsic dignity above all other God's creation.⁴³⁰ This godlike vital potency, inherently possessed by the human person, is essentially what theologians have, in the course of tradition, entitled as the image of God – also referred to as the '*Imago Dei*'.⁴³¹ This image of God applies to all humans and it plays role as of providing ground for the moral uniqueness of the human person in contrast to all other creatures as well as for the equality of all human beings. In a way, then, I choose to

⁴³⁰ See J. Roskoski, "A Biblical Model of Human Dignity: Based on the Image of God and the Incarnation," in *Associates for Biblical Research: The Shiloh Excavations*, Akron, PA: 2019, Spring Edition. Found online at: <<https://biblearchaeology.org/research/contemporary-issues/2405-a-biblical-model-of-human-dignity-based-on-the-image-of-god-and-the-incarnation?>>. Accessed on: 10.04.2019. John Roskoski holds the opinion that, this dignity of the human person – *Dignitatis personae* – would likewise share in the metaphysical properties of life and humanity at large.

⁴³¹ This insight is summarized, e.g. in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1700–1709; see also: Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 17 and 22.

assert that, this ‘image of God’ is what biblical scholars and theologians, as will be shown in the following passages, would interpret the godlike moral potency and acknowledge it to play role of the intrinsic moral value; and so that is none else but what is conventionally referred to as human dignity.

4.1 The ‘*Imago Dei*’: The Theological-biblical Account of Human Dignity as Inherent Value

Just as in the Bantu ethical theory, there is a strong emphasis on the inherent value of human dignity, the Christian idea of the creation of the human being is also being interpreted in this way. The theological setting up of human dignity, as intrinsic moral value, is in actual fact established from the creation narrative, of which we read in the Book of Genesis, especially in Chapter One. Thus, it is from the biblical creation narrative that we are informed: God positioned the human being (i.e. man and woman) at the crowning of the creation; the human being whom He created in His image and likeness,⁴³² and gave him/her the high standing representative responsibility over all other creatures. In words of the creation account itself, therefore, it is stated:

Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.’ (Genesis 1:26–27).

A profound theological anthropology of which we actually encounter and become aware of, from these biblical verses of Genesis, chapter one, is basically nothing other than the insight and discernment that: this creation account contains and holds in its “own symbolic and narrative language, profound teachings about human existence and its historical reality”.⁴³³ As of this creation narrative, then, we are able to perceive and

⁴³² Cf. Genesis 1: 26–27. Actually, the word “likeness” is intently attributed, not to diminish the word “image” but rather to amplify it and specify its meaning. For the human person is not just an image but a likeness-image of God. He is not simply representative but representational of the Creator. Man and woman, as the image of God, is the visible, corporeal representative of the invisible, bodiless God. Thus, the word “likeness” guarantees that human being is an adequate and faithful representative of God on earth. See also: Victor P. Hamilton, “דָּמַת” in G. Johannes Botterwerk – Helmer Ringgren – Heinz-Josef Fabry (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1, Chicago: 1980, Moody, p. 438. Nb. Hebrew word “דָּמַת” is in Latin letters written and pronounced as: “*d’mut*”/“*demuth*”, meaning: Likeness; while the word “image” in Hebrew is written as: “מְצַלֵּם” and pronounced as: “*zelem*”/“*tzelem*”. These two terms are also the one translated in the Vulgate as “*similitudo*” and “*imago*” respectively.

⁴³³ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 66.

recognise that, human “persons possess a worth that deserves to be treated with the reverence shown to that which is holy.”⁴³⁴ Evidently and significantly, however, the creation account points out to the universal understanding of the ethical and moral practicality of all human beings without exception, as they were entrusted to care, not only for themselves but also for the creation as a whole. The creation of human beings is thus, made quite distinctive as it is articulated by the use of ‘authority’ language – i.e. dominion over other creatures. And that means therefore that, God’s own authority is presented to mankind as unsurpassed and indisputable; so it is even more remarkable discerning and knowing that God confers authority on humans.

And right here, let us actually make it clear that this authority entrusted to mankind by God, is indeed none other but moral authority, if so to mention it specifically. In fact, it is God, who delegates this moral authority over his creation to the human person, and so he makes and raises the human person to a degree like Himself. And that means, even further that, the human person is, consequently, bound to always strive living to the best matching standard of his/her moral authority, as God’s representative and moral legate. Certainly, it is from the perception such as this that, the biblical creation narrative is strappingly preferred, by biblical scholars and theologians (such as Umberto Cassuto, Dennis G. Shulman, David Hollenbach, to mention but a few), to consider it as point of appeal for the theological conception of the inviolability of the human person and his/her dignity.⁴³⁵ And so, it is right away grasped in mind that, the theological basis for human dignity stems and gets thought up from the reflection and discernment acquired of this creation narrative.

In order to avoid misunderstanding it is necessary to remark that regarding the human being as the image of God, as it appears in the creation narrative, in the Book of Genesis, may not be associated predominantly with the corporeal situation of the human being, rather the “image of God” is referring to the human’s total being, including not only

⁴³⁴ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity in Catholic Thought” in *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (eds. Marcus Düwell et al.), Cambridge: 2014, Cambridge University Press, p. 252.

⁴³⁵ The expression ‘inviolability of the human person and his/her dignity’ implies here that: persons are theologically understood to possess a worth that deserves to be treated with high reverence shown to that which is holy or sacred; following the conception that human beings are made in God’s image and likeness, so they also possess a sacredness analogous to the holiness of God. And that is what binds them to lead a virtuous moral life and strive to shun what is evil. cf. D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...,” 2014, p. 252.

one's corporeality, but also the spiritual and psychological aspects of his or her personality. Thus, with insightful discernment and incisive hermeneutic of the creation account in itself and with respect to other biblical passages, one is able of arriving to the knowledge that, it is, actually, much more than just to be associated with material things.

From a hermeneutical standpoint, the signification of the expression: "in our image and according to our likeness" (Genesis 1: 26), reveals to us, in accordance with some biblical scholars and commentators, viz., Umberto Cassuto⁴³⁶ and Dennis G. Shulman,⁴³⁷ that, originally the expression was not associated with any material idea with it, but rather with a purely spiritual-moral connotation that, humans, although they resemble or look like all other earthly creatures in physical structure, still they are more closely correlated to God in their thought (intellect) and in their conscience, understood as practical judgment of the will.⁴³⁸

Thus, following the truth that, in the biblical portrayal, God is depicted as immutable and lofty, omnipotent and fundamentally removed from the physicality of his creations, then, the term 'image' (*צלם* ⇒ *zelem* or *tzelem*) should have been understood metaphorically as referring to the human person's spiritual vitality and moral potency.⁴³⁹ This means, therefore, that, the aforementioned approach, which associates the creation account to a corporal or physical interpretation of the image of God is not always well cherished or appreciated.⁴⁴⁰ Of course, we might have already come across such an approach of the corporeal view, and some authors even defending it as they hold and teach that: "Genesis 1: 26 makes it clear that it is by the image of God that man is distinguished from all the animals, which share with him the sixth day as the moment of their creation.

⁴³⁶ Cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah*, Part One, (trans. by Israel Abrahams), Perry Foundation for Biblical Research, Jerusalem: 1978, The Magnet Press.

⁴³⁷ Cf. D.G. Shulman, *The Genius of Genesis: A Psychoanalyst and Rabbi Examines the First Book of the Bible*, Lincoln: 2003, iUniverse, p. 29. As for clarification, Shulman is in his work, here mentioned, quoting from Cassuto's work mentioned just on the footnote above this.

⁴³⁸ D.G. Shulman, *The Genius of Genesis: ...*, 2003, p. 29.

⁴³⁹ Cf. D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," in *Tyndale Bulletin*, (19)1968, pp. 53–103; uploaded in <https://archive.org/stream/pdfy-SLVx2c60Fa59pgFJ/djvu.txt>, on 20.01.2015. Accessed on 30.04.2019. *Nota bene!* David John Alfred Clines is one of prominent biblical scholars who have tackled the discussion on the theme of the 'Image of God' and I found him to have been more elaborate in his elucidation (See op. cit.). He is currently Emeritus Professor at the University of Sheffield and for years he has served as President of the Society for Old Testament Study and as of same position as of the Society of Biblical Literature.

⁴⁴⁰ Cf. D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God..." 1968, p. 57.

[And so] one of the chief distinguishing marks of man in relation to the animals is his upright posture, as was already recognised in antiquity.”⁴⁴¹

In order to avoid misunderstanding, it is important to remind that this view and approach in trying to bring the notion of image of God into interpretation as one of corporeality of the human person does encounter two main obstacles, which appear to stand in the way of accepting such an approach. The first obstacle states that: “Since God is spirit and has no body, how could the image of God in which man was created be corporeal?”⁴⁴² And the second obstacle runs as: “Animals have bodies but are not said to have been created in the image of God [and according to his likeness], so corporeality does not necessarily have to be related to the image of God.”⁴⁴³ However, while being aware of these thoughtfully stated obstacles, I would still prefer to consider further that, we can critically comprehend the terminological phrase ‘upright posture’ not necessarily as an indication of the ‘vertical standing’ of human being’s nature, but rather as a language with implication standing for: the human person’s moral disposition and ethical decency. So, just because the human person, who is said to be created in the image and likeness of God, has a physical body, it does not necessarily mean to attribute that physical body to God. All in all, however, the human person was created a total being, material and immaterial, and that total being is what in theological understanding referred to as the image of God (*Imago Dei*).⁴⁴⁴ For a clear explanation and a more elaborate elucidation of the perception such as this, one can also notice and observe it, as it appears being well presented by the biblical scholar, David J.A. Clines, who puts it this way:

One essential meaning of the statement that man was created ‘in the image of God’ is plain: it is that man is in some way and in some degree like God. Even if the similarity between man and God could not be defined more precisely, the significance of this statement of the nature of man for the understanding of biblical thought could not be over-emphasized. Man is the one godlike creature in all the created order. His nature is not understood if he is viewed merely as the most highly developed of the animals, with whom he shares the earth, nor is it perceived if he is seen as an infinitesimal being dwarfed by the enormous magnitude of the universe. By the doctrine of the image of God, Genesis affirms the dignity and worth of man, and elevates all men – not just kings or nobles – to the highest status conceivable, short of complete divinization.⁴⁴⁵

⁴⁴¹ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God ...,” 1968, p. 57. Words in brackets are my personal supplement.

⁴⁴² C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 218.

⁴⁴³ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 218.

⁴⁴⁴ Cf. C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 219.

⁴⁴⁵ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...” 1968, p. 53.

Accordingly, it is sensible to say: humans are intrinsically endowed with the inherent dignity higher than other creatures and that plays role as of their moral value as of their operational set-up for ethical mandate and/or moral directive. In such view, then, the conception of human dignity, is implicitly understood as the inherent moral value which is strongly related to a moral duty. Whereas the human person is created distinctive from all other creatures, by virtue of the endowed intrinsic moral value, he/she is, thus far, made capable of opting for virtuous moral living; and that, it is this inherent moral value, which confers and sanctions him/her into doing what is good and shunning what is evil.

Certainly, there might have been in the doctrinal teaching about the ‘image of God’, an insignificant hint of limitation with regard of the nature and the position of mankind as on claiming that the ‘image of God’ is not in itself the object, but rather, as some biblical scholars and theologians would say: a representation of the human person in kind of a replica and that such replica must in some respects be distinct from its original.⁴⁴⁶ However, it is argued that “... this limiting aspect of biblical anthropology is hardly to be recognised as an important element in the ‘image’ doctrine, that conveys the complementary view of human nature: that man is ‘made’ in the image of God,”⁴⁴⁷ and that means, he remains to be God’s creature, subject to the moral mandate of one’s own Maker; and thus, there are some sort of similarity. Following this argument, then, the scholar Clines has this to say:

If the image refers primarily to similarity between God and man, it is only to be expected that the image will be identified with that part of man which man shares with God, his spirit. It would appear that no further arguments ... could increase the attractiveness of this interpretation; for it is plain from the setting of the image doctrine at the apex of the pyramidal structure of the creation narrative and from the solemnity of the statement of divine deliberation with which it is introduced that we have here no mere *obiter dictum* about man but a carefully considered *theologoumenon* which adequately expresses the superlative dignity and spiritual capacities of man.⁴⁴⁸

Some biblical scholars, like Walther Eichrodt and John L. McKenzie, had even tried to elucidate that, having been derived from the couplet of terms – *image* and *likeness* of God – human dignity can certainly be understood in terms of both; the ‘spiritual qualities’ of humankind as well as in the ‘socio-ethical context’, meaning; the human being’s virtuous

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 54.

⁴⁴⁷ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 54.

⁴⁴⁸ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, pp. 56–57.

uprightness or moral righteousness.⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore, there are some other authors who have once pursued to combine both the spiritual reference and the physical insinuation raised up by the two words, namely; ‘image’ (*zelem*) and ‘likeness’ (*d’muth*); so they argued that: “One does well to separate as little as possible the bodily and spiritual; for the whole man is created in the *imago* of God.”⁴⁵⁰ That is to say, it is not that, it takes only a certain part of the human person, which one can say that, this is the real part, which portrays the image of God; rather it is the human person as a whole, who is the image of God – body and soul; intellect and will. Some theologians, like Charles C. Ryrie, are, however, of the opinion that:

Tselem means a fashioned image, a shaped and representative figure, an image in some concrete sense (2 Kings 11:18; Ezek. 23:14; Amos 5:26). *Demuth* refers also to the idea of similarity, but more in the abstract or ideal. By using the two words together, the biblical author ‘seems to be attempting to express a very difficult idea in which he wants to make clear that man is in some way the concrete reflection of God, but at the same time he wants to spiritualize this toward abstraction.’⁴⁵¹

In theological interpretation via biblical hermeneutics, thus, the term *image* is considered to be the natural appearance belonging to a human person as one of the created beings, while also including the unpretended moral freedom. On the other hand, the term “*likeness* indicates that moral image that did not belong to man as originally created but was rapidly and very early superadded to him. It needed to be added because of concupiscence, which is a natural bent toward the lower appetites, though not in and of itself sinful.”⁴⁵² In keeping with this view, then, the theologian, Stanley J. Grenz, holds to the interpretation that, “God’s original design endowed humans with not only the natural powers (especially, reason and will), which form the divine image. Humans also enjoyed God’s supernatural gift of righteousness, which marked the divine likeness.”⁴⁵³ And that means, the term *likeness* implies more of the added state of righteousness and moral state

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. J. Roskoski, “A Biblical Model...,” (2019). Accessed on 10.04.2019. See also: John L. McKenzie, “Image of God” in *Dictionary of the Bible*, Chicago: 1966, Bruce; and also: Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (trans. by J.A. Baker), Westminster: 1961, John Knox Press.

⁴⁵⁰ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 59. See also: G. von Rad, *Genesis*, SCM, London: 1961, p. 56; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2, (trans. by J.A. Baker), Westminster: 1961, John Knox Press, pp. 122–125.

⁴⁵¹ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 217. See also the citation in the quotation by: A.H. Leitch, “Image of God,” in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopaedia of the Bible*, Vol. 3, Grand Rapids: 1975, Zondervan, p. 256.

⁴⁵² C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 219.

⁴⁵³ S.J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest...*, 1997, pp. 146–147.

of goodness to the human being;⁴⁵⁴ the state of being and doing what is good, which is, in accordance with the biblical creation narrative, and of which it is not found in other creatures but distinctively in humans.

As every one would expect, there stands, in the theologians' mind, also the awareness of the Fall of Adam right after the creation. In line with the Christian theological school of thought, then, it is held: by the Fall of humans, as it is biblically stated, it means that, human beings have lost the likeness of God. They no longer enjoy the supernatural gift of righteousness; and nor can they love God as they should. Nevertheless, the image of God remains intact in their natural being and state. And for that reason, the natural powers – especially the intellectual capabilities – were not ruined or shattered by the Fall.⁴⁵⁵ It is also argued, on the other hand, that, “man’s representative function is what is principally implied by the image”⁴⁵⁶ and that the human person, even after the Fall, remains still a representative of God by his/her total being, physical and spiritual.⁴⁵⁷ Additionally, it is distinctively and correspondingly asserted along the same line of argument, that: “the image is to be found in man’s possession of heart, tongue, and limbs which corresponds to the divine faculty of thought, speech and act.”⁴⁵⁸ Thus, for the purpose of strengthening a point, Charles C. Ryrie had this to observe; that, “The Greek and Latin fathers distinguished between image and likeness, referring the former to the physical and the latter to the ethical part of God’s image. Irenaeus understood the image to refer to man’s freedom and reason and likeness to the gift of supernatural communion with God ...”⁴⁵⁹.

Then again, it is even further observed that, under the influence of his search for the Trinitarian dogma, Augustine interpreted the concept of ‘image of God’ in such a way that, it is “to be seen as the triune faculties of the [human] soul, *memoria, intellectus, et amor*”⁴⁶⁰ – i.e. memory, intellect and love. It is thus under such theological teaching positions as these that it comes to the assertion that: it is the inherent moral value of the human person, the *Imago Dei*, also referred to as human dignity, which stands as ethical/moral basis in the

⁴⁵⁴ Cf. C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 219.

⁴⁵⁵ Cf. S.J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest...*, 1997, p. 147.

⁴⁵⁶ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁷ Cf. D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁸ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁹ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 217.

⁴⁶⁰ D.J.A. Clines, “The Image of God...,” 1968, pp. 54–55.

course of the human person's striving to forbid serving any evil inclinations, which are against that godlike nature in him or her,⁴⁶¹ and so he or she should always determine and commit oneself into leading a virtuous moral life.

Moreover, it is from the theological interpretation of the creation narrative, that, it is in analytical facts, congruently indorsed that, humanity "is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself."⁴⁶² And it is, thus, generally asserted that: through the motif of the image of God, we are conversant of the immense dignity of every human person, "who is not just something, but someone. [A person who] is capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving himself [or herself] and entering into communion with other persons."⁴⁶³ It means, therefore that, "by virtue of our unique dignity and our gift of intelligence, we are called to respect creation and its inherent laws ... (Proverbs 3:19)."⁴⁶⁴

In case one has to use words of Charles C. Ryrie, then, one would indorse in words as: "This view connects the image of God to facets of personality. [It places more emphasis on the] moral likeness, dominion, the exercise of will, and intellectual faculties (ability to speak, organize, etc.) as specifics of the non-corporeal image of God."⁴⁶⁵ I find this argument as one of substantial implication and even more significant, not only because it implies rejection of corporeal interpretation of the meaning of the image of God, but also because it raises up the awareness of the image of God as some quality which is shared with God, such as: intelligence and power; self-consciousness and self-determination; spiritual nature, as well as, thought and conscience.⁴⁶⁶

Consequently, then, there comes the affirmation that every human person deserves always to be treated with respect and affability the way he/she is, and keeping in mind that he or she is one of God's representative by one's own being as a whole. And actually, we can find such affirmation as this one, not only in the book of Genesis, but also in some other scriptural sources in the Bible – like for instance, in the Psalms (cf. Ps 8:5), in the

⁴⁶¹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 14.

⁴⁶² Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 66.

⁴⁶³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 357. Words in brackets are my personal addition.

⁴⁶⁴ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 69.

⁴⁶⁵ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 218.

⁴⁶⁶ Cf. D.J.A. Clines, "The Image of God..." 1968, p. 59.

book of Wisdom (cf. Wis 2:23), in the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 11:7), as well as in the Letter of James (cf. Jas 3:9). In view of the creation narrative and the portrayal that the human being is created in the likeness and image of God, then, is grounded the established affirmation that, the Scriptures heartily point out to the *Imago Dei* as indication of the inviolable dignity of the human person, inherently endowed him or her by virtue of creation.

This inviolable dignity is, therefore, prior to any human achievement. Meaning it does not result from human achievements or status, as many would like to indicate it, especially when we refer it in every day's normal language as mere social status. Conversely, it is, thus, the inviolable inherent dignity, which is actually referred to as in this dissertation as the moral value, so also as ethical principle and basic moral foundation for virtuous moral living.

Furthermore, the biblical creation narrative denotes us of the fact that, the human person is not only a living being, like any other living creature, “but a being like God with both intelligence and will that give him the ability to make decisions that enable him to have dominion over the world (Gen. 1: 28).”⁴⁶⁷ And in summing up this notion, one thus turns up with an inference that: “the image of God in which [the human being] was created included the totality of his being as living, intelligent, determining, and moral.”⁴⁶⁸

By synthesizing the two schools of thought – Bantu African ethical theory and Christian theological ethics – this dissertation, thus, endeavours to combine what was previously been two separate frameworks into one unified whole to highlight and make reflection of what is basic ethical or moral foundation for virtuous moral living. That means, in accordance with the biblical creation account, human dignity is the intrinsic moral value made noticeable, by the Creator himself, and by him, it is made manifest in the nature of the human moral order and mandate.⁴⁶⁹ So like the rays of a gleaming beacon, human dignity helps reflecting and radiating insights to provide guidance to our daily human

⁴⁶⁷ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 219.

⁴⁶⁸ C.C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology...*, 1999, p. 219.

⁴⁶⁹ Cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 85. In explicating this conception, Pope John XXIII did actually refer to the teaching of his predecessor; Pope Pius XII; meaning from his Radio Message of Pius XII, Christmas Eve, 1941. See footnote 54 in the Encyclical letter on establishing universal peace in truth, justice, charity and liberty (*Pacem in Terris*).

conducts while enabling us to live in accordance with the moral dictates of our nature as humans with humane behaviour.⁴⁷⁰

4.2 Human Dignity as Groundwork for Christian Ethics: the Reception of Kant

The Catholic tradition, consequently, has based its claims for essential and basic human rights on the theological foundation, which places the inherent dignity of the human person as core moral value, in accordance with what the Scriptures reveal via the creation account.⁴⁷¹ In using David Hollenbach's words, I am inclined to abide impressively to the conviction that, having made a contented discernment on the significance of human dignity that, the "Catholic thought and advocacy grounds its appeal to human rights in an affirmation that human dignity is the most basic standard to which all personal behaviour and social institutions are accountable."⁴⁷²

Noticeably, there has been, especially after the Second Vatican Council, a steady trend in theological ethics, with deeper commitment to human dignity and with apparent zeal to elucidate the significance of the concept of human dignity as inherent moral value and inviolable. It is, thus, affirmed and accentuated that, the dignity of the human person is distinctive from all other creatures and that, "the justice or injustice of ... decisions are to be evaluated in light of their impact on the dignity of persons."⁴⁷³ Likewise, it is perceptively maintained that, as proprietor of the intrinsic value – the image of God – then human persons have been given a functional responsibility and moral compulsion that: "just as God has brought the world of nature into being and sustains and governs it, human beings as images of God also exercise a creative, sustaining and governing role in the world."⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷⁰ Cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 85.

⁴⁷¹ See for instance the Encyclical *Peace on Earth (Pacem in Terris)* of John XXIII; and cf. as well to his other encyclical: *Mater et Magistra* (1961), n. 219. Also see: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, Washington, D.C.: 2009, nn. 14, 25, and 28. Dignity also played a role in Pope Paul III' defence of the rights of the Indios and his position against slavery: Cf. Hans Schelkshorn, *Entgrenzungen. Ein europäischer Beitrag zum philosophischen Diskurs über die Moderne*, Weilerswist 2009: Velbrück Wissenschaft, p. 272.

⁴⁷² D. Hollenbach, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 250.

⁴⁷³ D. Hollenbach, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 252.

⁴⁷⁴ D. Hollenbach, "Human Dignity...", 2014, p. 254.

In addition, then, this dissertation raises a consociate that, for a well-established moral order to prevail in any community, it requires that such moral order is built upon the unshakable and unchangeable footing or call it groundwork, which, in its universal claim, ensues respect for human dignity, and which is intuitively and rationally, actually, regarded as the intrinsic moral value of our humanity. This human dignity is given by the mere fact of being created by God and is therefore universal, not depending on the religious faith of the individual.

Ever since the Second Vatican Council, theologians have persistently given particular attention to the freedom of a person in association with the *Imago Dei*, which in turn, is also referred to as that value which endows to the human person the inherent and irrevocable dignity due him/her. Following the statement as it is conveyed by the Catechism of the Catholic Church, thus, it is indicated that: “By virtue of his soul and his spiritual powers of intellect and will, man is endowed with freedom, an *outstanding manifestation of the divine image*.”⁴⁷⁵ In interpretation of this statement, thus, we can see clearly an affirmation that the person’s moral autonomy or self-governing is by reason that, human beings belong to themselves and they are created to possess themselves and govern their conducts and character in such a way as to image the supreme self-possession of God, their Creator. This element of freedom has already exercised influence on patterns of good behaviour in African countries, e.g. with respect to the freedom of choosing a partner for marriage. Thus, in complementing the African ethical theory of human dignity, I would argue that it is important that the Christian aspect of endowed freedom of individuals in the community be incorporated in the Bantu socio-ethical pattern. For it is actually true that the individual person can enrich the community only when he or she is allowed to be free of contributing while at the same time sharing in the communal process of self-realization by which others become equally persons with respect and recognition.

The importance of the individual can be argued in various ways, one important being the analogy between God and the human being. In Christian theological school of thought, it is certainly grasped that, God does possess Himself by existing through Himself and on His own; but we humans, who do not exist through ourselves, show forth something of God’s being inherent in us, while at the same time each of us is created as being of one’s

⁴⁷⁵ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1705; see also: Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17.

own end; kind of person who is whole in one's own and an unrepeatable being, called to possess ourselves in an analogical sense. Thus, humanity is cohesive by virtue of the dignity inherent in every human person; i.e. by that dignity which is indeed reflecting that divine image intrinsic to all human beings.

Of course, the fact which shows that the concept of human dignity has been gaining more and more ground in a number of issues and concerns in Christian theological ethics, is apparently and clearly observed in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*. Hence, even when this document does not definitely specify that human dignity is the foundational moral principle for morality, yet by implication one can without doubt arrive to such an inference. For actually the document states: "the dignity of the human person is a concern of which people of our time are becoming increasingly more aware."⁴⁷⁶ This fact is indeed even further attesting itself that, the concept of human dignity is, in our contemporary epoch, appearing to play central role in political thought as part of the basis for the right conception of justice and proper claim and practice of human rights, whereas including the moral aspect in terms of socio-ethical relations in our societies as humans with dignity.

While Christian faith is indeed introducing the idea of individual freedom, on unfolding the unconditional status and dignity of the human person, another aspect of the image of God has, in contemporary Christian theology, also been stressed. A groundbreaking trend which reveals that: we human beings resemble the Trinitarian God through our interpersonal communion.⁴⁷⁷ And so again in words of the Catechism of the Catholic Church we find the affirmation that: "The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves."⁴⁷⁸ So, the theological point and emphasis in Christian thoughts is that, God's

⁴⁷⁶ Vatican Council II, *Declaration of Religious Freedom (Dignitatis Humanae)*, Vatican: 1965, n. 1. Obviously, this remark was on reference to Pope John XXIII's Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), 1963), which has indeed spoken a lot about human dignity in relation to moral law and the pursuit for human rights. See also: Pius XII, Radio Message (24.Dec.1944), *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 37 (1945), p. 14.

⁴⁷⁷ It is actually John Paul II who first came out with this idea and popularized it in his 'theology of the body' in which he offered us that deep insight on the nature of human identity. It means, he was the first Pope to enlighten discernment of the image of our Trinitarian God in the man-woman difference and in the ordering of man and woman to each other. See: John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman*, (*Mulieris Dignitatem*), Vatican: 15 August 1988, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, nn. 6-7. See also: John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body* (trans. by Michael Waldstein), Boston: 2006, Pauline Books & Media, p. 94f.

⁴⁷⁸ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1702 and 1704; and see also in Chapter two.

very self is a communion of persons; i.e. three persons united as one. This divine communion is a loving communion considered as the fibre or character of God's being and the very basis for all moral reality, which originates in God. It is this loving communion of God, which radiates itself as love, which is self-giving. Since the divine love is self-giving, then we are informed that, God's creation of the human being is an expression of self-giving love. And thus, "it is to an ultimate destiny of loving union with God that all persons are invited."⁴⁷⁹

We also know that in the Christian morality, the centrality of love for humanity is always on focus for a person to be able of leading a virtuous moral living. But in fact, this centrality of love for humanity is there by reason of the inherent dignity which is none other but the portrait of the image of God manifested in the human person and who is the representative of the Creator, himself. I would like at this juncture, thus, to clarify this point in concern by words of William C. Mattison III who wrote:

Not only is humanity created out of love. Given a special place in all creation, as created in the image of God (*Imago Dei*), humanity is specially equipped to participate in the love that characterizes God's very being, which spills out in all creation, and which characterizes the ultimate destiny to which humanity is called. That is why the greatest commandment is to love God and to love others (see Matthew 22: 37–39; Mark 12:29–31; Luke 10: 27). This is not some externally imposed obligation placed on humanity. It is rather an invitation for us to live the way we were created to live; in other words, it is a call to be who we are as *Imago Dei*. It is also a foretaste of the fullness of life, which is complete loving union with God.⁴⁸⁰

As it happens, this is judged to be a completely different perspective from what previous Christian thinkers and theologians held in mind, when they spoke of the *Imago Dei*. For when the previous Christian theologians and scholars spoke of the image of God in man, they typically referred it to a person on its own and to the noblest faculties found within each person. So one can claim that, currently, it is relatively new, though also entirely or quite authentic, that in contemporary time Christian development is insightfully turned around to perceive and recognise the image of God in human persons who are united with each other in love.⁴⁸¹ This ground-breaking perception is even indorsed by the International Theological Commission that: "it is within this communion of love that the

⁴⁷⁹ W.C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*, Grand Rapids, MI: 2008, Brazos Press, p. 202.

⁴⁸⁰ W.C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology...*, 2008, p. 202.

⁴⁸¹ Cf. John Paul II, *On the Dignity and Vocation of Woman*, (*Mulieris Dignitatem*), Vatican: 1988, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 7.

mystery of all being, as embraced by God, finds its fullest meaning.”⁴⁸² That means the recognition of the Triune image of God, so referred to as the Trinitarian God is appreciated and even being admired in the human person’s uniqueness and character.

The intrinsic and incomparable dignity of human persons is, thus, in our contemporary time involved constantly in theological discourses; nonetheless the involvement is always in connection with the image of God. It is, thus, in this aspect that, Christian theologians continuously keep affirming the moral uniqueness and character in the human person in accord with the dignity endowed him or her. By resembling God so characteristically as to exist in his image, humanity shares accordingly in his divine dignity and holiness. Still, one should at the same time remember that our dignity as human persons, while solidly having its foundation in God’s image, stands also for the moral value intrinsic to human persons as moral individuals on their own; meaning, humans are categorised or characterized as created beings with freedom of will. In other words, human dignity in virtue of the image of God is not conferred on us from without, as if God could also withdraw it whenever he liked. And so, to a great extent, this is the reason it is easily grasped and understood by sincere people, no matter they are Christian believers or non-Christians.⁴⁸³

In line with the biblical-theological trend, it is obvious that, those pledging adherence of human dignity to the *Imago Dei* concept, are already those well acquainted with Christianity faith and mentality. The trend conception of the *Imago Dei* as holder of human dignity appears many times, though somehow seeming complex to explain, especially when it is to be elucidated or defined to a normal lay person, who is not so expert in the Christian philosophical forum and/or in theological subject-matters. The problem, however, remains always as of how does the *Imago Dei* idea coexists with the concept of human dignity and how does it correlate to virtuous moral living.

Consequently, the inclination in search of explanation finds itself somehow jammed between and within worldviews of Christian theological anthropology and the

⁴⁸² International Theological Commission (chaired by Joseph Card. Ratzinger), *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, Rome: 2002, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 95.

⁴⁸³ By the word ‘non-Christians’ I mean those believers like for instance: Muslims, Hinduists Buddhists and believers in African traditional religions. All of them do exist in Tanzania as well as in the African region or area-extension, where the Bantu people reside.

philosophical critique of humanity in essence. A significant number of some philosophers in consort with theological scholars started, therefore, searching for profound and perceptive sociocultural insights, knowledge and anthropological principles, inclined to pay insightful attention to the human being's alleged resemblance to God and so help bring crystal understanding of the concept. It is undeniably, at moments like this, the tendency is, every now and then, to envision the concept of human dignity outside the biblical background of the *Imago Dei* notion, like for instance, from the perspective of traditional ethical systems and general moral principles.

Despite the fact that, it is not yet certain, it still appears apparently that there are quite a good number of ethical thinkers in Africa South of Sahara,⁴⁸⁴ who are more and more of enticement that, such envisioning is indeed, what might make sense and reveal a common ground which is hospitable and genial to any person; meaning, even to those who are not yet acquainted with Christian faith and doctrine; that means, those people of good will outside Christianity, yet searching to uphold humanity's moral worth and acting in right conduct even when they know not of the Christian theological warrant. With intention of seeing the relevance of the *Imago Dei* idea from Christian anthropological sensibility, thus, one needs to distinguish within it two different claims: firstly, "the belief that the world in general, and human beings in particular, are God's creation"⁴⁸⁵ and secondly, the idea holding that, humanity resembles God. As one can from these two assertions, obviously see: the first acumen does not distinguish humanity from the rest of creation; rather, it is the latter assertion, and this is what gives rise to the concept of human dignity *qua* moral principle and ethical norm. Such resemblance can, of course, be interpreted in as many different ways as the biblical hermeneutics and theological interpretation is concerned. However, a striking supposition remains to be the one deducing it in terms of the knowledge of good and evil. This can also be referred to as ethics in anthropology, which basically reflects those general moral principles of what is bad and what is good in terms of what one should not do and what one should do as a human person in community or society. In particular, it is in this respect, humankind's resemblance to God is designated

⁴⁸⁴ I have actually been mentioning their names repeatedly, in the course of this dissertation, yet just for the sake of reminder they are such scholars and thinkers as: Thaddeus Metz, Mogobe Ramose, Laurent Magesa, Richard N. Rwiza, Kwame Gyekye, Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, Samwel J. Mbiti, Bénédzet Bujo, Kwasi Wiredu and some many others.

⁴⁸⁵ M. Dan-Cohen, *Normative Subjects...*, 2016, p. 144.

and predicted to imply humanity's divine importance and so the special worth or ethical value being engrossed to it.

All in all, the concept of human dignity, as fundamental value of human beings, is common to a number of ethical thinkers. Yet it appears like each thinker understands it on condition of the logical perspective of which one is well-versed and in accordance with existing different features of human reality, like: human nature; God-relatedness; the faculty of reason; or recognition within society. That comes following the fact that, each of the four conceptions comprehends the human person to consist in a number of stuffs, and consequently take the fundamental value of the human being to consist the principal core in different aspects of its being. Holding on this view, Lebech thus asserts:

The human being exists in and through these aspects, which characterise it essentially. Fundamental value, however, pertains to the individual human being and not merely to its nature, faith, reason or status. Herein the frameworks agree. Hence they also agree that human dignity pertains to the human being as such, even if they disagree as to what exactly it is that justifies this attribution.⁴⁸⁶

If any definition of the concept is, therefore, given like saying: 'Human dignity is the fundamental value of the human being', Lebech argues, this definition will, however, remain being acknowledged as merely formal.⁴⁸⁷ To properly account for the contented description of human dignity, therefore, we are referred significantly to the understanding of its fullness in love, friendship and kinship. In these, then, one is able to pick up and identify with the essential attributes focused on contexts of human dignity as a fundamental moral value inherent in every human person. One is able to be well vested with what it means to be human, and essentially the implication of human dignity in as far as morality is concerned, when one definitely sees the incomparable worth or value intrinsic in human beings.

Of this insight one can, consequently, grasp an impression that: the conception of human dignity in this perspective is, in one way or another, closely linked to the ultimate object of respect as it is in the same way asserted by the mere statement of the categorical imperative of Immanuel Kant, which is, indeed, the Kantian fundamental principle of

⁴⁸⁶ M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 10.

⁴⁸⁷ Cf. M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 10.

reason and morality.⁴⁸⁸ In his moral philosophy, Immanuel Kant held that, all persons, regardless of rank or social class, have an equal intrinsic worth, referred to as human dignity.⁴⁸⁹

As of recently and for some decades now, the concept of human dignity is one of the central planks of modern moral and political philosophy, exclusively in as far as the whole issue and theme of foundation for virtuous moral living and the concern for human rights is on the peak. It is even often assumed to be the highest principle in ethical and legal discourses.⁴⁹⁰ That means, the concept of human dignity is one of widely and largely utilized to a number of socio-ethical and cultural-philosophical and theological spheres.

Noticeably, therefore, human dignity is not a concept newly used in moral, ethical, and even in socio-political discussions in Tanzania. It is a concept that has always been meant to signify that every human person has an innate right to respect and worth of ethical treatment. Moreover, it is the concept that has been continuously understood to be universal and equally been kept in unchanged perception, not only in the Western Christian world, but also in the African ethical pattern and moral tradition. Remarkably, yet, it shows that, besides the groundwork of Kant, human dignity, as a moral concept, has not been given enough room for speculation and analysis in subject-matters of ethics and morality in Africa. Nevertheless, in the contemporary age and time, kept in discourse and debate.

All in all, however, it is at moment sufficient to bear in mind that, just like it is in the Christian moral teaching, that the dignity of the human person is intrinsically linked to his or her creation as human being, so also it is conceived in the Bantu African ethical viewpoint. In this sense, both traditions have developed an anthropology that comprises a strong emphasis on human dignity.

One might ask the question whether it is necessary or allowed to integrate the Bantu concept of human dignity in a Christian line of interpretation. In this respect, we can refer

⁴⁸⁸ There are three different versions of the Categorical imperative are expressed in Kant's *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* (GMS IV, 421; 429; 436). Cf. I. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, (eds. T.E. Hill and A. Zweig), Oxford: 2002, Oxford University Press, pp. 214–245. See also: M. Lebech, "What is Human Dignity?", p. 6.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. T. E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives ...," 2014, pp. 215–216.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch nachdenken*, Band 1: Grundlagen, Würzburg: 2014, Echter Verlag GmbH, p. 241.

to the fact that Christianity has integrated, along the different periods of time, various philosophical accounts of dignity. In Early Christianity, there has been influence of the Stoic philosophical school on the Christian interpretation of human dignity. The Roman philosopher Cicero, who was also influenced by Stoicism, for instance, saw the concept of human dignity, already from his life time, “as a central requirement of a virtuous life that one should behave in a way that is appropriate to the dignity of a human being; and famously, for Immanuel Kant, the dignity of the human person is at the centre of his moral philosophy.”⁴⁹¹ This argument in favour of Kant’s universal perception of the concept of human dignity can be proved evidently from Kant’s own theory on the categorical imperative. Some scholars, like Thomas E. Hill, Jr. and those of same view, hold even further assertion that, Kant presents, “considerations to heighten our awareness that in our thinking and practice we are in fact deeply, and unavoidably, committed to fundamental moral principles as rational constraints on our attitudes and choices. For example, one argument challenges us to acknowledge that we cannot help but regard ourselves as more than a mere means for the use of others, and that we regard ourselves in this way for the same reason that everyone else does.”⁴⁹²

Some scholars in ethics are of the opinion that, there is somehow clear insight and an elaborate exploration from Immanuel Kant, as he dealt with the concept of human dignity in relation to the human ability of making judgment by use of reason.⁴⁹³ Owing to this argument, there is general agreement, therefore, that the Kantian perspective on the rational basis of human dignity is an exploration bestowing us with the perception that: all persons, regardless of rank or social class, have an equal intrinsic worth or dignity.⁴⁹⁴ Obviously, Kant might have picked up this notion from Christianity and Stoicism and so extended its implication from social-political ideal into a moral ideal of all humanity

⁴⁹¹ M. Düwell et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook...*, 2014, p. xvii. However, Kant’s position “that human beings have dignity by virtue of their rationality and autonomy [and actually this] has been repeatedly challenged on the ground that it devalues children and mentally incompetent human adults, making them subject to treatment merely as means.” This might be a wrong perception of Kant, however, for clearly and articulately Kant’s vision of human dignity is of universal perception and it does not give room for any segregation or marginalisation whatsoever. T.E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives on the Rational Basis of Human Dignity” in M. Düwell et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, Cambridge: 2014, Cambridge University Press, p. 218. Words in brackets are mine.

⁴⁹² T.E. Hill, “Kantian Perspectives...,” 2014, p. 219.

⁴⁹³ Cf. G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch...*, 2014, p. 244.

⁴⁹⁴ Cf. I. Kant, *Groundwork of...*, 2002, pp. 235–236.

interconnected by common principles.⁴⁹⁵ While in Stoic tradition, dignity can be interpreted more in the line of moral self-formation of the person⁴⁹⁶, Kant extended the connection of human dignity to the foundation of moral law and humanity. In appraisal of this standpoint of Kant, one scholar and author, Thomas E. Hill, in his contribution to the *Cambridge Handbook of Human Dignity: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, stated that:

The Kantian thesis that the moral law and humanity have an unconditional and incomparable value does not mean that judgements of moral rights and wrong are ultimately based on a prior intuition of a value that is independent of the moral law. In an important sense, for Kant the right is always prior to the good. To attribute dignity to the moral law and therefore to humanity is to express in a concise and forceful way that we must appropriately respect and honour both in our attitudes, choices and conduct. What we must do to comply, more specifically, must be determined by the content of the moral law as expressed in the Categorical Imperative, and Kant defends this, not by appeal to a prior independent value, but by complex arguments about the presuppositions of rational moral judgements.⁴⁹⁷

In the lines of Kant, it is conceived by various ethicists, moral thinkers as well as moral theologians that, human dignity is an inherent human value.⁴⁹⁸ For as a matter of fact, Kant grounds his understanding of the human person's dignity with relation to human moral nature and autonomy, and so he defines it as that capacity of the human person to participate in "the making of universal law"⁴⁹⁹ and to freely act according to the moral imperatives the person perceives. Explicitly, thus, human dignity is an innate worth or status that no human being did earn out of one's own effort and neither can a person lose it.⁵⁰⁰ In other words, even by doing something wrong, a person does not forfeit one's own fundamental status as a human being, albeit by criminal acts a human person may be stripped of various civil rights. That means, even those who make the 'evil' life-governing choice to subordinate the moral law to self-interest⁵⁰¹ have to be respected as human beings

⁴⁹⁵ Cf. T. E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 216.

⁴⁹⁶ Cf. Herschel C. Baker, *The Dignity of Man: Studies in the Persistence of an Idea*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1947, Harvard University Press, pp. 79-80.

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. T. E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 217.

⁴⁹⁸ A thorough investigation of the use of human dignity in theological ethics can be found in: Werner Wolbert, *Der Mensch als Mittel und Zweck. Die Idee der Menschenwürde in normativer Ethik und Metaethik*, Münster: 1987, Aschendorff. As an example for its application as foundational element in Theological Ethics I would like to refer to Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Grundlegung der Ethik. Ein theologischer Entwurf*, Freiburg, Basel, Wien: 2007: Herder, p. 406, where he defends human dignity as foundational principle that cannot be changed by positive law.

⁴⁹⁹ I. Kant, *Groundwork of...*, 2002, p. 78.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. T. E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215. See also: G. Marschütz, *Theologisch ethisch...*, 2014, p. 242.

⁵⁰¹ Cf. I. Kant, *Religion within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, (eds. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni), Cambridge: 1998, Cambridge University Press, pp. 55-61.

assuming that, despite their bad choices, they still have that dignity vital to all human persons and which bears that basic human rationality and freedom necessary for being moral agents.

And it is actually based on this point that it can also be said that the Bantu African ethical theory and Kant's categorical imperative are like two sides of the same coin, the Bantu tradition developing the moral claims following from the dignity of the person from the communal towards the universal, and Kant from the universal to the more concrete. And yet beyond all differences, I have to repeat again and again, that, human dignity is, also in the Bantu tradition, perceived as being the universal moral principle on which the more concrete, communal ways of virtuous moral living are based.

In spite of the communal bond in humankind as a whole, there is no person, who can altogether escape the rational recognition of the universal authority of moral law and consciousness of his/her capacity to choose to conform; for the basis of this recognized authority is neither tradition, nor self-interest, human sentiments, external powers nor even Platonic forms, but the common practical reason of each human person as an autonomous entity by himself or herself.⁵⁰² For this reason, human dignity is much more than the social understanding of dignity as it is represented by dignitaries or aristocratic people, but also by common folks; meaning, all humans "as members of a universal moral commonwealth, even ordinary human beings have a dignity independent of office, social class and political citizenship."⁵⁰³ Thus, it is reasonable that, all humans must strive to make their own individual choices commendable of this moral standing, which elevates human beings above animals and/or mere things. It is here, then that, the "fundamental principle of reason and morality, the Categorical Imperative, tells us to treat humanity in each person never merely as a means, but always as an end in itself."⁵⁰⁴ Signifying that, we must all act as if we were both law-makers and subjects in an ideal moral community of human beings, "in which all the members, as ends in themselves, have *dignity* rather than mere *price*."⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰² Cf. T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 216–217.

⁵⁰³ T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 216.

⁵⁰⁴ T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215.

⁵⁰⁵ T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215. See also: I. Kant, *Groundwork of...*, 2002, § 77, pp. 434–435.

Dignity, as of this juncture, is accordingly, a depiction of the human person's non-negotiable intrinsic value in contrast to price, which is more of presenting the relative value of things. Indications on support of this awareness are keen-sighted by Thomas E. Hill, as he wrote that:

In contrast to market price and other values that are dependent on our personal attachments, Kant calls dignity 'an unconditional and incomparable worth' that 'admits of no equivalent'. Human dignity is based on the prior thesis that 'the moral law', an unconditional command of reason, has an absolute dignity and authority that everyone must respect. This moral law requires respect for human dignity because all human persons, good or bad, must from the standpoint of practice, be presumed to have the capacities and predispositions of rational autonomy. In treating humanity as an end in itself and following the moral principles of an ideal moral commonwealth, we will be giving appropriate recognition to the autonomy of each person and shaping our lives by general policies that we can rationally regard as permissible for anyone to follow.⁵⁰⁶

This tells us, therefore, that in due course, it is the fundamental moral law, which affirms that human dignity has practical implications for both law and individual ethical choices⁵⁰⁷ for the guaranteeing of a person's virtuous moral living. And that due to the reason that, dignity of the human person cannot be easily separated from the moral law; one cannot even claim that: I first have dignity and then moral law; and neither can one say that to me it is first moral law and then comes my dignity. Thus, the communal ethical systems as well as legal institutions in our societies, are there to ensure proper interpretation, application and coercive enforcement of the innate right to freedom of every person along with that moral duty of giving due respect to each other. And this implies likewise that, individuals must as well respect themselves and so equally respect others as persons with equal standing under the moral law.⁵⁰⁸ In such sense, then, there will be no sharp contrast between individuals in social relationships.

In an article entitled "Menschenwürde", Konrad Hilpert draws out an observation that: as a concept, human dignity implies the fact that is what makes him/her human, surpasses and never rises from what he/she is formed of.⁵⁰⁹ This observation succumbs an implication that, human dignity as an intrinsic value transcends all descriptions, perceptions, analyses, and notions of a person's own images. Furthermore, the surveillance affirms the inevitability of that equal dignity of any person with the essential capacities to

⁵⁰⁶ T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215.

⁵⁰⁸ Cf. T.E. Hill, "Kantian Perspectives...", 2014, p. 215.

⁵⁰⁹ Cf. K. Hilpert, „Menschenwürde“, 2006, p. 133.

be a moral agent. And while being noted as a moral value, human dignity is, likewise, implicitly well-thought-out as inviolable, indestructible and inalienable. According to Kant, human dignity is above all price; it is, therefore, not to be sacrificed for things the value of which depends solely on utility and personal preferences, for it is irreplaceable.⁵¹⁰ And for that reason, respect for human dignity guarantees ethical conducts in life, as well as providing prospect and guidance for personal moral growth, of which the social regulations and the human societies or communities (state powers) have to ensure and safeguard.⁵¹¹ This conception then leads us to grasp that human dignity is not only evident and putative, but also a moral value necessarily grounding the human person as an entity and moral being to act and to be treated with respect and soundly protected in all his/her basic rights. And such an understanding, thus calls us, on one hand, to reflect on the necessity to acquaint ourselves well with common potentialities in terms of individual-personal life; while, on the other hand, accounting for the role this dignity plays on the constitutional moral finiteness and weakness of the human person. With both respects, however, the notion human dignity is consequently taken into consideration, as equally in view of oneself as a holder-person of dignity, and that means, without essentially undermining it in other human beings living on the surrounding or call it in the community with him/her.

It is revealed, in general survey, that: the 1948 *Declaration of Human Rights* testifies to the currency of both terms, human dignity and human rights, although it still remains that, a systematic usage of the term ‘human dignity’ came to be the object of philosophic investigation only within the Human Rights tradition. Thus, flowing from this document, the term ‘human dignity’ is constantly used to express the basic intuition from which human rights proceed. It is meant as the basic principle upon which human rights are understood to rest.⁵¹² And the reason behind is the implication that, human dignity is inherent in each and every person, and congruently inalienable. In other words, one can say, even when the UN Declaration of Human Rights does speak more of human rights than of morality, yet the quest for basic human rights is indeed one of the subject-matters occupying serious concern not only in the socio-political realm, but also in the perimeters of morality as a whole. Especially when Bantu ethical principles are being developed for

⁵¹⁰ Cf. I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, (trans. and ed. Mary Gregor), Cambridge: 1996, Cambridge University Press, pp. 187 and 209. See also: I. Kant, *Groundwork of...*, 2002, pp. 235–236.

⁵¹¹ Cf. K. Hilpert, „Menschenwürde“, 2006, p. 133.

⁵¹² Cf. M. Lebech, “What is Human Dignity?”, p. 2.

covering also socio-political fields, as freedom of assembly or freedom of speech, it is important to integrate human rights in the perspective of a universal ethics based on Bantu morality.

4.3 The Concept of Human Dignity in Vatican Council II

The following part of the chapter aims at explaining the way in which human dignity is perceived in the Christian tradition after the Second Vatican council and how it shaped the theologians in the development of theological ethics differently from what they thought of the human person and morality before the Second Vatican Council. Describing the understanding of human dignity will make it possible to see where there are similarities between the Christian view on human dignity and the Bantu approach, so that Christian moral teaching can be recognized as strengthening important elements of Bantu ethics. On the other hand, also specific features will become visible that are not immediately in harmony with all interpretations of Bantu ethics. These differences will open the opportunity of developing the Bantu ethical approach further.

Following the publication of the encyclical: *Pacem in Terris* (1963), in which actually, the concept of human dignity was vividly positioned on highlights of theological ethics, the Second Vatican Council approved and promulgated two documents whose contents carried the Catholic understanding of human dignity a step further, as to affirm that, human dignity is discernible in the sense of duty efficient for the human person to be morally guided, and thus, it is one of basic foundation for virtuous moral living. The two documents are namely; the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*)⁵¹³ and the Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*).⁵¹⁴ These documents are actually pigeonholed as the most significant statements of the Council related not only to those questions of social morality but also to the whole subject matter of virtuous morality as a whole.

⁵¹³ Vatican Council II, “*Gaudium et Spes* – Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World” (07 December 1965), in Walter M. Abbot – Joseph Gallagher (eds.), *Documents of Vatican II*, New York: 1966, pp. 199–308.

⁵¹⁴ Vatican Council II, “*Dignitatis Humanae* – Declaration on Religious Liberty” (07 December 1965), in Walter M. Abbot – Joseph Gallagher (eds.), *Documents of Vatican II*, New York: 1966, pp. 675–696.

It is obvious that, the primary contribution of the two documents was their innovative discussion of the dutiful and spiritual basis of Christian ethical concern having been based on the dignity of the human person.⁵¹⁵ Yet, with keen observation, one can as well notice that, just little before the convocation of the Second Vatican Council, there was an encyclical letter, *Mater et Magistra*: on Christianity and the Social Progress, issued by Pope John XXIII,⁵¹⁶ in which it was “affirmed that the modern Catholic tradition of social thought is controlled by one basic theme – an unshakable affirmation and defence of the dignity and rights of the human person.”⁵¹⁷ A commitment which emerged to be one of significant force for the undertaking of human dignity as moral value and basic foundation for the moral conducts of human beings.⁵¹⁸

4.3.1 Human Dignity in *Gaudium et Spes*

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*): This document does, hitherto, make a number of significant wide-reaching contributions to the discussion on the foundations of an ethical theory for virtuous moral living and especially in relation to the question and defence of human rights. By the same token, the document *Dignitatis Humanae*, in its case, has indeed played significant role in contributing for the promotion of human dignity as intrinsic moral value, though seeming to be more concerned with a very particular and important moral issue on the right to religious liberty. However, in the course of its treatment of religious liberty, this declarative document appeals to a number of more general outsets of moral conducts to be significantly considered in light of human dignity in as far as virtuous moral living is concerned.

In addition to the point above, the Second Vatican Council, upholds firmly to the teaching that, human dignity is with no doubt one of significant imperative, following the commitment enforced by the Council on Christian ethical teaching and moral tradition as to its appreciation and acknowledgement that, in case, we claim that our life as human

⁵¹⁵ Cf. D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, p. 250.

⁵¹⁶ Cf. John XXIII, *Encyclical Letter on Christianity and Social Progress, (Mater et Magistra)* Vatican: 1961, Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

⁵¹⁷ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...,” 2014, p. 250. See also: John XXIII, “A preview of *Mater et Magistra*,” in The Staff of the Pope Speaks Magazine (eds.), *The Encyclicals and Other Messages of John XXIII*, Washington, DC: 1964, TPS Press, p. 233.

⁵¹⁸ Cf. D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...,” 2014, p. 250.

persons is righteous and virtuous, then that has to be in agreement with the normative moral value referred to as the human dignity. And actually, that is the reason, the Second Vatican Council affirms that, the normative moral value of human dignity is the criterion resolutely warranting equality to all humans without exception. The document *Gaudium et Spes*, thus, states that:

All humans are endowed with a rational soul and are created in God's image; they have the same nature and origin and, being redeemed by Christ, they enjoy the same divine calling and destiny; there is here a basic equality between all human beings and it must be given ever greater recognition.⁵¹⁹

By this endorsement, the Second Vatican Council had, actually, asserted quite clearly, the bond existing between the transcendental value or worth of human persons and the natural social realization of such value – meaning, the dignity of which every human person inherently possesses. Accordingly, the Council continues emphasising that:

... with respect to the fundamental rights of the person, every type of discrimination, whether social or cultural, whether based on sex, race, colour, social condition, language, or religion, is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent. ... Moreover, although rightful differences exist between human beings, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about.⁵²⁰

This quotation would strengthen some of the principles of Bantu ethics. Sometimes, however, the Bantu can observe tensions because of lacking respect for people of different communities. To point again at the universality of Bantu morality, this passage from the Second Vatican Council can strengthen the idea of universal dignity when used to teach in the Bantu culture.

It seems in this affirmation, that the Second Vatican Council insinuates that, full implications of the ideal of human dignity is, indeed, made clear and vivid, through moral actions which are more humane towards other humans; such moral actions required for the establishment of life conditions, which are just and of respect to human equality. Accordingly, the Council gives us a hint that the ideal moral foundation owing to inherent dignity of the human person is, actually, situated in a complex natural interdependence of all humans. In other words, that is to say, it is set in the natural human dependence of each other in the community or society, which cannot be affirmed or acknowledged apart from the concrete conditions of cultural-anthropological and ethical aspects that guarantee the

⁵¹⁹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29.

⁵²⁰ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29.

well-being of everybody. And that means, even further that, the complex natural human interdependencies of social, economic and political life are as well interpreted as evidence for the vitality of humanity and human dignity; as it discloses by itself in the nature of the human person, the socio-cultural historicity and the ethics that follows from it. .

On the other hand, however, the Second Vatican Council was also quite aware of the reality that, although it affirmed of the inherent equality of all human beings by virtue of their dignity, yet, it remains true that human persons “are not alike from the point of view of varying physical power and the diversity of intellectual and moral resources.”⁵²¹ In reality, then, and according to what is being said, the concerns raised at this instance are like what is stated in words of David Hollenbach, who wrote: “If persons in society possess a transcendental worth, then the structures of [socio-ethical] organization are confronted with claims to serve and protect this personal dignity.”⁵²² Also and for the reason that, human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, then, all humans are called to respect and appreciate that dignity in all humans even more distinctly.⁵²³ And since the precise content of such claims is naturally and socio-ethically conditioned, any justification which would grant them status of rights must involve a measure of natural, ethical and socio-cultural judgement as well.

From this view, I therefore get a picture that, in Christian theological ethics it is manifested that sometimes there are questions and doubts raised on claims for moral righteousness of some people because of misinterpreting their socio-ethical and cultural historicity and moral tradition.⁵²⁴ And although *Gaudium et Spes* does not, in fact, give a systematically unified response to this problem, yet it reaffirms and clarifies the validity of the tradition’s view that moral obligation on our human conducts entails something more essential in understanding the nature of the human person. That means, it is not merely a matter of cultural-social bias or prejudice; there is more of considering the human person’s nature too. The task for us all humans, therefore, is being able of reading well the ‘signs of the times’ from a prevalent sense of understanding the dignity of the human person as well

⁵²¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29.

⁵²² D. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition*, New York: 1979, Paulist Press, p. 70.

⁵²³ Cf. John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 10.

⁵²⁴ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29.

as “the place and role of man in the universe, about the meaning of his individual and collective strivings, and about the ultimate destiny of reality and of humanity.”⁵²⁵

Gaudium et Spes is of the opinion that a conflict within human existence itself is the cause of many tensions and problems experienced in the world as against human dignity and rights of the human person. That is to say, quite a number of ethical problems are the results of a conflict between the drive of the human spirit toward a value worthy of absolute commitment and the shifting and limited values of socio-ethical anthropology and cultural-historical existence.⁵²⁶ So, the Second Vatican Council insisted that human dignity as well as the nature of the human person, together with the concreteness of personal relationships, and the socio-ethical structures or patterns, are all essential as basic foundation for virtuous moral living and for the provision of justice and basic moral rights.⁵²⁷ In fact, they are features abound with framing and conditioning the personality and moral behaviour of every human person. When they are not properly ordered, they can cause constrictive and oppressive trends of events in the society; yet in their primary natural edifice, social order and interpersonal relationships are positive possibilities in and through which human dignity is realized.⁵²⁸

The document goes further to affirm that the structures for the realization of human dignity are of two types: some relate with immediacy to the “innermost nature”⁵²⁹ of the person, while others change through socio-cultural history as the result of people’s decisions and human civilisations. In the first category, it includes such forms of human interrelationship as the family and the political community. At this juncture, therefore, more light is cast on the essential social nature of persons⁵³⁰ and the exercise of human intelligence. Greater dignity to persons is brought about by correct exercise of human intelligence; so the expansion of the educational and cultural opportunities of persons is called for to ensure that this is possible. Consequently, virtuous moral living, on basis of respect for human dignity, is quite well realized in abiding faithfully to the person’s own

⁵²⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 3.

⁵²⁶ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 10.

⁵²⁷ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 30.

⁵²⁸ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 14, 23 and 25.

⁵²⁹ I am going to explicate more of this point in section 4.3.3. of this dissertation, where I will explain of human dignity as sign or stance of encounter with our moral innermost.

⁵³⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 25.

conscience and consciousness through an accurate exercise of reason and freedom. However, this person's own conscience should be well informed and tuned to stay conscious of the cultural and educational norms and moral values of the community he/she lives in. For actually, the organization of action in freedom rather than through coercion is, correspondingly, essential characteristic of human personhood in the community or society.⁵³¹

As we have noticed, therefore, *Gaudium et Spes* suggests a fruitful way to combine the traditional view of human dignity as basic root for morality, following the nature of humans, but without throwing away the socio-cultural consciousness and anthropological historicity, e.g. including references to the ancestors. There are domains of human existence, which cannot be suppressed without oppressing human beings at the same time. These include respect for the individual, interpersonal, social-political, economic and cultural dimensions of human existence. Because of the increasing interdependence of persons the means to this respect must be more and more provided or supported through the organized action of communities and of society as a whole. Thus from the perspective of the Council, such ethical issues like of social, economic and cultural rights, defined in relation to historical conditions, are expressed to assume a novel place of importance in the Catholic moral tradition and especially on the practice and protection for human rights.⁵³² This shows the importance of social ethical efforts in addition to individual ethical support for, e.g., the formation of conscience.

4.3.2 Human Dignity in *Dignitatis Humanae*

The Declaration on Religious Liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*): This document is another major contribution of the Second Vatican Council to the development of the social ethical tradition of the Catholic Church in our time. Like *Pacem in Terris*, an encyclical, which was issued two years before, the document *Dignitatis Humanae* frames its doctrinal

⁵³¹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 14–16.

⁵³² D. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict...*, p. 75.

position with an analysis of the moral problematic setting and status quo in the contemporary world human community.

In Article 1 of this document, for instance, it is vividly acknowledged and affirmed that:

A sense of the dignity of the human person has been impressing itself more and more deeply on the consciousness of contemporary man, and the demand is increasingly made that humans should act on their own judgment, enjoying and making use of a responsible freedom, not driven by coercion but motivated by a sense of duty. The demand is likewise made that constitutional limits should be set to the powers of government, in order that there may be no encroachment on the rightful freedom of the person and of associations. This demand for freedom in human society chiefly regards the quest for the values proper to the human spirit.⁵³³

That means, in the *Dignitatis Humanae*, it is noticeably acknowledged and affirmed clearly of the increasing consciousness of human dignity and personal responsibility, which characterizes contemporary humanity, especially where the question of basic human rights is mostly in concern. However, in article 8 of this same document, there is a notice of the ambiguity of this new consciousness, as it points out that, there are some people who fall into temptation of tending to misuse their freedom and capability of acting on their own judgement with humanity while holding the same icon of human dignity that they are free to act in whatever way they like.⁵³⁴ In short, we can say the Declaration's context is the issue that dominated the Council's thoughts and attention, especially on the existent tension between communal socialization and private personalization, which at all times brings threat to the moral issue in as far as the rulings of our dignity and rights as human persons are concerned. And so it is stated:

“Wherefore this Vatican Council urges everyone, especially those who are charged with the task of educating others, to do their utmost to form men who, on the one hand will respect the moral order and be obedient to lawful authority, and on the other hand, will be lovers of true freedom—men, in other words, who will come to decisions on their own judgement and in the light of truth, govern their activities with a sense of responsibility, and strive after what is true and right, willing always to join with others in cooperative effort.”⁵³⁵

In *Dignitatis Humanae* we, thus, find laid bare in quite explicit terms human dignity as the unshaken principle of doctrinal development, which is to be held and understood as basic foundation for morality. In the document *Dignitatis Humanae*, we all can see that the

⁵³³ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 1.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 8.

⁵³⁵ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 8.

strains created in the modern world by the simultaneous threat to virtuous moral living and responsibility for the respect of human dignity, as well as the increasing power and range of human creativity have driven the Second Vatican Council's socio-ethical instruction to a deepened recognition of a moral principle and value, to be considered as essential guidance to our moral conducts and life. This principle is none else but the moral norm and value referred to as respect for "the dignity of the responsible person in society."⁵³⁶ It is also brought to the clear light of day that the Council "intends to develop the doctrine of recent Popes on the inviolable rights of the human person and on the constitutional order of society."⁵³⁷ That is an effort to bring forward the doctrine laid down on the moral norm and principle, which bind all people equally and justly.

Thus, taking *Dignitatis Humanae* with keen consideration, we can observe that, it insists on responsible use of freedom; the freedom grounded on the respect of dignity of all humans and which actually can with no doubt define the very nature of social morality. That means the definition of the content of such responsibility must occur within the context of changing cultural and social structures. Thus, when it comes, for instance, on the question of human rights, they are to be grasped as rights confined within natural human society. In addition, we still find in this document that, there is an important and essential key to the challenging concern on basic foundation for morality, moral conducts and human interrelation with respect of all humans and institutionalization of basic human rights and duties due all humans. Precisely, the Declaration, *Dignitatis Humanae*, states: "In exercising their rights individual men and social groups are bound by the moral law to have regard for the rights of others, their own duties to others and the common good of all. All men must be treated with justice and humanity."⁵³⁸

Dignitatis Humanae affirms, in continuity with the earlier documents, that it is the task of governments to intervene and make sure that in their societies and communities, human dignity is respected; all rights and duties are attended on basis of the dignity inherent to all humans; and that all their subjects or citizens are brought into harmony with moral order, so as to maintain justice and public peace.⁵³⁹ That is to say: the state and communities

⁵³⁶ D. Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict...*, p. 76.

⁵³⁷ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 1.

⁵³⁸ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 7.

⁵³⁹ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, nn. 7–8.

must protect essential rights of their citizens or subjects, and to this end moral liberty may be structured and ensured. Of course, it should also be understood that, when it comes to the question of freedom of religion or conviction, for example, the document declares that, no community has the moral right to regulate its ethical settings or patterns in order to assure that a particular ideology, whether religious or secular, becomes normative for all in society, since every human being has the right to believe and honour his Creator in accordance with the “dictates of an upright conscience.”⁵⁴⁰ In words of the Declaration itself, thus, it is stated:

The declaration of this Vatican Council on the right of man to religious freedom has its foundation in the dignity of the person, whose exigencies have come to be are fully known to human reason through centuries of experience. What is more ... Revelation does not indeed affirm in so many words the right of man to immunity from external coercion in matters religious. It does, however, disclose the dignity of the human person in its full dimensions. ... Thus further light is cast upon the general principles upon which the doctrine of this declaration on religious freedom is based.⁵⁴¹

The Focus here is, in fact, to be perceived as to have been directed to the natural persons’ interaction, rather than on theories or religions seeking adherents. In other words, the concern of the argument is principally pursued for the person and his or her natural freedom to act in society. That is the reason, the Declaration continues appealing that: “It is one of the major tenets of Catholic doctrine that man’s response to God in faith must be free: no one therefore is to be forced to embrace the Christian faith against his own will.”⁵⁴² Though, however, it is also apparent that, the Council’s mission was to defend that “human dignity and rights flows from the heart of Christian faith.”⁵⁴³ Nevertheless, it remains in truth that, the ecclesial institutions and equally the states should not substitute themselves for the responsible humans or people, although they may both – Church and State – act or take action to bring order to the human social interactions.

For *Dignitatis Humanae*, just as for *Gaudium et Spes*, the moral order, on basis of respect of the dignity of the human person, is, actually, none else but the regulation of moral freedom and springboard for virtuous moral living.⁵⁴⁴ And actually the point of conviction is, according the Second Vatican Council’s vision, that, human dignity is the significant

⁵⁴⁰ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, nn. 8–9. See also: John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, n. 14.

⁵⁴¹ Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 9.

⁵⁴² Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 10.

⁵⁴³ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, p. 253.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Vatican Council II, *Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 15.

moral value and principle, since it is the one, which can, by virtue of reason and will, “be recognised by all human beings and make claims upon all, both Christian and non-Christian.”⁵⁴⁵ So, this is the just way possible to understand the common root of both personal and social rights and to see their essential interrelationship with each other. Thus far, in making summary of all that is discussed in this section about the perception of human dignity in the Second Vatican Council, I prefer yet again using words of David Hollenbach that:

The Second Vatican Council offered several secular warrants for its affirmation of the dignity of the person, very much in line with ... natural law-based conviction that fundamental ethical responsibilities can be grasped by human reason and by philosophical reflection on what it is to be human. First, the Council affirmed that the dignity of the human person is discernible in the transcendent power of the human mind. Through the intellect, human beings transcend the material universe, and the mind’s capacity to share in divine wisdom gives humans a worth analogous to God’s. Second, human dignity is manifest in the capacity of the human conscience to search for moral truth and to adhere to it when it has been found. Obedience to the dictates of conscience – which is the deepest core and sanctuary of a person – ‘is the very dignity of the human person’. Third, dignity is also evident in the excellence of human liberty. Freedom is ‘an exceptional sign of the divine image within the human person’. The dignity of freedom requires that persons act in accord with their free choice and that they seek to direct their freedom through knowledge of the true good.⁵⁴⁶

All in all, therefore, we all can, at this juncture, conclude that even the Second Vatican Council did acknowledge that, the “three secular warrants for human dignity – the transcendence of the mind, the sacredness of conscience, and the excellence of liberty – are all aspects of the power of human reason which is a prime manifestation of the likeness of humans to God.”⁵⁴⁷ Likewise, we denote that the teaching of the Council defends, “the ‘social nature’ of the human person, which implies that the development of the person and the advance of society ‘hinge on each other’ and that each person ‘stands completely in need of social life.’”⁵⁴⁸

Of course, unlike in the Bantu African’s school-of-thought, in the Christian theological ethics, the concept of human dignity is accentuated to an advanced perception with sophisticated theological connotation being based on the biblical narrative on ‘creation

⁵⁴⁵ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, p. 253.

⁵⁴⁶ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, p. 253. See also: *Gaudium et Spes*, nn. 15–17.

⁵⁴⁷ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, p. 253.

⁵⁴⁸ D. Hollenbach, “Human Dignity...” 2014, pp. 253–254. See also: *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 25.

of the human being in the image and likeness of God.’⁵⁴⁹ The defence of individual freedom can, however, also falsely be put in contrast with the need of social embeddedness of individual action. Therefore, in view of educating young people in a changing society, a balanced view is needed, which means a developed understanding of human dignity as fostering individual human beings in their social context is needed.

4.4. Theological-ethical Approaches to Human Dignity in Strengthening a Universal Bantu Ethics

4.4.1 The Emphasis on Moral Formation: Personhood, Dignity and Conscience

For promoting maturity of the human person on matters of morals and ethics, meaning the moral and ethical maturity fitting the characteristic dignity the person enjoys as a human person, it was always important that the formation of conscience took into account the so-called on-going ethical instructions and moral teaching from the existing socio-ethical settings of the community that strengthen dignity and informed conscience. In the African communities, such instructions and teachings, were and are usually communicated and steered, in per diem social encounter of people with one another, through wise words, proverbs, and folk-tales. Such praxis is, of course, effected as daily reminder to maintain coherent reflection on human dignity, as intrinsic moral value, inherent to all humans and taken hold as a significant moral value and ethical principle by any existing human community.

It means, therefore, in the African communities, the so-called moral characterization of any human being is not only perceived in one’s own personhood as an individual being, but also in the dignity of the human person in connection and consideration of some other features of the human person’s, which certainly include the communal ethical forms and nature.⁵⁵⁰ Surely, it follows also from common-sense and the ontological understanding that, the human “individual is by nature a social (communal)

⁵⁴⁹ Cf. The Vatican, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Revised Edition, Rome: 2000, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, nn. 1700–1709; also see *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 17 and 22.

⁵⁵⁰ Cf. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 47.

being;”⁵⁵¹ denoting as well that every human person possesses not only what constitutes one’s own nature but also “other attributes that may also be said to constitute his/her nature”⁵⁵² – in this case then, let us call them communal aspects and characteristics.

Essentially though, it is the constituent asserting that: it is through carrying out ethical and moral obligations in life and via our moral actions in community, that we are transformed from “the it-status of early child-hood, marked by an absence of moral function, into the person-status of later years, marked by a widened maturity of ethical sense – an ethical maturity without which personhood is conceived as eluding one.”⁵⁵³ It is thus purported that the attainment of moral qualities by means of accomplishing ethical obligations and via communal moral actions signifies an individual’s success in one’s own moral life; i.e. an adequate practice of virtuous moral living.⁵⁵⁴ This does not, however, imply creating moral perfection or faultlessness in the human person’s disposition, as some African scholars, like Kwame Gyekye or Ifeanyi A. Menkiti would hypothesize. Surely, it is made clear that, human nature is hardly impeccable but because of the dignity inherent in all humans, every individual is to strive doing what is good and avoid what is evil; and one comes across learning the difference *via* the socio-ethical pattern in community one lives. Above and beyond, therefore, Bantu African ethical formation of the moral conscience involves the fact that personhood is sort of status to be attained in direct proportion with formation of the human person by the establishment in *per diem* socio-ethical instruction. Nonetheless, the basic concern of the Bantu African ethical formation is the communicability of moral norms, which in fact should now be established for the sake of dialoguing with the world, that means in search of the universal principle, which goes beyond the communal boundary. It would be important that the universal Bantu ethical aspects also are taken up and taught in schools, e.g. in the classes of religious studies, in addition to Western philosophical traditions. Also, the Christian parishes can assume the responsibility of fostering Bantu ethical norms in their universal form, which is compatible with Christian teaching.

⁵⁵¹ K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 47. I fancy this perception is from Aristotelian ethics, for he is until now understood to be the first person to have popularized the idea and mentally; yet no one is sure whether before him there was no one with such logical perception whatsoever.

⁵⁵² K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 47.

⁵⁵³ K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 48. For the original quotation see also I. Menkiti, “On the Normative...,” 2004, p. 330, quoted in chapter 3.2.1.

⁵⁵⁴ Cf. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 49.

Key concern to an approach such as this, trails from the understanding that, it is simply persons with keen and well informed conscience, who promptly conduct virtuous life on basis of the dignity they possess. That means, by the fact that human beings are endowed with the inherent moral value, which is the reflection of that divine portrayal in them, they are, by nature, bound to lead a virtuous moral living, for they are created and formed to be humans with the disposition, which is humane. Of this knowledge, we are, furthermore, informed, in the document of the Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, that: "... although rightful differences exist between human beings, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about."⁵⁵⁵

This ethical instruction and teaching, has in fact been already perceived and maintained by the Bantu Africans as: when the person's conducts, very often appear to be cruel, unsympathetic, wicked, unpleasant, selfish, ungenerous, unkind or unsympathetic, it would be said of such an individual that 'he or she is *not* a person with dignity'⁵⁵⁶ (which would in Kiswahili be phrased as: '*yu mtu bila utu*' or '*hana utu ndani yake*').

In all sense, the implication of the remark such as this is usually understood by the Bantu Africans in twofold inferences: Firstly, the human person remains being acknowledged as a human being even when he/she is said to be not a person with dignity; that means, he/she is not grasped as a beast or a tree. And thus, this shows that, there is, in the Bantu African ethical pattern a clear distinction between the concept of a person with dignity and the concept of human being. It implies, therefore, that, an individual human can be human being without being a person with dignity; although also when a Bantu African say this individual is without human dignity, it doesn't imply that, that individual has lost his/her dignity as human, but rather he/she has tainted it or darkened it by one's wicked or decadent deeds or dissolute words.⁵⁵⁷

Secondly, the remarked expression after an individual does something really awkward and immoral that, the concerned individual is 'a person without human dignity,' does actually imply the emphatic assumption that there is a certain basic ethical principle, or norms and ideals, to which the moral behaviour of an individual human person needs to

⁵⁵⁵ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 29.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. K. Gyekye, "African Ethics," 2011. Accessed on 31.05.2019.

⁵⁵⁷ Cf. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity*..., 1997, p. 49.

be in accord with. That means, an individual human person ought to conform to the inherent moral value that makes him/her belong to the human personality as a moral person. The remarked statement, thus, “expresses the notion that there are moral virtues that an individual is capable of displaying in his conduct.”⁵⁵⁸

The Catholic Church in Africa, by applying its Christian teaching, can refer to and strengthen this cultural tradition of Bantu ethics and foster common grounds of ethical teaching. In the Christian morality and ethical teachings, one can as well see the insistence of conscience formation in relation to moral character and the human faculties of intellect and will. For that reason, one can apparently assert that, the importance of conscience formation is, in reality, as clearly manifested in the Bantu African moral and ethical system as it appears in Christian theological ethics, though in a slight assorted angle of view. In the Catechism of the Catholic Church, thus, it is stated that:

It is important for every person to be sufficiently present to himself in order to hear and follow the voice of his conscience. This requirement of interiority is all the more necessary as life often distracts us from any reflection, self-examination or introspection.⁵⁵⁹

In addition to this, one easily observes that, in Christian-oriented approach, and particularly in the Catholic moral teaching, conscience is described as that sanctuary of a person where one is alone with God.⁵⁶⁰ It means, therefore, that the Catholic Church always and firmly teaches that, when a person “listens to his conscience, the prudent man can hear God speaking.”⁵⁶¹ And that is the reason, the Second Vatican Council, via her document: the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), thus, unveils that:

In the depths of his conscience, man detects a law which he does not impose upon himself, but which holds him to obedience. Always summoning him to love good and avoid evil, the voice of conscience can when necessary speak to his heart more specifically: do this, shun that. For man has in his heart a law written by God. To obey it is the very dignity of man; according to it he will be judged.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁸ K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity...*, 1997, p. 50.

⁵⁵⁹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1779.

⁵⁶⁰ Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nn. 1777–1778.

⁵⁶¹ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1777.

⁵⁶² Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 16. See also: Stephan Goertz–Caroline Witting (eds.), *Amoris Laetitia – Wendepunkt für die Moraltheologie?*, Katholizismus im Umbruch, Band 4, Wien: 2016, Herder GmbH, pp.102–104.

Some African scholars, like Richard Rwiza, Thaddeus Metz, and others, are in fact, of the opinion that, just like it appears in the Christian foundation, the Bantu African moral standpoint, appeals for fresh approach, in view of “moving from a ‘morality of persons and attitudes or morality of efforts of good will’ to a ‘morality of fidelity to the spirit.’”⁵⁶³ It is indeed an attitude indicative of adaptation from ‘the good’ to ‘the person’ as central, primary, significant and fundamental focal point for moral analysis, and it has profound effect upon the theological source of morality;⁵⁶⁴ namely, the *object* chosen, the *end in view*, as commonly known as the *intention* and the circumstances of the action.

In case we have to make kind of general surveillance of such acquaintance, thus, one might observe that such approach as it is mentioned in the paragraph above, has its effects extended even upon the rest of moral theology as a whole. It is, for instance, asserted by some theologians, like Joseph Selling that: the significance of the human person and his/her dignity do take precedence when it comes to an instance where one has to make judgement of human actions. In Selling’s own words it states that: “It is not the endorsement of the priority of the object of the act (over the intention and circumstances) that determines the preference for ‘the good’ rather than ‘the person’, but exactly the opposite.”⁵⁶⁵ When it comes to formation of conscience, then it is important that one makes precise discernment that: “it deals first and foremost with persons by indicating what a person should be like.”⁵⁶⁶ And so, for a more adequate understanding of conscience, one has to maintain intent balance by overcoming the one-sided cognitive dimension so as to include an affective aspect as well. It might surely not be an easy task, for it is in actual fact, a real challenge faced in consideration of conscience, insofar as the search of moral development with specific focus on ethics of justice and care is concerned.⁵⁶⁷ Explicitly, “there is a need for the holistic approach on conscience: if conscience is viewed in terms of particular faculty or power, there is a danger of false particularism, which excludes the importance of all the other dimensions.”⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶³ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 97.

⁵⁶⁴ Cf. J.A. Selling, “The Context and Arguments of Veritatis Splendor” in Joseph A. Selling and Jan Jans (eds.), *The Splendour of Accuracy: An Examination of the Assertions Made by Veritatis Splendor*, Kampen: 1994, Grand Rapids, p. 70. See also: R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 97.

⁵⁶⁵ J.A. Selling, “The Context and Arguments...” 1994, p. 70.

⁵⁶⁶ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 98.

⁵⁶⁷ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 101.

⁵⁶⁸ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 101.

According to Rwiza, as well as other scholars in theological ethics (like Joseph A. Selling and Walter E. Conn), it is then to be kept in mind that, “the transcendental method begins with the subject it views objectivity not in conformity to the object out there but in terms of human knowing, deciding and living subject. The focus is on the human person as radically open to God.”⁵⁶⁹ By the same token, it is suggested that: one method of overcoming the danger has been pointed out in the study made by Walter E. Conn; who is on position to consider conscience reasonably as that dynamic core of the human person, driving him/her towards authenticity of self-transcendence. There is no doubt that, this holistic and developmental understanding of conscience differs radically from the traditional manualistic view⁵⁷⁰ of conscience as a faculty, power or an act. Such wholistic notion of the human person has significant practical implications in the formation not only of the human conscience in general, but also in formation of Christian conscience, in particular. As the scholar and author, Walter E. Conn, stated in his book, *Conscience – Development and Self-transcendence*, that: “The emphasis on an ethics developed from an interpretation of conscience as the drive for self-transcendence will be neither negative, nor minimal, nor legalistic, nor deductive, but positive, maximal, principled and creative.”⁵⁷¹

That means, we human beings ought to be a persons with such character consequently reflecting our dignity as humans; meaning, that normative moral value integral in us all, and whose main significance is to identify us all with humanity. Categorically, this point is imparted to us in depth by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* affirming that, it is the dignity of the human person that “implies and requires uprightness of moral conscience.”⁵⁷² And it is even further asserted that:

Conscience includes the perception of the principles of morality (*synderesis*); their application in the given circumstances by practical discernment of reasons and goods; and finally judgment about concrete acts yet to be performed or already performed. The truth about the moral good, stated in the law of reason, is recognized practically and

⁵⁶⁹ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 101. This citation is in fact as it is quoted on footnote number 38 of the hereby indicated Rwiza’s book on *Formation of Christian Conscience in Modern Africa*.

⁵⁷⁰ The Manualistic view is rooted from the manualistic moral theologians whose main emphasis is on methodological concern for morals depending chiefly on actions rather than on the person and his or her significance. In the contemporary time, especially after the Second Vatican Council, we know that the emphasis is more focussed on and for a personalistic morality. This personalistic understanding does in fact involve more the relationship of God to the human creature, and especially for the Christian believer, it shows and concentrates on the significance of the person’s position which sustains him or her for a virtuous moral living.

⁵⁷¹ W.E. Conn, *Conscience: Development and Self-transcendence*, Alabama: 1981, Religious Education Press, pp. 208f.

⁵⁷² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1780.

concretely by the prudent judgment of conscience. We call that man prudent who chooses in conformity with this judgment.⁵⁷³

Definitely, this is kind of search for a human centred ethical theory; an ethics taking into consideration the concept of human dignity to provide basis for morality in human community and foundation for virtuous living. In other words, so to say, that is an ethics understood to have function of providing a coherent and reasonable basis for human moral conducts. Nevertheless, it still needs input and insights from the acting moral agents found in continually changing circumstances of life. It follows that being appreciative of the human conscience, subsequent to one's dignity as a human person, must give central significance and reputation to the human self – the very person who acts and the characteristics of the person.⁵⁷⁴

When conversing on the concept of *the Acting Person*, Karol Wojtyla uses an analysis of consciousness to unfold his conception of a person, as a moral agent, who is free and of self-determining,⁵⁷⁵ which can also be referred to as self-realization. This state is never perfect, rather human beings find themselves in a continuous struggle for developing freedom in their narrowing conditions of life.⁵⁷⁶

Such emphasis is actually letting us into an understanding we also can find and learn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church that, each human person “has the right to act in conscience and in freedom so as personally to make moral decisions.”⁵⁷⁷ Moreover, in making sure that it is elaborate and clearly grasped by the mind, Pope John Paul II, insisted in the Encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, that: “In order to be able to understand the object of a human act which specifies that act morally, it is therefore necessary to consider the perspective of the acting person.”⁵⁷⁸ This explains why the moral action is considered to be

⁵⁷³ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1780.

⁵⁷⁴ Cf. R N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 98.

⁵⁷⁵ Cf. Karol Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, (trans. Andrzej Potocki, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka), Dordrecht: 1979, D.Reidel Publishing Co. This book was originally entitled *Osoba I Czyn* and published in Poland in 1969; *The Acting Person* is, therefore, the official English translation has been thoroughly edited and revised in collaboration with the author. In fact, it is Wojtyla's amalgamation of Thomistic ethics with the personalism of European phenomenology that has absorbed great attention of the importance of the human person as a moral agent very responsible for his/her ethical or moral behaviour; i.e. one's moral action and progress. N.B.! The author, Karol Wojtyla is the same person who was on the 16th of October, 1978 elected as Pope John Paul II and served as sovereign of the Vatican City State until the 2nd of April, 2005. He was canonized as Saint John Paul II on the 27th of April, 2014.

⁵⁷⁶ K. Wojtyla, *The Acting Person*, 1979, see especially the review on back-cover of the book.

⁵⁷⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1782.

⁵⁷⁸ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 78.

so important in relation to the dignity owed by the human person and how it is significant in as far as the structure and morality of human acts is concerned.

In this perspective, thus, formation of conscience is never to be determined merely for instruction in observance of moral rule but also must motivate the acting person to grow to maturity as a free and trustworthy human person. Certainly, one cannot but affirm that, for this to be achieved there should be requisite of both: the person and community, as first and foremost. Obviously, one should not ignore the fact that, though all humans are individual members having equal share in humanity as a whole, yet human members can enjoy diverse grades of maturity or completeness depending on what can be named as: the distinctive formation of conscience.

Hence, conscience of a valued and rightly guided person, stands for ‘the act of judgement’, or for the human faculty of intellect, to provide moral judgement of what to do and doing it right, in circumstances of indistinctness, misperception and impasse. It is also obvious that conscience can judge rightly, if it is supported by a continuing life of virtue or virtuous moral living. Virtuous moral living can in fact be authentic, if it is an expression of basic disposition of openness to eternal moral law as an enlightening and empowering reality in our daily life conducts. It is such basic disposition as it manifests itself in faith, hope and charity, which all human beings do have because of God’s graciousness towards each and every human person and which transform the moral virtues of temperance, courage, justice and prudence. And that is to affirm that, conscience can function properly – as the faculty of moral judgement – on the basis of such virtues, and particularly prudence, which is the key moral virtue worth of the human person under the criterion of human dignity as the moral norm. At this point, the explication of conscience contributes to the idea of character formation in the Bantu African context, in the sense that it helps for thoroughly and truly internalizing moral norms in such a way that one can speak of a personal conscience *and* awareness of social or communal responsibility. The Christian idea of conscience, thus, can be used to help reminding the fact that moral judgment depends on objective truth, which is universally accepted and realized in the concrete context of community.

4.4.2 Balancing Between the Human Person as Autonomous and Relational Being

With regard to the relationship between the individual and the community, the Second Vatican council can also contribute significantly to Bantu ethics. Even when in a general perception, it is always unveiling that, the individual human person is, by nature, constantly striving to achieve balance between autonomy and communion, or seclusion and fusion, yet it is important that we all bear in mind that, an individual human being is essentially and primarily member of the human species. From this perception, then, comes obviously the mentality that: a human being is not an island, but rather a social being. That means, humans are one single embodiment of a nature of a specific kind, namely: mankind, or also referred to as humanity (*Ubuntu*). And humanity is what, on the other side of the coin, gives all humans same dignity and moral value as human persons who are actually understood as moral agents. However, we should not forget, that even with such nature in commonality of their being humans, they remain at all times in constant struggle to be absolute and at the same time relational.

Such notion is indeed quite manifest, not only in Christian theological ethics and in Christian moral instructions, but also in the ethical countenance of the Bantu African ethical pattern and communal spirit. Indeed, to the Bantu Africans, it is even thoroughly displayed in their arts, proverbs, songs, and many such portents in persuasion of providing ethical instructions, generally so to speak. And it is from the ethical instructions that it is denoted and emphasised that, “a human being can perish when the community denies him the chance to become a person.”⁵⁷⁹ It is also from such ethical instructions that it is emphasized of the need to respect the dignity of each individual in the community, despite of his or her physical or economic status in the concerned community; in other words, that is to say, in the Bantu ethical instructions through the proverbs, the dignity of the individual in community is always recalled.⁵⁸⁰

Without prejudice and with keen observation, one can apparently notice that, the conception of normative moral values – in terms of the concept human dignity (*Utu*) and

⁵⁷⁹ B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. 2016.

⁵⁸⁰ Cf. B. Bujo, *Foundations of an African...*, 2016, p. 2016.

humanity (*Ubuntu*) – features more prominently in the Bantu African moral thought and practice. Indeed, when it comes to the undertaking of the human person’s dignity and one’s own conscience, the two broad considerations of the constitution of the human person, the absolute and the relational, are perceptibly not set aside. Whereas by the ‘absolute’, it means, the separateness of the person from other beings, which causes him/her to be unconditionally constituted; the ‘relational’ would from the other side of the coin mean: the communal adherence of every human person to the other human persons. However, the problem with the implied separateness is that, there is no human being who can possibly exist totally separated from others.

When particularly reflected from an African viewing platform, human living becomes more difficult and meaningless when one makes a sharp and distinct separation from community.⁵⁸¹ The community aspect of the constitution of the person is quasi not forgotten or set aside in course of the dignity of the human person and of one’s conscience formation as well as guidance to maturity of the person. In pointing to the project of full personality and/or personhood, therefore, Pantaleon O. Iroegbu argues that “The human person must remain human, personal, one who is there-with-others in mutuality and progressive development of all the community towering up to ultimacy.”⁵⁸²

Somehow, there have been tendencies of reacting to attenuation of the human person, in which the person has been turned into functionary-like within a life system or mere representative of an unrestricted pattern of communal life. It also cannot be denied, there is more or less focus on the freedom and the creativity of persons in the Bantu African ethical pattern while emphasizing on their somewhat elusive quality and inherent value. Certainly, human beings are not material to be manipulated, neither are they just the result of the condition of their heredity and environment, and not even interacting objects.⁵⁸³ The issue and emphasis here is, actually, on qualities of the human person that are often undervalued in the impersonality of much of life in the modern world. In fact, personality is more than something fixed. It is, however, founded on dignity of the human person, who is at the same time absolute and relational, at the same time autonomous and social. It

⁵⁸¹ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, pp. 98–99.

⁵⁸² Pantaleon Iroegbu, *Kpim of Personality; Treatise on the Human Person: Respect, Solidarity, Liberty*, Nekede, Owerri: 2000, Eustel Publications, p. 178.

⁵⁸³ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 99.

means, therefore that, rather than something fixed, there is somewhat more to the nature of the human person, which is not adequately accounted for in the apparent reality of one's actions and experiences that can be observed from outside. To account for that more-ness, one must posit another reality beyond the corporeal, external aspect. And that reality is indeed the human person with inherent moral value or dignity that includes personal self-realization.⁵⁸⁴

Personality in terms of personhood, thus, stands as indicator of the moral character, and it is accomplished only in communication among persons; that means, in the reciprocity of uprightness and righteous conducts between one person and another person. On focus of this view, then, the Tanzanian catholic cleric Richard Rwiza in his book, *Formation of Christian Conscience: in Modern Africa*, makes us aware of a problematic side of the prevalence of communal decision making by commenting that:

In African [societies] what is mainly missing is not the private acknowledgement of this person in individual encounter; what is missing is a public acceptance of this person. In other words, one is identified and defined as a stranger, an outsider, intruder, foreigner, a means to an end, etc. This is the very root for [the person's dignity] being rejected, repressed and denied. When human rights are respected, it is the dignity of the human person that is promoted.⁵⁸⁵

Rwiza points at the fact that beyond personal relationships in community that work already well, there need to be rights and laws that make sure that every human being is respected in his/her dignity and freedom at the level of the state, and in one's community. This is one of the points where Christian ideas and education can help to develop the communal aspect of Bantu ethics further to promote a more universal recognition of the human person in his/her individuality.

On private acknowledgement as considered in individual oddity of the person, every human is, therefore, thought to exist as a human person, who is, in fact, to find some things important and some other things not. Some of the things this person cherishes are important to him/her simply because they are subjectively satisfying. They feel good, and therefore he/she likes them.⁵⁸⁶ On the other side, it is equally considerable and significant that, adequately here considered is as Dolores L. Christie puts it, that the human person is “an

⁵⁸⁴ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 66.

⁵⁸⁵ R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 99. Words in brackets are mine.

⁵⁸⁶ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 132.

incarnate spirit, the human person is a dynamic totality which tends towards its proper fulfilment.”⁵⁸⁷ This assertion results from her perspective analysis on Louis Janssens’ personalist morality. Indeed, it is a statement, which evidently, offers basis of the human person in Christian perspective. Apparently, that means, it signifies element of personalistic approach in it. However, such element is, actually, one of the most significant elements specifically considered, as well in the Bantu African ethical theory, in terms of *Utu / Ubuntu*. In this way, Christian personalism can strengthen what is laid out already in Bantu ethics.

It is understandably that, the Bantu African ethical theory is more or less of communal insistence than that of the Western civilisation and culture. But even when the African theory does insist more on the communal aspect of the human person as moral agent, yet it “does not deny the autonomy of the individual person within the society, and especially not the responsibility for his/her own misdeeds.”⁵⁸⁸ So, there is to some extent, elements of personalistic approach even in the Bantu ethical theory. That means the Bantu theory does embrace also kind of personalist stance in the sense that, it is as well founded on the conscious human person, who is considered to be free and a responsible moral agent, and who essentially acts as a moral subject. However, even in this personalistic sense, the community still remains to be simply a means to an end of personal fulfilment, and the right balance of social and personal aspects appears to be in challenge.

Some scholars, thus, tend to call the Bantu outlook as: social personalism. In other words, it is kind of personalist approach for conscience formation, rooted in an encounter of one with the other; which might also be referred to as I-thou personalism.⁵⁸⁹ This position from the Bantu African point of view can, in fact, be taken into account, with comparison to the methodological scrutiny of Louis Janssens⁵⁹⁰ as he dealt with matters of morals. Of

⁵⁸⁷ D.L. Christie, *Adequately Considered: An American Perspective on Louis Janssens’ Personalist Morals*, Louvain: 1990, Peeters Press, p. 26.

⁵⁸⁸ H. Kimmerle, “Ubuntu and Communalism...,” 2006, p. 85.

⁵⁸⁹ For an overview on the development of personalism and its influence on Catholic Theology, cf. Thomas D. Williams – Jan Olof Bengtsson, „Personalism,“ in Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018 edition). Found online at: URL= <<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/personalism/>>.

⁵⁹⁰ As one of prominent professors of Moral Theology at the Catholic University of Leuven, Louvain (Belgium), Louis Janssens is actually known one of originators and forerunners for the development of the personalistic approach to moral judgement, which permeated the documents of Vatican Council II. And as we have already observed on the above footnote with author Dolores L. Christie, “Adequately Considered”, whose work is actually a major study of Janssens’ moral methodology.

course, Janssens is not Bantu, and not even African, but any scholar, particularly with matters of morals, can observe that, his understanding of the human person is ostensibly rooted in a specific type of personalism, which is definitely a radical I-thou personalism, based on an encounter with others, that comes very close to Bantu practice.

In addition, it is also noted and beheld that the Second Vatican Council imparts and exalts the dignity of the human person as: “subject and goal of all social institutions.”⁵⁹¹ On this standpoint, the Second Vatican Council, thus, points out to the importance of personal conscience and evidently to the need for rising awareness of personal dimension of the moral law, even when it is also clear that the human person is social by nature and by virtue of the inherent dignity of him or her. The personalistic sentiments of modern thoughts, therefore, are kind of help in presenting basic moral teaching, particularly on the subject-matter of virtuous moral living, provided the human person is not misrepresented by the unrestrained behaviour of individuals.⁵⁹²

Certainly, there is great need for understanding the human person as a whole. It is, thus, factual that again we all get well acquainted with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, in her Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*), that: “It remains each man’s duty to preserve a view of the whole person, a view in which the values of the intellect, will, conscience and fraternity are pre-eminent.”⁵⁹³ Instead of the dichotomy between body and soul, we should as well consider, in accordance with theological anthropology, which includes, the physical, psychic and spiritual dimensions of man, in both their individual and social aspects. This is a mutual dependence, rather than individualism, that facilitates harmony in personal development. In concrete situations however, it is necessary to use reason for establishing the right balance between individual and social claims. In this sense, “natural law is not only knowable by human persons but it is precisely the vocation of the human persons to discern and apply its meaning.”⁵⁹⁴ Persons are thought of as persons-in-community and not in opposition to it. It is in this way that moral conscience is formed in a social context.⁵⁹⁵ The social dimension is, therefore, not

⁵⁹¹ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 25.

⁵⁹² Cf. Bernard Häring, *The Christian Existentialist: The Philosophy and Theology of Self-fulfilment in Modern Society*, New York: 1968, University Press, pp. 3–10.

⁵⁹³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, n. 61.

⁵⁹⁴ J.A. Selling, “The Context and Arguments...,” 1994, p. 31.

⁵⁹⁵ Cf. R.N. Rwiza, *Formation of Christian...*, 2001, p. 100.

something added to man; for the human person is essentially social by nature. That is the reason, I fancy, that, the Africans clearly and explicitly find: there is a need for emphasizing the social aspects of morality, since the person finds his/her fulfilment as he/she lives with others in society and is impeded from attaining perfection through adverse social factors.

The oral tradition clearly manifests that ethical or moral responsibility is common task of the community, yet as I have already made a remark earlier in this chapter, the individual could even better realize him/herself as a human being with dignity in and with a community, when he or she is allowed to act with more free conscience. Only that such conscience should be an informed conscience, which takes also the communal consciousness and universal or intermediate moral principles into account. This means likewise the awareness that one's personal moral conduct, indeed all that the individual being does, affects also the entire community. And for this reason, then the individual cannot avoid reflecting on how his/her moral actions affect the community, and the common good of the whole Tanzanian society.

The implied African communitarian understanding of conscience formation is, thus, all-encompassing regarding the person's freedom and his/her shared humanity (*Ubuntu*). And such constituent is clearly discussed by Bénézet Bujo when he wrote:

Whereas from the Western perspective the individual has only to follow his or her conscience as the last instance, the situation in Africa is different. Individual conscience is not the last instance without a common listening to each other: the conscience of the community might eventually be the last instance for individual action, because one does not feel cheated by the community. Instead, the individual knows that the community is positively oriented towards him or her.⁵⁹⁶

Concerning these ideas, it is without a doubt made plain that, two approaches can be traced: first, that of personal context, ensuing the fact that an individual person is autonomous; and secondly, that of communal setting, resultant of the fact that, the human person is a social being by nature and belongs to a community or a family. In point of fact, even within the traditional Catholic teaching in moral theology, there have been two

⁵⁹⁶ B. Bujo, *The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South*, (trans. Cecilia Namulondo Nganda), Nairobi: 1998, Paulines Publications Africa, p. 75. See also: M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, 1999, p. 64. This African scholar Ramose is actually one of those holding the viewpoint that in the *Ubuntu* ethical theory a human being in the world of the living must be *umuntu* (i.e. of humankind) in order that he/she gives response to the challenge of the fundamental instability of being. *Umuntu* cannot attain *Ubuntu* without the intervention of the spiritual world which includes the Divine Creator. The spiritual world is important to the upkeep and protection of the community and of humanity *per se*.

methodologies in which moral conscience has either been linked with the intellect as in the Thomistic context or connected more with the will as in the Franciscan approach.⁵⁹⁷ Henceforth, it is more appealing to maintain that conscience is not just one faculty, but the result of the holistic interconnection between intellect, will and one's total personality, including, therefore, one's dignity as human person, who is as well of social nature.

It is clear that moral reasoning and acting are a function of the human person. However, it is not only the ability of the human person on thinking logically and learning of concepts and norms, which is responsible for setting of measures to judge one's moral actions or conducts, but also because of the anthropological inherent moral value of being created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1: 26-27). For this reason, an integrated approach to the realisation of moral consciousness, fit for virtuous moral living, has to take into account not only reasoning, but also feelings and acting behaviours of persons in community. The Christian holistic understanding of the human person can be in support of practicing good interactions with human persons that reinforces the experience that we are deeply shaped by our interactions with others, and therefore should make this communal aspect of Bantu ethics an important criterion for personal moral behaviour, while safeguarding our personal moral judgment.

4.4.3 The person's Moral Innermost and Universal Humanity: Inseparable in Christian and Bantu Ethics

A third aspect in which the Second Vatican council can make an important contribution to a Bantu ethical concept is the close relationship it assumes between the person's inner conscience and the regard of humanity as a whole. Human dignity, as depiction of the Imago Dei, is essentially what makes the human person being able to encounter with one's own innermost. It follows further that, it is in such encounter with our innermost that a person, and especially a Christian, is enabled to encounter with the true image of God in the person of Jesus Christ. And "the encounter with the person of Jesus Christ is what changes our life, transforms our heart, and moves us to go out to encounter

⁵⁹⁷ Cf. K.H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics* (1), 1996, p. 204.

those who suffer, to give them back their dignity as beloved children of God.”⁵⁹⁸ In words of Father Milton Zonta SDS, the Superior General of the Society of the Divine Saviour, it means that being able to encounter with our innermost, seeing our true image inside us, and so being able to encounter Jesus Christ, is the beginning of not living only for ourselves, thinking only on what benefits us personally, but rather to live in a sacrificial way becoming all for all.⁵⁹⁹ Father Zonta even goes further saying: “The best way to give meaning to life is to put one’s life at the service of others, because as Jesus said, the grain of wheat that does not die, will rot and does not multiply the thousands of latent potentialities inside.”⁶⁰⁰

The human being, therefore, is now and then urged, by the voice of conscience, not to lose sight of the moral gift and value of humanity he or she has received from God, the Creator and giver of all goodness. And this leads us further to the knowledge that, virtuous moral living for every human person is like the river with two banks: the moral law and human dignity as moral values grounding our humanity. These are the shield and foundation for us to shape or form our ethical patterns and moral system on life of fraternity, of respect, and of compassion for others. One should not let the radiances of inherent value (human dignity) inside him/her die; for it is said, ‘the tragedy of life is what dies inside a man while he lives’.⁶⁰¹ Living in accordance with the dignity of our humanity and to the dictates of the moral law is, therefore, like nourishing that image of God in us and consequently manifesting it intensely by way of virtuous living. The tenacity of our virtuous moral living is, then, of meaningful to all that we are and all that we do.

We are even cautioned from the Scriptures that: any cry from an afflicted people, being a cry caused by misery and suffering of the people due to somewhat human mistreatment or decadent conducts, does penetrate the conscience and brings alarms about the sense of right and wrong.⁶⁰² Following such cases, then, we are constantly reminded of

⁵⁹⁸ Milton Zonta, “To begin again from Fr. Francis Jordan”, in *Informationes: Society of the Divine Saviour*, Vol. XI, Nr.32, Rome: April 2018, p. 1. N.B.! Father Milton Zonta is actually the currently in office Superior General of the Society of the Divine Saviour, also known as the Salvatorian Fathers and Brothers, whose first term in office was in 2013–2018 and now in second term office from 2019–2024. The dignity he speaks about, in the Salvatorian bulletin in concern, is indeed what we have already come across and observed in section 1.2.2 of this dissertation about ‘Comparative Sense of Dignity’.

⁵⁹⁹ Cf. M. Zonta, “To begin again...,” 2018, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁰ M. Zonta, “To begin again...,” 2018, p. 1.

⁶⁰¹ Cf. M. Zonta, “To begin again...,” 2018, p. 1. N.B.! Father Zonta has quoted this saying from Albert Schweitzer, though he did not indicate clearly of his quotation reference as to publication and page.

⁶⁰² See the related insight and alert from the Scriptures in Book of Exodus 3: 7–8a.

the point that every human person is indeed created in God's image and likeness; and so, every human individual is endowed with the dignity no amount of defencelessness can obscure. This is the dignity of which we all humans, and exclusively Christian believers, do firmly defend for the protection of humanity and the promotion of right socio-ethical conducts in societies. The protection of our human societies from evil thoughts and actions or conducts; like for instances, the mistreatment and the killing or taking of an innocent person's life. It is actually for this dignity that Jesus Christ called us to uphold by feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the sick, even those in prison, and yes, welcoming the stranger. It is the dignity that is not forfeited by infirmity of the person nor even when the person commits crime or acts not in accordance with the dictates of ethics and decency. This Christian insight can strengthen the Bantu emphasis on reintegration of persons into the community even if they have committed crimes.

When our innermost is authentically open to humanity, which is truly the vital measure for the universal communion of all humans, then, that sense of fraternity will surely exclude nobody and nothing. That is principally leading a life on basis of the innermost and the inherent value of the human person and in accordance with the dictates of the natural moral law. Besides, it is a life centred on reverence and observance of the inherent natural human values, which in effect do keep humanity and the dignity attached to into being cared for. It is indeed a lifestyle, which includes the human capacity for living together and in communion. In Christian theology, we are always reminded that: "we have God as our common Father and that this makes us brothers and sisters."⁶⁰³

That is to say, therefore, that, if communal and fraternal love is established with respect of the inherent dignity of the human person, then, it can only be gratuitous; and that is never used as a means of recompensing to others for what they have done or will do for community or even for an individual in the community. That is the reason even it can be possible that a person is capable of loving one's own enemies as we learn from the Gospel.⁶⁰⁴

⁶⁰³ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 228.

⁶⁰⁴ Of this teaching one can refer to the teaching of Jesus on the Mount as he taught the multitude saying that: "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." (Mt 5: 43-44); also see Leviticus 19:18. Cf. *The Holy Bible*, New International Version, N.Y.: 2011, Biblica, Inc.

It means therefore that we must sustain the conviction that we human beings do need one another, for we all have a shared responsibility for others and the world or the creation at large. Thus being good and decent towards one another is worth it. Of course we sometimes tend towards doing what is immoral and do the mockery of ethics or morality, goodness, faith and honesty, yet we need in time to acknowledge that doing things or acting against our dignity as human person does us no good rather than only leading us astray.⁶⁰⁵ “When the foundations of social life are corroded, what ensues are battles over conflicting interests, new forms of violence and brutality, and obstacles to the growth of a genuine culture of care”⁶⁰⁶ for humanity as well as for the communal environment at large.

From the theological standpoint, we observe that: we human beings are created in the image and likeness of God, and that is what makes the essence of our innermost nature as persons with conscience; that we can make judgement as well as decision for what is right and what is evil. That is the reason, every act of cruelty towards any human being and even towards any other creatures is considered to be “contrary to human dignity.”⁶⁰⁷ Correspondingly, it means, all we human beings, can hardly consider ourselves to be fully loving if we disregard any of our neighbour by negligence of any aspect of reality, namely the practice of justice, prudence, tolerance, love and peace.

It further means, such aspects of reality as “peace, justice and the preservation of creation are three absolutely interconnected themes, which cannot be separated and treated individually without once again falling into reductionism.”⁶⁰⁸ Henceforth, Pope Francis keeps on instructing and insisting that:

Our capacity to reason, to develop arguments, to be inventive, to interpret reality and to create art, along with other not yet discovered capacities, are signs of a uniqueness which transcends the spheres of physics and biology. The sheer novelty involved in the emergence of a personal being within a material universe presupposes a direct action of God and a particular call to life and to relationship on the part of a ‘Thou’ who addresses himself to another ‘thou’. The biblical accounts of creation invite us to see each human being as a subject who can never be reduced to the status of an object.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁵ Cf. Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 229.

⁶⁰⁶ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 229.

⁶⁰⁷ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2418.

⁶⁰⁸ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 92. N.B.! This quotation was cited by Pope Francis from the: Conference of Dominican Bishops, Pastoral Letter *Sobre la relacion del hombre con la naturaleza*, 21 January, 1987.

⁶⁰⁹ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 81.

Remaining on discussion of this subject-matter, we find that, Pope Francis goes on writing: “Everything is related and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love of God.”⁶¹⁰ Such is the love for humanity and commitment to the common good and it is the outstanding expression of a charity, which affects not only the relationships between individuals but also the macro-relationships, social, economic and even political ones.⁶¹¹ Besides, we are imparted with the knowledge that: “In order to make society more human, more worthy of the human person, love in social life – political, economic and cultural – must be given renewed value, becoming the constant and highest norm for all activity.”⁶¹² In addition, that is to say, when we realize that God is calling us to intervene with each other in such social dynamics, we should as well understand that it is part of our humanity; the exercise of charity and as such the manifestation of our innermost maturity and perfection of our personhood via realization of our dignity.

In fact, it follows often that our moral decadences, manifesting themselves via indifference or cruelty towards fellow human beings and even towards other creatures, more or less, does affect our moral stands through the ill-treatment we intentionally commit without regard of our dignity. Since we all have the same dignity as humans, then, it certainly means, disposing ourselves to wretchedness which leads us into mistreating our fellow human beings, eventually tends towards destroying our moral disposition as well as our relationships with God, who is *per se* the essence of our innermost; and ultimately this leads into destroying our very own life and happiness.

Pope John XXIII, thus, wrote in his encyclical letter ‘On Recent Developments of the Social Question in Light of Christian Teaching’ (*Mater et Magistra*), that:

Wherefore, whatever the progress in technology and economic life, there can be neither justice nor peace in the world, so long as men fail to realize how great is their dignity; for they have been created by God and are his children. We speak of God, who must be regarded as the first and final cause of all things he has created. Separated from God, man becomes monstrous to himself and others. Consequently, mutual relationships between men absolutely require a right ordering of the human conscience in relation to God, the source of all truth, justice, and love.⁶¹³

⁶¹⁰ Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 92.

⁶¹¹ Cf. Francis, *Laudato Sí*, n. 231.

⁶¹² PCJP, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican: 2004, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 582.

⁶¹³ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n. 215.

The insight we acquire from this teaching is, in fact, that from the very creation of the universe and particularly the creation of the human being, God stands to be the real foundation of the moral order. The moral order, which can be reflected from the innermost nature of the human person, in accordance with the dignity inherently endowed to the human being right from the very beginning of creation. That means, as human persons, we are capable of abiding the good will of our hearts more deeply in our minds, and especially, when the laws of truth and justice are acknowledged and preserved on us all as humans of the same origin and nature. For that reason, it is asserted: since we are endowed with the inherent dignity in the image and likeness of the Creator, then, we dare call this the grounding for virtuous moral living, in as far as the truth always remains that, “the guiding principles of morality and virtue can be based only on God; apart from him, they necessarily collapse.”⁶¹⁴

That is the Christian theological rather than the Bantu African conception. In this study work that is an attempt to search for a foundational principle of morality, I find that there is a need to inculturate this theological teaching into the Bantu African approach. This can be easily done because the Bantu do believe in creation as such, even if the ethical claim is not seen as revealed. However, the creation account does have a confirming effect on the obligation to use moral reason that is given by creation to human beings.

This truth is even further confirmed in the statement of John XXIII as he affirmed: “For man is composed not merely of body, but of soul as well, and is endowed with reason and freedom.”⁶¹⁵ This means, therefore, that humans are not only supposed to grow daily more consciously of their fully endowed nature with all the rights as human persons, but also they are called to “strive mightily that relations among themselves become more equitable and more conformed to human dignity.”⁶¹⁶

4.5 Human Dignity: Ground for Moral Values and Virtuous Character

Following the reason that, human dignity is perceived as supreme and intrinsic moral value, inherent to all human beings, therefore, it is likewise perceived as foundational

⁶¹⁴ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n. 208.

⁶¹⁵ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n. 208.

⁶¹⁶ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n. 211.

moral principle, which sets up a guiding rod for claims of human basic rights and it binds human persons to moral obligations. And therefore it is discerned and perceived that, by virtue of the inherent moral value, possessed by all humans, it follows, that all humans are endowed with aptitudes of intellect and will, in terms of power of reason and conscience. For that reason, then it follows that all humans are born free and equal in basic rights. They should all, thus, live and act towards one another in a spirit of fraternity and sorority.⁶¹⁷

In fact, in the Bantu African tradition and ethical theory, such conception and understanding of the human dignity is perceived without discrimination or segregation of any member of the biological human species, categorised as *Homo sapiens*, who is born with no fully functional nervous systems, for instance, who might have been born lacking some or all of very capacities or faculties that are constitutive of human autonomy. While the Bantu ethics accepts all persons as members of their community, this perspective needs to be universally accepted in the whole society. Therefore, Christian teaching can help to make all people well acquainted with the human dignity of each and every single person, so as to ensure virtuous moral living in our contemporary world all over.

When it comes to the Bantu African's standpoint, then, it is implicit that, being able to experience true fulfilment and happiness requires a person's recognition of one's own dignity and the dignity of others yet more significantly being able to live in accord to that understanding. In vision of the Bantu Africans, it is also implicit that: human dignity is not only perceived as the inherent moral value endowed to all human beings, but also as indeed being the foundational moral principle for morality. It, thus, plays significant role into shaping a person's moral character. It is through keen observance of this foundational moral principle that, the Bantu Africans ideally manage setting ethical directions and instructions in the community used to control and guide their moral conducts. Adherence to and respect of human dignity as foundational principle for morality is significant and it requires being cherished, so as to sustain the understanding of oneself and others as human beings who are all of equal rights and duty, and deserving to be treated as humans and not as objects for utility.

⁶¹⁷ Cf. Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, New York: 1948.

This understanding does also help into forgiveness, in case a person falls or fails into doing what is right and good in accordance to the dictates of the Law – of course, in this case I refer to the dictates of natural moral law. There can also be reconciliations in times of conflicts that can even extend into violence. In this field, the references to humanity as element of human dignity can help to argue for searching new ways of reconciliation at different levels in society.⁶¹⁸

Actually, we need to bear in mind that, human beings do fall into making mistakes and even committing sins despite the dignity they inherently possess. They can fall into doing what's not ethical or moral and still yet, they are supposed to stand up, correct themselves and keep on striving to do what is good and avoid what is evil. When we understand this, then, we are in good position of leading a virtuous life. And although there are times we fall into doing what is not in accord to the dictates of moral law, as I have already mentioned, yet in keeping our mind focussed to the respect of our dignity, it always then helps as guidance to the way of doing good without despair, i.e. even when we fall because of our weakness, that does not diminish or subordinate the inherent dignity of our humanity at all.

Here we can even recall what St. Paul denotes in his epistle to the Romans saying: “In my inmost self I dearly love God’s law, but I see that acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. I am thus brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body. ... So it is that I myself with my mind obey the law of God, but in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin. ... This was so that the Law’s requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not by our natural inclinations but by the Spirit” (Rom 7: 22–23, 25 and 8: 4).⁶¹⁹

Guidance by the spirit allows human beings to be free from egoistic motivations and to act according to one’s reason. It consequently, then, follows in an insight such as

⁶¹⁸ In this sense, the Catholic Fr. Jean O’Leary comments on the reconciliation process in South Africa, in: Audrey R. Chapman and Bernard Spong (Eds.), *Religion and Reconciliation in South Africa. Voices of Religious Leaders*, Philadelphia and London: 2003, Templeton Foundation Press, p. 203. Johan Cilliers approaches the contribution of Christianity for peace and reconciliation from the principle of unconditioned love: Johan Cilliers, “Between Enclavement and Embrace: Perspectives on the Role of Religion in Reconciliation in South Africa,” *Scriptura* 111 (2012: 3), pp. 499-508, especially p. 502.

⁶¹⁹ What St. Paul denotes in verse 4 of chapter 8 in his Epistle to the Romans as “the Spirit” would rather have been referred to, by the Bantu Africans, as Life-force or Essence.

this that, the most universal perception of human dignity as moral principle falls on the law of practical reason we have already come across several times in this dissertation that: ‘good must be pursued and evil must be avoided.’ It is reasonable, then, taking this dictum for granted or as self-evident that, human dignity is indeed the moral principle on which our moral conducts and actions are to be well grounded and get guided. As a moral principle, thus, human dignity serves as basis for other moral values and principles of morality, which are in one way or another equally evident and apparent to all humans, such as: maintain and promote social coexistence; maintain and promote your personal (or bodily) life; duties of state of life (parental duties and responsibility in particular) are to be answered; lawful authority (and particularly parents and elders in the community) should be obeyed; what you do not wish others to do to you, do not do to them as well – i.e. every human person is obliged to respect others as one respects oneself; leave to everyone and give to everyone what is his/her due; and last but not least, contracts and agreements must be honoured.⁶²⁰ The principles that have been developed from Bantu African ethics in the previous chapter are further examples of these generally valid rules.

In Christian theological ethics it is disclosed that: the oneness and rationality of human race is undeniable, what presupposes among others the significant metaphysical interpretation of “*humanum*” in which reasonableness and relationality are essential elements.⁶²¹ Elements, which manifest that, the richness of human culture in full of its varieties, is there for imparting and consolidating the value of fraternity and harmony, and which, indeed, stems out of the dignity of which all human beings possess. Being well acquainted with the significance of this common bond, here referred to as the dignity of which all humans possess, it comes to my conviction, therefore, that all humans are profoundly bound by reason and conscience to live virtuously in accordance with the natural *persona* of their being and the natural moral law, which guides our moral behaviour as human persons. For this reason, it is convenient that humans should live in accord to their inherent moral value and dignity. It is, furthermore, established that: lack of raising proper cognizance of the moral value of human dignity and the tendency to ignore embracing fully those other moral values subsequent to the dignity of the human person, like the moral value and principle of love and truth, then it does end up by the same token

⁶²⁰ Cf. K.H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics* (1), 1996, pp. 107–108.

⁶²¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 55.

retarding or even obstructing many other authentic moral and ethical values in a community or a society.⁶²²

For this reason, we obviously come to the knowledge and cognizance that, the understanding of morality with certainty, does call for an intercultural and sometimes countercultural learning and formation of conscience based on a firm conception of the dignity of the human person and on a deep commitment to the good in the face of severe pressure as it appears in a variety of cultures. In other words, that is to say, it should not be taken for granted that a good formation of conscience already takes place, that would take into consideration, among many others, also the significance of the inherent value of the human person, created in the image and likeness of God.

Accordingly, for those adherents of Christian instructions and theology, then, it is constantly important that morality be understood by tracing and searching for the coherent and sound theological roots of moral instructions, as contained in the Sacred Scriptures and as understood in the light of the Spirit-guided Tradition of the Church. That is the reason why, in his encyclical letter *Veritatis Splendor*, John Paul II opens with a well-founded prologue affirming that: “The splendour of truth shines forth in all the works of the Creator and, in a special way, in man, created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gen 1:26).”⁶²³ In addition to this, John Paul II goes even further, citing one of the fundamental texts from the Sacred Scriptures so as to assert an appropriate and solid comprehension of the dynamics of moral aspirations of the human person for self-fulfilment: “what good must I do ...?” (Mt 19:16). John Paul II takes this particular biblical text as a theological background to the exploration of Christian moral living. Henceforth, he begins with a crucial and very insightful reflection on the encounter of Jesus with the young man. Thus, he explains that, the text shows the kind of cognitive that Jesus, as the Master, is proposing to the young man to answer the crucial question: “What must I do?” in as far as morality is concerned. In this biblical text from Matthew 19:16 one can instantly observe that both the idea of moral duty as well as the idea of personal aspiration and growth are incorporated as two sides of the same coin. The text shows, it is obvious that we should understand certain moral norms, particularly those composing the first level of the natural law, as norms,

⁶²² Cf. Francis, *Laudato Si'*, n. 65.

⁶²³ John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter on the Splendour of Truth (Veritatis Splendor)*, Vatican: 1993, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 1.

which have their ultimate source in God, the Divine Authority who wants all human beings to flourish. That means, as a human person willing to get well acquainted with the answer to ‘what must be done?’, one is supposed to be aware that he or she is accountable, first and foremost, to the basic level of the moral norms. And these are like: “Do good and avoid evil;” also “Give to everyone their due.”⁶²⁴

The intention of the passage and its explanation in the encyclical is to hint at a spiritual dimension that is reflected in the motivation of human persons when they act morally, and at the transcendental aspects of one’s acting. It is also clear that the text shows, we are called to liberate ourselves from the so-called security provided by worldly possessions so that we ‘be possessed’ by the knowledge that, we all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God; that is the inherent value of our dignity, and *per se*, it leads us to God, who intrinsically is the ultimate end for self-fulfilment of any human person. To a large extent, one can therefore make an assertion that this text, basically referred in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, helps us finding what is the foundational basis for understanding of virtuous moral living: as a call to abide to the will of God and as a call to self-transcendence in the hope of achieving self-fulfilment, which is ultimately destined in the inherent human dignity as God’s gift to the human person.⁶²⁵

In responding to the call of God, Christians are habituated more deeply and intimately in the mystery of His love for each and every human being, as well as they are sent to share this love or friendship with their neighbour. This is the reason, why in Christian moral teaching it is instructed to place the appropriate and authentic moral aspirations for self-fulfilment within the clandestine foundation of God, as the beginning and end of our life. The moral precepts and norms are, therefore, only used to express God’s love for us.⁶²⁶ They set us at liberty as they facilitate for us the encounter with God without even having to justify ourselves; for they enable us to open ourselves to the divine love and our imitation of the divine attributes in our human conducts like mercy, forgiveness and reconciliation. In other words, that is to say, the normative dimension of Christian virtuous moral living leaves chances for us to freely respond to it with rightful moral conducts or

⁶²⁴ Cf. T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for a Catholic Morality*, New York: 1990, HarperCollins, p. 216.

⁶²⁵ Both these ‘calls’ as they are denoted in this particular paragraph and section can be referred to ‘as expressed in The Ten Commandments’ and ‘as expressed in The Beatitudes respectively’.

⁶²⁶ Cf. Francis, *Laudato Si*, 2015, n. 231.

action, rather than merely being transformed into an imperative, which goes beyond the obligation imposed by basic moral norms and ethical principles.

Actually, the imperative of love, as it appears implicit in the context of the account of God's love for human beings, turns into an invitation to a life of amity with God and among humans themselves.⁶²⁷ That means, a virtuous living of good relations with God as well as good-will with the neighbour. In view of this, Christ inaugurated for us, as Christians, the new law of love; the law of love supposed that it is as well active in all humans, through the inherent dignity they possess as a gift given by the Creator himself. Hence, the human person, by virtue of his or her dignity, is endowed with intellect and will, and he/she is capable of participating in the eternal law, through which God governs all our moral conducts as well as actions and the entire universe.⁶²⁸ Subsequently as to participate in the eternal law, the human person is supposed to go beyond one's own self-interest and recognise that, by means of moral collaboration and promotion of the common good, the human person realizes him or herself. So, it is by placing our individual good within a broader frame of the dignity that we have in common, that we are able to understand and appreciate ourselves properly and somehow shape our own ethical inclinations and moral conducts at large. Moreover, the other mutual or communal aspect of the human relationship to God, falling under the value of human dignity is that of: the gift of sharing in God's reconciling love. This helps human individuals relating to each other well while respecting each other's positive self-image and character with mercy and forgiveness, even when it comes to disappointments and mistakes in our conducts as humans.⁶²⁹ All in all, it is theologically affirmed that God, the Creator of the Universe, guides us humans through the law and helps us appreciate ourselves through the inherent gift of our being, namely; human dignity.

⁶²⁷ For a better picture of this point one should refer to the 'great commandment of love' as is narrated and described in the gospel according to Luke (Lk 10: 25–37) and for the specificity of the imperative element in love see Mark 12: 33.

⁶²⁸ Pamela M. Hall, „The Old Law and the New Law (Ia IIae, qq. 98-108),“ in: Stephen J. Pope (ed.), *The Ethics of Aquinas*, Washington, D.C.: 2002, Georgetown University Press, pp. 194-206, especially p. 194 with reference to *Summa Theologiae Ia IIae*, q. 91, a. 2.

⁶²⁹ On this aspect, cf. Margaret A. Farley, “Forgiving in the Service of Love,” in Frederick V. Simmons – Brian C. Sorrells (eds.), *Love and Christian Ethics: Tradition, Theory, and Society*, Washington, D.C.: 2016, Georgetown University Press, pp. 155-170.

Accordingly, the role of human dignity as ground setting of many other moral values and principles, is fitting and conspicuous. In fact, it is, in one way or another, also insisted and established that respect for human dignity, as intrinsic moral value, does play setting ground for the strengthening of moral character and it guides our moral conducts. Such affirmation and assertion appears, for instance; in the encyclical *Veritatis Splendor*, in which it is stated that: “In order to perfect oneself in his/her specific order, the person must do good and avoid evil, be concerned for the transmission and preservation of life, refine and develop the riches of the material world, cultivate social life, seek truth, practise good and contemplate beauty.”⁶³⁰ On this, I concur that, this implication is to be understood as none other but the affirmation that: the basic moral principle is simply the intrinsic moral value which helps to provide guiding rules for humanity to live the most loving life and virtuous one. And it is in being ready to live in accord with the basic moral principle that humans are capable of conforming to a virtuous moral life, to how they were created and endowed with the dignity unique from all other creatures, and even so to speak, being able to experience true fulfilment and happiness.

In today’s globalised world, there are certain movements and a new arising culture with tendencies that do not oblige humans to live in communion and respect of each other as creatures of same moral value and dignity. This is indeed a kind of new trend, which instead of bringing humans into awareness of their moral and spiritual union, it cuts them off from one another in search for mere individual well-being, limited to unsuitable gratification of their psychological desires and socio-economic gains. Consequently, then, there appears a tendency of proliferating moral decadence, which brings hindrances to virtuous moral living, and so it ends up in chartering people into treating each other as mere object-like-items with no dignity whatsoever.

This is certainly a proliferation and kind of syncretism,⁶³¹ attracting some human communities or even sole individuals into moral living decadences, while subsequently, giving rise to separation and disinterestedness from observance of the natural moral order

⁶³⁰ John Paul II, *Veritatis Splendor*, n. 51.

⁶³¹ Cf. John Paul II, *Address to the Sixth Public Session of the Pontifical Academies of Theology and of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Vatican: 2001, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, n. 3.

basically due, by virtue of creation, on the dignity of the human person.⁶³² Somehow referring to a practically similar moral inattention, Pope Benedict XVI, wrote in the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, indicating that:

One possible negative effect of the process of globalization is the tendency to favour this kind of syncretism by encouraging forms of “religion” that, instead of bringing people together, alienate them from one another and distance them from reality. At the same time, some religious and cultural traditions persist which ossify society in rigid social groupings, in magical beliefs that fail to respect the dignity of the person, and in attitudes of subjugation to occult powers.⁶³³

In these contexts, the natural moral order, in terms of love and truth, as Benedict XVI puts it, is obstructed from asserting itself, and thus virtuous moral living is impeded. In so far as God, the Creator, wisely ordered all creation, it is then spoken of the events of natural moral principle as being understood in mind, via reason, and it is said that it is the prudential comprehension which establishes dignity of the human person to play the role as significant moral principle and ethical value. Nevertheless, in Christian ethical instructions, though, the concern might be observed as more of the creatures, yet it sets its focus more on humans, who following their dignity, as inherent moral value, they are rationally capable of directing themselves to an end, which is virtuous and morally worth of a human person.

In fact, the concept of human dignity in Christian theological ethics, I can say is more or less utilised to imply or refer to the participation in the divine plan and rule that properly belongs to humans as rational creatures.⁶³⁴ That means, there is no way we can speak of human dignity without relating it to the faculties of the human person’s intellect and will; which we would rather simply call them, in their cooperation, practical reason and conscience. Then it leads us even to a further link of human dignity with the natural moral law. And in case we need to get well acquainted with the way natural law understood as moral reasoning is linked to the dignity of the human person, then, I prefer bringing the reader of my dissertation into words of the theologian Stanley J. Grenz, who wrote with affirmation that:

Natural law entails both the laws which emanate from our human, rational nature, as well as the judgments that people quite naturally make. As examples we could cite ‘the law of

⁶³² Biblically this fact is usually referred to the ‘*imago Dei*’ of which one may read it from the ‘creation narrative’ in the book of Genesis, chapter 1 verses 26–27.

⁶³³ Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n. 55.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Stanley J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest...*, 1997, p. 149.

self-preservation' and even the yearning to know God. But above all, natural law includes the human tendency to order life through the regulative function of reason and thereby participate in God's regulatory law.⁶³⁵

We humans are basically morally formed into living as human beings with a truly virtuous character and "in doing so ... we are actually living in accordance with the reality of things, including our own nature, the point of all creation, our ultimate destiny, and even the very essence of God's own being"⁶³⁶ of which we are endowed our dignity. The dignity which provides humans "with a set of common beliefs [or principles] to appeal to in determining whether a particular act is virtuous or not."⁶³⁷

It is also quite important to notice that, dignity of the person is not merely that dignity of a spiritual soul or something like an entity transcending empirical and corporeal existence. Being created in the image and likeness of God, means also the bodily inclusion which takes correspondingly the reality of the human aspect in the human person as a whole. That means it is rooted in the nature of the person – who stands as spiritual and free moral agent as well as his/her vocation to attend to the order of absolute moral values and to a destiny superior to time. It is, therefore, in a concrete human nature that every human being is capable of grasping through the faculty of intellect any ethical or moral implications of his/her own being, taken in all his/her vital relationship with the transcendental world, the physical world and particularly with other human persons.

The concept of human dignity is universally expressed in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Actually, given the fact that, Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* goes on mentioning the natural abilities of reason and conscience, it may possibly be that the declaration intended to focus on the typical, physically undamaged, and fully functioning adult human person. Indeed, the perception and interpretation of human dignity, as intrinsic moral value and foundational moral principle, should be like it is held in perspective of Kant, to which the Bantu African tradition and ethical theory can be related, with the exception of when its communal element and criteria is interpreted narrowly and exclusively. Kant's approach constructs a more elaborate and universal principle to be taken as basic foundation for morality and

⁶³⁵ S.J. Grenz, *The Moral Quest...*, 1997, p. 149.

⁶³⁶ W.C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology...*, 2008, p. 203.

⁶³⁷ W.C. Mattison III, *Introducing Moral Theology...*, 2008, p. 203.

guidance to moral conducts. When the characteristic elements of the two traditions, the Kantian tradition and the Bantu African tradition respectively, namely autonomy – i.e. the capacity for morally qualified self-determination – and the combination of individual and communal criteria are united, the conception of human dignity in both traditions is more comprehensive, all-inclusive and reflects more adequately the Christian tradition.

This perception might recently also be ramified universally, especially following the global moral challenges in bioethical and medical ethics, due to the advancement in science and technology. Many ethical challenges that so far have not been present in Tanzania, will become topics in the near future, together with the spread of new technologies, especially in the medical fields. That means those issues like in respect of genetics and human cloning; the termination or officious prolongation of life, will be discussed in the future and can be addressed with arguments based on human dignity and the many Christian ethical approaches to bioethics built on this principle.⁶³⁸ In other words, one can say, it is now timely that humanity takes consideration highly to human dignity, discussing and applying it among the wide range of researchers and experts or practitioners in such disciplines as: in medicine, law, philosophy, political science, history, theology and in religious studies. The principles of Bantu ethics and ethical accounts based on human dignity therefore ought to find a place in academic education of all these fields.

In view of this, it was even pointed out in the Post-synodal Pastoral Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Africa*,⁶³⁹ that: given the political, economic, social and cultural difficulties which African families must face as a result of the great changes which characterize the contemporary global human society, there is, thus, an existent challenge for us all humans striving to live virtuously and morally with one another in community, while also getting well acquainted with the universal concept of human dignity in both of its facets – communal and individual respect of persons. The real challenge is, in fact, not only for the Africans, but also to all humans to live in accordance with the dictates of an ethical

⁶³⁸ The importance of strengthening the concept of human dignity in the context of bioethics in Africa also has been stated by Etienne de Villiers in his article “The recognition of human dignity in Africa: A Christian ethics of responsibility perspective”, *Scriptura* 104 (2010), pp. 263-278. As example for its use in Bioethics cf. Eberhard Schockenhoff, *Ethik des Lebens: Grundlagen und neue Herausforderungen*, Freiburg: 2009, Herder, esp. pp. 227-250.

⁶³⁹ This papal document was issued by John Paul II upon finishing the African Bishops’ General Synod, which was held in the year 1994 with main theme of Christianity and Inculturation in Africa.

normative value as we see it being upheld and cherished in the African ethical pattern and system.⁶⁴⁰ In other words, that is to say, we human beings by virtue of our nature are supposed to abide to the dictates and directives of the moral theory, which places the concept of humanity and respect for human dignity as fundamental basis on which our socio-ethical edifice is built. This general command recalls Kant's formulation of the categorical imperative where it says that in everyone humanity needs to be respected.⁶⁴¹

The document, *Ecclesia in Africa*, encourages the Africans to maintain this moral approach based on their tradition: "...while adopting the positive values of modernity, the African family must preserve its own essential values."⁶⁴² It means, therefore, that humans are supposed to cherish those moral values, which strictly and strongly bring up every human individual to grow with vision on the significance of humanity, dignity of every human person, and communal living, but without setting aside the importance of individual freedom and autonomy.

So far, then, I hereby conclude this chapter by asserting that I have attempted to examine in some details human dignity as foundational principle and intrinsic moral value in the Christian theological perspective and thus I can argue that this Christian perspective is in a position to offer authentic contributions to the Bantu African ethical tradition as well as strengthening the systematic moral analysis of the Bantu ethical pattern and theological reflection.

Furthermore, the Christian tradition can provide a helping hand to the Bantu African ethical pattern to chart a course for authentic moral tradition with a universal perception of human dignity as foundational principle for virtuous moral living. This will in turn help to enhance other ethical values, just as these: tolerance, democracy, love, and a true Christian faith properly enculturated in the African tradition and communal life, yet with a sense of respect for the individual person and the freedom of choice.

⁶⁴⁰ Cf. John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, n. 180.

⁶⁴¹ Kant formulates his Categorical Imperative in its formula of the end in itself as follows: „Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end.“ (IV 421); cf, Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated and analysed by H.J. Paton, New York 1964: Harper & Row Publishers, p. 96.

⁶⁴² John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*, 1995, n. 80.

Some essential features of morality that are both Christian and Bantu African have been indicated in the course of the discussions in chapter 3 and 4, in order to help connection of the Bantu ethical tradition and the Christian moral tradition. The Christian ethics, thus, helps complementing to the principles and rules of morality, as they do appear in the Bantu African ethical tradition.

Since Christian ethics is built on firm universal foundations concerning God, the human person, and the philosophical reality in general, it will thus help in enhancing the construction of the universal perception of human dignity and humanity as foundational moral principle in the Bantu African ethical pattern and tradition.

Thus, the Bantu African communal principle of “I am because we are”, in combination with its other way of saying it as “a person is a person through other persons” shows significantly that striving to live morally and virtuously, so as we can well rise to the dignity of our personhood, humanity, and so develop our virtue, is something that one can do in so far as one enters truly into community with other humans. And the inference therefore is, that the new Bantu African categorical imperative for morality, while being complemented with significant elements of aspects from Christian theological ethics, especially from Kantian ethics and the teaching of the Vatican Council II (*Gaudium et spes*, *Dignitatis humane*), should run in a statement as:

A virtuous moral person should act in such a way that the dignity of his or her humanity is held as the universal foundational principle of human conducts in respect of all people without segregation of either community or individual.

5. GENERAL CONCLUSION

5.1 Concluding Review

In the course of all this treatise, I have been making an effort to end up with an inference which is comprehensible and logical. The whole study-work, therefore, is kind of hermeneutical analysis conducted through an analytical exploration of the Bantu African ethical pattern and moral tradition, while tethering to define and merge it with what is already found and conveyed or imparted from Christian moral tradition, particularly from Christian theological ethics.

At the beginning of this dissertation, I have considered the Bantu ethnicity as *locus ethicus*,⁶⁴³ while taking into consideration of the theme of human dignity and virtuous moral living, which stands as prevailing concern of this dissertation. I also have worked to provide, though in a nutshell, the cognizance on the concept of human dignity; – i.e. its etymological trace, its cultural lingual milieu as well as its sense by means of the Bantu African perspective of the concept as *Utu / Ubuntu* in order to show that Bantu ethics is not only a *locus ethicus* because of its regional dominance in Tanzania, but also because of its ethical structure that has a universal understanding of human dignity.⁶⁴⁴ Then, I have strived to display the conceptual survey of virtuous moral living in as far as morality and the moral values are concerned, especially in relation to human dignity, as the moral value and principle, in order to prepare for the chapter that comes after and which analyses the Bantu ethical structure. To do so, it was necessary to show how virtue ethics and a communal ethics can be developed in mutual coherence, without necessarily representing separate or even contrasting systems, when they are based on the principle of human dignity that serves as a connecting link and universal guiding criterion.

Henceforth, I arrived on the core theme of this treatise; meaning on examining and providing an analytical exposition of what is considered as moral foundation in the African ethical theory by trying to go beyond a purely communal understanding and developing the different layers of African moral theory based on human dignity.⁶⁴⁵ A main concern was to

⁶⁴³ See chapter 1.1. of this dissertation.

⁶⁴⁴ See chapter 1.2. and 1.3. of this dissertation.

⁶⁴⁵ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

show that Bantu ethics does indeed contain more than a set of rules that govern communal living, which would make it insufficient for building on it an ethics for a pluralistic society. All-encompassing, I have attempted, at this juncture, to employ more of Metz's critique of human dignity in vision of African ethics and the Bantu people's constellation of moral claims so as to establish and consolidate my point and argument, that there are as well universal aspects in Bantu ethics, only that they are not always put into emphasis by the African scholars.

Beyond the perspective and argument of Metz, I have tried to show that even the norms that Metz sees as more related to communal life, can serve, if put to a more abstract level, as foundation for a universal ethics, at least at an intermediate normative level that already respects some specific fields of practice. From other traditional Bantu insights and sayings, I have added two more principles to those derived from Metz' account of communal rules. Then last but not least, I have found it good and reasonable to bring in the related perspectives from Christian theological ethics, since that is actually part of my intention and purpose to indicate the merging of the two perspectives – from the Bantu African ethical patterns and from the Christian theological ethics – and the way the two are indeed seeming to be of the same assertion with regards to the concept of human dignity as moral value and foundational principle for morality or basic foundation for virtuous moral living.⁶⁴⁶ This is important because Bantu African ethics could not form the basis of moral living in a modern society without interacting strongly with religious faith systems, which so far in the contemporary African society have been merging with traditional beliefs and convictions.

The Bantu African ethical theory of human dignity, in terms of *Utu* (human dignity) / *Ubuntu* (humanity) has been developed in a way as to show that it contains a complex system of convictions that link personal value, moral obligation in community, personal self-realization and the universal claim of morality to each other.⁶⁴⁷ Meaning, the Bantu African ethical theory, is as well capable of establishing a theoretical interpretation of human dignity as one of fundamental moral values and principles, of which every human being inherently possesses. It also contributes the mind-set that, it is this same dignity of

⁶⁴⁶ See Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

⁶⁴⁷ See chapter 3 and 4 of this dissertation, particularly sections 3.2., section 3.3., and section 4.4.

the human person, which is intuitively grasped as one of guidance to all our moral conducts and actions as humans; and that we should live in community with fraternity and love to our neighbours and esteem of other fellow humans.

Thus, in allowing ourselves into making kind of bird's-eye-view from the Bantu African perspective about the concept of human dignity as basic foundation for virtuous moral living, we can, likewise, well grasp the insight that, moral living is more or less the manifestation of apposite morality grounded on human dignity, with an anthropological and a religious side; the dignity, intrinsic to all mankind and considered as the moral value and principle endowed to all human beings. In other words, it is the inherent moral value, which truly helps moral discernment for the appreciation and respect of every human being as human persons; i.e. human persons who are to be treated well and with esteem and love.

That is an ethics or morality, which holds and teaches that: whereas all human beings are inherently endowed with dignity, which is, indeed, grasped as the intrinsic moral value, then all humans are by virtue of this dignity required to live virtuously and morally good. It is, thus, via our *Utu /Ubuntu* , that we all humans are necessarily provided with the foundation, which plays the basis or cause and/or end of all socio-ethical interactions, and the obligation to moral self-formation that strives towards developing one's capacity to respect all human beings. This corresponds to the Christian understanding of human beings as those created beings in the image and likeness of God,⁶⁴⁸ and so “they are social by nature, and raised to an order of existence that transcends and subdues nature.”⁶⁴⁹

Although it is apparent that, in the Bantu African ethical pattern, there are abundance of moral richness with regards to the concept of *Utu /Ubuntu*, yet the application of what human dignity essentially stands for, continues facing acute challenges. This has been the reason why this thesis has been striving to first explain and then find support in the Christian understanding and teaching to strengthen the foundation of Bantu moral theory and offers the practical, pastoral opportunity to work towards a universal ethics for the changing society. In this same way we are actually instructed in the Christian theological ethics, though in Christian theology the insistence for the basic foundation of morality is more on moral law which is let wide-open and knowledgeable by virtue of

⁶⁴⁸ See chapter 4.1. of this dissertation.

⁶⁴⁹ John XXIII, *Mater et Magistra*, n. 219; see also n. 220.

purely human reason and divine revelation. And so, I would dare here saying, the challenge to set and effect human dignity as basic moral foundation for morality is not only applying to the Bantu Africans, but also to all mankind or say to all humanity as a whole.

On the other hand, however, human dignity besides being considered as the concept, it is more of the connotation that it is the intrinsic moral value and principle, which in reality, it poses critical concerns towards all human praxis of socio-ethical living and communal life *per se*. Hence, among many other moral values, then, the propensity aimed at setting into praxis and so effecting the moral value of *Utu / Ubuntu*, as ethical principle and moral theory, in accordance with the Bantu African ethical pattern is still one of real moral challenges, especially when it comes into real implementation and practice in a daily life conducts of the people. That means, human beings able to live and act, without hypocrisy, in accord with the dictates of our inherent moral value or principle, is actually not something easy, but still we humans are required or demanded into engaging more and more effort, so that we are able to lead a virtuous moral life. It has therefore been elaborated in this work how Bantu ethics leads to a virtue ethics approach that emphasizes the moral formation of the individual in order to get familiar and practice and acquire personally the ways in which human dignity of other human beings is respected and cherished.

It has been shown that the Christian tradition of conscience formation is in line with the educational patterns lived in Bantu communities. However, what is open and what actually presents a challenge, is the way in which this formation can be pursued in more anonymous patterns of life in the cities, in a more globalized world. Thus it is my view and argument, that new forms of education and formation need to be developed so as to guarantee the survival and practice of the Bantu ethical principle of human dignity in its elaboration and in wider contexts of child rearing and formation of young people. Such a move, I am convinced, it will be able to support the coherence in society and a balanced perspective of human dignity as foundational moral principle.

All in all, therefore, it implies from the Bantu African insight and ethical pattern that, virtuous moral life is more or less the manifestation of abiding to the dignity of our humanity. That means, even further that, all what is so-called or referred to as humanitarian ethic, for instance, is none else but a life following the dictates of our natural dignity as humans. In according to this insight, thus, I grasp and comprehend that virtuous moral

living, is indeed the way we lead our life and the way we conduct our human acts with esteem and respect towards one another, while knowingly being aware that, we are primarily and principally required to live in accord to our dignity. It means, the way we treat each other with care, the way human beings are supposed to live and have to be sentient in respect of one another as subjects bearing to that same image and likeness of God – which is interpreted and denoted as human dignity. That is indeed the perception implied in the moral array and sense of *Utu* and *Ubuntu*, as it is taught in the Bantu ethical theory, and of which I have attempted to formulate it, at the end, as a new Bantu African categorical imperative.

Actually, the Bantu African ethical theory, which can as well be referred to as an ethic based on humanity, thus, insists that all humans, by virtue of their dignity are required to live with love and respect of each other. And this ethical requirement is not only for the moral agents or subjects, but also “objects of moral concern, implying that our moral sensitivities should be extended to all people, irrespective of their cultures or societies.”⁶⁵⁰

Hence, virtuous moral living in vision of Bantu African ethical theory, is sort of moral life basically founded on the concept of human dignity, which in essence, one can as well claim that, it is not a life thought of further away from the provision of ideal ethics or morality. It is, thus, reasonably thought as life in accord with the ideal principle, following the fact that human dignity is the moral value intrinsic in all humans, and whose moral sanction binds all human beings. In other words, I would put it this way that, human dignity as an inherent moral value and principle is obviously the same to all humans, and its implication is on the same standards, though still we observe that, there are actually decisive differences arising from the way this moral principle is perceived by us humans, followings our distinctions in cultures, ethical traditions and schools of thought.

Virtuous moral living, being basically founded on human dignity as basic moral value and principle implies, therefore that, a human person’s morality is grounded on the person’s own fundamental disposition, which enables him/her to live and act as a human with humane and as a civilised human being. It means, being capable of living in accord with the fundamental disposition, which precisely imposes to the human person the demand

⁶⁵⁰ K. Gyekye, “African Ethics,” (2011). Accessed on 31.05.2019.

or command to be what he/she is, as if saying: ‘Be human!’” Indeed, that is what is meant to be inherently endowed with godlike dignity in our human nature from the very day of our creation. It is like signifying: that is what God, the Creator, inquires of us, no more and no less.

In Christian theological ethics, we are nowadays, thus, instructed that, human dignity becomes the logical consequence of the philosophic-theological understanding of the human person as the image of God (*Imago Dei*). And so, the fact that the human being is created in the image of God, in his self-transcendence, opens him/her to the possession of higher moral value and to the realization of his/her dignity and endowment that makes him/her responsible to respect other humans as well as the creation in general. Thus, the human person becomes aware of the duty or obligations endorsed on him/her for the realization of one’s self-fulfilment and vocation to live virtuously and uprightly.⁶⁵¹ Once a person is aware of one’s own inherent dignity and the calling of one’s own self-fulfilment at which case one can as well grasp personally the inherent moral value of each person, then, one is capable of seeing clearly that certain specific human conducts and actions, carefully described and lived in human experience, run counter to individual dignity of others; for such conducts or actions essentially cause humans to denominate the type-action or conduct as immoral and unacceptable to be called humane or of a human who is supposed to live in accord to one’s own dignity.

Such a virtuous life, then, promptly clutches social morality, also referred to as social ethics; the morality of the common good, and ethics of duty which is openly and outright comprehensive, for it brings within its compass the so referred to as moral ideals – such as the virtue of love, prudence, compassion, trust, and many others – yet, all these being comprehended as basically founded on the nature of the human person and his/her nature. It is, however, understandable that, these moral ideals are, by the same token, considered entitlement in Christian ethics and morality as well. And for surely, we all are quite aware that, it is consistently instilled in the Christian morality that: “Imitate Christ, and do this by seeking to be as faithful to the human vocation as he was. Love your neighbour as yourself. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”⁶⁵² This is the

⁶⁵¹ See chapter 4 of this dissertation, especially in sections 4.1. and 4.2.

⁶⁵² T.E. O’Connell, *Principles for...*, 1990, p. 33.

reason, I have purposely included in chapter four of this dissertation that discourse on the related perspectives from the theological ethics; the intention, among others, being about indicating that: even Christian ethics, when viewed from the perspective of its goal, it surely manifests itself as a human ethics; meaning, a morality grounded on vision of human dignity and humanity at large.⁶⁵³

Besides the scholarly Christian theological ethics' views and conception of human dignity as intrinsic value endowed to all human beings, one can likewise observe that, human dignity is officially proclaimed to be the basis of the equal and inalienable rights of all humans, in the preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in the preambles of the two main international covenants on human rights.⁶⁵⁴ Whereas, a number of declarations are often limited to a single nation, or continental union, or even to cultural boundaries, the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights was approved and considered common and universal by all the participants of the United Nation Organization. And in fact, it is the first multinational declaration principally mentioning human dignity as moral norm for claims of human rights. So one can see that even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has found it worth to profoundly think of human dignity as its focal point for accomplishment of some moral claims for rights and duty of the human person.

With this discernment and inference, let us also not forget that, one might grasp the Bantu African moral theory from whatever academic corner he or she likes, yet what is central or basic to the African morality, is to be well acquainted with the fact that, it is the moral character, based on dignity of the human person and the sense of indebtedness for humanity (*Utu / Ubuntu*) that actually matters and plays foundational role. The human rights and principles, as important they are for informing legislation, need to be made more concrete in order to find understanding and acceptance in Bantu culture. It therefore follows the reason that, appropriate conduct of moral life is essentially conceived as that sort of functional quality of an individual's personal life and it should be fitting together with the community he/she belongs; i.e. in connection with humanity and with respect of the

⁶⁵³ Cf. T.E. O'Connell, *Principles...*, 1990, p. 33.

⁶⁵⁴ Cf. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR); see <https://treaties.un.org/doc/publication/unts/volume%20999/volume-999-i-14668-english.pdf> (accessed on 31.10.2019); <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cescr.pdf> (accessed on 31.10.2019).

inherent dignity of all humans. The moral subject is, therefore, all the time and at each action he/she does, worth to be counted in community of persons as an agent with moral duty and rights in accordance to the person's dignity and humanity. This is why it is vital to develop and maintain a virtue ethical approach in Tanzania, in order to avoid the communal level and the human rights level to develop as two entities independently of each other.

The moral conception of human dignity, as it is held in the Bantu African ethical theory is, all in all, to be grasped as, a commencement that there are certain and specific basic moral norms and ideals to which our daily human conducts; the moral actions we carry out as individual human being, if he or she is a person, ought to conform to our dignity as humans imbued with intellect and will – human persons carrying the image of God with us. So, just as it is comprehensive in the Christian morality, the recognition in the African ethical theory of all human beings as brothers and sisters, by virtue of our common humanity (*Ubuntu*), is indeed a powerful moral ideal that must be cherished and raised as vital or full-bodied feature of global ethics and morality, not only in Tanzania or in the Bantu African societies, but also in our contemporary world at large. It is a fortification or barricade against developing such intolerant tendencies and prejudiced attitudes toward peoples of different status in community, different cultures or skin colours who are also, members of the universal human family called the human race or referred to as humankind under the umbrella of the concept of humanity and human dignity.

As concluding I would, therefore, like to refer to what I have pointed out earlier in chapter three of this dissertation, that, a human person who is judged to be with morally good character is, in Bantu African ethical perspective and theory, understood as being who is morally good person; i.e. a morally good person is said to be a person with dignity; and a person with dignity is a one with moral *persona*, and so the one who promptly leads a virtuous moral life in accordance with the dictates of the moral law and dignity he/she is intrinsically endowed. Consequently, is then asserted that, in Bantu African ethical theory, it is the dignity of the human person that ensures and assures as grounding principle for moral character of the person, in so far as it is liable for the adherence of the natural moral law and of the communal system of ethical principles which requires promoting the good of all in a society or community.

The Bantu African ethical theory holds therefore that, humans are created beings with higher dignity than animals or any other creatures. They are bound, by virtue of their nature as humans with dignity, to always strive to act morally towards others and likewise to be treated considerately as humans with dignity. Thus, leading a virtuous moral life, it requires that we humans take concern of respecting ourselves as human beings, who are worth of the inherent moral value – our *Utu / Ubuntu* (human dignity / humanity) – which is the intrinsic moral value worth of the nature of our humanity. For this reason, human dignity is held in the Bantu African Ethical theory as basic foundation of morality, and indeed, this position is what has been discussed so far in this dissertation, while taking also consideration of the comparative perspective of what is understood universally, especially from the standpoint of Christian theological ethics.

The better future of our people, and here I mean not only the African Bantu speaking people or alone the Tanzanians, but rather of all Africans and humanity at large, is certainly on presupposing the implication of human dignity as pivotal ethical concept and the role it plays on virtuous moral living. This work embarks on asking how such an ethical approach based on human dignity could be developed in the context of Bantu African ethics in Tanzania, while being strengthened by Christian ethics.

5.2 Proposal for Further Research Considerations

Of all the arguments and points that I have discussed in this doctoral study work, one thing has to be born in mind that, my intention and the objective of all this work has been, so far, trying my best to crack a nut in attempt of making scholarly echo on what is perceived of human dignity in the Bantu African ethical theory and pattern. That means, the main focus of this dissertation is in purpose of establishing, in one way or another, a foundation of a Christian-Bantu Ethics. Yet, even though, and without prejudice to what I have already indicated in the General Introduction of my work, especially on the limitations and scope of my research work, I admit of being aware that this dissertation might also have not been fully capable of covering all the questions arising in concern of the subject theme on human dignity, especially as it has been dealt with in the treatise. Here I mean, the way the concept of human dignity, as moral value and ethical principle, has been dealt with, particularly, in relation to fundamental morality and ethics.

My scholarly attempt has, thus, been chiefly focused to highlight the perception and school-of-thought of the concept of human dignity and to draw awareness through an insightful analysis of the Bantu African ethical pattern and system of moral tradition, and subsequently from such analysis, in combination together with an analytical hermeneutics of the Christian concept of the *Imago Dei* (image of God), trying to establish an assertion that human dignity is one of basic foundations for morality that can serve as point of departure for a universal ethical approach that grants just and respectful treatment to all people, irrespectively of their provenience and personal differences. It has delineated, in a first sketch, what kind of universal and intermediate principles do support human dignity in a practical way and can be unfolded to develop a more concrete structure of life in a modern, globalized society.

However, this work is not an absolute elucidation or resolution by itself. A much more detailed framework in its relationship to the law tradition and to social ethical questions would need to follow. This preliminary work can surely be open to critical arguments and allow further considerations and progression for the same concept and subject-matter or theme, for noticeably, it has not adequately treated many issues that, in one way or another, appear to mount concerns in so far as the subject of human dignity is involved in academic discourses, and so this doctoral work still leaves some questions unanswered and, certainly, there is much remaining to be done.

I am likewise quite aware that, as a continent, Africa is larger than the area covered or occupied by the Bantu Africans, for there are many other ethnic groups besides the Bantus, and all being of peoples of different cultures and traditions, though also seemingly quite related to one another. At some points in the course of working and writing this dissertation, I have mentioned now and then about African ethical theory, yet I would like to make it clear that, the scope of my limitation was to extent of those African traditions south of Sahara, and particularly, to the African Bantu, because, in many instances, and due to the intermingling of people and their cultures, there have been more or less similarities in their socio-ethical school of thought and tradition. I even, furthermore, realise that, what African moral theory is, may not be clear to everyone, especially when one tries to perceive it via Western oriented lenses as springboard for appreciative comprehension of tradition and theory, though I have tried to explain some features of it to create a better understanding

And being conscious of what I have so far mentioned, then, I would like to come out with several proposals to be considered for further research and study, in as far as the academic realm is concerned:

(1) *A Profound Study for Integral Understanding of Human Dignity in the Bantu African ethical tradition with respect to more concrete educational purposes.* Basing on the information in this dissertation, it will provide awareness of central aspects that would need being integrated in educational programmes seeking to give all people clarification on those issues which have impact upon respect of human dignity, human life, and all human beings at large. The role of making profound study on the subject of human dignity for the provision education to the people, will enhance awareness to know and understand their rights and duties; preserving democracy, especially in many of our countries in the continent of Africa; fighting corruptions and plundering of public funds, and helping people to emerge from miserable life situations and to be treated with priority as human person worth by themselves.

(2) *Promotion of Human Moral Values on Ground of Human Dignity.* It is obvious that all humans by virtue of their humanity are called to lead a virtuous living and create an atmosphere of ethical civilization founded on enduring moral values of peace and justice, unity, and love, dialogue and freedom, cooperation and fraternity, between persons and among peoples. Thus, keeping in mind that, today's world is more globalised and of scientific and technological advancement, the expression of solidarity and fraternity among humans as people of good will should lead the human society or humankind along new paths, in full respect for human dignity as intrinsic moral value and principle and the promotion of human moral values in their various facets.

Apparently, science and technology is presently touching all spheres of human activities and conducts in our contemporary era. That means, the advancement that comes as a result of science and technology constantly transforms the face of the earth as well as human mentality and the perception of things and realities. With such advancement arise also some controversial moral and ethical issues that touch human life and state of affairs directly, as the human person tries to pierce one's own life mysteries with aid of science and technology, and with the risk that human life itself and the respect due to it are endangered.

The challenges arising from globalization as well as from scientific and technological advancement, thus, call for all people of good will to work together to protect the most important human moral values which are threatened by the modern culture of consumerism and the world in continual transformation. The moral values that are grounded on human dignity are, thus, to be promoted via research work and scholarly treatises, and through international cooperation.

(3) *An Effective Process for Human Formation to Enhance the 'Culture of Care for Humanity'*. The task of implementing such a process should fall on those who have the responsibility for the human societies, as for instance those entrusted for provision of education, guidance and leadership in communities or societies. Alongside this point of view is put forward a research proposal that: it is important that significant programmes are established for the educating of the educators, or for the formation of the formators. It is high time that, those involved in pastoral and socio-ethical formation or moral education in our societies, and especially in educational institutions, like for instance in theological institutes and catechetical centres, will start providing courses to promote well acquaintance with cognisance of human dignity and the contemporary moral phenomena of our people and societies. Hopefully, such researches might lead into formulation, implementation and promotion of the vital significance of human dignity as moral theory and ethical principle.

It is nevertheless insufficient that the cognisance of human dignity and the moral phenomena be only briefly referred to in the teaching of ethics or Christian theological ethics. A comprehensive course which deals, firstly, with the actual ethical reality promoted; the means by which it is enforced, and the role, by which individuals and groups can play in the course of the process; and second, with the theological and socio-ethical significance of participation in the process of promoting human dignity as a moral principle and moral value, is indeed required and necessitated by the signs of time. Of course, the inclusion in curricula of such a course will not upshot the conscientization process overnight, but it will certainly be a significant first step in bringing awareness to the people to know of their dignity as moral value and respect others humans for the same reason and ground in very different fields of studies, since they all touch on ways of promoting and respecting human dignity.

There is still need, in our contemporary world, for the refinement and further elucidation and articulation of the significance of human dignity and for the strengthening or implementing the resolutions for the enforcement of our communal ethical systems. Crucial and vital to such a progress is the conducting of more research for the enrichment of human moral values and growth of a world ‘culture of care for humanity’, that is, a culture wherein there is a shared perception of the fundamental moral values, responsibility and respect for the dignity of the human person. This should go hand in hand together with commitment to the struggle for the promotion of the basic moral values in both aspects – as for the individual person’s life as well as for the communal life.

The nurturing of such this perception and proposal into commitment should not be left just to particular authorities in our societies – like say, the government or church leaders – but rather it needs participation of all members of a concerned human community or of all humanity. It requires the wholehearted participation of all the great forces in our societies. The best of such forces is, of course, the academic forum – in schools, universities, or even in academic seminars and symposiums. And the reason that, it should not be left to particular groups of authorities is that the work for the enhancement of human dignity as moral value and principle, of helping to develop the world ‘culture of care for humanity’, is in fact an immense task and needs common effort and the going-together spirit of workforce. For sure, there is with it a sense of heavy responsibility and great challenge.

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7. ABBREVIATIONS

a.	=	<i>in articulo</i> (in English: in article).
AAS	=	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> (English: Register of the Apostolic See; i.e. the official gazette of the Holy See.).
ACTS	=	Africa Christian Textbooks.
AG	=	<i>Ad Gentes</i> (English: ‘To the Nations’ – The Second Vatican Council’s Decree on Missionary Activity).
AHRLJ	=	African Human Rights Law Journal.
CCC	=	Catechism of the Catholic Church.
CDF	=	Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.
CD-ROM	=	Compact Disc Read-Only Memory.
cf.	=	<i>conferatur</i> (in English: compare / confer / consult).
CRVP	=	Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
DH	=	<i>Dignitatis Humanae</i> (The Second Vatican Council’s Declaration on Religious Liberty).
EDW	=	Encyclopaedia of the Developing World.
e.g.	=	<i>exempli gratia</i> (English: for example).
ed.	=	editor, edition.
eds.	=	editors.
EJA	=	Pastoral Letter: <i>Economic Justice for All</i> by the USA Bishops.
ESEAT	=	Ecumenical Symposium of Eastern Africa Theologians.
EZA	=	Expertisecentrum Zuidelijk Afrika (Expert Centre for South Africa).
Fig.	=	Figure.
Gen	=	Genesis (The first of the Five Books of Moses in the Bible).
GS	=	<i>Gaudium et Spes</i> (The Second Vatican Council’s Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World).
i.e.	=	<i>id est</i> (English: that is).
ibid.	=	<i>ibidem</i> (English: in the same place; in same reference as it is shown above).
ITC	=	International Theological Commission.

LLC	= Limited Liability Company.
MIAS	= Maryknoll Institute of African Studies.
n.	= number
nn.	= numbers.
op. cit.	= <i>opus citatum</i> / <i>opere citato</i> (English: the work cited / in the work cited).
p.	= page.
pp.	= pages.
PAK	= Philosophical Association of Kenya.
PCJP	= Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.
PULP	= Pretoria University Law Press.
q.	= <i>quaestio</i> (in English: question).
TEC	= Tanzanian Episcopal Conference.
TIKR	= Tanzanian Institute of Kiswahili Research.
TRC	= [The South African] Truth and Reconciliation Committee.
UNESCO	= United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.
USA	= United States of America.
USCC Inc.	= United States Conference Incorporations.
USCCB	= United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
viz.	= videlicet (English: namely; it is permitted to see)
Ia-IIae	= Prima Secundae Partis Summa Theologiae (Thomas Aquinas).
IIa-IIae	= Secunda Secundae Partis Summa Theologiae (Thomas Aquinas)

8. ABSTRACTS

– *English*

This dissertation in perspective of Bantu African ethical theory studies and explores Bantu peoples' ethical pattern and moral values, so as to present a comprehensible and scholarly discernment about the concept of human dignity as basic foundation for virtuous moral living. The intention is, however, to establish a foundation of a Christian-Bantu Ethics. The explication of coherent terms, referring to a constellation of ethical value claims and normative moral requirements, from traditional 'Bantu' ethics, is significantly employed; such are ethical terms, namely: "*Utu*" (human dignity) and "*Ubuntu*" (humanness, humankind or humanity). It is manifested in this dissertation that, Bantu Africans conceptualise that, human dignity in terms of "*Utu*" and "*Ubuntu*" characterise a foundational moral principle, which provides guidance on socio-ethical conducts and moral behaviour. The traditional ethical patterns and moral instructions of the Bantu African people are, however, examined alongside Christian theological ethics. The central focus of dissertation, though, remains on the African moral tradition and ethical pattern. In this way, it complies with the dictum: 'think globally, act locally!' The concern in study work, thus, falls keen on two aspects: first, on a challenge arising from general life situation and moral conduct of the people in sub-Saharan Africa, as a whole, and Tanzania in particular; and secondly, it's an attempt to promote Christian moral teaching in Africa, via revitalizing Bantu African ethical instructions and moral values. Meaning, such ethical instructions as they are established in the Bantu African moral theory, yet being considered with respect to Christian theological ethics. In a nutshell, the dissertation, therefore, asserts of moral lessons from the Bantu African traditional perception of human dignity and from Christian moral theology, as it unpacks analytically and so explicates this concept of human dignity as basic foundation for virtuous moral living.

– *Deutsch*

Diese Dissertation ist eine Untersuchung des Konzepts der Menschenwürde als normatives moralisches Prinzip in der Perspektive der afrikanischen Ethik der Bantu. Sie erforscht charakteristische Strukturen und moralische Werte der Bantu-Völker, um die moralische Grundlage des Handelns aufzuzeigen und für eine wissenschaftliche Rezeption aufzuarbeiten. Dies geschieht in der Absicht, eine Grundlage für eine christliche Bantu-Ethik zu schaffen. Die Erläuterung der Kohärenz der Begriffe, die sich auf ethische Wertansprüche und moralischen Anforderungen der traditionellen „Bantu-Ethik“ beziehen, ist dafür grundlegend. Dazu zählen die Begriffe „*Utu*“ (Menschenwürde) und „*Ubuntu*“ (Menschlichkeit, Menschheit oder Humanität). In dieser Dissertation wird aufgewiesen, dass Menschenwürde in der Form, wie sie in den Begriffen „*Utu*“ und „*Ubuntu*“ gefasst wird, zugleich ein grundlegendes moralisches Prinzip benennt, von dem sich sozialetischen und individuellen Handlungsnormen herleiten. Die traditionellen ethischen Verhaltensformen und moralischen Anweisungen der Bantu werden jedoch gemeinsam mit einer christlichen theologischen Ethik untersucht, auch wenn der Schwerpunkt der Dissertation auf der afrikanischen Moraltradition und ihren ethischen Charakteristika liegt. Daher entspricht das Motto der Arbeit dem Anliegen, global zu denken, aber lokal zu handeln. Das Anliegen dieser Studienarbeit ist daher ein zweifaches: erstens bezieht sie sich auf die Herausforderungen der allgemeinen Lebenssituation für das moralische Verhalten der Menschen in Afrika südlich der Sahara insgesamt und insbesondere in Tansania; zweitens ist sie ein Versuch, mit Hilfe der ethischen Anweisungen der Bantu-Ethik und der Verstärkung der in ihr vermittelten moralischen Werte eine christliche Ethik in Afrika zu unterstützen. Dies bedeutet, dass die Anweisungen der Bantu-Ethik im Licht der theologischen Ethik aufgegriffen werden. Daher verstärkt diese Dissertation die Bedeutung der Menschenwürde in der Wahrnehmung der Bantu und die aus ihr folgenden ethischen Konsequenzen ebenso wie aus Sicht der theologischen Ethik, indem die Vorstellung von der Menschenwürde analysiert und als Grundlage für ein redliches moralisches Leben entfaltet wird.