Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa

Michael Onyebuchi Eze

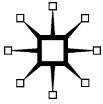# Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa

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Dominus Illuminatio mea!

I dedicate this work to

Jörn Rüsen, a great exemplar of humanism who inspired
this spark of curiosity

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Proof of Decisive Concept

by *Antjie Krog*

Few other scholars have analyzed so grudgingly yet adequately the role of ubuntu in the ethos of the "new" South Africa as Michael Onyebuchi Eze in this book. It is also not often that African scholars outside South Africa are willing to focus so specifically and exclusively on a South African theme, and it is fascinating to read how one is being looked at from an outside that is at the same time an inside.

Eze chose a difficult task within a precarious terrain. It is not without reason that Sophie Oluwele from the Department of Philosophy at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, admitted in her essay "Africa" that it "is not an understatement to say that the main area of African philosophy today remains basically unsettled. This is because there is no general agreement about the nature of African philosophy or about a specific worldview which is (generally) accepted as representative of African intellectual ideology" (Oluwele 1998:96).

It is into the abovementioned unsettled-ness that Eze wades, trying, on the one hand not to fall into the populist and exploitative traps around the concept of ubuntu while at the same time trying to distinguish it as a multifaceted, meaningful, and decisive concept at work in South Africa. His observation is astute that the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was underpinned by ubuntu, which manifested in unobtrusive traces of interconnectedness in the TRC hearings.

In my own research I have come to a similar conclusion, also using the words of one of the Gugulethu Seven mothers, Cynthia Ngewu. Mine is another quote, however, broadcast on SABC Radio, given by Mrs. Ngewu after meeting the perpetrator who killed her son. In simple terms she spells out the full complex implications of the role of ubuntu in the concept of reconciliation.

> This thing called reconciliation . . . if I am understanding it correctly . . . if it means this perpetrator, this man who has killed Christopher Piet, if it

means he becomes human again, this man, so that I, so that all of us, get
our humanity back . . . then I agree, then I support it all.

(Krog, 1998:109)

Her words, first, mean that she understood that the killer of her child could,
and did, kill, because he had lost his humanity; he was no longer human.
Second, she realized that to forgive him would open up the possibility for
him to regain his humanity, to change profoundly. Third, she felt also that
the loss of her son had affected her own humanity; she now herself had an
affected humanity. Fourth, and most importantly, she understood that if
indeed the perpetrator felt himself driven by her forgiveness to regain his
humanity, then it would open up for her the possibility to become fully
human again.

This remarkable formulation affirms how somebody, who would be
regarded by many as not effectively literate, let alone schooled in African
philosophy, intimately understood her interconnectedness and could for-
mulate it succinctly. I argue that it is precisely this understanding and
knowledge of ubuntu that underpinned most of the testimonies delivered
before the TRC and was largely responsible for the absence of revenge and
the way anger was articulated.

To put it more bluntly, the daily living of interconnectedness was the
determining factor in both "making the TRC work" and the tone of the
hearings.

It is important to note that the *reasons* why one would (or would not)
forgive and reconcile differed. Victims would say they forgave because Jesus
had forgiven them, or they had forgiven because they were interconnected.

The ubuntu forgiveness says: I forgive you so that you can change/heal;
then I can start on my interconnected path toward healing. The effort
is toward healing on earth; the wholeness of full personhood should be
achieved on earth. This means that forgiveness can never be without the
next step, reconciliation, and reconciliation can not take place without it
fundamentally changing the life of the one who forgave as well as the one
forgiven. Although ubuntu allows for the perpetrator to ask for forgive-
ness (and in fact prefers the perpetrator's quest for forgiveness to be the
beginning of the process), it also allows for the possibility of the victim to
move toward wholeness *without* the perpetrator asking for forgiveness—in
other words, the victim may forgive without even being asked, and thus the
power toward wholeness stays firmly in the hands of the victim. After the
act of forgiveness, however, the perpetrator must change.

Ubuntu also profoundly influenced the interpretation of concepts such
as amnesty and testimony. The South African TRC is credited for being the
first commission to hold victim hearings in public, individualize amnesty,

and allow victims fighting against and for apartheid to testify on the same forum. All three of these innovations can be traced back to attempts to restore the interconnectedness of a community: people who lost their loved ones for whatever reason, suffer alike and are interconnected, people who are prepared to apply for amnesty are willing to admit that they have done wrong and could begin to change to be readmitted into society. Because people share each others' pain, the audience has as much right to be in the presence of the testimony as the testifier.

It is important to have this kind of focused and continuous inter-rogation about ubuntu and disentangle it from other credited driving forces behind the "new" South Africa, such as human rights, legitimizing liberation politics, Christianity, et cetera.

The usurpation of the TRC process into Christianity and a human rights culture obscures the fact that a radically new way, embedded in an indige-nous view, had been suggested for dealing with gross injustice and cycles of violence. This throws a sharp light on a different way of becoming and being.

Sustained scholarship, such as this book, into the formation, sustain-ability, integrity, and moral compass of ubuntu could lead to a more informed discourse around events happening on the African continent. This text makes an important contribution.

Acknowledgments

1

Introduction

Daedalus is introduced in Greek mythology as a notorious craftsman. He is said to have constructed the Labyrinth for a Minotaur (half-bull, half-man) for Minos and a wooden cow for Pasiphaë. He is also said to have fashioned the bronze man that repelled the Argonauts. Falling out of favor with Minos, he was imprisoned along with his son, Icarius. They escaped because of Daedalus's ingenuity: he designed waxwings for the duo to escape toward Sicily. But the son flew too close to the sun—his wings melted and he crashed into the sea. Daedalus was, however, more notorious for his "rude," "magic," or "living" statues, which were said to be alive and runs away at night if not tethered. Plato (Meno 97d, Euthyphro 11c) informs us that Daedalus's statues not only walked, but also needed to be tethered (shackled) to prevent them from running away. Daedalus achieved this possibility by "freeing" the limbs (legs, arms) from the sides of the statues to conjure an image that they indeed were alive. Since these statues were *alive*, Daedalus would subsequently bind them as if to prevent them from walking away (see also, Euripides: *Hecuba* 838; Aristophanes: *Daidalos* frag. 194).

In reality, Daedalus is a mere symbol, conjuring an image of change, of the very nature of inventing tradition. Note Socrates's sarcasm of Daedalus:

Meno: It appears to me . . . Socrates . . . that knowledge should ever be more prized than right opinion, and why they should be two distinct and separate things.

Socrates: Well, do you know why it is that you wonder, or shall I tell you?

Meno: Please tell me

Socrates: It is because you have not observed with attention the images of Daedalus. But perhaps there are none in your country.

Meno: What is the point of your remark?

Socrates: That if they are not fastened up they play truant and run away; but, if fastened, they stay where they are.

(Plato 1967: Meno, 97d)

Invented traditions, like the statues of Daedalus, conjure a vision of a seemingly malleable panorama, of kaleidoscopic tradition, but which in reality is essentially a façade for its own mutability. The essence changes according to the "historical tissue of circumstance." Daedalus's statues walk away in the night but are static during the day. The question is whether what we call tradition, like the statues of Daedalus, actually changes or presents an illusion of change, or perhaps like the statues again becomes mutable in one historical epoch and remains frozen in another. In fact, we do not know. Do we change tradition or does it change us? We are back again to the question, what is a tradition? When does a tradition become invented? What processes are involved in its invention? Is tradition fluid, dynamic, or hegemonic? Would the processes of its invention reveal its essential character? Do these processes mask social differences, inequality, and power or enable it? Understanding the "invention" of tradition will enable us to locate the actual practices of our discourse within context. These practices are located within the ambiance of what we call culture. Culture is the manifest consciousness of a nation and the way through which a nation expresses itself. Culture is not synonymous with "consciousness"; it is a medium, an "active process" through which "human actors deploy historically salient cultural categories to construct self-awareness" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1987:193). The manner of this expression may be "implicit" or "explicit," "subtle" or "diverse," and its point of signification is to understand the peculiarity of its active emergence in the same capacity that one would pay attention to the "content of their messages." In other words, the actual process of historical narration cannot be isolated from the content of its history: "A people may not express their historical consciousness as conventional history at all . . . [For] . . . history and its representation are not nicely distinguishable. History lies in its representation: for representation is as *cum* the making of history as it is consciousness speaking out" (ibid.).

The process of "invention" is a multilayered locus of ideological baggage: it induces the very *processes* in the construction and invention of the "other" and at the same time constitutes the *actual* practices of these inventions. According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989), the term "invention" comes from the Latin stem *invenire*. It is *a* noun denoting the "action of inventing; of contrivance and fabrication, of original contrivance, the faculty of inventing or devising; power of mental creation or construction, inventiveness." The term will refer to a "fictitious

statement or story; a fabrication, fiction, figment . . . something formally or authoritatively introduced or established; an institution."

The modulation of these "inventions" and/or formation of concepts are represented through different formats. For our purposes, I shall be focusing on the idea of invention as a fictitious fabrication, but also as an original *origination* or as introduced formally by authority (of tradition). I will now examine some of these aspects of invention, beginning first with invention through the authority of tradition. In other words, to penetrate tradition's analytical essence, the actual process of inventing a tradition is as critical as that which has been invented. I will interrogate the invention of tradition as an actual indicator of how tradition and its process of invention are represented as a thread of codified meaning. Where living traditions represent the very process of invention, residual traditions (dead or abrogated traditions) reveal the continuity between "invention" and its content.

The capacity to invent a tradition (or culture) as a codified and ritualized contingent model of the present is perhaps best illustrated in the following anecdote of the Jesuit Father Anthony DeMello (1982:63):

> When the guru sat down to worship each evening, the ashram cat would get in the way and distract the worshipers. So he ordered that the cat be tied during evening worship. After the guru died the cat continued to be tied during worship. And when the cat died, another cat was brought to the ashram so that it could be duly tied during evening worship. Centuries later learned treatises were written by the guru's disciples on the religious and liturgical significance of tying up a cat while worship is performed.

From the Latin *trāditio-ōnem*, tradition literally means the art of "handing down" or transmitting statements pertaining to beliefs, sayings, *practices*, rules, or customs from one generation to the next—usually orally but especially by practice. My emphasis is on *practice* as an act of tradition. In this sense, *what* construes the practice of a community constitutes its tradition. Practice by definition is not static but describes the goods specific to this community. In the writing of Valentine Mudimbe (1988:89), tradition means "a dynamic continuation and possible conversion of *traditia* (legacies)." Hence, tradition is part of history in process, a history in the making; it is not static but dynamic.

Traditions do not emerge in a vacuum; they are invented consciously or unconsciously. As Eric Hobsbawm (1983:4) argues, invented tradition will be the "formalization" and "ritualization" of practices repeated in reference to the past; it emerges as a response to new challenges or codifies the current historical culture of a society. In times of rapid social change, as social fabrics and cultural architecture become unable to deal with the emergent

new social changes, new traditions emerge to accommodate these changes. These new traditions will be those traditions that are

> [actually] invented, constructed, and formally instituted and those (traditions) emerging in a less easily traceable manner within a brief and dateable period . . . [It includes] set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.
>
> (ibid.:1, 6)

Historical events undergo changes with a concomitant reinterpretation to suit or complement a dominant worldview that prevails.[1] A historical "past" is modified by the vagaries of a circumstantial "presence" inundated and grafted within moribund and eclectic traditions or what David Cannadine (1983:105–106) calls a "historical tissue of circumstance." Sometimes outright rejection of old traditions gives room for invented ones. According to Hobsbawm (1983), traditions inhabit the following character:

(1) Traditions symbolize social cohesion and membership of groups
(2) Traditions act as a source of legitimacy to institutions, status, and relations to authority
(3) Traditions act as a domain for socialization and inculcation of beliefs, values, and conventions

Performance of national traditions evokes a sense of continuity between the past and present histories of a nation; it simulates a unique sense of shared identity and history as Cannadine (1983:105) reflected: "[In] an essentially static age, unchanging ritual might be a genuine reflection of, and reinforcement to, stability and consensus. But in a period of change, conflict or crises, it might be deliberately unaltered so as to give an impression of continuity, community and comfort, despite overwhelming contextual evidence to the contrary." This "overwhelming" contextual evidence reveals to us that invented tradition infuses narrative into time.

Of poignant notice here is that these inventions will not be isolated from the social, political, economic, and cultural circumstances of the time. Any study in historical culture must therefore take into account the contexts in which these cultures operated as living traditions (Cannadine 1983:106–107). In the case of ubuntu, one might ask, what kind of society was precolonial Africa? What was the practice in these societies? Is ubuntu

a neo-cultural "African" tradition or a displacement narrative? Considerations such as these will enable us to appreciate the location of ubuntu as a constitutive historical culture or tradition in contemporary South African memory. They will also shed light on the legitimacy of forthcoming criticisms and appreciation.

A historical study of invented tradition, Hobsbawm (1983:10) informs us, underscores the following scenario: (1) such study unmasks the problems of cultural transformation and development that might be difficult to identify and date, (2) the study will reveal that invented tradition is intertwined with the larger study of the historical culture of a society, (3) and since all invented tradition appeals to history as a source of legitimacy, its historical study becomes necessary. For current purposes, our investigation concentrates on (2).

On Historical Culture

The role of history in the theory of ideas cannot be measured. According to Jörn Rüsen (2002) the dynamic thread of history is such that it oscillates toward the past (to draw resource from historical tradition), toward the present (for self-understanding), and toward the future (to anticipate a future self). In this process, extant and morbid historical tradition is revised and reviewed in light of the available evidence of present circumstances, whereas the current condition is better understood in retrospect to evidence from historical tradition. Tradition is the historically embedded narrative of the social practices and systems of thought of a specific community. This narrative is socially constructed, always a product of historical phenomenon. Historical tradition itself is not static but dynamic as it exhibits element of continuity in its dialogue with the past, the present, and future contingencies.

Historical culture is laden with multiple interpretations. The elasticity and dynamism of culture is evident in the fact that emerging context infuses new meaning into what we call our historical culture. This is the understanding of culture offered by Clyde Kluckhohn and Alfred Kroeber (1952:66):

> Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional [= historically derived and selected] ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand as conditioning elements of the future.

Culture is open to tradition; the purpose of cultural nationalism is to forge a national consciousness consistent with the cultural history of a society. Cultural history by implication is the ensemble of the integrative, common, and personal history of a people so defined as a social-human community. Cultural nationalism arises as a result of deliberate "manipulation of cultural factors to deflect human habits to new and perhaps constructive endeavors" (Forster 1994:480). Accordingly, when a context changes, the meaning of a historical culture receives different intentionality and connotation. This move allows culture to remain elastic and dynamic, accommodating the new context and infusing new meaning into an emerging social change. This is precisely what happened with the Japanese royal family as they grappled with the question of royal succession in the absence of a male heir. The Japanese parliament mediated a legislation that would accommodate female heirs. What we have is a case in which existing social and customary practices were institutionally modified to accommodate present exigencies. However, not all invented traditions emerge because of the inadaptability of the old tradition in dealing with novel situations. Within the context of coloniality in Africa, historical culture will become a politicized project as in apartheid South Africa where the term "cultural pluralism" was exceedingly pernicious. This term was manipulated and exploited by apartheid architects to problematize a necessity for difference while simultaneously promoting fragmentation and fierce opposition to any holistic view of culture. This accounted for the existence and institutionalization of the erstwhile ministry of Plural Relations, which codified the natives in terms such as "rural plurals" (see Martin 1996:5, 6). This was a project motivated by a specific understanding of culture to suit the political wavelength of the time. Here, culture as a compact, unique way of life would be a nonnegotiable prerequisite of the specific ethnic identity it represented: Zulu, Sotho, Xhosa, Ndebele, et cetera. These unique ways of life were so compact and incompatible with one another that the only solution was separate development. This vision of culture as unique and separate was at the core of apartheid coloniality, such that any attempt to forge or represent a similarity was theoretically and institutionally negated (ibid). This institutionalization of difference was both political and economical: to remove the threat to white domination and white society and for the promotion of economic privilege. This representation would become a parody of a numerical majority functioning as a cultural and political minority. This politicization of culture beckons upon a celebration of difference. An emphasis on difference is simultaneously an emphasis at distance. To maintain such a distance is to mask the other's subjectivity, *whitewash* our guilt and objectify his or her humanity. Hence, as there are many cultures, so there would be many humanism(s).

Of Ubuntu and the National Imaginary

At the turn of the new political dispensation in South Africa, a new generic disposition emerged among the black elites and some white academics: "ubuntu!" Like a wildfire, it permeated into the private and public discourses, such that in South Africa today, it has become a "commodity" and has been translated into business ventures such as *ubuntu security, ubuntu restaurant, and ubuntu management services.* Nowhere is this "commodification" more manifest than in the political circles, in which the magic word has evolved into a political doctrine and identity—a prescriptive ethics for reconciliation, amnesty, and state pardon. A populist understanding of ubuntu is that it is an African humanism. Those who practice ubuntu belong to the southern, central, and some western and eastern African ethno-cultures that fall within the Bantu language family. Ubuntu is derived from a vernacular mode of referring to a person in these languages. In Shona, for example, a person is *munhu* (plural *abantu*). In Sotho, it is *mutho* (plural *batho*). In isiZulu, Xhosa, and isiNdebele it is *umuntu* (plural *abantu*). This linguistic commonality literally encapsulates the essence or quality of being human, humanness, or otherwise loosely translated as humanism (Samkange 1989:41). The equivalent offered by most of its zealous apostles for its transition from a tribal conscious civic virtue to a pan-Africanist ethical consciousness is because the term "ubuntu philosophy" refers not only to the philosophy associated with the Bantu-speaking peoples who use the word "ubuntu" or its equivalent but also to the philosophy of other ethnic groups of sub-Saharan Africa (Ramose 1999:14). It is a universal African phenomenon because *among the peoples of sub-Saharan Africa, the ideals embodied in ubuntu are shared and given credence by the interrelatedness of cultural affinity and kinship* (Ramose 1999:14).

Such assessment constitutes dominant historiography on ubuntu. It would include methodological conjectures that locate ubuntu within an ideological framework. But such historical methods evacuate other possibilities of creative historicity for they rest on a presupposition of an ahistorical foundation. Part of this problem is that in contemporary Africa, many scholars and politicians would usually fall back on "ubuntu" as some kind of "magic concept" that seems to embody a universalistic principle of humanity and at the same time a pedagogy that cuts across the sociopolitical and cultural spectrum: *it is true and real simply because it is African; it is essentially an African philosophy autochthonous to all of black race!*

The consistency of such ideological tepidity, as an essentialist rendered discourse, exposes ubuntu to flaws and challenges it need not admit. If indeed ubuntu exists within the context of a complex, crime-ridden society

such as South Africa, and if ubuntu was in fact the cultural foundation of the precolonial sub-Saharan African people, then what kind of humanism is ubuntu? More provocatively, while genocide triumphed in Burundi and Rwanda, ethnic conflicts rage in the DRC and Sudan, and warlords celebrated in Somalia, where does ubuntu humanism come in? How do we reconcile these emergent crises of humanity in Africa with "ubuntu talk"? Even more as a humanism embedded in these African cultural traditions.

One of the consistent criticisms of ubuntu is that it is merely a quasi-philosophical discourse circulating primarily through oral tradition devoid of any authoritative text or historical authenticity. Since it remains largely oral, ubuntu is conducted in such sporadic, naïve, unstructured, and dangerous patterns like a "mechanical tool" employed to deal with contemporary issues *incognito* of the origin of the concept where it functioned more as a cultural anthropology for the communitarian system of the precolonial African people rather than an invented construct at the service of the ideologies like the "corporate South African capitalism" (Maluleke 1999:13). Wim van Binsbergen (2001) would be one of the foremost academics to raise objections over the authenticity of ubuntu as a genuine African discourse since it is unhistorical (cf. Chapter 7). And because it is unhistorical, ubuntu, he argues, is a representative distortion of an attempt to appropriate and define a philosophical perspective formatted in Western tradition paraded as indigenous philosophy. At best, ubuntu remains an assemblage of prophetic and utopian idealism dependent on its application to mediate and address the social ills plaguing the contemporary Southern African society. If its critics are right, ubuntu is not only an "empty concept," "unauthentic" and "unoriginal," it is merely a therapy for calming the spirit of the defeated.

The demands of the critics are that without a *necessary* historical authenticity, one may not talk of ubuntu as a genuine discourse, or the possibility of validity. I found such criticism problematic, and in response, two hypotheses will suffice: (1) Could the discourse be an artificial reconstruction of African systems of thought that plays a prophetic role reminiscent of the Owl of Minerva? (2) Are the critics right that the concept is an invention of the elite to masquerade the sociopolitical crises of contemporary South African society? If (1), then our discourse will have neither epistemic value nor socio-anthropological relevance. If (2), then how do we liberate the concept from the tutelage of "invention" and unmask its potentiality in the context of contemporary South African society. Whatever the results, our point of departure will necessarily intimate us to trace and investigate the historical origin and development of the term. In historicizing the discourse, we would be able to answer the question whether a *lack* or *presence* of historical authenticity invalidates or legitimates its

role or instrumentality in the making of modern South African imaginary. Historicizing ubuntu will also enable its signification as an ethnophilosophical *cul-de-sac*, displacement narrative, or political humanism. The pervasiveness of our method is interlaced with the sociopolitical imagination upon which ubuntu has gained emotional legitimacy.

Thus understood, the emergence of ubuntu as a postcolonial South African discourse cannot be isolated from the overall South African vision of history. This vision of history will be threefold: it consists of (1) its origins as a nation, (2) its struggle during the apartheid, and (3) its emergence as a democratic state. Interwoven with this threefold vision is the quest for a national identity, an inclusive self-definition that addresses the injustice of the past by appealing to a shared historic culture, tradition, or value from which it draws its sense of national subjective. Historicizing ubuntu implies understanding the context in which it emerged, and this context is the post-colonial as postcolonial.[2] The latter is historical insofar as it is a discourse dependent on the deconstruction of historiography. Accordingly, ubuntu as a postcolonial discourse is both a mirror and consequence of the aforementioned vision of history.

On course for a new method of analysis, I envisage that the mode of any cultural renaissance within Africa must start within Africa itself. An appeal for a return to African cultures is not an appeal to pristine unanimity but to the internal pluralism that pervades these cultures. It means to expose our cultures to other systems of choices, to become open through creative dialogue with other cultural traditions; for it is only in this way that African traditions can become revitalized as an agency of change. A dogmatic appeal to tradition denies this possibility, and hence cultural dynamism through interculturality is the essential key to a viable African renaissance (*see also* Appiah 1992).

What is Humanism?

Humanism was a term coined in the nineteenth century by Niethammer. However, the term *humaniora* had been used by fifteenth-century scholars in their discourse on human beings. Broadly speaking, "humanism" was also used to designate, albeit posthumously, the intellectual and cultural movement of the Renaissance period. In Renaissance Italy, a teacher of classics and literature was described as *umanista*, while the "humanities" as we have it today was referred to in the same period as *studia humanitatis*—representing such disciplines as rhetoric, history, literature, and moral philosophy, which emerged from the rediscovery of classical antiquities and the complete translation of Plato's work (Kolenda 1998:340–341).

This tradition extended its breadth to eighteenth-century scholars such as Voltaire, Diderot, Rousseau, Bentham, Hume, Lessing, Franklin, Jefferson, and especially, Kant. According to Konstantin Kolenda (1998:340–341) the point of emphasis at this juncture shifted from the mere celebration of antiquities and included other virtues leaning on the intrinsic dignity of the human person—the virtues of freedom, equality, tolerance, et cetera. These values will be proposed as key in advancing reforms in the sociopolitical sphere, which would otherwise encourage individual creativity as a self-generating end. The method of this reform, Konstantin Kolenda (1998:340–341) writes, is education:

> Humanists attribute crucial importance to education, conceiving of it as an all-round development of personality and individual talents, marrying science to poetry and culture to democracy. They champion freedom of thought and opinion, the use of intelligence and pragmatic research in science and technology, and social and political systems governed by representative institutions. Believing that it is possible to live confidently without metaphysical or religious certainty and that all opinions are open to revision and correction, they see human flourishing as dependent on open communication, discussion, criticism, and unforced consensus.

The aforementioned discourse of humanism will not be the ultimate preoccupation of this term in my current analysis. I propose a redefinition of content to suit the context of my discourse. For that purpose, I adopt the view of "new" humanism advanced by Rüsen for it is a view that accords with my application or projection of the term "humanism" on ubuntu. It is a view that projects the human being as an end in him or herself, a view that tries to rehabilitate the classical understanding of humanism within the sociopolitical topography of our times.

Rüsen's *new humanism* is not only a formalism of individuals as self-creating persons but of universal virtues shared by all human beings. It is a view that imposes an unconditional self-regard to the human person as an end in him or herself, self-generating beings celebrated for the only reason of being human beings. This rehabilitation also involves a reconceptualization of our historical thinking to relocate the actual terms of our discourse on humanism:

> [The] only way of keeping up the reference of humanism to history is to reconceptualize historical thinking. It has to change its sense criteria and open them to the catastrophic experiences of inhumanity strictly running against the traditional humanism as it has been embedded in the foundation of modern historical thinking to a large extent.
>
> (Rüsen 2007:7)

Rüsen (2007:2) appeals to Kant's categorical imperative to enunciate his position.[3] Kant in this imperative affirms the inherent worth and dignity of each person from whence we should neither treat people like things nor objectify them since we are noumenal selves and cannot be treated as conditional values (cf. Chapter 8). With this foundation, Rüsen proposes that while we cannot dismiss some lessons from the Renaissance humanism and its classical inheritance, we would need to embark toward a "new" humanism inclusive in character and that will deal with the many vicissitudes of our times. The central thesis of this humanism will be the unconditional regard of the "other" in their otherness and in which human dignity remains our leitmotif in any discourse on humanism.

Rüsen is not proposing a sovereign universal as opposed to location or historicization of such universals within a temporal unity in diversity. This will be a case for such humanism that maintains a relation and distance, sameness and difference. The obvert parallel between this understanding of humanism and ubuntu is to be located in the generalized conceptualization of ubuntu as an idealized format of African humanism. *A person is a person through other persons* induces an intersubjective formation of subjectivity. It is a demand for recognition of the other as an end in himself. It is a view in which the "I" and the "other" are dialectically implicated in their creative self-formation. When we talk of ubuntu as an African humanism, we will be accommodating its essentialist and performative character as induced in the public sphere, especially as codified in the academic literatures or projected in the political transitoriness from whence ubuntu would read, a person is a person through other persons or through *the otherness of the other.* This was the point in which ubuntu gains a performative identity as an African humanism, and would likely translate to mean, the very act of being a human being, a relation and distance, a formation of the "I" through "otherness" creation or recognition. Yet, my aim in this book is only to historicize the moment in which this humanism gained such emotional legitimacy. The historicization of our discourse redeems it from such dogmatism that effectively obfuscates its availability for healthy humanism; it also yields to a different intentionality: cultural history versus politics of the nation-state.

I begin in Chapter 2, which places South Africa within a historical space in order to understand the overall exigency and origination of African intellectual history and discourse. While the emergence of ubuntu as a postcolonial South African discourse cannot be excluded from the overall intellectual history of Africa, its historical pervasiveness is dependent and configured upon the South African historical context. This context will show how ubuntu as a postcolonial narrative is in fact a product or an eclecticism of many narratives that preceded it—millennial movements,

Black Consciousness Movement, Apartheid, Black Theology, Prophetic Christianity, et cetera. These narratives nevertheless share a similar historical experience while exhibiting different intentionality and character as will be the focus of chapters 3 to 5. In Chapter 6, I shall articulate the different *voices of ubuntu* in the making of the South African national imaginary: the transition from cultural to national nationalism, as a politicized project and as a mirror and aftermath of the overall colonial experience of South Africa. In chapters 7 and 8 I will trace its emergence into the sociopolitical sphere of South Africa. Constructed as a myth, does its historical pervasiveness deny its actual significance? Beyond these historical mappings, does its performative role transcend the history of polemics characterizing the overall intellectual history of Africa? Speaking of the performative, emphasis will be on the role of ubuntu in the formation of modern South Africa, especially on its role in instituting the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). At this juncture, intellectual history in contemporary South Africa is not merely a historical project, but also of sociological, political, and socioeconomic narratives of contemporary Africa. As a political humanism, ubuntu offers a criterion for interculturality, a model of historiography that eschews analogy in favor of context, that debunks reverse discrimination in favor of intra/interculturality. Its political significance is evident as it has opened possibilities of wider sociopolitical imagination(s) and intersubjectivities.

In Chapter 9, the rehabilitation of our discourse demands an understanding of the significant shift to creative historiography. A new method of analysis will be developed. This method will differ from the earlier Afrocentric method of discourse analysis and would enable the enrichment of our discourse. On this motivation, I shall present the terms in which we may speak of ubuntu as an African humanism, not as an essentialist ideology, a displacement narrative, or a critique against apartheid/colonial reason but as a creative historicism.

2

South Africa: The *Past* is Another Country

Historiography in South Africa—Contested Categories

The emphasis on the title of this chapter, "South Africa: The *Past* Is Another Country," is meant to indicate the complexity and inadequacy of any pretentious move to capture a "holistic" South African *past*. I merely approximate to a modest synthesis not a *history* of South Africa but a summation or interrogation of relevant *incidents*. In writing on South African history, I follow T.S. Elliot in maintaining a *perpetual presence* through a refusal to historical amnesia. I am also conscious that the greatest challenge to contemporary South African historiography is to develop coping strategies vis-à-vis memories and psychosocial traumas both on the level of individual and collective experiences of the contentious memories of a South African past. Thus, in negotiating the cartographies of the present, the past becomes a critical resource through which memory gains its *presence* and meaning. This negotiation in my view need not yield a fixation on the past, but draw lessons from the past for a creative future, to avoid the ominous charge against historicism that *HISTORY learns from history, that it has learnt nothing from history*.

Historiography in South Africa is a bubble of contentious and contested identities. Two schools of intense ideological rivalry emerge: the pro-settler and the humanists. The first school, "pro-settler," is typically represented in the works of Robert Godlonton, George Cory, and G.M. Theal. The second school is represented through the works of Shula Marks, W.M. Macmillan, R.W. Johnson, De Kiewiet, as well as the diaries and ethnographic work of missionaries such as John Philip (Cobley 2001:613–614). According to the

pro-settler tradition,[1] southern African historiography is a critical repository of violent clashes between whites and blacks, symbolizing a virtual conflict between the forces of "civilization" and "savagery," "modernity" and "primitivism," "progress" and "retardation." The humanist school Cobley (ibid.:614) informs us, while recognizing that South African historiography is afflicted with a series of dualisms exhibiting analytical tension nevertheless agrees that this confrontation is tragic and need not be the end of history. The humanist school would advocate for a rehabilitation of South African historiography with a focus "mediated by humanitarian concerns for the victims" (ibid.). Shula Marks, a key proponent of the humanist school, specifically appealed for a restoration of agency and voice in the writing of contemporary South African history, agency and voice to a people who were otherwise denied historical agency in the three centuries of white domination: "[W]hat has driven much of this work has been the urge to restore to African peoples their historical agency and to examine the actions of both settlers and Africans in historically and culturally specific context" (ibid.:615). This move, Marks (1986:38) noted, will enable us to move beyond such enforced history from above with its attendant consequences in which "an ideology of segregation based on color provided legal framework for domination and its legitimation." R.W. Johnson (2004:vii–viii) summarizes this exigency of restoring agency to history, which was sabotaged by the political culture of apartheid:

> Many ironies have been at work in South African historiography. With history writing so politicized, there has been enormous pressure for even the best historian to bow to all manner of sacred cows, to indulge in an ever-changing game of praise and blame and to observe a great deal in silence.

The social history of South Africa is therefore a history of residual narrative of imperialism and apartheid hegemony on the one hand and resistance to this imposed hegemony and imperial institution on the other—but polarities in dialectical relationship with each other. It is a story of three centuries of white domination, which began as far back as the 1650s with the settlement of a small Dutch supply company. The exact date of this arrival was between 1652 and 1655, an expedition commanded by Jan Van Riebeeck who started the Dutch East India Company. The arrival of the Dutch settlers in 1652 culminated with the Khoisan resistance and the subsequent genocide of the latter. This story would include The Afrikaner's *Great Trek* of 1834–1854 to escape British influence and domination, the frontier wars in the Eastern Cape, the black resistance to British occupation and domination that triggered the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902).

The aftermath of the British conquest and subjugation of the *independent* Boer Republic triggered other series of events that led to the unification of South Africa in 1910. These events were followed by the formation of the SANNC (South African Native National Congress), later the ANC (African National Congress), in 1912 as a native resistance movement to fight for land and political rights of the natives, Indians, and coloreds. It is a story of many centuries of decentralized dictatorship—a legacy that would invent human types and categorize them into "citizens" and "subjects." It is a story of resistance to this structural racism and its collapse. It is a story of the attempt to forge a nation through these historical residues, to make sense out of this history. These historical processes, in my view, partly constitute an immediate "presence" of South Africa's historiography.

The history of initial occupation is similar to what happened elsewhere in Africa. Military conquest enabled the victorious to break opposition and institutionalize permanent oligarchy. Upon the military conquest is "paper conquest," by which natives were further subjugated, albeit under duress, to treaties, concessions, and/or threat of military domination. According to many accounts, South Africa before the arrival of the Dutch Company was inhabited by hunters and gatherers, and later pastoralists. Otherwise known as the San or Khoikhoi, respectively, these hunters and gatherers were to be conquered by the Bantu speaking people who were at the same time migrating from parts of Central Africa in search of grazing field. This was, however, many centuries before the white settlement in Table Bay and their consequent expansion upwards. Initially, the first natives to make contact with these white settlers were the Hottentots (nomadic pastoralists) and the San Bushmen (hunters). The political structure of the latter, characterized as it was by hunting bands (Bushmen) and patrilineal kinship (Hottentots), broke down under the impact of white adventurists (*see* Kuper 1964:150).

Through the white people's contact with the indigenous population, genetic crossings occurred, in which new breed of human beings emerged and codified into what will be called a *transitional* group by virtue of miscegenation. Although socioculturally and linguistically "white," this so-called transitional group would become classified as "nonwhite" or pejoratively "colored" in a racialized South African state. The Indian-South Africans for their part first immigrated to South Africa when a legislation in 1860 allowed the emigration of laborers from India to Natal for work in the sugar plantations.

Not being able to withstand the superior military force and encroachment of the invading white capitalists, the indigenous tribal units and kingdoms had by the end of the nineteenth century lost their independence; their local authorities were substituted by the representatives of the

occupying force. The rest of the indigenous population was confined to labor reserves for the emerging white economy (ibid.:150). As elsewhere in Africa, these early settlers in South Africa perceived ethnicity as a threatening, yet realistic, feature of social reality. Ethnic groupings represented indigenous, autonomous ways of life. This autonomy, Mahmood Mamdani (1996:90–91) argues, is multifaceted for it embodies the natives' tribal economy and a source of livelihood; the autonomy eschewed a "tribal ideology" upon which the identity and common consciousness depends, a "tribal" institution on which a collective consciousness develops and offers a uniform resistance. The only option available to settler colonialists at this time was to break up the "ethnic groups" into "tribes" for they often acted as a medium of resistance. This process involved inventing tribes and subdividing major ones, a process grafted within an ideological exigency translated into juridical framework. At the base of this consciousness was a marked desire for control of land and labor, disguised and inundated by a pulverized need to "civilize" the locals. Here "civilized" means abrogating such norms, customs, and laws of the natives that impeded unlimited acquisition of land and labor by the white adventurist-capitalists. "Civilized" in this semantic usage does not correspond with the overall general principle of civilization *touted* much later in the Berlin Conference of 1885 as the basic premise for colonization. To become civilized is to adopt European sociocultural norms, assimilate this worldview, and discard the indigenous culture as primitive, but mostly barbaric. No doubt some of these cultural practices in the light of today are indeed barbaric, but not without a consideration of cultural evolution.[2] Administering reasons for the abolishment of the native's culture and norms, Governor Pine of Natal complained that "the kaffirs are much more insubordinate and impatient to control; they are rapidly becoming rich and independent" (Bundy 1988: 171).

The ministration of Governor Pine would come to symbolize such capitalist racialism that became the lot of South Africa. Capitalist racialism typifies this mode of colonialism. In the present context, the *a priori* condition for "civilization" is to enhance control of capital by instituting legislations that restrict access to capital for the natives and undermine any competitive edge against white capitalists. It also involves the transformation of the native population into a consumerist culture. The paradox is that as these "kaffirs" become "civilized" they simultaneously become a threat to the promise of colonial logic such that the South African Native Affairs commission of 1903–1905 avowed the necessity of "keeping young people in check" and undermine any unilateral political threat they may pose. The clause "young people" in the sentence refers to the indigenous

persons irrespective of age, a common colonial doctrine of reference to indigenous populations as undeveloped humanity.

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate and delineate certain historical processes in the making of modern South Africa. My task is to investigate how modern South Africa is a product of different historical incidents and conscious memories, but memories that evolve through overlapping historical contours and representations. These memories are still processes in continuity, and my attempt here is merely to expose the interstices of historical changes involved in the process of its realization. Furthermore, no culture or civilization develops outside history. What it means to be a Dutch settler in 1652 is different to what it means to be an Afrikaner in 2008. Similarly, what it means to be a Xhosa, Zulu, or Ndebele in 1948 is different from what it means to be a Xhosa, Zulu, or Ndebele in 2008. Therefore, an intellectual history of South Africa must not only be cognizant of these evolving parallels and differences, continuities and discontinuities, it must also integrate and not isolate the voices of different historical incidents that gave birth to modern South Africa. This, in my view, is the only successful way of arriving at a veritable conclusion. Admittedly, my aim here is to neither debate nor contest the import of these parallels or discontinuities. However, on the judgment of their implications and my findings, I am enabled to locate and historicize them, define them within these contexts, and make sense of their internal rationality. This chapter is critically essential to the overall *raison d'être* of this project. It serves as a historical umbilical cord between past memories and the emerging national memories in the making of modern South Africa.

Concerning methodology, I adapt a historical method that enables me to articulate and locate a wide range of influences that impacted or provoked the emergence of ubuntu in the South African national memory. And any discourse in the contemporary historiography of South Africa has to be familiar with context. Such familiarization induces localization within history. In view of the central theme of this book, ubuntu as a "national" discourse did not emerge in a vacuum; it developed within a specific socioeconomic, political, and historical context. Posed as the repudiation to South Africa's kind of colonial discourse, it becomes significant to trace such continuity and what in fact constitutes *that* which is repudiated by the ubuntu discourse. Trapped within the discursive formation of what became *modern* South Africa, this "process" or "formation" implores an understanding of those factors that provoked ubuntu's emergence as constitutive of this formation and process with such profound emotional legitimacy. In chapters 6–9, ubuntu would become a custodian of a nationalistic consciousness that seeks to bridge (1) the citizen

and subject divide and (2) the civil society and the "colonized" subjects. Most fundamentally, ubuntu would be cast as a displacement narrative of apartheid discourse and its logic of racial supremacy. The narrative will be an attempt to forge and institutionalize a new consciousness that fuses political power and political freedom in opposition to the apartheid consciousness characterized as it were by fusion of political power with administratively driven justice that favors racial domination. In my view, it is simultaneously egregious to assume that a single perspective constitutes a coherent historiography; yet, I do not desire (nor aim for arriving at) any historical neutrality[3] as opposed to gaining insight into those *formations* in the making of our modern imaginary. I have adapted a historical perspective because it offers a key analytical and explanatory role for the overall theme of my discourse.

In nomine regis et reginae: *The Bifurcated State*

The military and paper conquest of natives in Africa was preceded by attempts at "cheap" control over natives. State formation in precolonial Africa was as a result of this conquest and internal differentiation. As elsewhere in Africa, the policy of indirect rule was expedited through intervening legal edicts and decrees. In South Africa, the terms of a nonracial franchise were strictly outlined under the Cape of Good Hope Ordinance of 1852. In practice, this is not the case. As the political economy changed, many indigenous communities became sources for cheap migrant labor. Subsequently, the policy of nonracial franchise became applied to a few selected communities while being restricted to others. In the Transkei, for example, the governor assumed unlimited powers as an absolute "prefect." In the Cape, the governor was accountable to the legislature. The function of the "prefect" was not to guarantee rights but to enforce civil obedience (Mamdani 1996:69–70). The procedural application on the role of this "prefect" became evident in the arguments proffered by the Cape authorities in the annexation of Basutoland in 1871, in which the "kaffirs" were "not yet sufficiently advanced in civilization and social progress," neither to be treated as responsible citizens nor to be integrated into a form of legal assimilation. And when the Sotho people made a petition for a franchise in 1872, the governor, in rejecting their appeal, warned: "[C]olonial law would have to supersede Sotho Law, the unoccupied land would be appropriated and sold, and whites be allowed to acquire land and settle in Basutoland" (ibid.:67). The Cape, in the meantime, under British occupation was a multiracial society inhabited by the majority Khoikhoi with a minority Malay slave population. The indigenous population nevertheless

swelled up with the migrating Xhosas after their conquest by the British during a century-old war that became known as the First Kaffir War, which reached the Fish River in 1779. In the run up to these wars, the British initiated a policy of deporting natives to remote areas. This policy was, however, abandoned when the British lost the Great Kei in 1847 (ibid.:66). The Boers for their part defeated the Ndebele in 1883, a conquest that was accompanied by the subjugation and enslavement of the Ndebele as farm laborers.

The British occupation of Natal in 1843 promoted a commission of inquiry that found that the native's customary laws and traditional authorities had been overridden with English laws. The commission advocated for a "system of Justice" that "should conform as much" to the native's own while being compatible with the principles of the British justice system, or otherwise, the *general principles of humanity*. The result was that nearly half a million natives were juxtaposed in ten separate locations while the residential and family land of up to three million acres was subjected to the Native Trust set up in 1864 under the leadership of the governor and his executive council (Mamdani 1992:63). With regard to native control, the then colonial secretary instructed the "stay" of customary laws insofar as they did not contradict or become "repugnant to the general principles of humanity recognized throughout the whole civilized world." The ideal guarantor of the civilization of the native was the "general principle of humanity" (ibid.). In a dual contradictory motion, the legitimacy of later colonial violence would be embedded in the logic of its point of departure—to "civilize" and "humanize" according to no other principle rather than its own. On the other hand, colonial violence remains a double problematic for it discarded the native's customs and cultures in favor of a hegemony given the sanction of legitimacy by the governor and his deputies. This move was an insidious, albeit a benign, depredation of a people's culture that would become an armchair deliberation of the governor and his deputies, an approval that was dependent on what the governor perceived as not being "distasteful" but *synchronized* with what were considered the "general principles of humanity" (ibid.).

The attempt at the native's control through segregated administration was a territorial segregation neither between the citizen and the subject, nor between the native and the settler. According to Mamdani (1996:63),[4] it was in fact the first phase of "institutionalized segregation" as recorded in Ordinance 3 of 1849. According to this ordinance, the office of the Lt. Governor is that of "supreme or paramount native chief, with full powers to appoint all subordinate chiefs, or other authorities among them" (clause 4). In addition, where customary laws applied, they were administered by the chief's newly acquired functions and powers. In subsequent

years, this ordinance was to become the basis for the Natal code of Native Law of 1878 as ratified in 1891. This ordinance stimulated the following adaptations: as the supreme chief in command, the Lt. Governor had the power to set "the least number of houses which shall compose a Kraal"[5] (s.42); he could force any "tribe, portion thereof; or subjects of the tribe to any part of the colony" (s.37); he could "balkanize," divide, or amalgamate any tribe (s.33); all chiefs were subordinate to him because he appointed all and could dismiss any of the chiefs for "political offence, or for incompetence, or other just cause" (s.33.34) where "just" meant what according to his discretion accorded to the general principles of humanity. He could summon natives for compulsory military service, taxation, or forced labor (s.35, 36). The governor was simultaneously the legislative, executive, and judiciary with an "authority to punish by fine or imprisonment or both (without being) subject to the Supreme Court, or to any other court of law" (s.39, 40).[6] In agreement to what could be the *general principle of humanity*, women were further subordinated. The ordinance provided institutionalized violence, reforms that induced patriarchal control over women and minors in each kraal. The kraal head was "the absolute owner of all property belonging to his kraal," and he was the arbitrator of disputes in his kraal (s.68). As "a general rule, all the inmates of kraal are minors in law" with the exception of adult males (s.72); "females are always considered minors and without independent power," can "neither inherit nor bequeath," nor have income since the kraal head controlled the income (s.94, s.138, 143). Indeed, the clichéd phrase of Lord Acton, "*Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men . . .*" does reflect the mode of this decentralization policy. Even though his power was invented and given, the relationship between the kraal head and members of his kraal was more solicited than induced. Since his position of power is a nonpermanent tenure, he dominated his people by malfeasance logic, for his position was dependent on his ability to achieve absolute control on behalf of the governor. A good chief was one who without restraint was able to achieve maximum exploitation for the colonial project. There was no limit to this usurpation of power because in addition, the kraal head could disown or disinherit any disobedient son (s.140); kraal heads were to "rank as constables within the precincts of their own kraals and are authorized to arrest summarily any person therein" (s.74). The kraal head represented this fusion of power of the chief in the colonial era, a policy that undoubtedly yielded to series of abuses—a form of institutionalized abuse since the perpetrators, the chiefs, had the legitimacy and mandate of the colonial powers. These were the "general principles of humanity" that induced the code of ordinance and according to which the native must be guided to a "civilized" humanity.

In fact, s.219 was dedicated to types of greetings, for example, the salute they must give to officials from the kraal head to the lieutenant governor. In Natal, as in the Cape in 1927, the Native Administration Act endorsed the governor general as the supreme prefect of the natives (s.1); he ruled all the natives by decree (s.25) and was not accountable to the legislature; he had the power to amalgamate or divide existing tribes and constitute new ones (s.5[1]a); he designated areas in which the natives had to carry passes as well as "prescribe[d] regulations for the central and prohibition of the movement of natives into, within or from any such areas" (s.25); he had absolute control over the native's collective identity (*see* Mamdani 1996:65, 71 for a detailed argument).

Capitalist Racialism

The evolving social history of South Africa was a calculated disenfranchisement in the colonies. However, this disenfranchisement was dependent on capitalist coloniality. The rationale was to disenfranchise the natives to undermine (1) the possibility of political legitimacy and (2) reinforce the position of a dominating white minority by weakening the position and influence of the majority as Governor Pine pointed out. The abuse in the system would become very prevalent, invoking sympathy from unusual quarters in the person of John Cecil Rhodes. In the aftermath of the abuses, Rhodes beseeched for "[equal] rights for every civilized man south of the Zambezi." In reality, Rhodes was merely issuing a propagandist statement targeting the Afrikaners in the Transvaal for they had disenfranchised English speaking immigrants (Fredrickson 1996:43). Besides, even taken at face value, Rhodes's franchise was conditional and limited to the propertied class, which then excludes the majority landless blacks and uneducated blacks. In retrospect, the systematic disenfranchisement started with the appropriation of the native's land. Furthermore, the vast majority of the populace was black and property-less, and hence this suggestion for legal equality was a mask for preexisting civil inequality orchestrated by the appropriation of the native's land. A propertied class necessarily strains the efficacy of colonial rule since the law would have protected the native's land instead of dispossessing the native (Mamdani 1996:69). Therefore, the political inequality had to be integrated in a dualistic legal framework instead of a marked differentiation, a colonial polity exhibiting a Janus-faced judicial system: modern and customary. Both of these systems are unequally interrelated in varying circumstances—the former (modern) for citizens who are propertied and have franchise and the later (customary) for the disenfranchised propertyless subjects (ibid). Yet, this propertied

class of note acquired this status by dispossessing the subject through the very process of capitalist coloniality. The plea of Rhodes therefore cannot be *a fortiori* characterized as a free franchise as it was bereft of notional credibility.

Capitalist coloniality in South Africa was a process prodigiously preserved as it was a motley desideratum of malignant indifference to difference. All of this reaches its apotheosis in a lecture delivered by Field Marshal Jan Smuts at the prestigious Rhodes Lecture at Oxford in 1929. Smuts was rejecting the assimilationist tradition as found in the Cape, where Africans were generally assimilated into the cultural society. He supported the move for segregation to protect the basis of the black man's system. Smuts (1930:75–76) spoke of the "African" *as a special type* who is simultaneously a "natural" servile with "some wonderful characteristics" and who has remained a phallus being, "a child type, with a child psychology and outlook...." Indeed, "no other race is so easily satisfied, so good-tempered, so care-free...." Fixated on his childhood, the African neither indulges in present or past troubles nor anticipates any form of social progress for "wine, women, and song in their African forms remain the great consolations of his life." These Africans are children of the moment with neither the "inner toughness and persistence of the European, nor those social and moral incentives to progress which have built up European civilization in a comparatively short period."

Smut's representation and celebration of his African atavism is not strikingly unique. Capitalist colonialism usually proscribed the African as a "boy," "houseboy," "mine boy," et cetera. In French colonies, for instance, the "kaffir" is a subject of much derision who may not be addressed with the pronoun *vous*. The "kaffir" remains always a child-type, to be addressed with the pronoun *tu*. The Negro is a child! Nevertheless, this "childhood" of the Negro is fixated; he can never grow. Even if an unconscious bearer of the imperial racism of the *Empire*, Smuts is actively complicit in its application to his *African-Child*. Allister Sparks (1990:184) reminds us, however, that General Smuts was no ordinary politician, but one who "had become an international star and the darling of the British Commonwealth": a counselor to Churchill and Roosevelt, a former chancellor of the prestigious Cambridge University, a member of the British War Cabinet, and a commission member who crafted and drafted the post – World War I League of Nations—to mention a few of his many notable credentials. A Modernist propagandist, Smuts, Mamdani (1996:4) writes, was an apologist of the Enlightenment tradition who opposed the transatlantic slave trade while celebrating the benefits of the French Revolution, which liberated Europe. But why would he not extend such benefits to the Negro? The reason is

simple: for the Negro is of such stock and unique race. The "kaffir" must be restricted in his primitivism for his condition is only natural and not coeval with the universal principles of humanity. The South African historian R.W. Johnson (2004:18–19) concurs: "[F]rom the earliest days of colonialism, blacks were discouraged from developing skills which would make them competitive with whites. The prohibition required increasingly tough legislation and brute force to make it work, to keep Africans 'in their (traditional) place.'" Masking this paternalism in a familiar disquisition of the native child, Smuts (1930:76–77) argues that "a race so unique, and so different in its mentality and its cultures from those of Europe, requires a (different) policy. . . . Nothing could be worse for Africa than the application of a policy . . . which would . . . destroy the basis of this African type, to de-Africanize the African and turn him either into a beast of the field or into a pseudo-European." Note the parallel with the ideological motivation of the invention of Bantustans in apartheid. As South Africa became more industrialized, it did so concomitantly with economic development. This industrialization and development were largely dependent on what Mamdani (1996:6) calls the "urbanized and detribalized natives." The appeal was a stabilization of racial domination with territorial segregation for an imposed political system of ethnic pluralism. Smuts believed that the success of this policy of institutional segregation was already too late in South Africa because of its massive industrialization. Smuts (1930:102) obliged other colonies to learn from the South African experience: "[L]earn from the mistakes . . . made in South Africa, and can *ab initio* reserve ample lands for the natives . . . check the abuses of the chiefs, and effectively supervise the working of the native system."

In this section, I will highlight factors that mediated institutional segregation within South Africa. These factors were not merely political or administrative; they were also economic, by virtue of which another terminology for South Africa's colonialism could easily be "capitalist racialism" (cf. *especially* Moodley 1986:193–201). Capitalist coloniality, as some scholars have pointed out (cf. Mamdani 1996:29ff.), in South Africa was a product of five historical moments, to which I add a sixth moment. My analysis of what constitutes these moments, however, differs since I will merge the moments and develop new ones.

The first moment was two centuries of conquest and consolidations that culminated in the union of South Africa in 1910. The second moment was the institutionalization of apartheid in the late 1940s in opposition to the "winds of change" blowing in other parts of the continent after World War II and leading to independence in other African countries. The third moment was the decade of peace (1960–1970) following the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, the Rivonia trials, and the continued process

of black proletarianization and urbanization. The fourth moment, ending the decade of peace, comprised the Soweto uprising (1976) and the Durban strikes (1973). The fifth moment was the struggle between the state-sponsored repression and the popular resistance that was at a stalemate in the mid-1980s. Upon this moment are the historical changes in the international scene with the fall of the Soviet Union. The apartheid state, seemingly weakened by internal pressures, attempted to recuperate its legitimacy by readjusting its policies and abolishing pass laws (in 1986), and by extension, voiding the institutionalism of forced removals. The sixth moment was post-1986 and the consequence of influx into township and the violence that ensued (cf. especially, Mamdani 1996:29 ff.).

Afrikaner nationalism was a highly perfidious instrument in the *seizure* of power by the National Party in 1948. I say *seizure* insofar as South African governments prior to 1994 were theoretically illegitimate governments.[7] While segregation policies existed before apartheid, 1948 diminished any notional prospect of freedom. The formal introduction of apartheid reinforced the administrative-driven justice already in existence, driving the state into an ambivalent condition of paltry concessions and spasmodic repression, a topography in which all the jettisoned promises of human freedom abdicated, reaching a political nadir in 1961 with the declaration of a "Republic" that ingeniously blurred unjust sociopolitical reality. Revisionist historians have argued that the primary reason for apartheid cannot be isolated from the need for cheap labor. It was a system aimed at nurturing the mines and capitalist-oriented agriculture. Segregation would be necessary for the industrial system of South Africa for it offered cheap labor without which there is no economy. On this revisionism, apartheid becomes more of class oppression or domination as opposed to racial domination. I shall argue, however, that this view is problematic because where race is tied to capitalism, capital or class domination is simultaneously racial domination for these two are mutually inclusive.

From Citizens to Subjects

The gold rush had a huge impact in the genesis of racial segregation in South Africa. In the beginning, both blacks and whites had equal claims on the mines. In the 1870s, however, fierce competition between claim holders and white share-workers led to the marginalization of blacks with heightened demand to regulate black claimants and workers. This move was endorsed by the local white merchants who perceived black competition as a threat to their capital base (see Worden 2000). Attempt at resistance by blacks with the Black Flag Revolt of 1875 made their case even bleaker as

the sympathetic Lt. Governor of Griqualand who resisted racist legislations was sacked. Thereafter, in 1876, pass laws were introduced to control African workers with indentured contracts imposed to "limit the ability of laborers to play off one employer against another" (Worden 2000:43). To further stem the flow of illicit mining, strip search was introduced in the 1880s. When white workers protested, the search became limited to the blacks. Soon after, to ensure further control of workers and easy access to labor, compounds were built for the workers. Again, white workers protested, and the compounds became limited to the blacks (ibid.). In general, white racism became a platform for pseudo-unity among whites, a *protective belt* to consolidate this capitalist-induced racialism.

The doctrine of white supremacy was officially entrenched in 1907, beginning with the semiautonomous parliament controlled by the Afrikaans in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. The Cape maintained a nonracial franchise, albeit property ownership, for blacks but excluded such demand for whites, whose only qualification was *male, white, and adult*. Africans could not stand as candidates for parliament but would be represented by whites. On this procedure, if in the Transvaal the black was simply inferior, in the Cape he was a capitalist subjective; in other words, his humanity was qualified by ownership of property. The wealthier he was, the more human he became. His subjectivity was not a given, but dependent on the economic capital.

The 1913 Land Act of Natal forbade the lease and purchase of land by blacks and was thereafter extended to the rest of South Africa. The Land Act of 1913 is very significant for it became the thrust of later racial segregation and policies under apartheid, initiating boundaries of "native resources" and the founding principle of land segregation (Worden 2000:54–55). The act effectively legitimated land seizure from blacks, leaving in its wake a huge landless population whose only option for survival was to work for the new white landlords. The 1913 general strike was against the use of black labor force. Its objective was for a racially skewed unit for a common cause of economic privilege and protection of the whites and sustenance of this racial privilege. The strikes were successful, and this inspired the introduction of the Status Quo Act in 1918. Indeed, color bar became the *status quo*, and race a determinant for accessibility to the labor market or capital.

Although officially endorsed in 1907, racial segregations were, however, in place prior to 1900. In Durban, the targets were Indian businessmen perceived as an economic threat to white traders who resented competition with them. It became extended to the blacks at the height of the Bambatha rebellion in 1906. In the 1920s, racial laws were mainly to sustain the economic viability of whites. At this time, many blacks were migrating to the

major towns in search of work—a move resented by the white working class and property owners who perceived them as unnecessary competitors and a bad influence on property value. These reasons spurred the Transvaal Local Government Commission's (Stallard) Urban Areas Act of 1923. The commission empowered local governments to introduce and enforce segregation policy and deny property rights to natives. In addition, it stipulated that the natives "should only be permitted within municipal areas in so far and for so long as their presence is demanded by the wants of the white population." The commission would also initiate strict segregation policies that would define South Africa in the decades to follow: "[T]hat *the native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the White man's creation, when he is willing to enter and to minister to the needs of the White man, and should depart there—from when he ceases so to minister*" (Walshe and Roberts 1986:575—my emphasis).

Note the tripartite relationship between politics, economy, and subjectivity. Without property rights, the African has no franchise; he is not a citizen but a subject of the state. Yet, his subjectivity is dependent on his accessibility to capital, which is nevertheless officially denied. But this move was not a decision of a government official but of a collective unconscious of white electorates who legitimated such policies through their votes (or rejected as in the Sodley Commission, which asked for a review of the racial polices). The 1926 Master and Servant Act extended the power of white farmers—more control over the tenants who were not even allowed to leave the farm without written permission of the owners. The act reinforced indentured labor and compulsory labor tenancy that compelled tenants to work for six months without pay for their landlords (Worden 2000:68). In a nutshell, the system had a severe toll on the black population. Calculating the cost of such cheap labor, D. Horbart Houghton noted that in an average 18-month contract (as at 1964), migrants would have journeyed extra 379 million miles (595,330,000 kilometers) a year, excluding their daily travel to work. Since they were only legally permitted to remain in the urban areas during the duration of their employment, it was inevitable that thousands were prosecuted and jailed for exceeding the maximum 72-hour allowance to remain in urban areas without permission and pass approval. The consequence was that 17.5 million black people were jailed for pass law – related offences in the period 1916–1981 (Mamdani 1996:228).

In the meantime, other laws were passed: Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act (1949) and the Immorality Act (1950) targeting sex between blacks and whites. The Immorality Act selectively applied to black men, who were forbidden from sexual relations with white women. The law was indifferent to white men or even worse, rape of black housemaids or female black workers by their white bosses and security forces. Other

laws were the Area Group Act (1950), which heightened segregation, and the Suppression of Community Act (1950), which broadly targeted and silenced all opposition to apartheid. The Native Law Amendment Act of 1952 restricted African residency to only those who were born in a particular city (residency was not transferable) or had worked for a particular employee for over 15 years. The rest needed a permit for a stay exceeding three days. The 1955 Native's Amendment Act defined what rights Africans have in urban places. This particular act reveals the trajectory of apartheid capitalist coloniality—there is little choice or freedom insofar as the subject's survival and subjectivity are dependent on his tie to working for a particular master. His subjectivity is only guaranteed through his labor. Other draconian legislations were the 1953 Criminal Law Amendment Act against civil disobedience and Reservations of Separate Amenity Act (1953), which introduced segregation of public amenities such as public toilets, transport, cinemas, parks et cetera. Where colored, blacks, and Indians were categorized as "blacks," English people and Afrikaans were categorized as "whites." The legislation of "whites only" and "non-whites only" was to become the symbolic representation of apartheid. This law became ratified in 1957 with a caveat in which the facilities or separate amenities could maintain a double standard literally—in quality and efficacy.[8] It was a racialism in which biological racism (physiological superiority) was to be sustained on the logic of sociocultural racism and capitalist coloniality (racial capitalism).[9]

The cohesion of group membership was dependent on institutionalized boundaries based on the racial criterion. In this context, racial boundary was exclusively bound with class privilege and right—a legalized racial stratification between citizens and subjects. Where race was substituted for class, it invariably follows that poverty among the subjects (blacks, Indians, and coloreds) was simultaneously linked to their race insofar as apartheid was dependent on control of labor and its exploitation. Access to labor was inhibited by bureaucratic dictatorship and migrant labor control and pass laws; labor shortage for advanced skills was compensated with the influx of European migrant workers. At this juncture emanated an admixture of race and capital. The exclusion of people of color from the political was not merely because of fear or *angst* of existential obliteration as opposed to a racialist capitalism. It was an impulse consistently marred by the denial of subjectivity to the other (I will come back to this point later). The racial configuration of the state mirrors a racialization of groups into classes.[10] This sentiment is consistent with Frantz Fanon's (1963:30) claim that

> [w]hen you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not

belonging to a given race, a given species. In the colonies, the economic sub-structure is also a superstructure. The cause is the consequence; *you are rich because you are white, you are white because you are rich.* (my emphasis)

However, this coloniality was not just a capitalist racialism; it was a cultural phenomenon that prospered under the myth of social Darwinism of white supremacy. Such a scale of preference akin to social Darwinism was evident in job reservation, where jobs were reserved first for the whites, then Indians, and none for Africans. In addition, what led to the Durban strike (1973) was that Indians had access to freehold property and labor that was denied to blacks. And later in the tricameral legislature, blacks were equally excluded. Whites would increasingly be appointed to superior positions of authority over blacks until such a time when structural racism became a culture, a norm of white/black relationship in the overall South African political economy. In the wake of the great depression, many programs were introduced to alleviate the plight of the whites who had also been affected by the droughts of the 1930s. A significant part of these job creation endeavors was that in government sectors of the economy, blacks would be fired and replaced with unemployed whites (Worden 2000:67). At the same time, unskilled black workers in the closed compounds could only survive as single men and depended on the rural economy for their survival. Pass laws were meant to stem geographical mobility of labor and minimize absconding. The racial division of labor was all the more sustained because the mine economy would not be able to assimilate a "proletarianized permanent labor force." This move was legitimated in 1904 in the Transvaal Labor Ordinance and rectified by the Mine and Works Act of 1911, which introduced the clause "certificate of competency" applying only to black workers. Attempts to redress the issue elicited strikes and white protests. And linked to the economy is the political, in which the status quo would rather "stay" because of electoral votes. Since blacks had no franchise, they were not a threat (Worden 2000:46). Under Hertzog's administrative pact, the 1926 Mines and Works Act enforced a "civilized labor policy" that entailed color-bar enforcement not only in government sectors but also in the private sectors. The *civilized labor* would include racialization of wages as indicated by government cabinet circular no. 5, 31/10/24:

Persons whose standard of living conforms to the standard of living generally recognized as tolerable from the usual European standpoint. Uncivilized labor is to be regarded as labor rendered by persons whose aim is restricted to the bare requirements of the necessities of life as understood among barbarous and underdeveloped peoples.

(Chanock 2001:452)

From Subjects to Capital a.k.a. Apartheid

Apartheid ideology was a residue of the earlier sociopolitical and economic racialization of South Africa's unique colonialism. Constitutively, it shared a similarity with British colonial practice; however, as I shall argue in Chapter 5, apartheid gained a unique essence by the substantive content of its practice. I insist on the autonomy of history, yet plead for a consideration of its consistency with the sociopolitical and economic motivations. Any discourse on apartheid that does not consider these features contemporaneously, effectively disguises an unjust reality. Socially, apartheid was a pretension of racial superiority. Economically, it was a project aimed at sustaining the economic privilege of the "superior" race and class. Politically, the aim was to protect the white minority from being dominated by the majority. Linked to the political was the "cultural," through which the former became jettisoned in favor of policies that were more expedient. The one-person, one-vote system was assumed as a political suicide, a threat to the existence of the white minority. This precocious panoply of factors suggests to us, as Kogila Moodley (1986:190) argues, the rationale of state-sanctioned civil formation: (1) enforced group membership, (2) legalized racial group boundaries, and (3) convergence of race and class. The reality of group membership was that Africans had no choice in this plan of self-determination except for fatality of language and color. This process itself yielded to institutionalized depersonalization. In an attempt to deal with the native question (threat of black majority, need for capital and land, security of access to labor, etc.), further legislations and edicts were passed to mask the actual brutality of the system. The aim of the imposed group membership exhibits a double maneuver: politically, it erased all possibilities for the black majority; socially, it was an alibi against bad conscience, a policy designed to deny a *presence* to the majority who would otherwise have been recognized as South Africans. It was a policy that came at a price: the politicization of the ethnic—the price of suffocating and subletting an individual's identity by invisible trademark—Zulu, Xhosa, or Ndebele. Such labeling aims at putting the subject as a remote possibility, a *presence* denied at the discreet crossings of racial capital. Consequently, the individual's subjectivity will become neutralized. To recognize someone as an equal is to recognize his/her individuality and hence accord him/her the right to be a person, a human being. Categorizing someone puts him at a distance, masks his face, and makes him invisible. I should like to risk a hypothesis that this is a *colonization of subjectivity*; it is coloniality because the subject is annihilated and must not *re-present* himself. When we perceive him as an equal, we have a problem in our hands, and the easy solution is a mutilation of his subjectivity. When he becomes a less subject, our guilt becomes less (cf. Chapter 9).

Gesuiwerde Nasionale Party (a.k.a. National Party, hereafter as NP) came to power on the ideological manifesto of *swart gevaar* (black peril) threatening the whites of South Africa and promised a heightened segregation. The myth of the black peril generated a climate of fear and white degeneration that could be curbed if races lived "apart." There would be a ban on miscegenation for fear that the white race would become outbreed-ed. Furthermore, Smuts's surprise loss in the election is generally attributed to the rise in civil protests that followed his relaxation of pass laws and subsequent influx of blacks into the urban areas. In his campaign promises, Malan promised a strict revival of the pass laws, a forceful implementation of the Land Act of 1936, which was faulted by the government-sponsored Fagan Commission. Malan launched his electoral manifesto of *apartheid*—rigorous controls, pass laws, heightened segregation, and abolished where it existed, limited African franchise. Malan won the elections, and apartheid was born, albeit a socioeconomic and cultural *coup d'etat* in 1948, with a *proviso* of strategies that induced a hitherto sacrosanct redefinition of identity and citizenship, a revisionism that would abrogate all the detritus of civic virtue and offer a malfeasance gesture of inclusion through the citizen and subject categories.

Apartheid was not a spontaneous child of the moment; it was a residue of diverging historical epochs and experiences. Depending on the historian, a different account will suffice. Nevertheless, a shared consensus is that apartheid was a symbolic platform for the Afrikaner *volk*. The historical consciousness of such *volk nationalism* will admit a story that started in the Cape frontiers of a people fighting for survival and oppression from their British competitors leading to the great Trek of 1834,[11] fighting the British in the 1870s and in the South African civil war of the 1900s, dehumanized in the concentration camps, winning partial power under Hertzog in the 1920s when Afrikaans became an official language, having complete power in 1948, breaking away from the commonwealth of nations and declaring a republic in 1961 (see Worden 2000:99). This *volk* philosophy, Worden (2000:99) argues, is actually traced to the experiences of middle-class teachers and clerics who in the late nineteenth century protested against the use of Dutch as the standard language. These disgruntled middle-class men proceeded to found the *Genootskap Van Regte* (Society of True Afrikaners) in 1875 with the motto, "To stand for our language, our nation and our land." They also founded the first Afrikaner newspaper, *Die Afrikaanse Patriot,* and began to publish Afrikaans history books that emphasized the unity of the *volk* and the Afrikaners' unique experiences as God's chosen people. Indeed, as Benedict Anderson would have argued, the newspaper offered a shared identity within a contemporaneous empty

time, infused a possibility for a new form of nationalism, offering the idea of unity where none existed before.

The legacy of the *volk* would include the historical circumstances in which South Africa became "our land . . . our nation." The legitimacy of such a claim is an intense topic of debate among historians, considering that the *land* or *nation* being referred to was also seized from a people who inhabited the land before the arrival of the white capitalist adventurists. And as Nigel Worden (2000:6) persuasively argues, the narrative of "empty land" unoccupied before the settlers is simply a myth. It was a myth advanced to give legitimacy for white occupation of land. The area called South Africa was originally populated by hunters and pastoralist San people. These were people that the first Dutch settlers encountered in the late seventeenth century. But where such justification is deemed inauthentic because it lacks *documentation,* history is replaced with an ideology of *God's chosen people—a common destiny*. The historicity of such nationalism becomes a unity of the *volk* through a compass of suffering.

The Urban Areas Act demanded relocation of blacks from predominantly "white" areas to the Bantustans. The heightened enforcement of separate development after 1948 was only a fulfillment of the election promises. The institutionalization of this policy demanded a relocation of blacks into separate homelands and the imposition of independence on these homelands. The idea of homeland was introduced in 1970. These homelands were given "independence," starting with Transkei (1976), Bophuthatswana (1977), Venda (1979), and Ciskei (1981). These new "countries," otherwise called Bantustans, were tribalized homelands for citizenship was tied to ethnicity. Blacks ceased to be South African nationals and were forcefully relocated to a presumed Bantustan of origin. The very process of such forced removals is one of the most pronounced tragedies of apartheid, manifesting the raw power of the state over black lives. And the people who had been relocated were confined to the most impoverished lands, denied any access to the capitalist economy, a move, Worden (2000:126) argues, that was tantamount to genocide.

In theory, I should risk a hypothesis that the imposition of homelands was aimed at creating a racialist capitalist territory that in practice exhibited a façade that belied the incongruity of any attempt at state formation, a symbolism of degeneration to the enemy. The enemy is the landless native, a degenerate type of human being that has no right to socioeconomic capital. And where capital is tied to human subjectivity, to deny the native access to economic capital is to deny him subjectivity. Besides, this policy of "apartheid" or "separateness" did not excuse those urban blacks who did not have any sociocultural ties to their presumptive homelands. This category of persons were only temporal residents destined to

be deported to their new, "independent" homelands and would thereafter need *pass* (visa) to visit the white-owned Republic of South Africa. Membership to this homeland was by linguistic affiliation and not by birth. Fatality of birth or that of your progenies was irrelevant; the language one spoke determined the homeland to which one was consigned. Indeed, as the precursor of German nationalism, Herder had argued, the spirit of a nation is expressed in the spirit of its language (Sprachgeist). The difference, however, is that the South African context exculpates only a salutary analogy; it was an imposed redefinition of difference. The color-bar clause had already stripped black South Africans of their South African citizenship. While blacks had to carry passes before crossing into "only" white areas, whites could without restriction move in and out of black reservations. Blacks carried passes because (1) they were aliens in their own country since the apartheid government denied them status as citizens of South Africa, and hence (2), they needed *dompass* (visas) to travel around their own country.[12]

The Population Registration Act of 1950 was a rigid fixation of a person and his forebears within a specified racialized identity. A white person is "a person who in appearance obviously is, or who is generally accepted as white person," excludes "a person who although in appearance obviously a white person is generally accepted as a colored person." A "native" is "a person who in fact is or is generally accepted as a member of aboriginal race or tribe of Africa." Now, the "native" has up to 11 other definitions depending on context. The interesting point is the shift in semantics to establish a negative semiotics of the "other," where nonwhites become residual identities, a negated subjectivity. A colored, for example, is a "nonwhite." A later proclamation (no. 46 of 1959) further subdivided the coloreds—Cape colored, Cape Malay, Griqua, Chinese, Indians, "Other coloreds," et cetera (cf. Kuper 1964:149–164). The significance of this racial index is tied to accessibility to sociocultural and economic capital.

Besides the associative dehumanization of this racial index, the burden of proof is on the black, Indian, or colored individual to prove to his/her racial community—that he/she is of their race. No doubt, such racialization induces a veneer of incoherent mosaic of sociocultural representation—in which race is a yardstick for being a citizen or a subject. If you are able to prove that you are *white* then you are accorded the status of a citizen and its accompanying privileges, such as the right to vote, access to labor, capital, and socioeconomic well-being. If you are otherwise classified as nonwhite, then you fall into one of several ingenious classifications: a subject in transition, for the *subject* is subject to further classification into *Asian* (persons of Indian origin), *Colored* (offspring of miscegenation between white and other races), and *Kaffir* (blacks). These were the subjects.

The Bantu Education Act (1953), enforced from the primary to the university level, imposed a uniform curriculum for blacks with an emphasis on preparing students for manual labor and Bantu culture. Africans were also forbidden from learning or acquiring skills that could not be used in the Bantustans or in the service of white-designated areas. The purpose of Bantu education, Dr. H.F. Verwoerd (the architect of this policy) argued, was for service in the homelands and white communities. Yet, his remarks elsewhere reveal other hidden motives: "When I have control over native education, I will reform it so that natives will be taught from childhood that equality with Europeans is not for them . . . There is no place for Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor" (Christie 1990:12). Somewhere else he would highlight the dangers of exposing blacks to education similar to that of whites because in the past such attempts had deluded Africans by making them susceptible to "the green pastures of European society in which they are not allowed to graze" (Christie and Collins 1984:173). In this policy, acquiring skills such as mathematics and science was *dangerous* for blacks because it would increase vain expectations. Besides, education of the Africans was neither compulsory nor free as it was for whites. Moreover, Bantu education was under the Department of Native Affairs and not the Department of Education. The department also designed the syllabus with a heavy emphasis on Afrikaans and handiworks. Of course, the language of instruction was the mother tongue, and later, Afrikaans was imposed as English was proscribed. The universities were also segregated into racially classified colleges or "tribal" universities. In most of these tribal universities, academic excellence could only be measured by the quality of the faculty, who indeed were quasi rejects of Afrikaner academics. But even such education was not a capital guarantee; educated blacks were mostly unemployable and were not hired by white-owned firms except in extreme circumstances where education was a prerequisite.

Increased pressures forced the regimes of H.F. Verwoerd and B.J. Vorster for a rethink on the political development in the Bantustans. An attempt to diffuse the internal pressures began with "handouts"—political concessions that could reinforce the legitimacy of the apartheid regime. These were relevant concessions but bereft of any practical solutions to the plight of blacks, coloreds, and Indians in South Africa. It was a move that unmasks other hidden motives at the base of the "tribalization" and decentralization of the natives. According to Moodley (1986:197), first, such decentralization was a bad copy of a true federation for it was an alibi for minority white bureaucrats to excuse themselves of democratic "illegality" and strain of internal pressure by luring and passing the buck to black leadership in the homelands. Second, the Bantustan "regimes" were not only unpopular puppets of Pretoria, but by assuming "independence"

they became responsible for the poverty and policies in their *independent* states. Third, the attempt was a skewed design of apartheid to "denationalize" or strip blacks in these homelands of their South African citizenship. People would be expelled from their ancestral homes on the basis of proximity to a "white" reservation area. Now, the conditions in these already overpopulated homelands would expose the extreme inhumanity of the policy—high mortality rate, poverty, disease, conditions akin to a concentration camp. A significant modulation of the aforementioned political "handout" was the mordant compromise in 1985 to incorporate *promising* or "compliant" coloreds and Indians into a separate but "subordinate" house of parliament and a few handpicked blacks into the president's council (ibid.). This was the so-called tricameral parliament, which consisted only of whites, Indians, and coloreds. The move nevertheless received strong opposition from within the NP. It was perceived as a betrayal of the *Nation*. The move was also projected to lead South Africa into economic recession, as the Stellenbosch professor of economics Sampie Terre' Blanche (1983) lamented: "[T]he economic cost of black representation in parliament will be astronomically high and therefore unpayable" (Moodley 1986:194). Such concessions and compromise would lead to loss of political domination and subsequent loss of economic power, access to labor, and capital control.

Thus far my analysis has focused only on the history of political domination, but this domination generated different modes of resistance. Such resistance inhabits the character of ideology. The resistance would induce intellectual and social revolution in defiance to the discourse of domination. This revolution will take on the format of religious millennialism and ideological movements in which people try to find transcendental hope and solution for a predicament that they cannot change. It will also inspire militant resistance that would bridge the gap between utopia and ideological praxis.

South African (Black) Nationalist Ideologies and Resistance Movements

Millennial Movements

A major thrust of the decentralization policy was the politicization of the ethnic, which was usually the ideological backbone of the native's resistance against the settlers. The ethnic as a "territorial parameter of indigenous defense" had to be broken. If native resistance was to be broken, then it had to start with this ideological backbone, for the ethnic represented an unconscious, imaginary community, a platform on which the natives could muster a common resistance. When the ethnic is broken, the people are broken. It is in this state of affairs that the *apocalypse* gives hope, offering meaning, empowerment, and unity of purpose. In times of despair, a message of hope unites a conquered people. When the life of a people becomes terrible and poverty stricken, the *apocalypse* has always looked good.[1] The apocalypse symbolizes hope in this time of despair as the people's consolation is pinned on the messianic figure. As their life becomes unbearable, "revolution" would become desirable. One of the ways of creating a revolution is by creating the ideal of Apocalypse, a messianic figure who embodies the people's hope. In Hebraic religions, we see such great icons of hope represented by the prophets and patriarchs with a resounding hope of a messiah. In Christianity specifically, this hope is expressed in the *Parousia*, the *Second Coming* of Jesus the "Christ."[2] The lot of most conquered people hinges on this hope, which inspires revolutionary millennialism. The leader of such movements most importantly possesses a prophetic

mandate. The need for prophecy is a phantasm that becomes functional as an emotional compensation and as an escape from their hopelessness. This is what the teenage prophetess (described later) had, and she succeeded. She had something to offer for the Xhosa's consummation, a consummation of hope brought about by the apocalypse. Among the Xhosa, it was a time of intense deprivation and exploitation of a people desperate to win back their confiscated land and cattle. In the present context, our young prophetess symbolizes a salvific hope and offers the Xhosa what they want.

Popular myths in the Judeo-Christian tradition are often pictured as situations in which violence will precede the coming of the New Jerusalem like the apocalyptic Armageddon, implying imminent war with God's enemies, a project that can only be attained if we define our enemies. Projecting an eschatological purpose that fulfils the existential vacuum, millennial movements represent an ideology of hope. Such movements also bolster the unity for a common resistance. This was the case in such consciousness awareness that motivated the social movement of Nongqawuse in the cattle killing of 1857, the Bambata Rebellion of 1906.

The cattle killing of 1857 offers an insight into the power of millennial movements to achieve unity and a sense of a common identity in the face of oppression and channel such unity for resistance against domination. The episode represents a poignant moment in the classic struggle of black people in South Africa against white settlers. As the British firmly established control of the Cape in 1806, they embarked on a new campaign to affect a permanent stability in the region. The result was that in 1811, the Cape governor, Sir John Cradock, embarked on a military expedition into the Xhosa hinterland. In 1846, the then Cape governor Maitland would order an attack on the Xhosa of the Cape with the intention of confiscating more land. The code language was a punitive expedition to punish the Xhosa for harboring and rescuing a criminal from Fort Beaufort prison and in which process a police orderly was *murdered*. The crime was theft of an axe. As a collective punishment for harboring the criminal, the British army embarked on a military expedition, seizing more land and renaming the territory as "British Kaffraria." The background and disillusionment brought about the need for apocalypse. But this was not the only factor. There was also the impact of a devastating lung sickness that destroyed over 100,000 cattle in 1854 (Worden 2000:20).

The aforementioned circumstances ushered in a climate of disillusionment, and the prophecy became a benign sign of hope, representing a new consciousness mechanism to cope with the current travail. It all started with a young man, Mlanjeni, who gained a reputation as a "witch hunter" and attracted a significant following in the 1840s. Notably influenced by Christianity, Mlanjeni had a vision in which his people's (Xhosa) only hope

to banish whites from their land was to abandon sorcery and witchcraft. Johannes Meintjes informs us that Mlanjeni had claimed that "he had been to Heaven and had talked to God who was displeased with the white man for having killed his Son . . . God would help the black man against the white" (Thompson 2006:75). According to Monica Wilson, "[H]e [Mlanjeni] commanded the sacrifice of dun-and cream-colored cattle through Xhosa country . . . Finally, he conceived men that he, the war-doctor (*itola*) had power to make them invulnerable, to fill the white men's guns with water, and to drive the white men out of the country" (Du Toit 1983:372). A noticeable eclectic influence of Christian teaching reinterpreted to accommodate the reality of the local people. The Xhosa at this time already had some Christian missionaries among them, and one notices a Christian messianic influence as inspiring the sociopolitical struggle. Following the tradition of Judeo-Christian Messianism, Xhosas were exhorted to abandon "social ills" (witchcraft and sorcery). The people can only escape white pillage and domination by turning back to God. It was an adaption similar to the pre- and post-exilic Israel; like Jonah among the Ninevites, Amos in Northern Israel, Ezekiel during the Babylonian exiles, and a host of other parallels and influences. These predictions never came to fulfillment: bullets did not melt into water, and whites were not banished from the land in the ensuing war (ca. 1851–1853) with the British.

The uprising of Mlanjeni was crushed, thanks to a peculiar military stratagem of the British. The war strategy of the Xhosa was mainly to weaken the economic power of the settlers; hence, their focus in the war was on recapturing their cattle, confiscated as taxation. Unlike the vanquished, however, the victor's war strategy was of total annihilation and included the scorched earth policy. There were also mass killings of men, women, and children. In the face of such failure, Mlanjeni lost his following and status as a prophet but his influence left an indelible mark on the people's conscious memories (Chidester 1996:103). This moment of despair accounted for their faith in the redemptive apocalypse of Nongqawuse: a vision of redemptive return of ancestors who would defeat the enemies, restore *the land* and cattle.

In the meantime, rumors of the Crimean War spread fast among blacks in the Eastern Cape. Consistent with the information dissemination of the day, the news was usually distorted. According to James Merriman (1957:215), "[S]ome of them (kaffirs) displayed great anxiety to know how the Russian War was going on, inquired what color the Englishmen's enemy were of, and seemed surprised to learn that they were White men like ourselves." Blacks sided with Russians, and Russian victories were exaggerated with rumors that after defeating the English, these "black brothers" will come from the sea to redeem them from the English who will then be

driven into the sea. It was at the height of this anxiety that 16-year-old Nongqawuse, a niece of Mhlakaza (an official seer and visionary in the court of senior chief Sarhili) began to see a vision of strange persons and cattle. In one such vision Nongqawuse claimed to have seen two men who said they had died long ago, coming back with a message for the whole community:

> You are to tell the people that the whole community is about to rise again from the dead. Then go on to say to them that the cattle living now must be slaughtered, for they are reared with defiled hands, as the people handles witchcraft. Say to them there must be no ploughing of lands, rather must the people dig deep pits (granaries), erect new huts, set up wide, strongly built cattle folds . . . The people must give up witchcraft.
>
> (Thompson 2006:77)

Mhlakaza, tasked by Chief Sarhili to verify the vision, confirmed with his own vision of a massive black crowd "among whom he recognized his brother (Mlanjeni) some years dead. He was told by these people that they had come from across the water; that they were the people— the Russians—who had been fighting the English with whom they would wedge perpetual warfare" (Brownlee 1977:138–139). Mhlakaza in his own vision was informed that the people in the vision had come from across the water. The vision represented the Xhosa as a chosen people who would be aided by God to destroy God's enemies, the English. Again, like Mlanjeni's earlier ritual observances that would aid them to get rid of the white man, Xhosas were exhorted to rid themselves of witchcraft and sorcery for the prophecy to come through. A key injunction of the prophecy demanded slaughtering of all cattle as well as the destruction of grain fields, suspension of farming and planting of crops. The instructions were carried out in October 1856. For a people whose only source of livelihood was their cattle, it was more than an act of faith and belief; it was an eschatological project for a new life different from the old one. The hope was that the slaughtered animals and destroyed grain fields would rise again on the eight day with a surplus.[3] Those who disobeyed the injunction would be destroyed with the whites at the Great Judgment, as indicated in one of the visions: "[T]here was another chief . . . [whose] name was Grey, otherwise known as Satan. All those who did not slaughter their cattle would become subjects of the chief named Satan" (Thompson 2006:77).

The ordinary people were divided between *amathamba* (soft believers), those who believed in the prophecy, and *amagogotya* (hard believers), those who were skeptical or rejected the prophecy. The former were national- ists who considered the plight of the people above other interests, whereas

the latter were selfish, individualistic persons. When nothing happened on the eight day, it was blamed on "unbelievers," and more cattle and granaries were destroyed such that between October 1856 and February 1857 more than 400,000 cattle had been slaughtered before reality set in. What followed was to reshape the fate of Xhosas forever. The episode exposed Xhosas to a much harsher and vulnerable condition. Over 40,000 people died of starvation with over 40,000 permanently dispersed in search of food and shelter in anticipation of the coming winter (Chidester 1996:103; Thompson 2006:78;). The episode was followed by disaster: famine, disease, and hunger. The people's will and resistance were broken, and the rest was entered into the annals of history: the British took advantage of the human tragedy and confiscated the rest of the Thembu and Xhosa land, forcing them into remote areas and settling thousands of whites on the property. The natives were dispersed in search of food in the harsh winter. Their domination was further strengthened by their integration into a single institutionalized order. The chief's powers were withdrawn and transferred to white magistrates with a policy of nonrecognition of the natives' institutions and the erosion of their communal autonomy. The Xhosa became more vulnerable to British domination, and the dream of further resistance and expulsion of the British became a historical stillborn.

Eighty years later a new prophet would arise to shoulder a people's resilience to domination and exploitation. Prophet Enoch Mgijima attracted a new following that became known as the "Israelites." These Israelites shared with earlier millennial movements a Judeo-Christian messianic influence of hope of a messiah who would redeem them from the white man's captivity and restore the glory of a persecuted people, of a redeemer from the bondage of the white man. They appealed to dispossessed landless peasants and farm laborers who saw the movement as an opportunity to vent off their frustration and anger against their oppressors. The Israelites refused to pay tax and did not recognize colonial authorities. The last straw was their refusal to forced relocation for they believed the world was ending and the God of the Old Testament had instructed them to remain on their land. They were ordered to disband. When they did not heed the order, Smuts's government ordered a bloody confrontation at Bulhoek in May 1921 in which a few hundred of the Israelites armed with sticks challenged the combined forces of the military and the police. An estimated 800 armed military personnel confronted the white robed warriors. Like Nongqawuse, the Israelites were not afraid of the white man's weapons. In retrospect, a responsible government would have used water cannons or teargas to disperse them. *Pretoria* decided otherwise. At the end of the bloody day, 183 Israelites had been slaughtered, 129 wounded.

The police sustained one causality.[4] Rubin Nkopo, a Bulhoek survivor, narrates his experience:

> We usually stayed at Ntabelenga just to celebrate Passover, but this time we decided to leave. When we emerged, we were face to face with the enemy. All our people got finished. There were three of us still alive. We tried to run, but the one in front fell and died right there as our white neighbors rejoiced. When we entered Queenstown, there were white people lining the road. They were cheering. There were many of us, wounded people on carts. All the way to the hospital, we were on show.
>
> (Vision 1993)

Other significant movements would include the African Wesleyan Church founded by Nehemiah Tile in 1884 primarily to promote Thembu nationalism and resistance, the African Methodist Episcopal Church introduced by M. Makone in 1898, and the Wellington Movement founded by Wellington Buthelezi in the 1920s. The Wellington Movement was an admixture of the ideological influence of early millennial movements and Garveyism. In an apocalyptic style reminiscent of Nongqawuse, Buthelezi assured his followers that black Americans would come with airplanes to liberate them from white domination. The myth quickly spread, especially in the Transkei. And like the Israelites, he urged his followers to refuse to pay poll tax. Others would include the Zionist Churches with massive grassroots support.

These movements were not "protestant" churches as wrongly attributed by historians. The movements signify a dialectic between theology and ideology to affect a new social order. They were fighting against similar values like discrimination, domination, and oppression. Where they lacked political praxis, they offered an eschatological hope. Although the significance of millennial movements has not received significant attention in the contemporary historiography of South Africa, one needs to be mindful of their impact as foundations upon which later nationalist movements built their resistant ideologies.

Ideological Movements

The African National Congress

Indigenous black political organizations began to emerge toward the late nineteenth century. The first of such impulses was in the Eastern Cape and comprised an attempt to win votes for the limited franchise of a few propertied black electorates. These developments saw the emergence of

other black organizations such as the Native Educational Association in 1879 and the *Imbumba Ya Manyama* (Union of Black People) in 1882. The primary focus of the *Imbumba* members was to unify black people as a formidable political force in the face of the rising wave of Afrikaner Bond (Broederbond) and the Afrikaner's culture of a politics of exclusion. Of significant interest in this development was John Tengo's newspaper, *Imvo Zabantsundu* (Native Opinion), which was influential within the blacks' political landscape. When Mr. Tengo shifted his support to the Afrikaner cause in the 1890s, an opposition newspaper, *Izwi Labantu* (Voice of the Black people), emerged with a new class of black politicians who became the founding fathers of the then South African Native Congress. Yet, the political climate of the time reveals the consciousness of many educated blacks who would rather remain dependent on white oligarchy, eschewing any possibility of political freedom as noted in a shamefaced petition to the British secretary of state to the colonies by the members of the *Imbumba Ya Manyama,* which had assumed the informal name of South African Native Congress in 1903:

> Black races are too conscious of their dependence upon the white mission-
> aries and of their obligations towards the British race, and the benefits to be
> derived by their presence in the general control and guidance of the civil
> and religious affairs of the country to harbor foolish notions of political
> ascendancy.
>
> (Fredrickson 1996:46)

Heightened segregation and further disenfranchisement changed this out-look from optimism and paternalism to revolt. Blacks began to realize that South African government intentionally and structurally excluded black posterity. The end of the Anglo-Boer War spurred deliberations and nego-tiations that culminated in the Union of South Africa in 1910. Although the outcome of the deliberations would massively affect the black majority, blacks were neither consulted nor involved in these negotiations. According to Jordan Ngubane (1963:70) the exclusion of black majority inspired the emergence of different black nationalist movements to oppose the delib-erations. The opposition in the Cape was led by Mr. Tengo, who formed an alliance with white liberals to fight for a stay of their complete fran-chise. Another voice was that of Dr. P.K.I. Seme, who argued that only a united black organization could thaw the deliberations considering the white man's indifference to the black man's cause. According to Ngubane (ibid.:70), "Seme . . . regarded the union as a white united front that would work for the continuous ruin of the African people. The only guarantee of security and, therefore, survival was to create an African united front that

would work always for the extension of the area of liberalism." The African opposition had no immediate impact on the continued exclusion of blacks in the deliberations. In reaction, black leaders and intellectuals organized a conference in January 1912 in Bloemfontein and left with the formation of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), which became the African National Congress (ANC) in 1923. It was no longer of the black man as "too conscious of their dependence" but of racial solidarity as a platform for the political solidarity of all oppressed and disenfranchised people in South Africa.

This new congress was led by Rev. Walter Rubusana and Allan Soga. In Natal, there was the Natal Native Congress of Pastor John Dube with its voice echoed through their newspaper, *Ilanga lase Natal*. Generally, the newspapers were an outlet for black frustrations, a propaganda machine to alleviate their social condition as in Sol Plaatje's *Tsala ea Becoana* (Bechuana Friend) and *Sesotho Tsala ea Batho* (Friend of the People). For the larger native congress, John Dube was the first president. In the sentiment of Chief Albert Luthuli (1962:90–91):

> One of the major purposes of the Congress, right at the beginning was to overcome the divisions and disunities between tribes, and, since we did not then hope to *create* national unity against the will of the whites who held all the power, at least to *develop* African Unity. Right from its inception the ANC realized the importance of awakening the African people and uniting them in a common loyalty which would cut across all lesser loyalties.
>
> [emphasis in the original]

In the early years, the tactics of the SANNC were mainly diplomatic by way of petitions, negotiations, lobbying, and newspaper editorials. Under Mr. Dube, the SANNC was strictly nonmilitant. The congress was generally not inclined toward civil protest. Nevertheless, Hertzog's land bill of 1926 stirred a reactionary consciousness in which congress leaders realized the futility of their efforts at conciliation. Josiah Gumede took over the mantle of leadership of the ANC in 1927, but a crack had already emerged with new political factions advocating for a different strategy. Dr. Seme replaced Gumede in 1930 and was succeeded by Alfred Xuma in 1940. However, the major revival of the ANC was with the youth league under the leadership of Anton Lembede, Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, and Nelson Mandela. For these youths the events of World War II had already demystified the supremacy of the white race and they did not accept or accommodate white paternalism nor the authority of the *white man* as a given—somewhat a character of the "senior" ANC. The intrusion of these youth leaguers into the executive cadres of the ANC changed its

working dynamics. They stressed for political self-determination, opposed passive resistance, and advocated for full franchise and self-rule. As the political landscape worsened with the ascendance of the National Party (NP) in 1948 with the institution of apartheid, the youth league adopted a new program of action in 1949. Its leaders abandoned the diplomacy and conciliation of earlier decades for a proactive line of action through civil disobedience, boycotts, and strikes. The political blueprint adopted by the new ANC would be enshrined in the *Freedom Charter:*

> We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white, and that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of the people;
>
> That our people have been robbed of their birthright to land, liberty and peace by a form of government founded on injustice and inequality;
>
> That our country will never be prosperous or free until all our people live in brotherhood, enjoying equal rights and opportunities . . . the rights of the people shall be the same regardless of race, color or sex.

Initial opposition to the charter came from blacks who saw the charter as radically immobile for it glossed over issues affecting the African people. While the ANC was moderate to include all races in South Africa, the late Lembede led the opposition by arguing that South Africa belonged to Africans only. Otherwise called the Africanist, this opposition group rejected alliances and cooperation with other groups and would call the *Freedom Charter* a "political bluff" (Worden 2000:120). In 1958, these Africanists broke away to form the Pan African Congress (PAC) under the new leadership of Robert Sobukwe with a view of an essentialist black nationalism of "Africa for Africans alone" (ibid.). No doubt, echoing the rhetoric of the pan-Africanist statesmen Edward Blyden and Kwame Nkrumah that *Africa Be For Africans alone.* Added to this was the influence of the winds of change blowing over the rest of the African continent. That the PAC was a more radical movement than the ANC was evident in the events of December 1959, which led to the *Sharpeville Massacre.* On this incident, the ANC had advocated for a single nonviolent demonstration against pass laws. The majority of blacks, however, supported by the PAC wanted sustained demonstrations, refusal to carry passes, and massive protests at police stations. On March 21, 1960, around 7,000 people participated in a peaceful march to Sharpeville police station. The march was broken up when the police fired indiscriminately at the crowd, killing 69 and wounding 80. Some historians have argued that the shooting was because "constables alarmed by the size of the crowd panicked and fired" (Worden 2000:121). I disagree. Evidence indicates that no attempt

was made at warning shots or at a nonlethal effort to disrupt the crowd. The first action was a live bullet. Although the commanding officer at the Sharpeville police station, Lieutenant Colonel Pienaar, denied issuing orders for the shooting, his sentiment toward the protest contradicts his official version of events, for he had earlier indicated that "the native mentality does not allow them to gather for a peaceful demonstration. For them to gather means violence . . . " (Reeves 1961:77). In addition to this evidence was that most of those killed or wounded were shot in the back, indicating that the police continued to shoot even as the crowd ran away (cf. TRC documents). The police action simply reflects an ideological mind-set of the apartheid government, for history would repeat itself in Soweto (1976) and on Sharpeville day in 1985 when police opened fire at a funeral procession at Uitenhage in Eastern Cape, killing 20 innocent people. Sharpeville exposed South Africa to international condemnation and economic sanctions at the UN—but sanctions that would become vetoed by the United States and Britain. After Sharpeville, new laws gave the police unlimited power in the General Law Amendment Act (1963) through which the police could detain without charge and with power of solitary confinement. And section 10 of the National Amendment Act of 1955 was even revoked to curb and abolish any remaining rights of Africans in that section of the law (see Worden 2000).

The NP through these legislative acts effectively crippled the ANC and the PAC. This period became known as the *Decade of Peace. Peaceful* precisely because of the heavy handedness of the government on protest, banning of newspapers, imprisonment, increased police power, and imprisonment of notable ANC and PAC leaders. Unable to become active or forge new mass protests as in the past, the ANC decided on militant action and consequently formed *Umkhonto we Sizwe* (Spear of the Nation) as its military wing. This military wing would sabotage government facilities and installations in the years that followed. For the PAC, the military wing was *Poqo* (Pure or Alone), which aimed at killing police officers, whites, and black informers. Both *Poqo* and *Umkhonto* had limited impact, and their influence was further damaged when the British Colonial Office raided the ANC and PAC offices in Maseru and seized the list of their members, who became detained in South Africa in 1963 (see Worden 2000). Six months later, the ANC headquarters was raided, and in the infamous Rivonia Trials, the leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment on Robben Island. The liberation movement was effectively weakened. In the absence of these liberation movements, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) filled the vacuum.

I do not intend a recount of the historical précis of all nationalist movements in South Africa. My focus on the BCM, the ANC, and prophetic

Christianity (Chapter 4) is because of their continued impact as ideological hubris of later nationalist ideology in the making of contemporary South Africa. While the ANC was unable to completely transcend intraethnic rivalries and chauvinism for an inclusive national imaginary, the BCM (and its ally, prophetic Christianity) was able to regenerate this enthusiasm of which the ANC was a major beneficiary.

The Black Consciousness Movement

The 1970s was a decade of disillusionment among blacks in South Africa, as Steve Biko (2004:37) noted:

> After the banning of the black political parties in South Africa, people's hearts were gripped by some kind of foreboding fear for anything political. Not only were politics a closed book, but at every corner one was greeted by a slave-like apathy that often bordered on timidity. To anyone living in the black world, the hidden anger and turmoil could always be seen shining through the faces and actions of these voiceless masses but it was never verbalized.

Biko was referring to the Sharpeville Massacre, harsher racial laws; a dominant liberation movement—the ANC—that had been banned; a weakening black racial solidarity that had lost its tempo; the increasing number of "homelands" that were aligning with Pretoria; black leaders, black policemen, and informers now working for the apartheid regime. The involvement of these people not only posed a challenge to the theory of "race" as the core substantive and strategic model for black emancipation but also impelled a new understanding of race. In the face of these frustrations, the racial theory beckoned a new understanding of "blackness," a shift from the old understanding of black race—in which race was constitutive of the basic premise of black oppression via an institutionalized racism, in which race became the basis for sociopolitical and economic primogeniture. The BCM challenged this essentialist rendition of humanity of race as a primary source of subjectivity.

The internal dynamics of this dehumanization was of an institutional structure whereby the Negro actually began to perceive himself as inferior in comparison to other races. The sociopolitical proclivity of this moment stipulated a hierarchy of races to mirror a hierarchy of classes with accompanying status and privileges. This racial categorization reinforced intraracial conflicts among the "inferior races," who then in turn fought for racial supremacy among themselves akin to George Orwell's *Animal Farm*. The winners of this historical struggle would become obvious in

the 1980s when the NP instituted the tricameral parliament. In general, black consciousness was a movement aimed at the rejection of liberal paternalism, a dismissal of the negative conception of the black person as "nonwhite," a definition by default. It was an attempt to reconstitute the black person's subjectivity. The aim of the BCM was to transform "a negative attitude about subordinate "non whites" into an inverted, positive discourse of resistance. It offered psychological support to an oppressed group by providing a model for positive identification, and sought to alter the contempt that the victims often felt for their own group" (Moodley 1991:242). This was the sociohistorical demography upon which the BCM exploded, rising to the international scene with the 1976 *Soweto Uprising,* which the BCM inspired. This uprising is significant and deserves a paragraph.

SOWETO is an acronym for South Western Township. It was an invention of the apartheid government, designed for mass deportation of blacks from urban areas but mostly for those forcibly removed from their ancestral homes such as the Sophiatown. "Soweto" used in this context is not written in upper case for its analytical content is indicative as a proper noun reflecting a historical epoch. Here, Soweto refers specifically to the student uprising of 1976 and the massacre that ensued. It symbolizes a new phase in the struggle, breaking the decade of "peace" 16 years after "Sharpeville." After "Soweto" therefore refers to the June 16, 1976, uprising that actually brought Soweto into the spotlight when images of the massacre floated around the world with the now classic picture of the lifeless body of Hector Pieterson carried by a fellow pupil, Mbuyisa Makhubo, as the "new face" of Soweto. The cause of the uprising was refusal by pupils to follow the structured "Bantu Education," but most specifically, a protest against the compulsory use of Afrikaans as the teaching medium in black schools. The year 1975 saw the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in black schools. About 15,000 children took to the street; the police fired into the crowd killing many of the pupils as they were singing *Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica* (God Bless Africa). The shooting specifically was in Orlando West. Soweto would come to eclipse the Sharpsville massacre in both destruction of human lives and property. The imposition of Afrikaans was similar to the British imposition of English as a medium of learning for Afrikaners a century earlier, a move deeply resented by the Afrikanerdom. In the event of Soweto, however, the students' refusal was matched with bloodshed in which over 332 were murdered (in Soweto alone) and 435 killed in backlash nationally. The *Times* would estimate the number of the dead at 700 and over and above 1,000 wounded. The apartheid state (unlike Sharpsville) emerged from the crisis weaker than before the crisis. According to Nelson Mandela, "The significance of 1976 uprising is that

the government (in their hard handedness) actually produced the most rebellious generation of the movement" (Vision 1993).

Returning to the point of our discussion, ironically, the BCM has its origins in those Bantu universities that were established in fulfillment of the NP's policy of segregation. These universities included the University of the North (Turfloop), University of Zululand, and University of Bophuthatswana. These campuses were isolated, and academic freedom was severely restricted by the dominating Afrikaner faculty. These factors nourished the resentment and anger that made these universities a fertile ground for the development of the BCM. A paradox indeed, for in principle, the BCM was a child of apartheid ideology. The exclusive membership of the BCM in itself was a partial fulfillment of apartheid dogma on separate development. It is no wonder that the BCM thrived and developed in these exclusive black universities under the watch of an exclusive Afrikaner faculty who initially saw it as a successful incorporation of the Education Act. The student founders of the BCM exploited the ideological backbone for segregation to develop an overall exclusive black movement. As Biko (2004:22) observes, "[A]t the heart of true integration is the provision for each man, each group to rise and attain the envisioned self. Each group must be able to attain its style of existence without encroaching on or being thwarted by another." But is this not exactly, at least in theory, the metaphysics of apartheid or "separateness"? As Kogila Moodley (1991:247) observed, the emergence of the BCM not only "demystified the relationship between knowledge, control and hegemony" but also exposed the internal contradiction of apartheid as reproduced in political ritual and ideological narrative. Indeed, Pretoria was seemingly contradicting itself by "virtual" abortion of its ideological "offspring" in its suppression of the movement.

On an analytical level, the BCM was an eclecticism of divergent influences: the black power movement in the United States; the thoughts of black Americans such as Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, and Eldridge Cleaver; significant and massive influence from the earlier millennial movements, pan-Africanism, Ethiopianism, Negritude movement and authenticité in Zaire; from other Negro elites in Africa and Caribbean— Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, Kaunda, Nyerere, Senghor and Nkrumah; From Latin America were Albert Memmi and Paulo Freire. The movement officially started in 1969 when black students at Turfloop campus accused the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) as being indifferent to the plight of black students. Many black students broke away thereafter to form the South African Student Organization (SASO) and later the BCP (Black People's Convention) and finally the BCM. The formation of the BCP was an attempt to link their views to the grass root level.

On the ideology of the BPC, Steve Biko (2004:53), who was to become the celebrated and inspirational leader of the movement, had written:

> Black consciousness is in essence the realization by the black man of the need to rally together . . . around the cause of their operation—the blackness of their skin—and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the "normal" which is white. It is a manifestation of a new realization that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black.

This black experience was underscored by the subjective formation of the individual on the basis of color, a mirror through which the individual was revealed: the kind of job he got, and if at all, the kind of education he received, the place to live, who to marry, in fact, the totality of his overall well-being. But it was also a marker of an inferior subject, a second-class human being. Blackness became a classification for nonhumans. The BCM sought a redefinition of subjectivity, in which race ceased to be the standard measure of humanity, and *whiteness* ceased to be a paradigm for absolute good. On this motivation, race became the core strategic impulse and analytical category for black struggle in South Africa.

The black man it was argued could only realize himself if he emancipated himself from racial discrimination, but an emancipation that could only occur with a reinterpretation of the meaning of blackness and its symbolism. The BCM inspired a celebration of blackness and black culture, taking pride in this celebration as a primordial step for black emancipation. At the same time, the leitmotif according to Biko (2004:78–79) was a refusal at this psychology of oppression: "[W]e shall watch as time destroys his paper castles and know that all these little pranks were but frantic attempts of frightened little people to convince each other that they can control the minds and bodies of indigenous people." Whites on the other hand were excluded from BCM membership for not being "black" enough and for the reason that their interest in the BCM was only out of sympathy. This exclusion was reinforced by the argument that white sympathy lacked "subjective" experience to justify white membership. Other people of color such as Indians and coloreds qualified as members of the BCM because of a shared fatality of color and the persecution that came with it. Nevertheless, any person of color (Indian, colored, or black) who cooperated with the apartheid government would lose his "blackness," and by extension, the privilege and right to belong to the BCM as "he has sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver" (ibid.:86). Membership involved proactive activism against apartheid and all its apparatuses.

The rejection of white liberals was that they represented a class enemy. The liberals were products of an oppressive system and collaboration with them was considered poisonous. Allegations of racism in such implicit proclamations were dismissed on the basis that one could be racist only if he/she has the power to dominate and subjugate. In his introduction to the *Black Viewpoint,* Biko (1972) went further to decry how white liberals had unwittingly assumed the writing of the black man's history, albeit a paternalist mode: "[W]e have felt and observed in the past, the existence of a great vacuum in our literary and newspaper world. So many things are said often to us, about us and for us but very seldom by us." The exclusion of white sympathizers according to Biko (2004:25, 54) was because their presence was "irksome and of nuisance value." Whites, he believed, would only constitute a distraction and should mind their own business of challenging white racism.

And since white liberals lived and enjoyed the privilege of their color under the oppressive regime, all whites in South Africa necessarily partook in an unanimous "metaphysical guilt."[5] Whites could only sympathize, but they had not lived or experienced the psychological trauma of the oppressed blacks and hence their influence would undermine the capacity of the BCM to attain autonomy and self-reliance. Bennie Khoapa (1972), another founding member of the BCM, would agree that "it is a mystification to preach universal brotherhood in a situation of oppression . . . it is too soon to love everybody . . . History has charged us with the cruel responsibility of going to the very gate of racism in order to destroy racism—to the gate, no further."

The BCM as an ideology began with a primary focus on capturing and influencing the mind of the oppressed. A disciple of Fanon and of the Negritude scholars, Biko, the ideological godfather of the BCM, was concerned that the most powerful weapon of the apartheid regime was the control of the people's mind. The black man could only attain liberation when he was free from this psychological and racial domination, free from liberal paternalism, and attained a heightened consciousness. The BCM was a projected nonviolent movement with strategic employment of an "awareness" philosophy to make oppressed blacks conscious of their circumstances and encourage them to escape the psychological and mental agony to which they had been subjected. Legitimacy of this appeal was essentially linked to the ideological motivation behind the Bantu Education Act as pointed out earlier. The act, for example reveals, albeit cagily, a dialectics between power and knowledge versus domination and politics. The government through such acts like the Bantu Education attempted to ensure its domination through control of knowledge as proffered by the then ANC president Dr. Xuma: "[I]t has been felt that an educated African

is a threat to the security of Europeans. And so, politicians have found that it has become more and more necessary to limit opportunity of Africans or at least to make it impossible for them to acquire the same qualification and the same skills" (Vision 1993). Govan Mbeki continues, "Verwoerd believed that if we get the child into the classroom to accept domination, to accept a subservient position in society, they (the school children) will in turn spread it amongst the community and in the final analysis, the whole African population will accept subservience" (ibid.). To this charge, Dr. Hendricks Verwoerd responded, "[I]t must be separate development for the Bantu on the one hand and the European on the other. Therefore in the course of time we should separate the spheres of influence of these two racial groups" (ibid.).

As G. Rossouw pointed out, "[W]hen you control knowledge or information, you depict the world in a particular way, but at the same time distort it . . . through your verbal control of reality you do not reflect it but create it according to your view, and persuade others to see it as you see it. This amounts to subtle domination to make others look at things your way" (Jordaan and Jordaan 1998:599). Bantu Education was therefore an ideologically inundated practice that aimed at dominating and influencing the worldview of those so dominated by a refusal to expose them to alternative worldviews. According to Wilhelm Jordaan and Jackie Jordaan (ibid.:599), what the Bantu Education Act does yield to is, "I or we [representing the system, an ideology, or a policy] will determine what you know, how you know it and what you do with your knowledge." The impact of this relationship between power and knowledge would become the critical motivation of the BCM and its policy of decolonization.

Evaluation, Critique, and Legacies

The BCM was a movement within a context. In colonial South Africa, the black person was a mere *kaffir.* But he was aware that his problems were the genus of his race and not the result of any other material reality. He was dirty because of his color; he was filled with self-contempt and self-hate, which disposed him *to suck up to the white master* while treating his fellow blacks as a "scum." He did not respect his fellow blacks because he had no respect for himself—*nemo dat quod non-habet* (no one gives what he does not have). Since his humanity was marked with self-derision and his identity disparaged in wanton, he became faceless, a nobody. The BCM was an attempt to educate the black man to become a person, to assume and define his own identity without which he could not forge a substantive political identity. He could only become an active agent of political change

by assuming a positive identity that was both empowering and reflexive. Such an identity would empower a self already disoriented by colonial discourse; it would be reflexive in situating the individual to transcend the subjectivity of colonial discourse. The individual needed to re-present himself, master, negotiate, and chart the course of his political destiny. This was only possible when the Negro was consistently conscious and aware of his negrohood.

As a movement, the BCM was a reactionary discourse to challenge apartheid's hegemonic discourse, to defuse the psychological pressure of apartheid consciousness. The BCM was an attempt to decolonize or expose the African mind to understand that black person's "given" identity, which they had assimilated, was only to facilitate their continual domination and disempowerment, instill a psychosocial disorientation, and invent a defeated-truncated African subjectivity. Hence, the quest and appeal to our cultural history for a redefinition of our identity as human beings, citizens, and not merely the given status quo—subjects. The BCM was an attempt to motivate a conscious awareness among us to be proud of our color and race as an antithesis to apartheid discourse with its functional representations that has cast the black person as an inferior "other."

The BCM was criticized to constitute what Sartre would have called an *antiracist racist* movement because of denial of membership to whites. Biko and the other architects of the BCM, for all their genuine concerns, could not escape this charge. Their position, in my view, did not accommodate other narratives of many white South Africans who also perished fighting for the liberation of South Africa. For example, the defiance campaign of 1952 had as many as 8,500 people arrested—people of all races, blacks, coloreds, Indians, Afrikaners, and the English. Any objective account of South African historiography must necessarily appreciate the role of these gallant heroes as well. While it is a worthwhile venture to include the role of these white heroes in the liberation of South Africa in any South African historiography, it does not fall within the current scope of my research but one must be cognizant of their significance.

The legacy of the BCM can only be measured within the context it developed: unfavorable sociopolitical climate and hard-line attitude toward the movement as reflected in the detentions, banning, and eventual execution of their inspirational leader Steve Biko on September 12, 1979, in police custody. With the demise of Biko, the people's energy that was resuscitated by the BCM became channeled to the ANC. Many BCM members fled into exile; others disappeared or got killed by the security branch. In the wake of the Soweto uprising, many of those who fled the crackdown joined the ANC in exile, especially its military wing, *Umkhonto we Sizwe.* At the time when the ANC was in exile, the BCM played a pivotal role to resurrect the

spirit of the struggle in the 1970s and for a period put into the international spotlight the situation in South Africa. Ironically, the BCM did not reap from this success; it was rather a movement in transition, preparing the ground for a more dominant player (the ANC) in the decade that followed. BCM members at home were to be absorbed into mainstream ANC cadre. The absorption of the BCM by the ANC would become very significant in the 1980s, when the leadership of the BCM unanimously joined ranks with the ANC.

4

The "Prophets" and the "Apocalypse"

Prophetic Christianity

Identity politics in colonial South Africa is an interface between Christianity and ideology. In Chapter 3, I argued how Christianity became very pivotal in the very first wave of the indigenous people's attempt to develop a sense of nationalism or resistance ideological movements in which Christianity would offer a beacon of hope, a convergence of political consuetude with religious praxis. On the one side of the spectrum is a Christian identity that tries to reconcile itself with the true teaching of the gospel in a midst of sociopolitical crises. On the other side is an oppressive system that sought its legitimacy on a particular interpretation of Christian principles. For current purposes, the prophetic role of Christianity is reflexive of its character as a repository for guide and conduct in responding and dealing with the immediate problem of apartheid. It would employ Christian principles as a succor for social justice and for interposing a just social order. In chapters 6–9, the architects of ubuntu in the making of modern South Africa will be accused of imposing prophetic Christianity or messianism to mask the actual necessity for social justice. Perhaps, this section might shed light on the real motivation and role that prophetic Christianity has played in the making of modern South Africa and see if the charges in later chapters are admissible. This judgment is left to the reader!

Such events like Sharpeville, Rivonia trials, Soweto, Gugulethu, et cetera, heightened the influence of prophetic Christianity in the liberation struggle in South Africa. These events I need mention, however, did not "invent" prophetic Christianity; they only exposed it to the national consciousness. Many reasons suggest that some of the liberation

movements in South Africa were significantly inundated by ideological influences of prophetic Christianity. Parallel, and drawn between Christian egalitarian principles, and given justification and legitimacy on simulated African cultural traditions, which emphasize African communitarian principles that find expression and coherence in the gospel, prophetic Christianity was to become an ideological blueprint for seduction of churches into the liberation struggle.

Black Theology

The discourse of Black Theology (BT) is built on the concept of *Black Power*. Black power is a response to structural racialism against dehumanization of black people, an invitation to confront this racial absurdity with a new kind of power. The new power unveils a realization that the psychosocial identity of the black person is an invented construct that must be refused. Black power is a refusal to this identity designation, a rebellion from such denigration that evacuates all possibility of creative subjectivity. Accordingly, BT is arguably a political project. It responds to the question of identity for black Christians who want to differentiate themselves from their *white Christian* oppressors. Is it possible to be black and Christian or is Christianity a sole reserve for white races? Where Christianity has become socialized into a political doctrine, can a black person be in politics and remain a Christian?

Within the South African context, BT emerged as a discourse of liberation. It advocated a reinterpretation of history and religion to challenge *White Christianity*. BT was beckoned upon for the redemption of Christianity from the fetishism of white supremacy, to liberate blackness from the claim of nothingness. It would weave politics and history to rewrite the graced history of black Christians within overall Christian historiography. Christianity had not only failed to accommodate black people but would become complicit in their oppression:

> For we first met the . . . [*White*] Christ on slave ships. We heard his name sung in praise while we died in our thousands, chained in stinking holds beneath the decks, locked in with terror and disease and sad memories of our families and homes. When we leaped from the decks to be seized by sharks we saw his name carved in the ship's solid sides. When our women were raped in the cabins, they must have noted the great and holy books on the shelves. Our introduction to this Christ was not propitious and the horrors continued.
>
> (Harding 1969:95–96)

The argument is that Christianity has remained indifferent to the *curse* of black persons and would become implicated in their further subjugation. In some instances, Christianity would be employed as a discourse of domination as in the following slave catechesis:

Q: Who gave you a master and a mistress?
A: God gave them to me.
Q: Who says that you must obey them?
A: God says that I must.

(Jones 1971:34)

BT set to liberate the gospel message from this interpretative absurdity. Religion could no longer be used as an instrument of oppression or *fait accompli* in continuous domination. Indeed, the history of Christianity was challenged by the notorious engagement of many men of clergy in the overall scheme of black oppression. In support of slavery, for example, these men of God would argue that being a Christian does not free one from the burden of slavery. Often 1Peter Chapter2 verse18 is cited as a justification: "Slaves, you should obey your masters respectfully, not only those who are kind and reasonable but also those who are difficult to please." Rev. Richard Furman of South Carolina would declare, for instance, that "the right of holding slaves is clearly established in the Holy scriptures, both by precept and example . . . Neither the spirit nor the letter of Scripture demands the abolition of slavery" (Jones 1971:35). In some cases, the Church forbade catechetical instruction to slaves. In other instances, even the Jesuits, among the courageous few in Christendom to break away from tradition and baptize African slaves, took recourse to conditionality: *I baptize you, if you have a soul, may God have mercy on you*. Within apartheid South Africa, Christian salvation was a white reserve. The reference to white Christianity is that a particular interpretation of the Bible was employed to justify the political order.

In South Africa, the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK) was especially notorious for distorting the scriptures to find justification for apartheid ideology to the extent that the NGK would be condemned as heretical by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches during its Ottawa convention in 1982. In defiant response, however, the *Landman Report* on race relations in South Africa commissioned by the general synod of the Dutch Reformed Church concluded that apartheid was the will of God, further evidence of the politicization of Christianity to feed a nascent political order, as Rev. Cedric Mayson (1972:6) informs us:

The difference in color is merely the physical manifestation of two irreconcilable ways of life; between barbarism and civilization, between heathenism

and Christianity . . . *Apartheid* is based on what the Afrikaner believes to be his divine privilege and calling—to convert the heathen to Christianity without obliterating his national identity.

Indeed, this version of Christianity would become a populist politicized discourse. Listen to Rev. Dr. Malan, the first Nationalist prime minister and clergyman: "When men with totally different views assert they are acting in the name of God they cannot be all right: for God is one. The '*God of the Afrikaner*' is a non-Christian myth—a projection of the Old Testament prophets on the wide screen of Afrikaner nationalism, in black and white" (Mayson 1972:4).

BT conceives God as "God of the oppressed," of the enslaved, and if the Negro is both oppressed and enslaved, this God is a Negro for he is a just God. Oppression is a system introduced by people and can be overturned without contradicting Christian virtues. Typical of liberation theology, it challenges the dominant stereotype of Western theology and proposes a God who is on the side of the oppressed, a "God of the Bible" different from the "God of the whites." The former is a God of liberation, justice, love, freedom, righteousness, community, et cetera. The latter is a God of oppression, injustice, exploitation, enslavement, hatred, apartheid (Boesak 1976:10–11).

But is BT a black racism? Rev. Alfred Kuyper notes: "[D]on't think that Christianity has weakened the racial hatred of these blacks . . . They still dream of deposing whites of their supreme power. For them, Abel was *black* and curse of God on Cain was surely this: He made him *White!*" (Boesak 1976:39). Black power challenges the myth of white superiority and white race. Where *race* is not only a criterion of social capital but the absolute measure of subjectivity in which white versus black = rich versus poor, citizen versus subject, et cetera. The white power structure is a concrete sociopolitical reality for it thrives on the invention of a new subjectivity (blackness) simultaneously tied to capitalism. Thus, to be black is to have pass laws, restricted access to labor, and powerlessness.

Black Theology and its Legacies

As argued, BT was not a definitive racial category but a sociopolitical concept in which black people located their experiences within a historical context and tried to make sense out of them. Just as blackness as a racial category had become a marker of certainty, the *black situation* would become the overall determining factor for the black person's potential subjectivity. BT was a revolt against this imposed subjectivity, often justified by

distortions of the gospel. Moving beyond revolt, BT drew resource from Christian egalitarian principles[1] of sharing and nonracialism to present an alternative political order. It sought to create a new subject that was able to transcend the deceptive nuances of racism and bridge the divide among all oppressed peoples of South Africa. It strove for empowerment and self-recognition, a *subjective conversion*, a conscious awareness that one was black but also primarily a human being without preconditions. The role of this prophetic Christianity was to invoke a new consciousness to undermine and expose the inconsistencies and hypocrisy of state-sponsored churches. If the roots of apartheid could be traced to a specific interpretation of Christianity, it is all the more relevant to go back to uproot apartheid from its own roots. On this prophetic role of Christianity, Albert Luthuli (1962:119), in the wake of the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) in 1960, had supplicated:

> The churches have simply submitted to the secular state for too long; some have even supported apartheid. While it is not too late for white Christians to look at the Gospels and redefine their allegiance, I warn those who care for Christianity, who care to go to *all* the world and preach the Gospel, that in South Africa the opportunity is 300 years old. It will not last forever.

The impact of prophetic Christianity on the liberation movements was evident in the open desire of the ANC leadership to justify their movement as an inclusive nonracial government within a broad sociopolitical and religious spectrum. As early as 1912, the first president of the South African Native National Congress (SANNC), John Dube, during his visit to the United States deliberated such values (now associated with ubuntu—values such as patience, solidarity, magnanimity) as a point of convergence between African cultural tradition and Christianity. These values expressed the native's desire for justice and would lead to "break down the adamantine wall of color prejudice and even force our enemies to be our admirers and our friends . . . [It would lead to] Onward! Upward! Into the higher places of civilization and Christianity" (Walshe 1991:30). This move Peter Walshe (ibid.:30) argues was initiated insofar as "the ethical imperative was to move beyond the confines of family, clan, tribe, and race on the basis of nonracial and increasingly egalitarian legislation." And reflecting on this projection many years later, Mr. Dube pondered the significant influence the Church could have mustered if united Christianity had more effectively been preached in protest of the color bar (ibid.).

In the footsteps of Mr. Dube was the Methodist pastor Zacheus Mahabane, who during his time as the ANC Cape president in the 1920s and 1930s was known for his integration of politics with Christian values,

an adulation in which Christianity became the basis for struggle against white domination, as he reiterated: "[T]he universal acknowledgement of Christ as common Lord and king [would] break down the social, spiritual and intellectual barriers between the races" (Walshe 1991:31). And 40 years later, as pastor Mahabane reminisced on his personal experiences in an address at the John Wesley College, Walshe (ibid.) described pastor Mahabane's non-diminishing enthusiasm: "His vision was as powerful as ever." The world was reaching a certain height whereby Christian efforts would "spread the good news of Jesus and establish widening circles of fellowship."

A powerful woman of Christian influence on the movement was Charlotte Maxexe, one of the pioneering leaders of the African Methodist Church (AME) in South Africa. A high-profile member of the SANNC, she founded the women's league, which championed a passive resistance that ended pass laws for women in 1920. The pass laws would be reintroduced during apartheid. However, Ms. Maxexe was not the only woman. The women of her age dared the men! Their corporate strength posed a remarkable threat as a Methodist pastor once noted on their militancy in 1922: "[S]ome women of our church, including women of our women's association . . . went to Makobeni's homestead and held a prayer meeting." Where "holding a prayer" also meant a political meeting, the women opposed the Land Registration Act and "challenged the men to take off their pair of trousers and wear frocks as the men were such cowards and were afraid of another man (meaning the white magistrate)" (Isichei 1995:304).

Another notable figure from the ranks of the ANC was the American-trained physician Dr. Xuma, who later became ANC president from 1940 to 1949. Dr. Xuma implored for a vision of an inclusive political order founded on the ideals of Christianity: "The liberation movement is not antiwhite in seeking full scope for African progress [on the contrary, it is] working for the good of all South Africans, working to promote the ideal of Christianity, human decency and democracy" (ibid.). At the funeral of Samuel E. Mqhayi (b. 1875), Dr. Xuma eulogized Mr. Mqhayi as "[our] African Shakespeare, our poet Laureate"; for Mr. Mqhayi's exemplary Christian life, he adduced a prophetic voice who understood "there must be neither white nor nonwhite, but a common citizenship, a united South African nation"(Walshe 1991:31). The significance of the late poet was an ability in his writings to denounce apartheid within the framework of Christian charity that promoted a Christian attitude as a response to apartheid.

"Krune Mqhayi," Nelson Mandela (1995:49) wrote in his *Long Walk to Freedom,* was a "praise singer, a kind of oral historian who masks

contemporary events with poetry that is of special meaning to his people."
Mandela recalled his admiration for the great poet:

> Mqhayi then began to recite his well-known poem in which he apportions
> the stars in the heavens to the various nations of the world. I had never before
> heard it. Roving the stage and gesturing with his assegai towards the sky, he
> said that to the people of Europe—the French, the Germans, the English—
> "I give you the Milky Way, the largest constellation, for you are a strange
> people, full of greed and envy, who quarrel over plenty." He allocated cer-
> tain stars to the Asian nations, and to North and South America. He then
> discussed Africa and separated the continent into different nations, giving
> specific constellations to different tribes. He had been dancing about the
> stage, waving his spear, modulating his voice, and now, suddenly, he became
> still, and lowered his voice. "Now, come you, O House of Xhosa," he said,
> and slowly began to lower himself so that he was on one knee. "I give unto
> you the most important and transcendent star, the Morning Star, for you
> are a proud and powerful people. It is the star for counting the years—the
> years of manhood." When he spoke this last word, he dropped his head to
> his chest. We rose to our feet, clapping and cheering. I did not want ever to
> stop applauding. I felt such intense pride at that point, not as an African, but
> as a Xhosa; I felt like one of the chosen people.

The reader would easily notice Christian influence: *morning star* refers to
Lucifer, who Revelation chapter 12 in the Bible tells us was the most power-
ful angel in heaven but pride led to his fall and expulsion from heaven, or as
adulated in Milton's celebrated *Paradise Lost*. Now, the persona (Mandela)
refers to himself as one of the *chosen ones*. An attitude that has become
part of Xhosa consciousness beginning with Mlanjeni and Nongqawuse
(cf. Chapter 3)—a chosen people who would eventually become redeemed
and their glory restored.

As shown earlier in this chapter, while the Dutch Reformed Church offi-
cially embraced and offered legitimation for apartheid, other mainstream
denominations circumscribed to indifference to such legislations as the
Urban Areas Act of 1923 and the Group Areas Act of 1950, which among
other things, issued a segregation of churches. In the Catholic Church, the
seminaries were institutionally segregated until 1979. It was only as late as
1957 that the Catholic Hierarchy began to distance itself from apartheid
through an encyclical "Statement on Apartheid," in which the Catholic
church denounced what they described as "a blasphemy to attribute to
God the sins against charity and Justice which are the necessary accompa-
niment of apartheid" (Walshe 1991:32). Nevertheless, these denunciations
of apartheid remained on the level of pronouncements.

According to Walshe (ibid.:33), although the churches as "institutional arrangements" were inactive in challenging the oppressive structures of apartheid, individual clergies for their part stood out. Of significance among these were the likes of Trevor Huddleston, Michael Scott, Ambrose Reeves, and Arthur Blaxell (later to be deported). Geofrey Clayton (the Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town) and Denis Hurley "the Lion of Durban" (the militant Catholic Archbishop of Durban) vigorously and vehemently opposed the government's attempt to bar blacks from attending churches in white areas. Yet, these were exceptions. In the overall scheme of things, the churches were non-committal to the struggle; in many cases, they were *temporal* servants of temporal power through active collaboration or passive indifference to the regime.

Although the impact of BT began to be felt before the formation of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), many reasons suggest that the later militancy of prophetic Christianity was given a boost by the BCM. Other factors suggest a symbiotic influence between the BCM and later versions of prophetic Christianity. A significant influence in the evolution of BT was the emphasis on substituting the universalistic theology as interpreted by white missionaries with interpretations fitting into the situation of the oppressed natives. Resource was sought in the gospel for evidence against oppression and support for resistance against apartheid. Although the likes of Biko, Barney Pityana (clergy), Abraham Tiro, and Malusi Mpumlawana (clergy) were the acknowledged political leaders of the BCM, other members of the South African clergy such as Manas Buthelezi, Bonganjalo Goba, Sabelo Ntwasa, and Allan Boesak were credited theological mentors of the BCM. Pityana and Mpumlawana specifically ended up as Anglican priests. With his appointment as Lutheran bishop, Manas Buthelezi was joined by Desmond Tutu and Mandlenkhosi Zwane in developing the exegesis of BT as championed by the BCM and later the UDF and the ANC (Walshe 1991:34). Desmond Tutu for his part was first consecrated as the bishop of Lesotho in 1976, and then the secretary-general of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) before becoming elected as the Archbishop of Cape Town in 1986.

These individuals were significant in the development of prophetic ideology, of which BT was no less significant. It is in this sense that what became known as BT became foreshadowed by a prophetic ideal and a movement under the shadows of the BCM as Biko (2004:34) himself noted: "The only path open for us now is to redefine the message in the bible and to make it relevant to the struggling masses. The bible must not be seen to preach that all authority is divinely instituted. It must rather preach that it is a sin to allow oneself to be oppressed."

The political mandate of prophetic Christianity and its dependent ideologies became more manifest with the formation of the United Democratic Front (UDF) in 1983 through the initiatives of Tutu, Naudé, Chikane, and Boesak (all members of the clergy). The UDF was founded to fight against the 1983 Constitution. These men, Walshe (1991:52) notes, "were among its patrons. Charismatic, confrontational yet irenic in intent, they were eloquent spokesmen for the Front's non-racial ideals." By 1985, the UDF would coalesce with both COSATU (Congress of South African Trade Union) and the ANC. It adopted the ANC's freedom charter and became the prophetic voice of the alliance, infusing its initiatives of non-racialization and justice into the movement. A fulfillment of the prophetic vision envisioned by Boesak (1979:102) when he noted: "It is not a Christian struggle I am pleading for, it is for a Christian presence in the struggle that I plead."

The Decade of Darkness and the "Third Force"

Pass laws in South Africa were abolished in 1986: a point of departure for a reform process that altogether unbanned nationalist movements and the release of political prisoners. This development also brought with it an influx into the cities and townships. The struggle for scarce resources heightened tensions in already politicized tribal communities as they competed for recognition, supremacy, and access to resources. The immediate cause of the crises started in 1987 in Natal when different townships allied with the UDF began to challenge the dominance of townships, hostels, and shantytowns that were sympathetic to Inkatha. The human cost of the feud was massive. The violence continuing unabated spread to the Reef and the Transvaal where pro-Inkatha hostel dwellers clashed with hostel dwellers sympathetic to the ANC or the UDF. Now critical questions emerge: Why did a political dispensation aimed at ending the violence of colonialism and apartheid defeat its own end? Was the violence a result of a *third force* with the intention of weakening any organized resistance and opposition to any residual legacy of apartheid? By extension, did the violence represent an implicit intention to sustain colonial/apartheid logic that Africans could not rule themselves? Answers to these questions remain as complex as the situation itself. I shall content myself in commenting briefly, albeit in retrospect, on the chronology of events that led to the "macabre."

The 1980s saw a violent wave of protest among blacks in response to the 1983 Constitution, which introduced a pseudo-sardonic tricameral legislation of white-Indian-coloreds only parliament. The new Constitution

was intended to bolster the apartheid regime's power base and gain international legitimacy. Every means was employed to attain this goal: the country was put in a state of emergency, as the police, the army, and government vigilantes occupied and unleashed terror on black townships. There was an intensive clampdown on opposition to apartheid. With the growing black population and concomitant unemployment, many unemployed blacks would be recruited to spy for the government, but mostly to bolster the ranks of the police and the army. These new recruits were usually poorly trained as evident in their vicious discharge of duties.

The "third force" so to speak was that the state actively encouraged vigilante groups to attack antiapartheid organizations and their sympathizers in the townships and Bantustans. This became the so-called *black on black* violence. These vigilantes received massive logistical support from the state to perpetrate violence. Evidence of a *third force* would be found in the activities of the *Witdoeke* (known as such because of the white headbands they wore) and the *Kitskonstables (*Instant constables). Graduating after a six-week crash course, the *Kitskonstables* were notoriously used by the security branch to terrorize anti apartheid groups. In May and June 1986, the *Witdoeke* would destroy many ANC sympathetic homes under the full glare of the police who came only to protect them from retaliatory attacks from the residents. These vigilante groups did the *dirty jobs* for the government. A similar incident was in June 1992 when the ANC leadership attending a funeral in Boipatong, a township in Transvaal, was attacked by Inkatha vigilante while the police watched. The impact of the *third force* reached a peak in the conflict between the UDF-ANC and Inkatha. In the crises of 1987–1988 in Natal, the NP government sided with Inkatha, looking away when Inkatha inflicted heavy damage and causality on the UDF-ANC, but then arresting and detaining members of the latter in the event of counterattack (*see also* Worden 2000: 145, 151).

The decade of darkness was further characterized by the institutionalization of police and army death squads, torture of political detainees, and thousands of disappearances, a situation that would elicit the revulsion of the South African antiapartheid literary giant Nadine Gordimer (1999:126), who summarized the situation in her celebrated novel, *The House Gun*:

> There had been so much cruelty enacted in the name of the State they had lived in, so many fatal beatings, mortal interrogations, a dying man driven across a thousand kilometers naked in a police van; common law criminals singing through the night before the morning of execution, hangings taking place in Pretoria while a second slice of bread pops up from the toaster.

Evidence suggests that the NP government was desperate to derail the peace process, distract and destabilize the ANC from the coming elections. In perceiving the moderate Inkatha as an ally, the NP had sought an alliance with Chief Buthelezi to counter and wither the rising influence of the ANC. A range of support was given to Buthelezi, such as propaganda materials, educational initiatives, and most significantly, a covert military training assistance by the South African National Defense Force (SANDF). The last straw was the financial assistance to the tune of $100,000 given to Inkatha for a 1990 rally. Some have argued that the state went on and "directly sponsored the resulting mayhem to the tune of several million rand" (Adam and Moodley 1992:488). In retrospect, the action of Pretoria in supporting Inkatha in my view reflects a political ingenuity. De Klerk in an attempt to gain legitimacy for his government (at least for the international community) at this time was also forging an alliance with the ANC. So why the double maneuver? Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley (ibid.:488) have argued the reason is that in initiating *black on black* violence, white voters would be frightened to support the moderates (Inkatha) and further weaken the position of the ANC at the negotiating table for the ANC would no longer be in a position to forge a formidable alliance.

Buthelezi would readily admit that a secret apartheid fund had financed two Inkatha rallies and that the apartheid government did indeed train an Inkatha hit squad that contributed to the civil crises. This revelation damaged his credibility among many black South Africans, a move that endeared him toward the NP in the 1994 elections (Worden 2000:158–159). De Klerk for his part denied knowledge of the third force and denounced the findings at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which implicated him in the 1987 bombing of the anti-apartheid center in Johannesburg. Yet, one would imagine that in a centralized state such as apartheid South Africa, De Klerk could not claim ignorance of the third force. For all his humanism, Mandela struggled to forgive De Klerk for this complicity as he noted when he was about to receive the Nobel Prize: "[I]t is impossible to defend him [De Klerk] in our communities. In his view their [black] lives are cheap . . . that is the most serious problem for us as far as the violence is concerned (Russell 2000:145). Through his lawyers, De Klerk contested the findings of the TRC and would have his name struck out from the final report of the commission.

In an attempt to deflate international criticism, De Klerk appointed the Justice Goldstone Commission of which findings implicated the security branch. Other commissions of inquiry included an Independent Board of Inquiry, which summarized its findings in what it titled "Fortresses of Fear," still yet pointing to a third force. These findings confirmed earlier findings of an international delegation of jurists that visited South Africa

in March 1992 in investigating the possibility of a *third force.* A claim further supported in another finding by the Community Agency for Social Enquiry (CASE) based in Pietermaritzburg, pointing fingers at De Klerk and his NP.

As the violence subsided, De Klerk was pressured into dismantling the last vestiges of official apartheid through a complete franchise for all races in South Africa. This franchise was not unconditional; many factors account that the NP negotiated from the position of power over the ANC. Other reasons suggest that the "only" alternative choice for the ANC much less for the NP was to negotiate: the fall of USSR, which indicates loss of financial and ideological support as well as diplomatic recognition; the control of the security apparatus and economic capital by the NP, the ensuing civil war between the ANC and Inkatha, etc. To this end, De Klerk arguably negotiated with "political institutions that would exaggerate the power of minorities and shackle majorities" (Macdonald and Wilmot 1993:397). The idea is not to abdicate but to share power: an overrepresentation of the white minority in the upper chamber of parliament by a regional representation, but a representation with a veto power to decisions enacted in the lower chamber. It is to share power, by which De Klerk in the London *Financial Times* of May 7, 1991 means, to keep "one hand on the tiller for a very long time" (ibid.:395).

The "Prophets" of the Apocalypse

As argued in Chapter 2, the special kind of colonialism in South Africa was a racial capitalism dependent on permanent settlement. While the internal rationality of such racism was a projected illusion of white supremacy, the question that remains is how such racial oligarchy remained sustainable. Consider that the rationale of the theological and racist motivations; racial oligarchy and cultural purity at the foundation of this racial capitalism is certainly challenged and made fragile by its own contradictions. This obvious incoherence and internal contradictions pose a demand for a continual redefinition of its content in order to sustain its ideological framework. The process of this redefinition is survival politics; demanding a new imagination, confluences of strategy in which old ideas are recast in new mould. These features tell us that ideology is not just a product of political culture; it is also a determinant of political culture. In South Africa, survival politics would become a platform to deal with the anticipated political apocalypse when blacks come to power. The strength of its logic, Adam (1978:661–662) argues, "lies in creating anxieties in the first place, and then offering way out for the frightened" from the "Jungle" world

of "black and white, with Marxist aggressors at the throat of industrious farmers".

Many reasons suggest that delayed transition to democracy in South Africa was a peculiar ideological mindset of the apartheid government. The term *prophet* in this section resonates with the peculiar understanding of the "nation" within a nation. A prospect of political dispensation and freedom presents an ominous threat to the *nation*, which in this case is the "Afrikanerdom". As a result, grand prophets emerged; prophets whose voices represented the essential character of apartheid order. These prophets would manipulate sociohistorical exigency of the present to justify continued oppression. This apocalypse, irrational to us but possessing an own rationality, was anchored on the fear of a political doomsday.[2] As the institutional structures of apartheid began to crumble, the regime adapted a Machiavellian pose. Power was no longer easily attainable through the barrel of the guns or administratively driven justice. As the ideological formation of apartheid was withering, the polemical thrust of apartheid mutates; this time, a psychosocial warfare. This was not new. It was merely less recognizable. It possessed the same consciousness at the heart of capitalist coloniality. In the South African example, fear is induced in the mind of white South Africans. Such fears usually circumscribed to the existential obliteration of white subjectivity in South Africa if blacks gain political power. The concern is on the procedural application of power and not on its substantive consent which would otherwise interrogate *where*, *how* and *what* gives such acquired power any legitimacy. Incidents elsewhere in Africa is adapted and captured with exaggeration and analyzed as a classic example to what could happen to whites if they relinquish power to a black majority. The voice of the prophets echoed the *present* in such pervasiveness as the National Party Cabinet Minister warned Parliament on March 24, 1988: "*Everywhere in Africa, coups, insurrections and political violence have been endemic as ethnic groups have struggled for supremacy . . . why would majority rule be any difference in South Africa?*"[3] And as negotiations got underway, pessimism on the future of the whites no doubt clouded any political will to engage in negotiations. Attacking the NP for venturing into negotiations with the "terrorist" ANC, the leader of the breakaway Conservative Party, Andries Treunicht, less subtle in his prophecy of an impending doom lamented in the *The Pretoria News* of February 9, 1988: "*The National party . . .* [is leading South Africa] *on the road to a hell of white destruction and racial conflict*". The prophecy was anchored on the inevitable bloodshed between blacks and whites. Evidence of civil strife in other parts of African is indicative of what blacks are capable of when they achieve political power. Blacks on gaining power would certainly turn the tables unleashing morbid violence to the

inevitable extinction of the white person in South Africa: "*It cannot surely be doubted that both sides . . .* still have an enormous capacity to unleash much greater violence, so that deaths will . . . be . . . in their tens of thousands" (Hugo 1988:567). There was heightened defiance and resistance to change as Terre' Blanche pleaded: "When [blacks] start to burn and loot our property and rape our women as they did in the rest of Africa, we will not lie down and be slaughtered" (ibid.:567).

There is no doubt that the motives of these lamentations were every bit emotive in an imminent struggle of a decaying political power. At the same time other voices tried to pacify this fear and concern such as that of Dr. Nthato Motlana: "These forgiving people I am sure will forgive the unspeakable iniquities of the past and be willing to introduce a just society" (Fischer, Giliomee and Albeldas 1987:126). This view was echoed in the Lusaka Manifesto (1969): "Our Stand towards Southern Africa thus involves a rejection of racialism, not a reversal of existing racial domination" (Essack 1986:32).

In my view, this fear of apocalypse is not based on any actual fear of existential obliteration as opposed to fear of loss of capital. If South Africa is a racialist capital territory in which subjectivity is surreptitiously linked to capital, loss of capital equals loss of subjectivity. It is therefore fear of a possible loss of economic power which found its expression by projecting fear of physical violence as opposed to survival of subjectivity. This is in line with the thesis that colonialism in South Africa (apartheid or British) was in fact a capitalist coloniality. The very virtue of this system was that the "whiter" you were, the more available the resources. Apartheid was therefore not just a social and political principle but also an economic principle as Ndebele (1972) had observed:

> Among the whites, the fanaticism about race has simply watered down to negative attitudes springing from a self-inflicted ignorance. That is why apartheid has all in all become 'petty'. Apartheid is no longer a pseudo-ideology; it has become an economic principle. This is an important development for the black person. It means that the black man must be careful on concentrating on the racial struggle to the detriment of the economic struggle, because the latter may have become more important than the former."

As I shall argue in Chapter 5, the psychosocial impact of this mentality on South Africans at the end of apartheid was decisive. With the demise of apartheid, ordinary life became an attempt to reverse this form of capitalist coloniality, subjecting of identities to the altar of capital accumulation. For the Afrikaners in this point in history, the preservation of

capital is synonymous to a preservation of subjectivity. Adam and Moodley (1987:165) noted that the "major unifying bond lies in preserving affluence and privilege not doctrinal purity". The fear of loss of privileges becomes tied with everything else—social status, humanity, prestige, all essential features of capitalist racialism. The ideology of fear became politicized government propaganda for its own survival. Fear became an alibi for continual stay in power.

In the meantime, the threat of white man's "existential obliteration" develops into a nuanced subject of political debate; a psychological innuendo that goes beyond social economics to survival travesty. The hold on power is sustained by such charade of fear. Gwendolen Carter drawing an analogy from the white man's situation in Kenya foretells the future of white South Africans under black majority rule: "Mau Mau movement, unrest, blood lust and hostility towards the white man were the fruits of a liberal policy [by the British] such as the [opposition] United Party advocated" (Hugo 1988:571). At this juncture, politics becomes a psychological warfare in which an imaginary fear of survival is induced to dissuade other whites who might be sympathetic to freedom. Undoubtedly, as pointed earlier, this politicization of fear remains vacuous as its appeal, demanding continual redefinition of its content. Based on the assimilated evidence, incorporation or integration of blacks into the political stream has proven to be a disaster as they learn from other African countries. David Maughan-Brown similarly relates the Kenyan analogy: "Mau Mau. The words conjure nightmare images of mutilated bodies and bloodied pangas, of remote clearings in the forest . . . peopled by shadowy forms engaging in obscene and bestial rituals . . . the words evoke images of isolated farms, lonely little groups of whites . . . being crept up on by black figures"(ibid.:571–572).

The story of the Afrikaner in South Africa it has been argued is unlike other "whites" who could return to their country of origin when expelled from other African countries at independence. The Afrikaners' only home is South Africa. The situation of whites in other parts of Africa demonstrates that the only solution in SA is separate development. As evidence has shown, it is seemingly that blacks do not tolerate partnership with whites, a view echoed in the editorial (8th and 12th July, 1960) of *Die Transvaler, which* sympathized with white South Africans who cannot flee like other whites in the rest of Africa. South African Whites have no choice than to remain behind as masters in their *own* land.

Consistently spurred by hyperbole, fear as an ideological propaganda would sustain the continued disenfranchisement and exploitation of persons of color through an illicit transposition of historical analogy. Hugo (1988:574) describes such emotive referential incidents like the 1978 Kolwezi crises in Congo in which white lives were lost; an analogical destiny

of white South Africans when blacks gains political power. On the aftermath of the Congo riots, Afrikaner newspapers bore disturbing headlines, prophesying the inevitable doomsday as a consequence of a prospective political dispensation. Highly charged emotive pronouncements: The editorial of *Pretoria News* of May 22, 1978 reads:

> Death's Face of Horror Revealed . . . the stench of decaying flesh is overwhelming. The sight is even worse; 32 white people jammed into a tiny room and slaughtered . . . further atrocities particularly against women were committed . . . In front of a . . . hedgerow lay the body of a (white) girl about sixteen. A few centimeters away lay her head, severed by a panga.

Attacking the liberals for their sympathy towards a black enfranchisement, the Johannesburg based *The Citizen* editorial of same day curried similar warning that the crises in Congo should be a warning for all who seek political dispensation. Even though South Africa is Western Democracy, the editorial goes, Africa as seen elsewhere do not accommodate democratic principles: "the continent, in fact is still possessed of an inherent savagery . . . the brutality of a Dark Continent surfaces shamefully and shockingly. Mass murders, atrocities, genocide . . .".

But the politics of fear is also a question of a survival politics. Survival ideology describes a unity of the *volk* under a barrier of a common threat. The idea of a common enemy (projected or otherwise) induces common unity; generating a necessity for a new ideology as the *Rapport* of January 2, 1977 noted on apartheid resistance:

> Two comments, typical of many which recurred in private conversations, may suffice to illustrate the perplexed longing for a new faith in an ideological vacuum: It is in times like these that a nation needs a vision, such as the one we had when we seized upon the idea of separate freedoms. Then, too, we were aware of the dark times that lay ahead, but somewhere in the tunnel, we saw a glimmer of light and we made our way in that direction. Now we find ourselves once more in such a tunnel.
>
> (Adam and Gilomee 1979:130)

The "glimmer of light" at the foundation of apartheid—the safety of the white man, to prevent the extinction of the white race, policies implemented through apartheid style of capitalist coloniality. The efficacy of the ideological manipulation has now become the center of citizenship politics in South Africa as P.W. Botha himself realizes, "it is not always easy to determine precisely what is of importance for survival. That is where it is necessary to conduct the debate more openly and more searchingly. I personally believe that there are numerous matters which could be changed

without affecting our survival, indeed, which must be changed if we are to survive" (ibid.:134). While citizenship was imposed on white South Africans, it was denied to black "South Africans". As apartheid regime began to crumble, citizenship status became an ideological tool for government manipulation. A law was thereafter passed to give "aliens" conditional citizenship. "Aliens" (who by the way are South Africans but deprived of that status by fatality of race) who are under 25 years would gain citizenship after two years of permanent residential permit. But, this came at a price. In becoming "citizens", they simultaneously qualify for military service and would fight against the terrorist nationalist movements like the ANC. Refusal to oblige compulsory military service spells an automatic loss of citizenship and residency.

As Adam and Gilomee (1979) argue, survival of a cause is dependent on ideology without which such cause crumbles. The ideological form becomes manifest through survival politics and victimhood. At first, the idea was of victimhood in which white South Africa sought to redeem its image through a distinctive appeal to historical analogy as Gerrit Viljoen wrote in the editorial of *The Star Weekly*, May 20, 1978:

> South Africa is the victim of an historical guilt feeling in the West. South Africans were the only white people to establish themselves outside Europe who continued to flourish without killing off all the indigenous people or reducing them to a minority in their own country. This happened with the Indians in North America, the Eskimos in Canada, Laplanders in Sweden, Aborigines and Maoris in Australia and New Zealand, and the Aztecs and Incas in South America. It is now the descendants of these murderers of peoples who criticize the Afrikaner today, citing high morality and Christianity.
>
> (Adam and Gilomee 1979:139)

Within a historical contextualization, playing victimhood can be legitimized in reference to the atrocities of the British forces against unarmed Afrikaners during the Boer War. Historically persecuted by the British, the question is why these people who have experienced domination and exploitation by the British, in seizing power turn the table not against the British, but a less formidable foe, exhibiting in their character a worst form of imperial adventurism. In retrospect and for pure historical interest, I shall pause now to examine the extent and limits therefore to which Afrikanerdom might lay claim to victimhood as a justification for apartheid and as a policy in defense of *subjectivity* or "self preservation". The English briefly occupied the Cape between 1795 and 1803. During this occupation, series of laws were passed aimed at weakening and neutralizing the influence and power of the Afrikaners. The British occupation became

permanent in 1806. Through a series of draconian legislations (1823, 1825, and 1827), English language was made the compulsory official language for schools, businesses and foreign relations. Further legislations (1854) prohibited Afrikaners from the parliament and in State schools (in 1865). Reminiscing on this experience, G.H. Rossouw noted:

> The time is well remembered when pupils in the lower grades were severely punished if they dared speak their mother tongue during school hour or playtime ... Africaans, [*sic*] the spoken language, was anathema to the English teacher ... One thing, however, the educationists failed to accomplish. They failed to make English the spoken language of the Dutch. English, to be sure, became the literary language and the language of commerce and trade. But in the Africander [*sic*] homes Afrikaans persisted as the spoken language.
>
> (Du Toit 1970:539)

But an internal contradiction of the allegations become evident in an earlier paragraph in which Rossouw tries to justify his accusation of the English and defends the status quo with a quote from T.B. Muller, *Die Geloofsbelydenis van n Nasionalis* (The Confession of a Faith of a Nationalist):

> Just as a *child* best develops self-conscious personality when he not only associates with *children* but also with *adults*, so our national self-consciousness appeared in full when we not only had to do with *Kaffir tribes*, but rather, *with the powerful British nation* as whole. And was not the fact that the greatest empire on earth did not bring small expeditionary force against us, but a large army, the best evidence that they respected and regarded us as equal with their European enemies ... In suffering and anxiety our nation was born.
>
> (Du Toit 1970:539–540—my emphasis)

Notice my emphasis: *child* or *children* is equal to the *Kaffir tribes* (blacks) as *adult* is equal to the *Powerful British nation*. What was not evident in the voice of the personae is that he was also a conquering adventurist. His cry of lamentation becomes only significant because a more powerful force is dominating him. Such lamentation of victimhood has become embodied in the historical emergence of the "chosen" people, an exclusive historical memory as Du Toit (1966:109) seems to suggest:

> [The Afrikaner] was born on the outposts of the Dutch settlement at the Cape; weaned in the vast expanses of the interior while withdrawing from British domination and struggling against hordes of African tribesmen; came of age after being trashed by the British troops in the Second War

of Independence [the Anglo-Boer War]; and matured as the ruler of South Africa. In his personality and make-up is ingrained in the struggle for recognition in the years during which he opposed Anglicisation, and fear of the possibility of being swamped by the numerically superior Africans. These two aspects must be kept in mind when looking at the Afrikanner element in South Africa.

Elsewhere, Du Toit (1970:541) becomes more apologetic:

I would suggest then that what we are dealing with is hardly different from Afrikanner apartheid. In this context then we can fully understand that the Afrikaners, especially the Nationalist party, which represented the political ideals of the majority of this group of people, developed a policy by which they could best achieve recognition of their cultural and linguistic unity and continuity. This recognition in fact was accorded to the other culturally and linguistically homogenous groups in South Africa.

As to the question why geographical separation is the solution and deportation only applicable to blacks, and excluded other white "identities" like the German, English, Afrikaner, etc., Du Toit (1970:541–542) responds:

It seems, that Bantu-speaking peoples have traditional geographical, cultural, and linguistic areas, and these are being developed. The whites, though speaking different languages, are all resident in South Africa and should then be identified together . . . it seems, moreover, that it would be politically less expedient to sub-divide the whites, since they already form a minority group.

The political expedience of apartheid ideology, it seems, modulates the "other" (black, Indian, colored) as the antithesis of the *persona par Exelon.* The "other" is an inconsequential topic, an afterthought whose subjectivity is merely accidental. Such thoughts call to mind the often-poached Marxist argument that a dominating superstructure is sustained by invention of moral rationalizing or ideologies by intellectuals. This claim is vindicated through such analogical references in which Du Toit (ibid.:533) and other proapartheid scholars arrives at the conclusion: "In the light of Australia's immigration policy, and the views of French-speaking Canadians, Black-Power Americans, and some African states, it seems clear that *apartheid* as philosophy and as policy is no longer unique to South Africa". The psychosocial impact of these polices on black South Africans echoed long after independence, mediating a new consciousness in the civil society. The next chapter will briefly focus on some psychosocial residues that have become a dominant character of postcolonial South Africa.

When the Chickens Come Home to Roost

Language and Power

I begin this section with a remark on language, power, and discourse. Psychology of colonial domination occurs through cultural mummification in which the culture of a dominating power is celebrated as a continuous reminder of the victor and vanquished. For the vanquished, the loss is of a perpetual defeat; for the victor, an eternal glory. One such example was the *Voortrekker* Memorial in South Africa, which became a symbol of animosity and contempt for the British especially. In the South African context, the historiography of the Afrikaner nationalism is constituted by Anglophobia and negrophobia in which the virtues and persona of the Afrikaner *volk* patriots are adored and celebrated in contrast to what Hilda Kuper (1964:161) described as the "atrocities of the English, and the savagery of the Africans."

Related to cultural mummification is the crucial role of language in the erosion of traditional memory. Language holds an awesome power as a tool of colonialism and its representative discourses. Language transgressions are formidable part of South African historical culture. While the Nguni languages (isiNdebele, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiSwati) are the only click languages that evolved through their contacts with the Khoisans, according to Marylin Martin (1996:6)

> Afrikaans was originally a kitchen patois, a simplified, faulty interlanguage which found its written manifestation in Arabic script, which was subsequently standardized, used as a tool of power in the rise of Afrikaner

nationalism, and [as] . . . language of apartheid and the language of the oppressor.

As I argued in Chapter 2, the imposition of Afrikaans in South Africa was an attempt to homogenize different memories of Africans through language. Resistance to Afrikaans as the alternative language of institutions was because it symbolized domination and exploitation. Afrikaans was conceived as a domain in which African subjectivity will be intentionally manipulated and displaced to give space for the growth of a new memory—a sentiment that bears legitimacy to the criminalization of any deviation toward the adaptation of Afrikaans as in 1976 Soweto. According to Mudimbe (1994:132), since language is tied to power, other "divergent languages and cultures often vied for prominence, and this competition occasionally developed into a confrontation, or a sort of ethnic warfare." South Africa is more peculiar because Afrikaans actually developed around the history and culture of white occupation in South Africa; hence, some critics have called it a language of oppression. I do not agree with this assessment. By itself, it is an extraordinarily rich language, a unique contribution to South Africa's diversity, and a beautiful language.

Nonuniqueness of Apartheid?

It smacks of intellectual mockery to claim that this modest intrusion into the legacy of South Africa's colonial history is an overwhelming comprehensive account. The location of the evidence I have chosen is only justified for their relatedness or perhaps, more precisely because they offer a sociopolitical topography to validate my discourse. In this section, I shall briefly explore certain residual antecedents of South Africa's colonial history. I shall proceed by locating South Africa's colonial history in the context of the overall colonial tendencies in Africa. Is South Africa's colonial history unique? If not, what will be the contradistinctions? And if we agree that South Africa's colonial history is co-substantively unique what will be the residual consciousness of this moribund coloniality? I will now proceed to investigate the psychosocial detritus of South Africa's special kind of coloniality. *When the chickens come to roost* implores various strategies of coping with these spillover effects of our colonial history. I will examine the shift from being (humans) to consumers and the very vacuous appeal to scapegoatism as a foil for the emanating crises.

Many South African writers (Berger and Bobby 1988:26ff; Giliomee and Schelmmer 1990; Spark 1990; Welsh 1990:9) have decried any parallel analogy between the South African colonial experience and the process

of decolonization in the rest of Africa. South Africa it is argued is unique in the sense of being an independent country since 1910 and not a colony. The situation in South Africa they argue is one of a transition from authoritarian regime to a democracy eschewing any form of decolonization. Normatively speaking, the end of apartheid as *transition to democracy* is meaningful insofar as there are indigenous "whites" who did not leave the country as seen in the exodus of whites in other parts of the African continent at independence. South Africa was a settler colony. Any extension beyond this fact in my view, is easily undermined by the substantive content of apartheid, which was its ideological stress on capitalist racialism. The very fact that oppositions to apartheid were in fact liberation movements and not democratic parties undermines any claim to "procedural transition" eschewing decolonization. Above all, the emergence of a liberation movement usually yields within specific condition. The more successful the liberation movement becomes in their struggle, the more distance they are from those conditions that will spawn democracy. In South Africa, liberation movements were not sustained by erudite metaphysics, but noncryptic ideological reasons to improve the basic sociopolitical conditions that are tied to the economic at the grass roots. The aim was to give hope: restoration of a humanity truncated by the racialist history of South Africa.

Scholars such as Mamdani have argued that apartheid is neither different from the British indirect rule system nor the French policy of "association" or "assimilation." According to Mamdani, this idealized uniformity between policies (indirect rule, association, and apartheid) is further evidenced by the structural differentiation between "identity" and "differentiation" highlighted by Lord Hailey (1957:150) in his analysis of different forms of colonial experience:

> The doctrine of identity conceives the future social and political institutions of Africans as destined to be basically similar to those of Europeans; the doctrine of differentiation aims at the evolution of separate institutions appropriate to African conditions and differing both in spirit and in form from those of Europeans.

The policy of differentiation is anchored toward forging a native institution through which to rule the natives. Yet, these institutions, Mamdani (1996:7–8) himself admits, were no more racial than ethnic, and no more native than tribal; the institutions were merely a front for a racial dualism "anchored in a politically enforced ethnic pluralism." He, however, arrives at the conclusion that the apartheid state was no colonial exception; it was only "a generic form of the colonial state in Africa . . . the British termed (it)

indirect rule, and the French association . . . it is a decentralized despotism." This deposition demands further explanation and scrutiny.

On the sociocultural level, black South Africans were culturally not assimilated like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa. Although blacks in South Africa experienced social dislocation through forced removals to the homelands, they nevertheless remained attached to their cultural environment. Blacks in South Africa were inhibited from any form of synchronic assimilation. Attempts at integration were encapsulated in a diachronic isolationism. Drawing insight from the French experience, the policy of assimilation was at least in theory, synchronic,[1] a contrast to the apartheid policies of dubious sociopolitical and cultural separateness. Ezekiel Mphahlele (1962:25) recognizes this double contradiction:

> It is significant that it is not the African in British-settled territories—a product of "indirect rule" and one that has been left in his cultural habitat— who readily reaches out for his traditional past. It is rather the assimilated African, who has absorbed French culture, who is now passionately wanting to recapture his past.

Most of the African colonial experience was a product of a bifurcated state's encounter within the colonial context. The state maintained a dualistic power schedule with a hegemonic authority, as Mamdani (1996:18) himself brilliantly argued: "[U]rban power spoke the language of civil society and civil rights, rural power of community and culture. Civil power claimed to protect rights, customary power pledged to enforce tradition. The former was organized on the principle of differentiation to check the concentration of power, the latter around the principle of fusion to ensure a unitary authority." Accordingly, if indirect rule is characterized by a decentralized despotism, Mamdani (1996:18) argues that it does share essential features with apartheid, ranging from the banal violent experience of its application, "experience" he construes to be parallel with apartheid with the only difference being that

> [t]he Africa of free peasants is trapped in a nonracial version of apartheid. What we have before us is a bifurcated world, no longer simply racially organized, but a world in which the dividing line between those human and the restless human is a line between those who labor on the land and those who do not . . . inhabited by subjects on one side and citizens on the other.
>
> (ibid.:61)

On this basis, Mamdani (ibid.:61) asks if indeed the colonial state was not a basic form of apartheid state. And by extension, "has not the deracilization of that sate structure through independence failed to come to

terms fully with the institutional legacy of colonialism?" The independent African states are "deracialized but not democratized" and only represent a "deracialized but decentralized despotism," which remains the African state's inherited legacy. It is in this persuasion that Mamdani (ibid.:27) proceeds to argue that apartheid is not necessarily unique to South Africa. While generally perceived as a form of institutionalized racial domination, "apartheid" Mamdani (ibid.:27) opines, "was actually an attempt to soften racial antagonism by mediating and thereby refracting the impact of racial domination through a range of Native Authorities." According to this view, apartheid is only an idealized form of indirect rule as obtained in other parts of Africa simulated in a divide and rule system. This appraisal is marred by controversy, and in response, I shall expose the incriminating essence of its appeal as it is consistently less transparent.

Mamdani isolates issues of racialist capitalism in apartheid South Africa and focused only on the bifurcated character of the apartheid state without interrogating that even the bifurcated state is in itself a product of capitalist coloniality. South Africa he would argue is only exceptional on the weight of its very active civil society and the large numbers of white settlers. Black urbanization on the other hand is a consequence of industrialization following the gold rush. He cites the Soweto example of 1976 as a testimony to the strength of black civil society. And exceptionalism of this South African experience is because resistance is located in townships, that is, the "urban-based warrior" as opposed to other resistance movements in other parts of Africa, which were against Native Authorities (ibid.:29). Unlike most African countries where indigenous civil society became a postindependence phenomenon as a consequence of the deracilization of the state, in South Africa the indigenous civil society "is both the cause and consequence of that deracialization" (ibid.:29). At this juncture, it seems to me that Professor Mamdani is not specifically clear on what he means that South Africa's historical colonial experience is not unique. In some areas, he becomes ambiguous:

> It is precisely because the South African historical experience is so different that it dramatically underlines what is common in the African colonial experience. Its brutality in a semi-industrialized setting notwithstanding, apartheid needs to be understood as a form of the state, the result of a reform in the mode of rule, which attempted to contain a growing urban-based revolt . . . by repackaging the native population under the immediate grip of a constellation of autonomous Native Authorities so as to fragment it.
>
> (ibid.:31)

To the extent that the constitutive arrangement of colonialism reflects a bifurcated character, I concur with Mamdani that constitutively, colonial

policies in most of Africa remain the same. However, my key moment of disagreement with Mamdani is on the substantive content of what constitutes these policies. If apartheid is influenced by segregation laws in earlier decades, the relaxation of these policies and even recommendation that they be abolished (cf. Fagan Commission etc.) challenges some interpretation that apartheid was merely a continuation of the British indirect rule system and/or that the policy of apartheid was similar to the rest of the Africa in substantive format. My position is that one may tease out common constitutive similarity between the colonial systems in South Africa with the rest of Africa prior to 1948. This is the closest commonality with other forms of coloniality in Africa. In application, apartheid is different and unique for it moves beyond capitalist racialism to inhabit a character of ethnic nationalism or *unity of the volk.*

This conflation of subject and capital became the benchmark of apartheid ideology as an institutionalized racialist control of socioeconomic resources. The political inducement was to create an artificial majority by balkanizing the black population into homelands. With regards to its substantive essence, it will be preposterous to argue that indirect rule is also a form of apartheid, with the only difference being that it was not trapped in the racial version of apartheid. In my view, there is no continuity between indirect rule as practiced in most of sub-Saharan Africa and the South African apartheid experience. Decentralized despotism was a hallmark and consequence of the indirect rule. But does the same narrative apply to South Africa? Apartheid was both a form of decentralized despotism with forced labor, banal violence such that differs from indirect rule and much more. The hallmark of apartheid does not rest only in a decentralized despotism but also on a racial capitalism, which determines everything else, an ideology of power generated for control of capital, arbitrated by a discourse of a special kind of humanism. While the policies of apartheid (South Africa), assimilation (French and Portugal), association (French), and indirect rule (some parts of British Africa and India) were definitely colonial (a constitutive commonality), the development and application of the policies differ in structure, orientation, and substantive motivation.

If indeed Professor Mamdani does make a comparison between indirect rule and apartheid in South Africa, this comparison, I think, lies in the constitutive format of both systems and not on their institutional substantive exigency. The "invention" of paramount or warrant chief by the British is comparable to the apartheid's regime attempt to balkanize and invent "homelands." The stark difference is that the former was merely for administrative efficacy without forceful evictions and deportations; the latter was invented to enhance and stabilize the policy of racial domination and territorial segregation. The modus operandi of both systems spells

out unequivocally the South African experience as extremely unique in its own right. Hence, the constitutive arrangement remains the same, but the substantive application differs as to where and to what extent the violence of colonialism was unleashed on the African people. Furthermore, the apartheid state was much more than a bifurcated state: it was a state of the privileged race, strapped upon social Darwinism. Malan government introduced new categories of races and divided the population according to race: white, colored, Indian, blacks. This racial category determines the sociopolitical framework in which an individual operates. The rigidity of enforcement and application of the racial differences is usually bottom-up, in which those unfortunates in the bottom section of this racial hierarchy may not access the sociopolitical, economic, and political sphere of the upper races. I do not agree that the development of indigenous civil Society in South Africa is both a cause and consequence of deracialization. Apart from the pass laws, such argument may not contain other structural incidents such as separate busses, cinemas, toilets, a double standard enforced through institutional violence: Whites only! Blacks only! Surely, this kind of decentralized despotism moves beyond academic discourse. Besides, even the pass laws were only for a particular race. A person who was denied subjectivity because, as Verwoerd argued, "he cannot take care of himself . . . he is a warrior whose only aim is to impress his women. The white man taught him how to work, how to be a man . . . ," and therefore how to be human.

The position of Professor Mamdani is dependent on his basic premise that in the overall colonial malpractice in Africa, the absence of administrative personnel as a direct cause of indirect Rule was artificially created. If this claim is in fact true, Mamdani would have a point. But as I argued elsewhere (see Eze 2010), this is only partially true for it constitutes a "double problematic." In most instances, there was genuine absence of administrative personnel and indirect rule became the only feasible option, at least in the British controlled areas. And besides, even the substantive content of the practice in British controlled areas wouldn't conjure a common experience (even in the same country) where they are practiced much less with apartheid. Evidence such as these persuade me to conclude that any contradistinction between apartheid and other forms of colonial systems in Africa has to be based on their substantive and constitutive applications.

When the Chickens Come Home to Roost

In this section, I briefly shall explore the psychosocial impact of South Africa's colonial legacy. The imperative of this move is because it is an issue of the most celebrated public imaginary, consistently emotive as an

ideological nuance in the public sphere. This move will enable me to establish continuity between the sociohistorical character of South Africa's colonial experience with the prevalent conscious reception of that history within contemporary South Africa. It is not my intention to indulge in the sociohistorical or even normative significance of either continuities or discontinuities, but to create a dialogue with the different moments of South Africa's historical experiences, a consciousness that pervades contemporary South African historiography. This "dialogue" also construes a link between the preceding and successive chapters.

Apartheid left a huge vestige on the psychosocial consciousness of South Africans of all races. The collective unconscious of the typical black South African, for example, is entrapped at the historical interstices of identity negation. If as I have argued that apartheid was indeed a racialist capitalism, small wonder that attempts at "recovery" would follow similar pattern—to reconstruct the depersonalized identity of the African subject via the same trend that dehumanized him in the first place. His subjectivity is subjected to "possessive" ideology. The term "possessive" is a definiendum of the new black identity: an apparent contradiction in a continuous redefinition of its content, in which increasingly the paroxysm of *possesivisms* threatens to block the forecast of the struggle. A glorified dogma, the emerging black identity will be anchored on a capitalist subjectivity in which *who I am* is determined by the ancillary *what I have*. The kind of material possession as in the kind of car I drive is a repository for my identity. The reconstitution of my subjectivity through a pathological possesivism is played down by an inexplicable need to take possession of things only formerly accessible to the white community during apartheid, but a desire that comes with a striking sensuous rage. The idea is to weave one's perceived identity around a new form of racial capitalism, this time, a reverse racial capitalism—not necessarily affirmative! The structure of the new capitalist model is that the wound of the past is compensated by material acquisition. As I argued in Chapter 2, apartheid was a racialist capitalism (capitalist coloniality) in which race determines one's access to material resources. Now that the institutional structure that mediated the racial capital is overthrown, the black person "recovers" himself by way of "reverse discourse" to posses as much as he can as if his humanity is dependent on his possession. Although this revisionism emanates from the state's attempt to induce a hitherto sacrosanct redefinition of black identity in the new South Africa, the motives of such normativity are yet to be questioned. How does one account that majority of black workers in South Africa today live above their income? Living on credit? Buying new cars where BMW became baptized as (Be My Wife—BMW). Since humanity in apartheid was a racial capitalism, certain continuity is sustained for

access to socioeconomic privilege and resource still remains the measure of humanity. At this point, we encounter a quandary in which the new black identity is a *given* for it remains a subjectivity reconstructed at the gaze of the "other" by way of value reversal or what I have termed *subjective converters*. The definition of humanity hinges on the restoration of a pre-given standard of what it means to be a *human being* during the years of apartheid's racial capitalism. The power is not with the subject but on an ideal perceived as a standard bearer of humanity. This also explains why middle-class South Africans are more particular in their class division from those below them. Everyday encounters reveal how the new elites, the new middles class, make insidious efforts to create an invisible boundary between themselves and those below them. In this state of affairs, the middle-class person who has lived all his life in Mamelodi shantytown or another would upgrade to one of the most plush suburbs, identifying with the successful class, shunning poorer blacks, driving 4 × 4 vehicles (even if the privileges are on borrowed credit), all in an attempt to upgrade the scale, to become more human. *I am what I have!*

An accepted social imaginary adapted by the mentors of South African colonial enterprise was to conceive the native always as a child (cf. Chapter 2). "*The natives are children; they are always happy and laughing.*" No doubt a social imaginary given impetus by the likes of Lévy-Bruhl, the categorization offered legitimacy for the speaker to act as a guardian or protector of the "child." The child cannot vote for he is not-yet human; he must be taught, groomed, and punished if necessary. The "child" is happy in his condition; to raise his standards to the level of whites is to make him unhappy for he would no longer be a child because "the spoiled native is the one who becomes the agitator." Others will be less gracious and would contest the linguist term "childlike" native, who instead is a savage. Kuper (1964:161) describes one of such allusions: "They are savages really, they have no inhibitions, they can imitate, but can't think for themselves, they have different brains from whites . . . don't know the meaning of gratitude." As Kuper rightly argues, this was no less a political psychology to justify the continual domination of the natives. It is also a politics of exclusion dependent on racial hegemony. But this vision of humanity is not just one-way traffic. By way of reverse discourse, the African tries to reconstitute his humanity by negating the whites who would be described as "another kind," "not people," "have no pity," "full of greed." These whites are "are deceitful and have shown us their heart." The whites are "alien" such that children can be threatened to submission by mentioning that they would be taken into captive by whites. "Whites," Kuper (ibid.:162) continues, "have no ubuntu—loosely translatable as humanity."[2] This stereotypical categorization of whites exposes

the ambiguity toward any discredited view that racism was usually a one-way traffic. The British whites are viewed as hypocritical and pretentious, whereas the Afrikaner whites are mean but honest and less pretentious. On this stereotypical categorization, Mphahlele (1962:42) recounts his experience:

> It is difficult to reconcile the willingness on the part of the British to accept the group and not the individuals in the group . . . the Afrikaner can, in very paternalistic fashion, treat his servant very well as long as the latter 'keeps his place'. But the Afrikaner loathes the black people as a group. The Englishman can say quite glibly, "A wonderful tribe those people are—so well behaved, so humble" . . . and yet he [the Englishman] is a difficult man to get at from side of the color line and keeps up a tacitly superior pose in his dealing with me as an individual. I think he despises and distrusts me.

Among white South Africans, the stereotype continues for "whites" in South Africa are categorized into two groups: the Afrikaner and the English. Meet a white person on the street of South Africa and ask him his nationality and he will say either "I am Afrikaans" or "I am English." This attachment to ethno-linguistic affiliation transcends the national identity and the consciousness of being "South African." Perhaps, chapters 6–9 would proffer insights on how contemporary South Africa transcended these divisions.

Apartheid as a racial capitalism was largely descriptive of the "boss-servant" relationship with former being the benevolent benefactor. The new political dispensation with its associative ideologies alters the scenario. Affirmative action as a state dogma will become a critical location of struggle and subjective redefinition. The implication is that the South African white man and woman become a traumatized subject. This trauma emanates from the fear of subsequent loss of access to socioeconomic and political capital. During apartheid, the white man was the boss as the white South African woman was the "madam." These positions in the socioeconomic development of South Africa today are challenged. The white woman is challenged by her house cleaner on minimum wage. The black woman no longer readily responds to the "calling" of the madam, and she cannot be fired! With new democratic government, the black, colored or Indian worker realizes the extent of his political capital. COSATU tells him he can negotiate for his right as a worker and even for a better working condition. In the past, the *bass* dictated to his "fortunate" black employees, whose lot was reminiscent of a servile obedience: *Themba, do this; Zama, do this*, et cetera. With 1994, the position of the master, a position dependent on the burden of command, is now challenged as workers begin to make

demands for better working conditions. Only then does the *bass* realize how unprepared he is to matters of practical necessity.

Collective Catharsis and the Scapegoat Phenomenon

In dealing with the aftermath of apartheid, the transitional structures did not give attention to the collective psychic traumas experienced during the apartheid era. The great mass suffering deeply embedded in the unconscious imaginary was not given any expression nor surrogated. Some scholars have argued that violence in South Africa be construed as a sign of collective catharsis? In chapters 6–8 I shall argue how ubuntu has been proposed as an ideological surrogate or a realistic enterprise in dealing with the psychosocial dynamics of the postapartheid South African state. Before then, however, I need to examine the psychosocial implication of the apartheid experience as manifest in the present day socioeconomic and political consciousness of South African people. This is important in order to appreciate what happens afterwards in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the making of modern South Africa. It will also stand to measure the success of these ventures.

As indicative of this subsection, catharsis may become manifest through the scapegoat phenomenon. By scapegoat phenomenon, I mean the attempt of always finding an outlet to blame for our socioeconomic and political malaise. It means subletting the failures of our political elites (and personal failures) with surrogate excuses. The surrogate excuse may come in form of racism, antiracist-racism, or xenophobia. Usually, a particular group of people would become identified as scapegoats. In scapegoating, the social malaise is heaped upon the "other." He/she is always the cause of our problems. Purgation and catharsis is arrived at through heaping blame on others. The other is the *holocaust*, the *victim sacrifice* through which the group attains purity and reconciliation. The other is fixated as the "sacrifice." The outsider is an object of fixation, a projection of the victim who becomes a sacrificial lamb to purify the society of all its decadence and decay, of all its impurities.[3] Scapegoatism employs different outlets such as xenophobism, sexism, racism, ageism—all of which have a certain ritualistic dimension, albeit an unconscious neurotic fixation. In scapegoat phenomenon, *we condemn the thief not because he is necessarily worse than we are, but because he offers an opportunity to reinforce our own morality and sense of the good.* The *other* who is "different" from me becomes the holocaust sacrifice. Notice that this difference is not essential but accidental as explicated in the following Igbo idiom "Nkita niile na eri nsi mana obu nke ahuru nsi na onu ya ka an akpo ori nsi" (all dogs eat dung but it is only

those dogs that still have the remains around their mouth are called dung eaters) Collective guilt is borne by the scapegoat in the society. During the Nazi time, it was the Jews who became the holocaust, a source of purification, to purify and cleanse the Nazis. The experience of the Jews under the Nazi regime in comparison to the lot of the Negro has been articulated by Marie Bonaparte in *Myths de guerre:*

> The anti-Semite projects on to the Jew, ascribes to the Jew all his own more or less unconscious bad instincts... Thus, in ridding himself of them by heaping them on the shoulders of the Jew, he has purged himself of them in his own eyes and sees himself in shining purity. The Jew thus lends himself magnificently to a projection of the Devil.
>
> (Fanon 1986:183)

In the South African experience, scapegoatism is always marked by an appeal to a historical past. A lazy student who fails his examinations would blame his failure on the racist lecturers who do not want blacks to progress. A worker laid off for lack of performance would appeal to racism. Suffice to say that racism has become a crutch, a programmed instrument that imposes a symbolism of morbidity to the other. At the same time, however, it will be too tendentious to dismiss racism as a myth, for racism indeed is real and active in the postcolonial South African experience—exhibiting a surrealist character:

> A few years ago, I was a teaching assistant at a local university. Part of my duty was to correct and grade philosophy examination papers. In one instance a student had performed poorly, he accused the white lecturer of being biased because he was black. Actually, teaching assistants under supervision of lecturers corrected the examination papers. In this case, I marked this particular examination paper. When I was called to give justification to the student why he had performed poorly, the mere fact that I was black like him settled the case as he proceeded to issue apologies. Somewhere else, a lecturer was accused by fellow colleagues for inducing his teaching assistants to gloss over examination scripts of certain alphabetical surnames because this group happens to bear black surnames, a group that usually performed poorly.

Incidents such as these highlight the shifting tension in the making of modern South African identity. Both problems are inextricably bound and cannot be wished away; they are real and active. The former reveals the manipulations of historical past as a crutch for scapegoatsim, a point of projection to attain purification. The second incident efficaciously masks an otherwise unjust reality. While we cannot always appeal to the past as a crutch for our failures, it is continued injustice to mask such incidents with

catchphrases: *Move on! We have moved on!* Or as in some circles, where any reference to the past would become a stimulated historical fatigue. Apartheid is gone, but its ideological foundation, racism, is active and must be confronted. Yet, scapegoatism is not the solution; it is futile, as Fanon (1986:183,194) warns: "[R]elease from hate complexes will be accomplished only if mankind learns to renounce the scapegoat complex."

One cannot dismiss the impact of left over resides of what Fanon (ibid.:198–199) calls "un-reflected imposition of a culture." There is an ambivalent continuity between apartheid consciousness and postcolonial South African consciousness. The resocialization process exudes elements of historical contiguity. Apartheid denied the black man his humanity and dignity. A white man speaking to the African was like an adult to a child. The white man was usually patronizing, smirking, whispering to the Negro. As Fanon (ibid.:33–34) writes, the Negro is scolded: "[Y]ou'd better keep your place." This mentality, in Fanon's view (ibid.), was indigenous to colonial culture, a culture supposedly in sharp contrast to the Negro, a *muntu* whose subjectivity was that of an exploited subject:

> When the question arises of understanding why the European was called *Vazaha,* which means *honorable stranger*; when it is a matter of understanding why shipwrecked Europeans were welcomed with open arm; why the European, the foreigner, was never thought of as an enemy, instead of explaining these things in terms of humanity, of good will, of courtesy, basic characteristic of what Césaire calls, "the old courtly civilization", . . . some scholars argue that it is in the unconscious, there exists something that makes the white man the awaited master.

Fanon has a point. One sunny day does not make a summer! Transition to democracy neither engineered an automatic reconstitution of the political unconscious nor immediate change of frame of psychosocial referencing. For majority of older black South Africans, the frame of referencing is largely a servant complexity, whereas for the whites, it is that of a master complex—complexities that endure in the immediate years following the collapse of apartheid. An old man of 65 years still answers "bass" to a white South African twice younger—another proof of racial capital as the core determinant of humanity. Evidence suggests that in many cases, the white man represents an imaginary *superior* as proof of depersonalization consciousness that constituted the black man's past socialization, precisely what the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) was fighting against:

> Long after Mandela has been sworn as president, a group of black men in their sixties employed as manual laborers by a local university had gone to

work around 8.00 on a Saturday morning in one of the girl's hostels of a predominantly white university. On arrival, a young white girl sternly rebuked them for daring to disturb her long Saturday sleep. After the rebuke these men (much older than her father by all account) were made to wait outside for two hours before starting to do their work.[4] Somewhere else, a professor of sociology[5] sent out a petition to the dean of humanities in response to a memo in which every other person was addressed by their titles like prof, dr, mr, miss, even the secretaries except for the odd black men and women working as messengers who were simply addressed as James, Tebogo, Mary, etc. Their names were not prefixed with either ms or mr, a further evidence of such residue of capitalist racialism. The recent controversy at the University of Free State (February 2008) where white male students allegedly made stew with urine and fed to female black workers echoes a peculiar consciousness.

While these examples are isolated incidents and do not in my view construe or define the pattern of overall relationship between blacks and whites in South Africa, nevertheless in making the historically contingent, they offer a rationale for those exigencies that simultaneously obscure antagonisms. I wonder if the undergraduate student in my story was not simply reliving a consciousness pattern she picked during her socialization. This was the collective unconscious of her racial group: a consciousness in which the white was always the master and a person of color subjected to an inferior position. The same applies to the author of the memo at the University. These incidents unmask a fixation of a collective unconscious located in time past.

As pointed out earlier, we cannot dismiss the impact of apartheid consciousness on most black South Africans, a consciousness characterized by struggle for humanity and dignity. The struggles were sometimes codified through violence, in which morbidity of the enemy was a symbol of hope: *Death to the enemy! One settler one bullet!* Humanity was to be achieved through violence, and the death of the enemy. Our dilemma at this point is to understand what in fact is holding South Africa together. During apartheid, there was unity among all blacks in South Africa in opposition to whites; the nature and identity of the enemy was visibly imprinted in the minds of all. In the postapartheid context, the formidable dialectical relationship in which the enemy was visualized in the analytical tension of us versus them, the good guys versus the bad guys became eradicated. As the symbolism of the "other" become demystified, confusion reigned supreme in search for a new identity. This is so because our identity was indentured in the analytical tension of us versus them, in which *we* as residual characters developed and perceived our identity by our common victimhood under the lead character (the oppressor) and by our common

resistance (in the form of violent culture) to the lead character who neces-sarily determined this course of action. But does it follow that the removal of target simultaneously implies the cessation of tension? In my view, the abolition of the power of the lead character (the oppressor) is not a simul-taneous neutralization of the residual character. With the loss of power by the lead character, the residual character loses its target as confusion reigns supreme. The end of apartheid does not and need not necessarily spell the end of the culture of violence that emerged as a consequence of South Africa's colonial history.

This background also informs the rational of the following chapters and emerging criticisms. One must be cognizant of the "historical transi-tion" in which this culture of violence developed. It would be tendentious and illegitimate move to link what was "there" before apartheid and its emergent sociohistorical consequence with what "is" there after the tran-sition period. A theory of confluent identities would explain the infusion of the emergent historical consequences into the contemporary social his-toriography of South Africa. South Africa's colonial past was a period of *interregnum* between cultural histories. Therefore, if crime and violence contradict the very basis of our civic society, one must not lose cognizance of the historical moment and consequence that hijacked the moment in which the violent act occurs. In other words, one must take a contempora-neous look at this historical moment and not only focus on the *consequence* to arrive at conclusion but at the causality leading to such consequences.

But violence cannot have the last word. Indeed, that the native should restore his humanity either through scapegoatism or violence is merely an atavistic topography. Besides, the crises of 1987–1988, coupled with the struggle of the African National Congress (ANC) to transform itself from a liberation movement to a political party with a broad national perspective, were the challenges of the new government. The bitterness, hatred, suspi-cion, and desire for revenge after over 300 years of colonial violence, how do we transcend these divisions and achieve a national core, a national sovereignty? What can bring these competing identities into one imagi-nary fold of the national? In the absence of a cohesive national core, the election of 1994 was focused on the personality and character of the par-ticipants, mainly Mandela and De Klerk (Worden 2002:162). De Klerk represents the lingering residue of Afrikaner nationalism and Mandela that of a new sovereign subjective. The voting, understandably, was a highly charged racial affair. Of interest to note in this election was that most Indians and coloreds did not vote for the ANC but for the National Party (NP), a situation that reveals the precarious balance between identity and social Darwinism to which they have become assimilated. Mandela for his part became a prophetic symbol of New South Africa. But does this

symbolism accommodate whites, coloreds, and Indians who would rather remain with the status quo? The focus of the next chapters is to underscore various attempts to deal with these emerging crises. The success of this attempt is a subject of intense academic interest and debate. It would emerge through various attempts to forge a new national consciousness to form a new nation. The process through which this occurs, and is displayed, is intuitively linked to a redefinition of nationhood. This will be my narrative. A narrative in which hope symbolizes a future in the *present*, and as the future becomes present, the narrative opens a latitude in which the past becomes *present* too. In this way, my narrative attempts to establish continuity between the past, the present, and the future as one historical moment. This is the process through which ubuntu would emerge as a narrative discourse of South African historiography, a discourse not limited to one consciousness, narrative, or imagination, but to all. I shall expose the polemical thrust embedded in its representations (chapters 6 and 7), its shadow over the national memory as in the TRC, moving beyond these representations toward the reconstitution of ubuntu as offering a performative essence for the new national core (Chapter 8), and toward a new public discourse and humanism (Chapter 9).

6

Ubuntu: Many *Voices* of a History

Attempt at "creative historicism" will be the core method for the remaining chapters of this book. In this chapter specifically, I shall begin to interrogate one of such intellectual movements, "ubuntu." Although a reconstructed memory, ubuntu is a discourse that is partly dependent on the attempt to configure a theory of political succession through cultural nationalism. Ubuntu will become a representation that attempts to tell a *story* within a story, constituted in part by historical paradox, ambivalence, and ambiguities—features that add to its credibility on the one hand, but mask its authenticity on the other hand. If indeed an authentic movement within history how does its orthodoxy, confront or challenge the contradictory implications emanating from its narratives? Do its verbal pronouncements gauge its actual programs in dealing with the contemporary socioeconomic and political situation in South Africa? Relatedly, following the writing of Mudimbe (1994:149), to what extent is ubuntu as a discourse able to project a formidable function, "one of producing a reflection of a reality that is not out there in the name of a memory that it invents by positing it as reflected by an absolute origin and the pragmaticality of contemporary circumstances."

If chapters 2–5 inform us of the difficult historical incidents and memories of what constitutes the present South African state, what miracle defused the tension and unified the stalemate at the end of white minority rule? A creative impulse in the making of modern South Africa was the ability to generate a memory that is both representative and sympathetic albeit genuinely, the very turbulent and conflicting narrative of South Africa's historiography. This résumé was found in ubuntu. Where the term has been exposed to "commodification" (commoditization), political manipulation and polemical violence, the focus is to locate the discourse within the general historiography of South Africa and inextricably, within

the intellectually history of Africa. "History" in this peculiar context adopts a new posture: it gains a new intentionality where it is no longer a narrative of the past only but of the moment, the present, and the future. The historicity of ubuntu repudiates the pose of a passive narrator and becomes an active agent constitutive of, but not independent of the emerging sociopolitical imaginary. The question becomes; if ubuntu is a proactive and discursive political program, why was it not historicized? In historicizing ubuntu, is it validating or hegemonizing a tradition? Is ubuntu merely a sociopolitical desideratum, that is, a product of civil and political society? Does ubuntu need to be debated, and if so, what issues are to be debated? Would ubuntu be construed as a defense mechanism against apartheid ideology and by extension a reactionary discourse (Chapter 7)? What are the implications of such surrogate defense mechanism? Is ubuntu merely a postcolonial discourse by which the concept gains different intentionality and ideology? Linked to the past, how do the different memories converge into a single memory? Drawn to the present, to what extent does the normative inference succeed in forging national consciousness? This last question would remain very critical as I try to examine such processes in the making of modern South African "nation." To what extent does ubuntu go in this imagination of the nation? Would the classical understanding of what constitutes the nation as an "imagined" political community with a nationalist representation, language, ethnicity, et cetera, shed further light on the role of ubuntu in the making of modern South Africa (Chapter 8)? Extended to the future, what lessons can be learned?

What I have outlined here are generalized and vague ambitious statements of programmatic questions of which I do not know the answer. The questions raised are merely provocative and not indicative of the structure that I follow; they point to the trajectory at the title of this chapter—*many voices of a history*. I indulge myself to letting the reader infer from a broad outline what follows, and if indeed these questions are any relevant, worth pursuing, and/or admissible to the present discourse. I would also indulge in the many criticisms against ubuntu in the making of modern South Africa (Chapter 7). It will be necessary to expose ubuntu to such criticisms or polemical expedition in order to appreciate its internal rationality or sustainability as I shall argue in chapters 8 and 9.

What is Ubuntu/Botho?

On the Imaginings and Invention of a Discourse

Usually without justification, many Africanist scholars have given the equivalent translation of ubuntu as simply "humanism" and then proceed

to defer its definition and meaning by virtue of its association, appearance, and usage in African proverbs as its point of validation. The question is whether a passive acceptance of these proverbs offers a nuanced understanding of what the discourse is all about. Since we are also confronted with contradicting application of this discourse in these proverbs, it becomes pertinent to systematize its thought processes and understanding within a sociohistorical context. I will proceed however with an outline of several attempts at definitions often characterized by generalizations and unreflective adaptation of these proverbs.

Muleki Mnyaka (2005:215) defined ubuntu as "an old philosophy of life that has for many centuries sustained the African communities in South Africa in particular and *Africa* as a whole" [my emphasis]. Indeed ubuntu on such generalization will be practiced in the North, South, West, and East of Africa with the same intensity and characterization. In the writing of Blankenberg (1999:43), ubuntu is a "philosophy and an ideal circulating primarily through orality and tradition and associated with no particular authoritative text, *ubuntu* is open to interpretation, especially in view of its application to contemporary South African Society." Maluleke (1999:13), noting the controversy and ambiguity surrounding its usage in South Africa, admits that "[ubuntu] has often been conducted in sporadic unstructured, naïve and dangerous ways. This relates to the lack of deliberate and focused interest of issues of African culture on the part of the African thinkers and the new government." Kamwangamalu (2008:114) for his part chronicles its appearance in other languages outside South Africa:

> This concept has phonological variants in number of African languages: *umundu* in Kikuyu and *umuntu* in Kimeru, both languages spoken in Kenya; *bumuntu* in kiSukuma and KiHaya, both spoken in Tanzania; *vumuntu* om shiTsonga and shiTswa of Mozambique; *bomoto* in Bobangi, spoken in Democratic Republic of Congo; *gimuntu* in kiKongo and giKwese, spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Angola respectively.

Other scholars like Mnyandu would adopt an essentialist religious undertone: "[U]buntu is not merely positive human qualities, but the very essence itself, which 'lures' and enables human beings to become *abantu* or humanized beings, living in daily self-expressive works of love and efforts to create harmonious relationships in the community and the world beyond" (Mnyaka 2003:143). Broodryk (2002:13–14) extends this view according to which ubuntu is

> [a] comprehensive ancient African world view based on the values of intense humannesss, caring, sharing, respect, compassion and associated values, ensuring a happy and qualitative human community life in a spirit of

family. Ubuntu determines and influences everything a person thinks, says and does.

Somewhere else Broodryk continues:

> [It is] the whole complex of traditional behavior which has been developed by the human race and is successfully learned by each generation ... *Ubuntu* cultural norms have been orally transferred from generation to generation over a long time, and have never been produced as literature or written form [yet] if people could become more ubuntu conscious, it should lead to a more ordered, caring society based on humanity.
>
> <div align="right">(Mnyaka 2003:142)</div>

Of this reading, Mnyaka (ibid.:144) would interpret as "*A spiritual foundation of the world-view of African people*" an enunciatory ethics that functions as "a determining factor in ... [the] formation of perceptions ... of African society about what is good or bad behavior" (see Broodryk 1997:8).

According to this view, ubuntu inheres a religious essence (of all African people), but such religious essence that is simultaneously a prescriptive ethics (for all African people) and therefore the world will be a better place as it will become humanistic if everyone adopts ubuntu. On this view, reliving the cultural norms as transmitted from generation to generation will yield to a *well-ordered society*. But it will also include those cultural norms like killing of twins among some precolonial ethnics in Africa as well as witch-hunting among other cultural norms that is virtually anachronistic to the applied meaning of ubuntu today as a humanism which these authors try to project. The inconsistencies of definitions such as these in my view tends to undermine the legitimacy of the project as a whole, and hence, my plea for a more rigorous and nuanced interrogation. It is also in lieu with my persuasion for location of community's goods (norms, etc.) within the contextual practices of a community.

In their definitions of ubuntu, these Africanist writers[1] present ubuntu as a generic form of an "African" humanism, which is essentially inclusive; exuding a unanimous character of precolonial "African" societies. Ubuntu is projected to us in a rather hegemonic format; by way of an appeal to an unanimous past through which we may begin to understand the sociocultural imaginary of the "African" people before the violence of colonialism; an imagination that must be rehabilitated in that percussive sense for its actual appeal for the contemporary African society. Accordingly, ubuntu is in fact, *essentially* what it means to be an African as Saule (1996:83–85) tells us: "[Ubuntu] is something that springs from within oneself or better still, within society ... Ubuntu could be viewed as a sum total of human behaviors inculcated in the individual by society through

established traditional institutions over a period of time." Saule (ibid.:85, 93) tries to overcome this essentialist definition by admitting that:

> It stands to reason therefore that a synthetic definition of *ubuntu* would always be inadequate. In their definitions scholars address those characteristics of the concept of *Ubuntu* that mostly appeal to them … a person without *ubuntu* would have no peace of mind and might continue to hurt himself if he/she is not checked … [ubuntu] is not retribution but … healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships. This kind of justice seeks to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he or she has injured by his or her offence.

Moving beyond the primordial essentialism, ubuntu now possesses a universal attribute as Teffo (1998:4) seems to suggest:

> This philosophy is encapsulated in all the philosophies of the world, though it might be articulated and actualized differently. Effectively, therefore, it would be ethnocentric and, indeed, silly to suggest that the Botho ethics is uniquely African. The mere fact that the tenets that underpin this philosophy are intensely expressed by Africans, do not make those values exclusively African.

Despite the diverging definitions, a recurrent theme emphasized by these authors is that ubuntu is an African humanism. Netshitomboni (1998:6) offers us an overview of this common sentiment: "This idiom … underscores the need for respect for human life and dignity whatever the circumstances. No matter what wrong an individual has done to the community that individual remains a human being worthy of humane and equal treatment." On this point, Ramose (1999) has given us a yet-to-be more nuanced definition of what constitutes this humanism of ubuntu by extrapolating from incidents of African sayings and proverbs as the basis of Ubuntu and by extension, African philosophy. Ramose (ibid.:49) begins with an integrative definition of what constitutes *ubuntu* as the very foundation of African intellectual history:

> Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy. The be-ing of an African in the Universe is inseparably anchored upon *ubuntu*. Similarly, the African tree of knowledge stems from *ubuntu* with which it is connected indivisibly. *Ubuntu* then is the wellspring flowing with African ontology and epistemology. If these latter are the bases of philosophy, then African philosophy has long been established through *ubuntu*. Our point of departure is that *ubuntu* may be seen as the basis of African philosophy. Apart from a linguistic analysis of *ubuntu*, a persuasive philosophical argument can be made that there is

a "family atmosphere," that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa. No doubt there will be variations within this broad philosophical 'family atmosphere'. But the blood circulating through the "Family" members is the same in its basics. In this sense *ubuntu* is the basis of African philosophy.

As the very foundation of African intellectual history, Ubuntu Ramose (ibid.:99, 120) informs us is consistent with practices of African peoples as expressed in their proverbs and aphorisms of certain Nguni languages, specifically Zulu and Sotho:

(1) *Motho ke motho ka batho; Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (A person is a person through other people)
(2) *Feta Kgomo o tshware motho* (Ignore the cow and save the person because life is greater than wealth)
(3) *Kgosi ke kgosi ka batho* (The sovereignty of the king derives from and belongs to his subjects)
(4) *Motho gase mpshe ga a tshewe Sesotho* (No single human can be thoroughly and completely useless)

In the writing of Ramose (ibid.:52, 194), the first aphorism indicates that our humanity is intricately interwoven with other's humanity, by which he means that to be humans is to "affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish respectful human relations with them." The second saying indicates the priority of life over wealth, where preservation of human life is the highest human goal. The third aphorism Ramose (ibid.:151) writes is an indicator of African Communitarianism in which "the king owed his status, including all the powers associated with it, to the will of the people under him. Kinship rested upon and remained dependent upon the consent of the King's subjects. The people or the King's subjects were the ultimate source of the King's authority to rule." The fourth aphorism reemphasizes the priority of human life as a *summum bonum*. Ramose's humanism is often supported by an earlier postulation of Mbiti (1969:108–109):

> In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes this 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 say, '*I am, because*

we are; and since we are therefore I am'. This is the cardinal point in the understanding of the African view of man. [my emphasis][2]

To Mbiti's postulation, one might otherwise add Dzobo's (1992:132) "We are, therefore I am, and since I am, therefore we are." At this point, we are yet to arrive at any substantive definition as opposed to symbolisms of varying degrees of intentionalities. This inability in my view reveals the intricacies in the actual process of its intellectual "invention." These attempts at symbolic definition also reveal the process of its reconstruction either as a public discourse or as a *displacement narrative* of coloniality (see Chapter 7).

At this juncture, we are confronted with a semantic shift within the context-specific where ubuntu is positioned as an ideology for national integration as it is a social formation which according to Michael Ignatieff would lead "to a community of equal, rights-bearing citizens, united in patriotic attachment to a shared set of political practices and values" (Wilson 2001:1). The focus will be on the projected symbolism of ubuntu in mediating the process of a nation that is synchronic and inclusive, a project that reveals both its efficacy and instrumentality. Such instrumentality will become more pronounced in the TRC. Yet, this feature in my view does not undermine its creative value. In the overall process, this will be more evident specifically in its adaptation by ANC's community charter in 1995, which stipulates among other reasons the need: "to revive the spirit of Ubuntu, co-operation, and understanding by embracing the common interests and values of the whole community" (Coertze 2001:115). Extended to the judicial procedure, Judge Langa validates its legitimation on the assumption of an embedded substantive universal value like human dignity, a basis on which ubuntu gains a universal import as "a commendable attribute which the nation should strive for" (Wilson 2001:10).

Thus far, I remain seduced by these general statements and pronouncements on ubuntu. These sets of propositions are yet to offer a substantive definition and I revert to examine its roots once again in order to make sense of its internal rationality and secure a nuanced discussion for further insights.

Ubuntu: An Embedded or Disembodied Value (in Practices of African Communities)?

Generally, the term "*ubuntu*" is from IsiNguni languages. *Botho* is SeSotho, in xiTsonga, it is *vumunhi*, in *Tshivenda* it is *uhuthu.* The term possesses a

similar noun-stem with Nguni term *Umu-ntu* (plural *abantu*) and Sotho term *mo-tho* (plural *batho*) to literally encapsulate the essence or quality of being human. This "essence" or "quality" is autochthonous to the practices of what makes one human in these societies. It is for this reason that persons outside the linguistic-geopolitical unit in these societies are not necessarily accorded the same degree of essence or quality. To non-blacks, especially whites, a person is not "precisely" *fully* human as evident in the language game of these societies. For example, in these Nguni languages, a white person is *umlungu* (plural: *abelungu*), which means "white people" with a benign emphasis on difference. The indifference becomes more exclusive as in the Tsonga aphorism, "*Mulungu a nga na 'xa ka,' xa ka ra yena i imali*"—A white person has no relatives, money is his relative (Coertzee 2001:113). The first impression one gets is that the "quality" of being human is an exclusive regard for blacks excluding persons of other races. But I interrogate this evidence based on other crucial question before the summation: who qualifies to become a member of the human family in the ubuntu context? Is it a person belonging to a similar language group? Is personhood restricted to sociocultural affinity or racial embeddedness? If socioculturally, is it then racially exclusive? Consider that in seSotho, *Bana ba kgwale ba bit'ana ka melodi*—the offspring of the partridge recognize and call each other by the same song. They recognize and accept one another (Rakoma 1995:121; Coertze 2001:114). The Zulu aphorism goes, "*Zimbila zantabanye* 'they are rock rabbits of the same mountain' " (Nyembezi 1974:207; Coertze 2001:114). Expressing the duty of subjective affiliation and sharing only within one's cultural community is in the Sotho saying, *bana ba manna ba ngwathagana hlôgô ya tsiê*—"the descendants of one ancestor share even the head of a locust" (Rakoma 1995:121; Coertze 2001:114). A thought further confirmed in the Zulu proverb: *Izingane zasisu sinye zahlukaniselana inthethe*—children of the same stomach share even a locust. Would this subjective affiliation to one's cultural community be a mask for a less recognizable but highly insidious ethnocentrism? If so, does this ethnocentrism undermine the validity of any moral claim on ubuntu as an inclusive sociocultural order as claimed by many Africanist writers or does it negate its own intentionality by such exclusivism? Inconsistencies such as these beckon an investigation of such plethora of ambiguous interpretations.

Many reasons suggest that the exclusion of the "Whiteman" as a representative of the "excluded other" as not-yet-human is emotive as it is a historical residue of racial capitalism. As I argued in Chapter 2, racial capitalism was a key feature of South Africa's colonial past. Where accumulation and access of capital was tied to race, subjectivity is now a *given*. The defining moment being that "personhood" is now a material quality

ultimately determined by access to, and control of, capital. That is to say, the more accessible to resources or material acquisition, the more human you become. This was the term of such "capitalist coloniality" which resonated through imperial colonial discourse. Hence, the Tsonga proverb above may be reinterpreted as a reverse discourse, albeit a situation that gauges and determines the Tsonga's "location" within the structural capital of colonial racism, attacking the issues of taxation and control of capital—symbols that the white man represents. Hence, *a white man has no relatives for only money is his relative*, is also an intuitive discourse reversal, which expresses a link between control of capital and human subjectivity. Another plausible interpretation and seemingly more convincing is that the notion of what it means to be "human" in this context is in fact a good internal to the practices of this community. Does being "human" or the process of becoming one mean the same thing among the Sotho, Xhosa, Shona or Pedi? No doubt, this understanding of being "human" as a "desired quality" among these different ethnic groupings is a shared intracultural ideal. They share an ideal that one who lives up to certain standards within these communities possesses that quality of ubuntu as a desired good of that community. The attendant implication however is what in fact constitutes "ubuntu" as a desired good in these communities? What is the constitutive good? In my view, that which constitutes the good of a community necessarily differs for these goods remain internal to the desires and aspirations of these specific communities and people and not external to them. My critique against a pristine, homogenous notion of ubuntu in Chapter 7 is motivated by this homogenization of different memories and goods. It is a critique against the conflating different desires and aspirations to produce a unified consciousness, an absolute memory, a super-cultural memory. In my view, such conflation or homogenization mirrors atavistic nationalism with its attendant consequent devastations as we have seen in the twentieth century. This move is insensitive to context as it is "soulless" that is to say, an impartial ethic. Hence, any absolute pristine commitment ignores these essential differences in desires and aspirations of communities that are said to practice ubuntu. But this is not the last word; it is only part of the story and the presence of a discontinuity does not undermine the relevance of ubuntu as a contemporary discourse in the making of modern South Africa.

In view of the above, what makes one human among the Shona may in certain context differ from that which makes one human among the Tsonga. Consider, for example, the following conversation between two Shona in an event of an auto accident:

> *Tendayi: vanhu vangani vaive munjodzi*? (how many people were involved in the accident?)

> *Chipo: Iiiiiyi, zvaive zvakaoma, paive nevanhu vatatu neverudzi rechiNdebele
> vaviri* (Oh! It was tragic; there were three *persons* and two Ndebele).

If you substitute the tribal context, the Ndebele equivalent will go thus:

> *Zama: Bangaki abantu ababekuele ingozi yogwaqwo*? (how many people
> were involved in the accident?)
> *Zodwa: Ii Kwakunzima, kwakulabantu abatatu lama Shona ababili* (. . . three
> *persons* and two Shona)[3]

In these examples, the "three persons" mentioned in the first conversa-
tion refers to the Shona victims of the accident while the "others" are just
Ndebele. Or as in the second conversation, the "three persons" will be the
Ndebele with the Shona as simply the "other." The consideration is, why
would the Shona or Ndebele exclude each other in conferment of "per-
sonhood" in such conversations? What is missing in the "other" (Shona or
Ndebele) that eschews his or her recognition as a "person"? Notice that
this is an unconscious transposition of "nonhumanness" that reflects a
general way of speaking in daily social intercourse. Now, the Ndebele are
southern neighbors of the Shona. Like the Shona, the Ndebele are also a
Bantu speaking group that share similar ideals embodied in ubuntu except
for speaking different mother tongue. The Ndebele during the time of
King Lobengula migrated North to the South of what is now Zimbabwe
as they fled from the military exploits of Shaka Zulu. In the course of the
centuries, the Ndebele and the Shona have intermarried with intense cul-
tural interpenetration that has massively influenced the cultural identity
of these ethnic groups. Yet, the Ndebele or the Shona is not a "person"
(conceptually) so long as he does not belong to the cultural "commu-
nity." But this is not a linguistic twist noticeably peculiar to the Shona
or the Ndebele. Among the Xhosa, non-Xhosa speaking blacks who have
not been assimilated into the cultural milieu would be referred to as *int-
langa* (a person of another nation). The *intlanga* remains an outsider, the
"other," a second-class citizen. Nonblack foreigners in South Africa were
usually described as makwerekwere (a symbolic term of exclusion on the
basis of language difference). But even more interesting is that among
Xhosas in Cape Town, non-Xhosa speaking South Africans were generally
categorized as *makwerekwere*.[4]

Notice a parallel with the term *makwerekwere* and *barbarian* in English
language. According to Greek-English Lexicon, the etymology of this term
"barbarian" originates from $\beta\acute{\alpha}\rho\beta\alpha\rho o\varsigma$ which means to speak gibberish or
"broken" Greek; to speak in an unintelligible manner. An Onomatopoeic
term, the meaning resonates its sound of bar bar, or bla bla giving a feeling

of random hullabaloo or non recognizable babbling sound that cannot be understood. It was a term used to refer to all non-Greek-speaking peoples, specifically the Medes and Persians because of their *bla, bla* language. In Medieval Latin it comes from *barbaria* and *barbarous,* which mean "the foreign world," uncivilized races belonging to a foreign country (from a Greek standpoint). Note, however, that this was also an adaptation by the Romans to refer to non-Romans. In this context, barbarian was a term used to describe a foreigner who belongs to another ethnos but especially whose language differs from that of the speakers as Hare Guesses (1859) noted: "A barbarian is a person who does not talk as we talk, or dress as we dress or eat as we eat; in short, who is audacious as not to follow our practice in all the trivialities of manners." And Ovid noted: "[I]n his exile . . . the polished citizen is a barbarian to his neighbors" (ibid.). In historical context, barbarian was a term reserved for non-Greeks, Romans, or Christians (depending on the speaker), especially who is outside the context of the speaker's civilization. Hence, to the Greeks, a Roman is a barbarian, and vice versa. In the South African contest, ma-kwere-kwere is literally, the bar-bar-rian whose language we cannot understand for its sounding kwere-kwere (bla-bla). And despite a broad sociopolitical and intense intercultural penetration between black ethnic groups in South Africa, non-Xhosa speakers from within South Africa remain excluded as "outsiders."

Drawing upon these insights, one might argue that traditions are indeed products of historically mutating process and (internal) relations. We cannot speak of a tradition or culture outside sociocultural and historical context. To ignore context and history as is to *dehistoricize* the subject. Therefore, a coherent account of a society's good necessarily dovetails a prior knowledge of social and moral practices of that society. To understand what are held virtuous or as good among a people, one need to examine the social role of what constitutes a virtuous practice in these societies. For indeed, virtues are expressed within practices of a community, they constitute socioethical and political forms of activities in seeking to realize those goods internal to practice. Such virtuous activities mediate those goods internal to the practice of such community. This point need not infer a supremacist ethnocentric bias within these ethnic groups or in others as the only explanation is that within these cultural communities is a demand to fulfill certain ideals as a good of this community and these goods are internal and not external. The same explanation goes to the white man, only much worse – he is simply alienated!

Many idiomatic expressions express the unity of purpose that guarantees these values internal to the practices of a community. As Sol Plaatje had written: "*Di-tsa-bana bam pa ga di tsenwe*"—Do not intervene or enter into family quarrels (Coertze 2001:114). Within this corporate groups are

essentialist aptitude to conformism as in "*Bogwera ba gago ge ba sela moet'* *nal, le wean o sela*—'if the members of your age group cross a stream it is expected of you to do the same' " (Rakoma 1995:120; Coertze, 2001:114). Coertze (1995:114) enunciates its further implication: "[I]f the support and control of one's peers and relatives in this way become of decisive importance it becomes very difficult for the individual to subscribe to absolute standards of kindness, morality or goodwill that are not endorsed by specific examples of such sentiments within the societal framework of every-day existence." If I may add, what about the outsider? Hospitality, a core quality of ubuntu becomes a *conditional* possibility seemingly extended to the outsider for the reason that *Alela Moeng, gobane motlalekgomo ga a tsebje* "receive a guest with hospitality because the one that will bring you a beast [cattle] as a present is not known" (Rakoma 1995:119; Coertze 2001:114). But the guest is only a guest and therefore *Moeng, o naka di maripa*—"A guest has short horns," which means that he must behave like a guest, knowing that he is still an outsider and that hospitality given to him is not a privilege but a favor (ibid.). The guest is not automatically given membership, he has to qualify, trimmed to assimilate the good internal and peculiar to the practices of the community he is visiting: *Eyokufika ziyayibovula* "a beast that arrives (i.e., that comes from outside) is gored by the others" (Nyembezi 1974:204; Coertze 2001:114). That this is the case is confirmed by the unity, solidarity, and support one gets from his politicized ethnic group, that is, the tribe, when in confrontation with other ethnic groups as in the seSotho saying, *Bana ba tau ga re jane, re moloko mong*—"The children of the lion, we do not eat one another, we are of common descent" (Coertze 2001:114). A cultural attitude that features in isiZulu, *Akuhlanga, Iwa Lahlana lodwa*— "[N]o one throws away one of his own race, i.e., people of the same stock keep together" (Nyembezi 1974:204; Coertze 2001:114). A train of thought confirmed in the Yoruba saying, "a*kì i fi omo burúkú fún ekùn pa je*—We do not throw a child to the tiger just because he/she is bad" because "*omo burúkú ní ojó tire* (a bad child has his/her day of usefulness)." Indeed, the ethno sentiment of protecting our own is in other Yoruba saying, "*Nítorí wéré ti ìta làà fií ní wéré ti ilé*—since there are rascals outside, we should not mind the rascality of our own kids—because they can stand up to defend us if the rascals from outside should attempt to attack us" (Gbadegesin 1998:305). But one needs to be mindful of other proverbs that seemingly stand in contradiction to the aforementioned as in the saying among the Northern-Ndebele: *Motho yo ke agileng le yena, ke ngwane 'o*—"the one with whom I live together is our child i.e. becomes a member of our family" (Coertze 2001:115).

The most important thing here however is to note that the process involved in becoming human is specific to each [cultural] community; it means to perform those duties specific to these communities adjudged as good, a quality desired by the community as an ideal—that is, if we assume these sayings as our basic point of departure in understanding ubuntu discourse. My only justification is that by penetrating the sentiments expressing the values of these communities, one might gain insight as to what practices that are constitutive of the goods they share as ideal. No doubt, this approach has its own limitations but it does open room for discussion. As Wittgenstein argued on the use of language, private experience falls short of describing the socioethical morass of a society since the use of language entails rules, which are communal. This means therefore that the possible world of any people is expressed in their language as a custodian of the people's socioethical life in general. On this view, Herder argued that language and cultural traditions are key faucets in the making of a nation. In his *Essay on the Origin of Language ([1772] 1966)* Herder presents language as the distinguishing trait between humans and other species. According to Herder, words (language) and ideas are mutually inclusive, for all thoughts are bound and expressed through language. Yet such conceptualization is not merely perceptual for it includes affective sensation as Herder (1966:99) wrote:

> For I cannot conceal my amazement that philosophers—people, that is, who look for clear concepts—ever conceived of the idea that the origin of human language might be explained from these outcries of the emotions: for is not this obviously something quite different? All animals, down to the mute fish, sound their sensations. But this does not change the fact that not animal, not even the most perfect, has so much as the faintest beginning of a truly human language.

Herder (ibid.:127) maintains that language and ideas are intricately interwoven and their subtle difference only symbolizes the outer and inner coating of core human character, "that language, from without, is the true differential character of our species as reason is from within." Language precedes "conceptualization" for one can only think what he or she can express through language. Language he argues is responsible for differences and diversity of cultures. Herder links history and the nature of nation building as reflective of the national language. Language is the primary template of nation building.[5] On this view, each nation has its own *volksgeist* as expressed through its language. By virtue of its language, every cultural community possesses an identity and is able to express itself. In a celebrated passage, Herder will argue that language is vehicle of education,

a tool for arts and the sciences. Peculiar language is the most prized posses-
sion of any group and anyone who writes about the literature of a country
must not ignore its language:

> Has a nationality anything more precious than the language of its fathers?
> In this language dwell its whole world of tradition, history, religion, and
> principle of life, its whole heart and soul. [Language] is the bond of souls,
> the vehicle of education ... [Language] is generally acknowledged to be the
> means of transmitting human ideas, inclination and deeds; by means of it
> we bequeath the treasures of former times to later generations; through a
> common language all the members of a national group participate one in
> another to a greater or lesser degree.
>
> (Ergang 1931:149–150)

For Herder, it is seemingly that language is the mark of nationality insofar
as "every language bears the stamp of the mind and character of a national
group" (ibid.:105). And Hans Kohn (2005:431) informs us:

> Each nationality [For Herder] was a living organism, a manifestation of the
> Divine, and therefore something sacred which should not be destroyed but
> cultivated. Every man, so he taught, could fulfill his human destiny only
> within and through his nationality ... Thus language, national language,
> became a sacred instrument; each man could be himself only by thinking
> and creating in his own language. With the respect for all other nationalities
> went a respect for their languages.

But this uniqueness of the nation is constituted by the uniqueness of its
language and culture, as Herder notes: "[N]o individual country, no peo-
ple, no history of a people, no state is like any other. Therefore, the true, the
beautiful, and the good are not the same for them" (ibid.:433). Accordingly,
in Herder's view, nationality and language symbolize the unadulterated,
shared view of humanity that is enriched by the consistency of its varia-
tion capital as dependent on cultural creativity and language. To deny a
people this variation is to deny them that which makes them "distinctively
human."

In our own context, the social linguistic nuances of ubuntu as a good
internal to the practices of a community are yet to yield very concrete for-
mation. Hence I interrogate its evidence as a national discourse—*one of the
many voices of its history.* We will be confronted with ambivalence between
its emergence as a national imaginary and appropriation as embedded
practice of African communities. As a *midwife*, my point is not to arrive at
any conclusive evidence but merely to interrogate all the incidents located

in its formation for a creative discourse and dialogue in our sociopolitical formation.

Ubuntu in [as] a National Discourse

National Discourse or Political Myth?

As a politicized cultural memory, the term "Ubuntu/Botho" was first noticeable in the preamble to the Inkatha Constitution of 1975 as a predicated guiding principle of the Inkatha movement and reads in part:

> Accepting the fact that we have many things to copy from Western economic, political and education patterns of development, and striving for the promotion of African pattern of thought and the achievement of African Humanism otherwise commonly known in Nguni languages as UBUNTU and in Sotho languages as Botho: EMBRACING the principles of African humanism otherwise known as *Ubuntu/Botho* and accepting that governments are instituted and maintained to promote and protect human dignity, personal growth and fulfillment, and the individual pursuit of happiness.
>
> (*Inkatha Freedom Party* [1975]2006)

Although the term "ubuntu/botho" was not specifically defined, precisely because it has no specific definition suggests that it was a notion commonly understood in the public sphere two decades before it became invoked as national ideology. While *no love was lost* between the ANC government and Inkatha prior to the draft Constitution,[6] a possible hypothesis could be that the insertion of ubuntu/botho in the preamble to the draft Constitution was a possible influence or adaptation from Inkatha's Constitution. One would imagine if the eventual deletion of ubuntu from the final Constitution construes a further attempt by the ANC led government to distance itself from Inkatha. These are merely factious hypotheses and speculations considering the adaptation of ubuntu as a national discourse in the overall process of reconciliation and nation building in South Africa. But what influence (if any) has Inkatha in this regard? Originally starting as an ethnic based liberation movement concerned with the economic emancipation of the Zulus, Inkatha later reorganized itself to assume a pose of a national liberation movement.

Evidence such as these deflates criticisms that ubuntu is supposedly *only* a postapartheid phenomenon. It also points to a divergent view of experiences relating to its existence and application of the concept even during the struggle. And while the ANC did not "effectively" invoke the concept of ubuntu during the struggle, it did become a national symbol

for a political unity in post apartheid South Africa. It is significant to note how Inkatha maneuvered this cultural memory to transform itself from an ethnic based alliance exclusive to Zulu to become a national liberation movement. If Inkatha used it to gain national recognition, the postapartheid ANC government used it to forge national unity, a sense of inclusiveness. I will return to this point later in the chapter.

To understand the role of ubuntu as a national discourse in the making of modern South Africa one needs to first comprehend and relate with those classical processes or features nominally universal, but processes that constitute what in fact is a "nation." As I argued in Chapter 2, South Africa before 1994 was a state without a nation. My motivation is that integrating the processes in the making of nationhood and national discourse will pave way to understanding the seminal role of ubuntu in the making of modern South African nation.

Benedict Anderson (2001:6) has argued that a nation is "an imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." The incipient model of such communion is marked by a common language, a common religion, and a common culture—factors that make national imaginary possible. On this view, the nation is often characterized by a representation of simultaneity in a homogenous empty time. A South African will never be able to know and meet all South Africans—he/she has no access to this simultaneous activities but has faith in the fraternity they share, a fraternity characterized as it were by this simultaneous-anonymous chain of activity. Anderson (2001:55) uses the novel and newspaper as good examples of simultaneity in a homogenous empty time where characters usually discuss events without knowing about others or forging a cultural artifact for an imagined community; uniting all readers in anonymous simultaneity, but shared fraternity within a homogenized empty time—yet an activity regulated by a historical clock for an imagined community, a community in anonymity.

Nations are further characterized by a common historical archive, a historical narrative which enunciates their origins and specifics of such historical character. National history offers a nation this common story—a unique sense of shared origin, and a "collective identity in the present" (McLeod 2000:70). "Identity" is a concept always defined in relation to something else. A nation's identity is therefore characterized by its borders (with other nations), a standard national language (among others) that distinguishes the people within the nation from peoples or "aliens" outside the national boundaries. This is what Anderson (2001:6) means by

the Nation as "an imagined political community." The identity of a nation is dependent on its appeal to a common history, traditions, and symbols—all symbolism of continuity between the specific identity of the past, the present, and the future. A nation as an imagined community is narrated through forms of representations that advance unity of time and space. In promoting a unity of time and space, a nation brings together individuals who come to imagine their simultaneity with others. Nations stir a sense of belonging while evoking a standard unified memory accessible to all. As Paul Gilroy (1993:49) writes in *Small Acts*, "nations" might appear natural or eternal, they nevertheless emerge "through elaborate cultural, ideological and political processes which culminate in feeling of connectedness to other national subjects and in the idea of a national interest that transcends the supposedly petty divisions of class, region, dialect or caste."

Anderson (2001:101, 159) distinguishes between what he terms imperial and official nationalism. Where imperial nationalism is "an antici-patory strategy adopted by dominant groups which are threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally imagined com-munity," official nationalism is "a conscious self-protective *policy*, inti-mately linked to the preservation of imperial-dynastic interests." Imperial nationalism is nationalism from above for it conjures the imagery or mem-ories of an imagined memory imposed on others: "the paradox of imperial nationalism was that it inevitably brought what were increasingly thought of and written about as European 'national histories' into the conscious-ness of the colonized—not merely via occasional obtuse festivities, but also through reading-rooms and classrooms" (ibid.:118).

Nationalism from below is a challenge to imperial nationalism with its dominant effusion of class stratification. Nationalism from below is a fluid process, navigating between concerns for meaning and identity specific to communities, endorsed by particular aspirations within the geopolitical, and "bounded territorial state" (Kumar and Delanty 2006:2). As a product of modernity, nationhood is an expression of political community through which it becomes manifest as a social category. In this way, nationhood becomes "a contrast to the idea of the state, which is a category of political rule and unlike class is by definition inclusive" (ibid.). The key doctrine of nationalism however, is "self-determination" as spelt out by Ernest Renan (1990 [1882]:19):

> A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has achieved in an undivided form . . . The

nation like the individual, is the culmination of a long past of endeavors, sacrifice, and devotion. Of all cults, that of the ancestors is the most legitimate, for the ancestors have made us what we are. A heroic past, great men, glory . . . this is the social capital upon which one bases a national idea. To have common glories in the past and to have a common will in the present; to have performed great deeds together, to wish to perform still more—these are the essential conditions for being a people.

Developing this analysis of Renan, Gellner (1987:8) argues that Renan's theory of nationality and nationalism does in fact has two levels, "his main purpose is to deny any naturalistic determinism of the boundaries of nations: these are *not* dictated by language, geography, race, religion, or anything else . . . Nations are made by human will." On this persuasion, Gellner (1983:1) would write of nation/nationalism as "primarily a principle which holds that the political and national unity should be congruent." This understanding reinforces my persuasion that the colonial South African state was a state without a "nation." It was a *nationless* state or a state *without shells* for not only was the political and national unit incongruent, they were also ambivalent, contradictory, and lacked a congruent human will. This is what in fact Ernest Renan (1990[1882]:12) meant when he wrote that "[the] modern nation is therefore a historical result brought about by a series of convergent facts," facts such as a shared historical memory and historical past, but facts not fixated on a single historical memory but that converge, open ended and not closed. A scenario noticeably absent in colonial South Africa, I concur with Gellner (1964:168) that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where then do not exist." On this view, I subscribe to Anderson's (2001:12) claim on nationalism as conterminous with "large cultural systems that preceded it." Yet, I do not share Anderson's (ibid.) disavowal of nationalism with "self-consciously held political ideologies." While these political ideologies may not be a sufficient marker of nationalist ideology, they nevertheless offer emotive foundation.

The historical markers of nationhood enunciated above is seemingly lacking in the South African story. The principle of coherence at the core of the "nation" such as a shared memory, ethnicity or even temporality challenges any constitutive identification of what the *nation* is in this South African experience. The new South Africa as a location of multiple and often contradictory identities needs its own story in its imaginary formation as a nation. South Africa's colonial state was a state without a nation; the new state has to creatively transform itself into a nation-state. This is precisely what Hobsbawm (1990:18) meant when he argued that "the modern concept of 'the nation' " operationally speaking

is simultaneously located as a "concept in the political and social discourse . . . especially, under the name of the 'principle of nationality' from about 1830 onwards." But how does one arrive at such shared historical memory? What creative process can motivate the necessary social engineering for the social transformation into a nation? The answer lies in the successful engineering of social and political myths within the national consciousness. The politicization of such myth will remain embedded in our overall discourse of this formation. It lies in part, in understanding its symbolism as a necessary point of departure.

Henry Tudor has defined political myth as "normative visions of the past or the future that have practical value to the group of men who believes in them" (Day 1975:52). Political myths often represent a present predicament of a people; it tries to make sense of this experience and projects "a world in which merit receives its just reward, identifying the enemy and promising eventual victory" (ibid.:52). Political myths generally evolve out of specific historical conditions and circumstances "to satisfy social needs" and give the group a sense of common identity and purpose. It offers a kernel of unity and of united consciousness to repudiate any marginal influence of a dominating "other" and its associative hegemonic order. It is in this sense that Lévy-Straus conceives of myth as a functional capability which men adopt "to make coherent what is fundamentally self-contradictory in their beliefs or in their practical life" (ibid.:52). On this view, political myths become a channel of self-conscious discovery, a repository for signs and meanings in the mediating process of political formation.

Most political myths are usually embedded in ideologies, conflating the dialectical tension between reality and fact. When such myths are fixed and rigid, political myths become essentialist in the making or formation of ideologies. A rigid political myth is a fixation on tradition, a romantic quest for a codified meaning which confuses facts with metaphor for power while proposing alliance with social transformation and struggle for power. On this codification of myth, Malinowski had written:

> Myths acts as a charter for the present-day social order; it supplies a retrospective pattern of moral values, sociological order, and magical belief, the function of which is to strengthen tradition and endow it with a greater value and prestige by tracing it back to a higher, better, more supernatural reality of initial events.
>
> (Worsley 1964:5)

While this explanation is admissible, Myth in this context must be qualified. Myths are usually differentiated in terms of morphology and their

social function. Myth is an open statement and has its conceptual usage developed from the Greek, $\mu\hat{\upsilon}\theta\varsigma$ – *muthos/mythos* (as used by Homer and Hesiod) to mean word, speech, tale, story, or narrative. As a speech or word, it refers to things said or thought, unspoken words, of purpose and design. As a tale, story, or narrative, it does not make a distinction between truth or falsehood, but also relates to a fiction. From the Latin *mythos*, the term myth is often used to refer to fictitious narrative of supernatural events or persons "embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena." On these permutations, myth usually evolves with the emergence of gods, goddesses, and heroes. It extends to, but not restricted to sagas, folktales and legends that are stuff of a historical time. For a myth to achieve a mythical status, "its character as an experience of, and adaptation of reality" needs to possess a communal assent, a common interpretive effort and consensus (Zeruneith 2007:563–564). As a historical address, myth offers a narrative "space" to penetrate the past, order life, and make sense of the world. Reflecting a general statement on life, myths are "durable" in character by virtue of its continuous *retelling* over generations, a readaptation to context that opens spaces for different capacities. Yet, myths are not constants, they mutate with different interpretative needs and adapt to suit different historical epochs and conditions. The embodied variance enables the admission of *foreign* materials that would heighten and enhance its mythical status. These foreign materials expand and enrich its narrative and interpretive capacity, opening new spaces beyond its conceptual potential (ibid.:563–564).

Thus understood, myth is used as a kind of narrative to move the mind of communities where it functions as a narrative representative or as reflexive of a social order [or values] of a society. As a narrative, myth is not necessarily false or untrue. Sometimes, myths are employed as justificatory evidence for aspects of social order and narrative human experience. Accordingly, a work of historiography can be a myth but myth in this context entails certain interpretation of the world, the quality of making sense to the world, a signification to the listeners as Paul Veyne (1988: xii, 62, 65) noted:

> Men do not find the truth; they create it, as they create their history. And the two in turn offer a good return...sometimes...myths...are approximations of the idea...Myth is truthful, but figuratively so. It is not historical truth mixed with lies; it is a high philosophical teaching that is entirely true, on the condition that, instead of taking it literally, one sees in it an allegory.

In this context, Myth is not necessarily "untrue" as it contributes to system of thought and learning as an address of a historical moment of the

past. Homer's *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* would fall into such philosophical or historical truths (λόγος) as they reveal to us the sociopolitical mind-set of life in ancient Greece. When we read Homer's work we do not interpret them as factual reality but as a window of understanding life in ancient Greece; a historical address to penetrate and interpret past forms of experience.

But to what extent can we lay claim on a mythical symbolic past for a coherence sociopolitical formation of what we may call our nation? Considering especially as Bhabha (1994:149) had argued that the coherence of a nation is not dependent on narratives and fictions of a unified past but on what I have termed confluence of narratives (specified later). The unity of the nation persistently generates a conscious displacement of its "plural modern space, bounded by different [. . .] nations into a signifying space that is archaic and mythical, paradoxically representing the nation's modern territoriality." The confluence of narrative reveals to us that nation and nation building is a project in continuity. A new symbolism emerges as to what constitutes "our" nation. This indeterminacy and fluidity of the nation is precisely what Emile Durkheim endorsed in his criticism of Schaeffle's conception of the nation as merely an aggregate of persons, families and institutions "linked by various kinds of social 'tissue' " (Thom 1990:36). Aligning himself to such indeterminacy in the process of nationhood Durkheim had noted:

> Schaeffle has set out to subject present-day nations to an analysis and to resolve them into their principal elements. The author is frankly realist [in his approach]. Society is not a simple collection of individuals, it is a being which has preceded those of whom it is composed and which will survive them, which acts upon them more than they act upon it, which has its own life, its own consciousness and its own destiny. But what is its nature?
>
> (Thom 1990:36)

The nation is now a program in continuity as we move beyond the nation as merely *determinate-imaginative formation* to the "nation" properly understood as a *discursive formation*—a project in continuity. Where political myths offer us a necessary starting point, the nation is not a fixed social imaginary but a dynamic discursive formation. The role of political myths at this juncture is necessarily ambivalent considering that the nation is never a finished project. Yet, an appeal to such political myths is all the more relevant for "young" nations, especially in our third world where such myths remain a relevant signifier of a temporal permanence and solidity for the emerging independent nation.

National Discourse and Politics of Exclusion

In Chapter 2, we learned that the history of South Africa is arguably a history of imperial nationalism through the era of British domination and apartheid. It was a history of displacement of narratives and imposition of imperial histories and narratives. One such example as cited was the *Bantu Education Act* which among other things abolished teaching of African history in black schools; where history became the *history* of the English Empire and of the glorious Afrikanerdom. Yet, we know that these were histories that developed at the exclusion of the conscious imaginary of the indigenous people. This imposition of history construes conceptualization of nationalism and its construction thereof as essentially a modernist construction typical of the Enlightenment and its construction of the other:

> If nationalism expresses itself in a frenzy of irrational passion, it does so because it seeks to represent itself in the image of the Enlightenment and fails to do so. For Enlightenment itself, to assert its sovereignty as the universal ideal, needs its Other; if it could ever actualize itself in the real world as the truly universal, it would in fact destroy itself.
>
> <div align="right">(Chartterjee 1986:17)</div>

Nationalism, arguably, remains modernist in the sense that the idea of nationhood is known to "other" world through their encounter with European imperialism. Yet, this "appeal" of the idea of nationalism to the "natives" we learn from Appiah (1992:85) is assimilated and internalized not because it was "forced upon us" but because it gave us "a way to articulate a resistance both to the material domination of the world empires and to the more nebulous threat to precolonial modes of thought represented by the Western project of cultural ascendancy." On the impact of such assimilation and personalization of "national" memory in Africa, Chatterjee (1993:5) concurs:

> The most powerful as well as the most creative results of the nationalist imagination in Asia and Africa are posited not on an identity but rather on a *difference* with the "modular" forms of national society propagated by the modern West. How can we ignore this without reducing the experience of anticolonial nationalism to a caricature?

At this juncture, we are certainly confronted with an ambiguous mode of national discourse; first as an ambitious symbolic imaginary of our collective consciousness, and second, a model of differentiating order of

otherness. On this second point lies the danger of national discourse and its point of discrimination to those who do not share the discourse. Nationalistic discourse sometimes exploited this constitution by privileging "one racialized group above another as the nation's most legitimate or true people" (McLeod 2000:111). Within this exclusionary practice of nationalism, Balibar (1991:60) locates two modes of racism: *external* and *internal* racism. External racism is a manifest form of xenophobism directed against people who do not live within the "borders" of a specific nation or share similar national discourse. Internal racism on the other hand targets individuals within the nation but who do not belong to an "imagined community" of a specific race as in a common language or cultural community. As argued earlier, the term *makwerekwere* (ma-kwere-kwere- the-bla-bla-bla) at first was not construed as typical a xenophobic language of exclusion for non black South Africans. It is actually a semantic twist of exclusion first generated by Xhosas in Cape Town against non Xhosas from other parts of South Africa. This verbiage will eventually penetrate the overall colloquial discourse of black South Africans to describe other blacks from the rest of Africa whose supposedly strange languages sounded *kwere kwere.* This semantic nuance will become the mask of xenophobia for all *kwere kwere* people. As Balibar (1991:60) argues, such external racism expresses the ancillary mode of national discourse in producing a sense of national identity that is essentially a politics of exclusion of those who do not belong to our "imagined" community. Balibar notes: "This is why racism always tends to operate in an inverted fashion, drawing upon the projection mechanism ... the racial cultural identity of 'true nationals' remains invisible, but it can be inferred (and is ensured) *a contario* by the alleged, quasi-hallucinatory visibility of 'false nationals' " usually denoted and classified as the "Jews," "immigrants," "pakis," "natives," "blacks", aliens. We have to exclude the "other" to *become who we are*. Our identity is intrusively structured on the success of such exclusion and fixation of borders. In other words, *I am because you are different from me*. As a project in continuity, nationhood often mobilizes different identities into a shared consciousness or memory. This process can also become hegemonic as endogenous groups with disparate interests are sacrificed for a supranational memory as Balibar (ibid.:96) had written:

> No nation possesses an ethnic base naturally, but as social formations are institutionalized, the populations included within them, divided up among them or dominated by them are ethnicized—that is, represented in the past or in the future *as if* they formed a natural community, possessing of itself an identity of origins, culture and interests which transcends individuals and social conditions.

The point of Balibar (ibid.:93–95) is that this process of nationhood involves a social formation which "presupposes the constitution of a specific ideological form . . . more potent than the mere inculcation of political values [where national ideology or consciousness inculcates] an *a priori* condition of communication between individuals and between social groups . . . ideal signifiers [that generates] sense of the sacred and the affects of love, respect and sacrifice and fear" and reverence. Yet, this "national memory" is ideally feasible in the presence of "other" community from which it distinguishes and separates its identity. On this unifying power of national discourse Balibar (ibid.:97) continues:

> This is not to say that community is an immediate one, without internal limits, any more than communication is in reality 'transparent' between all individuals. But these limits are always relative: even if it were the case that individuals whose social conditions were very distant from one another were never in direct communication, they would be bound together by an uninterrupted chain of intermediate discourses.

This possibility of "intermediate discourses" allows the emergence of nationalism on the platform of an ideological blueprint, characterized as it were in the writing of Pierre Bourdieu (1977:94) by "an a priori condition of communication . . . a place beyond the grasp of consciousness [that cannot] be touched by voluntary deliberate transformation, cannot even be made explicit."

Thus far, the relationship between race and nationalism is also ambivalent for while laying claim to inclusivity, it is simultaneously exclusive with restrictions placed on those outside my imaginary domain. Nationalist discourse as a process of decolonization therefore endorses such racialization (racism, tribalism, ethnicism, etc.) to a certain degree. While nonreflexive imposition of a national discourse construes this ambivalence, Anderson (2001:149) mediates a possible distinction that eschews such conceptual ambivalence:

> Nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies, while racism dreams of eternal contaminations, transmitted from the origins of time through an endless sequence of loathsome copulations: outside history . . . the dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of *class*, rather than in those of nation.

On this view, racism becomes a project within the national boundary as instruments of oppression and domination typical of colonial racism which Anderson (2001:150) claims was an attempt to "wield dynastic legitimacy and national community" by generating a racial ideology based on

the principle of "innate, inherited superiority on which its own domestic position was (however shakily) based on the vastness of the overseas possessions, covertly (or not so covertly)." It would seem at this point that Anderson's basic distinction between nationalism and racism does not exculpate the dangers associated with the latter. The danger will be that national discourse can become manipulated at the service of active or reverse racism. This danger is also real in postcolonial African societies where national culture and discourse can become manipulated to enhance reverse racial discrimination if left unchecked.

In contemporary South Africa, the making of national identity is intertwined with a national discourse that attempts to forge a national memory. However, as I argued in Chapter 2, South Africa has a history of competing memories and identities. What therefore does it mean to be a South African? My attempt so far has been to elucidate and underline the classical processes in the process of nationhood. Understanding the various incidents or impetus in nation building might offer insight to understanding the role of such national discourse like Ubuntu in the making of modern South Africa. Admittedly, ubuntu as a national discourse is implicated in the making of modern South Africa's national memory as a consequence of which it has become incipient to many ideological nuances and definitions. A dogmatic point of reference beckons an unanimous hegemonic social imaginary. An open discursive point of reference, (a model to which I circumscribe) is inclusive by its appreciation and location of discourse within context and history.

Once again, my deliberation of these various incidents in the formation of the nation is in a rather lose classic sense. If this is our point of departure, we now assume that "nationhood" is a discursive imaginary formation in continuity. But to what extent is this so-called cultural capital expressed through national discourse historically contingent? Is this contingency dependent on its relationship to the putative whole? Certain ambivalent shift emerges with regards to the historically concretized as it pertains to the often critical relationships of people in the "nation," relationships that are significantly meaningful both in private and public sphere. Caught between this ambivalence of the (presupposed) universalism of the national discourse and particularity of private sphere, national culture does indeed project a morass of ambiguities and challenges as it is a paradigm of conflicting narratives. I shall briefly lurch into some of these challenges in order to project how they might fit with the overall theme of my discourse.

In his seminal essay, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the margins of the modern nation," Bhabha (1990) argues that nationalistic "representative" discourses contain certain ambivalent formulae that not only

threaten and undermine the unity they promise, they also remain unstable, fragile and at the same time, exhibiting similar familiarity with colonial discourse. This view is echoed elsewhere by Fanon (1963:169) in his blistering attack on colonial discourse and its false civilizing mission:

> Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all from and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it.

According to Bhabha (1994:148), in its attempt to create an "imagined" community out of difference, nationalistic discourses has become embodied with two ancillary (contradictory) modes of representations: pedagogic and performative. This pedagogical/performative mode of nationalistic discourse is a "double" narrative that splits the nation through a "conceptual ambivalence of modern society [which] becomes the site of *writing the nation.*" The nation is caught between two contradictory polarities: (i) as a fixed "originary existence" (pedagogic) and (ii) as a social continuation characterized as it were by performative acts and repetition. In this mode of disjunctive temporality, the nation as representing a sense of a homogenous identity begins to fragment. The pedagogical representation gives an image of the people as "object" that inspires coherence and unity by a claim to a hegemonic pristine past, of a fixed national origin of unbroken historicism (McLeod 2000:118). It is pedagogic by its guarantee of the "authority, legitimacy and primacy of the nation" as the principal political and social unit that harnesses the populace into a "people" (ibid.). The "people" in this case becomes an object of such pedagogical discourse but they are not only objects of nationalistic derivative discourse but also subjects of nationalistic discourse proactively engaged with the reproduction and dissemination of its signs and traditions. Nationalistic discourses as a performative act "is split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (Bhabha 1994:145).

Yet this pedagogical representation of a shared pristine unanimity is undermined by other emerging necessities that details the construction of new national discourse through performative acts and criteria through which the people *re-subjectify* themselves as members of this clan, this community, this group, et cetera, in the overall scheme of coherent national culture. Nationalistic discourse Bhabha (ibid.:145) informs us, is therefore simultaneously performative through such indicators like "icons" and "popular signs"; signifiers that must be continuously reenacted or

"rehearsed" by the people in order to maintain a heightened sense of "horizontal comradeship." The symbols and signifiers of national culture must be a performance in continuity (echoing Renan) for its invocative sense of national unity and significance as Bhabha (ibid.:145) observes: "the scraps, patches and rags of daily life must be repeatedly turned into the signs of a coherent national culture, while the very act of the narrative performance interpelaltes a growing circle of national subjects." The challenge therefore to the pedagogical utopia of a homogenous memory is dented by the very peformative necessity of nationalistic representations which accommodate all those at the fringe of the society or otherwise do not belong to the "homogenous" group. Those formerly excluded groups are implicated in the signifying process and are thus able to "challenge the dominant representations with their own" (McLeod 2000:119). Accordingly, a heterogeneous population may never be fully converted into a homogenous population because their embodied plurality and difference may never be completely ignored as Bhabha (1994:148) observes:

> The problem is not simply "selfhood" of the nation as opposed to the otherness of other nation. We are confronted with the nation split within itself, articulating the heterogeneity of its population. The barred nation it/self, alienated from its eternal self-generation, becomes a liminal signifying space that is internally marked by the discourse minorities, the heterogeneous histories of contending peoples, antagonistic authorities and tense location of cultural differences.

Coherent National Discourse as a Confluence of Narrative(s)

Analytical philosophers will undoubtedly quarrel with the associative significance of the term "pedagogic" which from the Greek πιδαγωgικ-óς (*Paidagōgikos*) and its Latin equivalent *Pædagōgic-us* means teaching and its practice thereof. The usage of this term at least in the classical sense of the word is *teaching*. Professor Bhabha in his very rigorous and brilliant description of pedagogic mode of representation did not seem to give attention to its normative analytical essence. This controversy is not my call for now although I recognize the inconsistency and for this reason, that is, lack of analytical coherence described earlier in lieu with the discourse description, the term "pedagogic" will henceforth be substituted with another term, "essentialist."

At this juncture, we now perceive performative discourse as a remedial narrative of defusing the hegemony of essentialist nationalistic discourses. Performative narrative discourses as "counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totaling boundaries—both actual and

conceptual—disturb these ideological maneuvers through which 'imagined communities' are given essentialist identities" (Bhabha1994:149). There is no doubt that national discourses need essence, origin, unity and coherence; yet its ideal of coherence as noted earlier is undermined by the two contradictory mode of representations which splits the nation for "counter-narratives interrupt the nation's smooth self-generation at the level of the performative, revealing *different* experiences, histories and representations which nationalistic discourse depend on excluding" (McLeod 2000:120). According to Bhabha (1994:146–147; 1990:4), the essentialist discourse enables the past to become invented through a simulated tradition in which "space" is located and differentiated by "atavistic territoriality of tradition"; through which the nation is "one of the major structures of ideological ambivalence within the cultural representations of 'modernity.' " This ideological ambivalence is evident in the "Nation's interrupted address, articulated in the tension signifying the people as an *a priori* historical presence, a pedagogical (essentialist) object." A people so invented in this narrative-performance signify "its enunciatory 'present' marked in the repetition and pulsation of the national sign." The pedagogical on the other hand, finds "its narrative authority in a tradition of the people." What we have now is a "moment of becoming designated by *itself*, encapsulated in a succession of historical moments that represents an eternity produced by self-generation" (Bhabha 1994:147–148).

It is at this point that Bhabha (ibid.:169) introduces the theory of what has been *conveniently* termed "Hybridity." The theory of hybridity suggests that "the national memory is always the site of the hybridity of histories and displacement of narratives." If this term "hybrid" is appropriate, hybridity signifies the nationalistic discourse as fragile, exclusive, contradictory and splitting in contrast to the nuanced image of coherence, unity, essence and origin that is wrongly projected on these discourses. Hybridity symbolizes that nationalistic discourses can never be captured in one coherent and common narrative—a narrative that adequately expresses a complete signification of the nation and its people.

In my view, the usage of the term "hybrid" in this context contradicts what it supposedly signifies. For the current discourse, I do not subscribe to its usage and hence I propose a redefinition and substitution with what I have termed "confluence of narratives" or "confluent identities." Hybridism breeds essentialism; the hybrid (if you like, crossbreed) subject has no "space" for he or she continuously inhabits a new form of *scripted* narrative called "hybridity." [7] The hybrid subject is *faceless* by which I mean a loss of subjectivity for his or her hybrid character entails a continuous inhabiting of other "selves." Such hybridism entails both the suppression and possession of the "other" for it is only when I inhabit the character of

the other that I affirm my subjectivity at which point, *subjectivity becomes subjectivism*. A "confluence of narratives" or "confluent identity" on the other hand, does not generate a dislocation of the self; it breeds relation and distance, alterity and sameness. It is a meadow of narrative identity nego- tiations, of creative fidelity. A strong subjectivity is not a hybrid character but a subject-in-a-relation where difference is a resource for strength. In ubuntu's terminology we say, "a person is a person through other people" to indicate the power of such difference and sameness in constituting a strong subjectivity.

And if our nationalist discourse essentially represents a dynamic iden- tity, the later, Bhabha (1994:1) tells us, will become symbolized as "the art of the present"; a metaphor for living with and dealing with the "border lives" on the fringes of the society/nation. "[The] beyond is neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past . . . ." This "art of the present" McLeod, (2000:218) writes, "requires a habit of mind in which movement and crossing are paramount." On this point, Bhabha (1994:1) reminds us that

> [w]hat is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differ- ences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of selfhood . . . that initiate new signs of identity.

In the tradition of poststructuralists like Foucault and Deleuze who criti- cized the notion of individuals as "sovereign subjects," [8] Bhabha argues that identity remains discursive and opposes the idea of "sovereign" or "essen- tialized" subject. And, if identity (or subjectivity) is a discursive project, it can be remade, remodeled in new inventive and creative ways. This possi- bility of new innovative and creative ways of remodeling identity McLeod (2000:218) notes has massive influence on individual and groups because:

> [Rethinking] identity is not a solipsistic activity but is bound up in group identity, group formation and group hostilities. So the imaginative crossings at the 'beyond' offer ways of thinking about communal identity, that depart from older ideas, such as the 'deep horizontal comradeship' of the nation which can fall foul of the binary logic of same/different, inside/outside, citizen/stranger.

This possibility of "imaginative crossings" was what enabled Bhabha to make a case against the often-perceived notion of cultures as holistic/pure artifacts of wisdom inherited through reformatted mode of knowledge preservation (ibid.). "Culture" Bhabha writes ought to be "intermingled

and manifold." Linked with this thesis is his argument in "DissemiNation" where he stresses the significance of performative (as opposed to pedagogical) as an avenue through which new confluent identities can emerge; a move which Mcleod (2000:218) argues, unveils the significance of the "border" as empowering the migrant "to intervene *actively* in the transmission of cultural inheritance or 'tradition' (of both the home and host land) rather than *passively* accept its venerable customs and pedagogical wisdom." Yet Bhabha does not completely dismiss essentialist (pedagogical knowledge). According to Bhabha, received or inherited knowledge can be remodeled and reconstructed with new and unexpected intentions and meanings. This according to Bhabha (1994:2) occludes a *restaging of the past* "for the recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition."

On this procedure, the subject is no longer an object of pedagogical (essentialist) discourse but of *dynamic* process. The subject is constituted by the seemingly confluence of narratives that informs his present identity. In other words, the subject's subjectivity is in fact a product of many locations, sources and materials. This thesis undermines the notion of a holistic single and pure cultural narrative. It is a thesis that promotes a creative way of thinking of identity against the currents of an "exclusionary, fixed, binary notions of identity based on ideas of rootedness and cultural, racial and national purity" (McLeod 2000:21). Thus, confluent identities are entrapped in continuity—never fixed but always changing in motion; but they remain a confluence and not a hybrid! In the next chapter, I shall now place ubuntu in the overall conceptual scheme we have developed. Does ubuntu mediate an essentialist or performative narrative in South Africa's national imaginary? Or both? If the former, the emergent problem yields to cultural hegemony. If the later, then it can be exposed to manipulation as a "political ideology." But if it expresses both the essentialist and performative normative, how do we reconcile the substantive ambivalence and transcend the aforementioned contradictions to arrive at a healthy humanism? This will be my concern in chapters 7 and 8.

7

Ubuntu: A Critique of Colonial/Apartheid Reason?

National Discourse and Colonial Reason: Essentialist (Pedagogic) or Performative?

The logic of apartheid as I argued in Chapter 2 was supposedly a systematic negation of the other person's identity and humanity such that provokes the native to ask, in the writing of Fanon (1963:200; 1963a:238) "in reality who am I?" *A victorious fight not only consecrates the triumph of its rights; it also gives to that people consistence, coherence and homogeneity.* The struggle against apartheid revisions the Western linear account of history and its "historicist 'idea' of time as a progressive, ordered whole" (Homi Bhabha 1986:xi). In Chapter 2, I investigated how colonialism depersonalized and alienated people from their culture, society, and heritage. From incidents of colonialism we learn therefore, according to Bhabha (ibid.:xi) that "[the] analysis of colonial depersonalization alienates not only the Enlightenment idea of 'man',[1] but challenges the transparency of social reality, as a pre-given image of human knowledge."

According to Fanon (1963:169), the role of the National culture cannot be underestimated in this scenario. Since the logic of colonialism denied him history, the native intellectual appeals to his so-called *nonexistent* history to affirm and legitimate his nation's heritage. A claim to a past national culture rehabilitates a nation and offers a modicum of unity and national imaginary. In the psychosocial consciousness, appeal to a national culture induces an important change in the native who look up to history for something to go beyond: "the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose

existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others" (ibid.). In this way, the past is rehabilitated for the native intellectual who tries to prove that he has a culture after all, a culture embedded in his past tradition, and because he has a culture, he is indeed a cultured person whose path has been clearly marked out by history and the onus is on him to give proof of its justification.

The native's intellectual deposition to a national culture is based on the urgent need to reconnect with his people. Fanon (ibid.:175) tells us that the fetishism toward the natural culture is a clinging on anything that can give the native "anchorage." To offset the gaze of the white man, and neutralize his power, the native finds refuge in "his unknown roots and to lose himself at whatever cost in his own barbarous people." The end of apartheid and its narrative discourse demanded a new form of public social history to reflect the changing times; a constructive historiography that will enable the formation of a nation-state to displace the old narrative order and its exclusionary practices; a new history that will reflect the political necessity of social transformation vis-à-vis a sociocultural and political demand for reconciliation and healing. The first embodiment of such public history according to Alan Cobley (2001:618) was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) with its emphasis on "the promotion of the redemptive value of memory and of personal testimony on the one hand and on the identification and dedication of new, inclusive, national monument on the other." This public history was of course ingratiated in a new public discourse (ubuntu) that became a source of legitimacy for the TRC. The new public history will redefine past historical moments with a new interpretation of the content of its embedded narrative. The first was the ensuing public debate on the fate of Robben Island after 1992. The second moment and most poignant and remarkable in this juxtaposition was the integration of the Afrikaner commemoration of the Day of the Covenant in remembrance of the Battle of Blood River on December 16, 1838, and the African National Congress (ANC) Heroes' Day—both events formerly celebrated on December 16 became baptized as the national Day of Reconciliation (will come back to this point shortly) (*see also* ibid.).

The third moment in this historical maneuver is the fusion of the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) with the military wing of the liberation movement. The fourth was a new flag that reflected the colors of the *new* and *old* order. The new being the colors of the African nationalism and the old being the apartheid order. The fifth moment would become manifest in the new South African national anthem which became a merger of the liberation *Nkosi Sikelela Africa* (God bless Africa) with old apartheid national anthem. These were conscious attempts by the Mandela government to achieve a contemporaneous shared time, a sense of national

inclusiveness, a national core by assimilating the old into a new order. A move that is not akin to displacement of the old but of integration into a new sovereign. To what extent South Africa reached this formidable goal of integrated national sovereignty is the goal of the rest of this book. In application, this South African maneuver, its success and its failures, of projects and endeavors is to create a new social order from the residues of the past and emerging orders thus exercised through the intellectual discourse of the new nation. The moral authority of the new South Africa is its ability to overcome such strife and injustice of the past with a new political humanism that goes beyond a mere democratic dispensation. I will come back to this point later, enunciating the present and historical pervasiveness of this new performative national consciousness otherwise called ubuntu to attain its intentionality through a double contrive of nation building and reconciliation. This revisionism, caught between the future and the past attaches the symbolism of change to a new social history but with a caution as Harries (1994:xvi) reminds us that the new history must not be a "product of 'objective reality' or even a lens through which reality is perceived, but as the product of a repertoire of signs through which experience is ordered and arranged, and infused with meaning."

Thus far, our new nationalist discourse in its attempt to accommodate the different layers of our historical experiences attaches a double mode of representation that assumes essentialist and performative edge. My persuasion nevertheless, will be for a history from below, a historicized conscious memory that gives voice to the subject and locates the agent as the center of history. I plead for a history from below for as Cobley (2001:620) warns, "the ironic consequences of many previous attempt to place categories of people 'hidden from history' at the centre of historical studies 'from below' was that these studies had deepened their marginalization . . ."

I shall henceforth attempt to highlight the different methods of representations (essentialist and performative) projected on the South African context. Although I am biased toward a performative discourse, I shall nevertheless highlight both modes of representations. I will attempt to transcend these differences and establish continuity. Not merely content with the differences, I am persuaded that both mode of nationalistic representation do posses internal rationale and values which must be tapped and appreciated. While the essentialist is seemingly hegemonic and obnoxious, I intend to interrogate its values and appreciate if indeed one might gain some insights through its adoption. In our case, ubuntu does offer a double narrative. It can be both performative and essentialist; it can transcend this rigid schematization to establish—by virtue of its internal value—a continuity between these modes of our discourse representation. This need not make ubuntu a "meta" or "super" discourse or narrative; it means

that it can both be a performative discourse but also essentialist (peda-gogic) and moves beyond. It is precisely at this point that ubuntu gains a new intentionality. It will become a discourse that is open, yet main-tains its coherence and unity. It becomes a method of discourse and yet discourse itself.[2]

The postcolonial South African historiography is confronted with two kinds of national discourse: One embodies individual liberty and includes the barbarian (foreigner) with a sense of ethical universalism. The other is fixated on quasi tradition without the ability of self-transcendence to accommodate other cultures. It becomes reactionary for it emerged in defi-ance to the British. Ubuntu represents the former, apartheid represents the latter. Ubuntu is civic while apartheid was an ethnic nationalism depen-dent on the *volk* philosophy, the myth of a shared pseudo-cultural and religious history. Both kinds of nationalism embody a distinction between "nation of citizens" and "ethnic nation." The former is a residue of pol-itics and collective will dependent on choice, obligation and contract. It is dynamic and mutable. The latter is fixated on *volk* philosophy, or of a closed common descent or race that eschews the foreigner, the outside tribe. Ubuntu fuses nation of citizens and ethnic nation in the making of new imaginary. Ubuntu thus understood will emerge to demonstrate the fallacy of this belief on the fixation on culture, race, or common descent as the absolute determinant of national imaginary.

The aforementioned national discourses exhibit two dominant modes of representations (performative and essentialist). The first (performative) is a dominant mode of representation evident in ubuntu and the latter (essentialist) is a dominant mode typical of apartheid narrative. For the former, this mode is not a straightjacket phenomenon for it does indeed fit both modes of representations with its uniqueness bestowed in its ability to reconcile both representations and generate a new kind of intentional-ity with such transcendence. Apartheid assumes an essentialist mode by its special appeal to the exclusion of the "other" through which it gains its internal rationality. It is a discourse that depends on the unity of the *volk*, on unanimity that celebrates *a people set apart and called forth by God.* The compass of collective suffering in the hands of British neverthe-less dictates this unity and coherence of the volk (cf. Chapters 2 and 3). I shall henceforth examine the performative and essentialist influences of such nationalistic discourses betwixt contradictory polarities and concep-tual ambivalence in which our nation is intertwined. Understanding the peculiar modes of these representations would enable us to locate the inter-nal rationality of our discourses and their constitutive role in dividing or uniting South Africa as a nation in the classical sense. Since my empha-sis is on the role of these discourses in uniting as opposed to dividing,

I will only briefly pause to examine one instance of such discourse that thrived on its ability or attempt to harness a nation through a divide and rule, out of difference. This is Calvinism and its relation to apartheid discourse. I will proceed from thence to one such discourse that captivates the imagination of my project with its focus on undermining former discourses (sometimes as a displacement narrative) by introducing inclusive and extraditing exclusive narratives from our daily social intercourse.

Afrikaner nationalism is arguably influenced by Calvinism on a consciousness that emerged on the necessity to form a nation set apart for God. The place of the individual is guaranteed when the community obeys God's will. In the institute, Calvin had proposed a theocracy in which the Church and state are different sides of the same coin—as two faces of a community. They are inseparable for secular work is signified as a divine vocation. This integration of the religious with the political enabled Calvin to eschew the separation of public and personal morals. The republic is a *Christian politia* by which he means that the social and historical life is a progress toward God (Kohn 2005:137). It is on the influence of such theocratic republic that apartheid government was able to enact laws—sometimes to extreme absurdity like the *Immorality Act* that forbade sex across racial boundaries. On this view, the life of the individual and the community can only flourish when they are bound to God's will. Since the individual belongs to the state and the state belongs to God, it follows that this individual is committed to doing God's will in order for the state to flourish. This individual's fulfillment is only realizable when the state flourishes by doing the will of God. Yet, this is *only* a relationship and the individual is able to maintain "individuality" and distance.

Afrikaner intellectuals have modified this abstraction of individualism and absolutism of the nation and introduced a new order of theocracy in which the nation becomes the "Church" and as a consequence, the rule of this "Church" is concomitantly the rule of the state. It follows that to be a citizen is to be a member of the church since the individual's claim to God is through the nation, which mediates such claims. Goldberg (1985:128) explicates:

> The discourse centered primarily on Calvinism, but the individualism of the central tenets of the doctrine had to be modified in order successfully to achieve a cooperate identity in the secular world. One crucial issue concerned the relationship of the state and the nation to the individual. In Kuyperian revisionism, Afrikaner intellectuals were able to find part of the solution. While Calvin had emphasized particular grace and the separation of church and state, Abraham Kuyper introduced a doctrine of common grace not mentioned in the Institutes. This allowed for the individual's relationship to God to be mediated through the nation, which not only

provided the basis for mass mobilization on exclusive lines, but also ensure the survival of the church itself.

Notice the shift from *particular* to *common* grace. The doctrine of particular grace under Calvinism enabled the individual to differentiate his subjectivity from the nation, while the doctrine of the common grace undermines such possibility. The individual's subjectivity is now expressed through the "common national grace." To arrive at this however, resource was to be found in Abraham Kuyper. On the force of such persuasion, the "Nationalist Party" and its apartheid policy is arguably a legitimate child of Afrikanerdom and precisely the reason why the apartheid government became known as the "Nationalist party." The ambivalence and internal contradiction of what is in fact "nationalist" only points to the "essentialist" and manipulative criterion of national discourse. Apartheid discourse itself is a projected sovereign universal, but a sovereign, which needs the "other" to be become real, for without its other, its end is self-destruction. The "other" has to be invented so that the "nationalist" can gain a legitimation for such legitimation comes only from outside borders. Without the "other," I cannot feel my presence as different; for the "national memory" is only feasible and plausible at the gaze of the "other" community from whom the *nationalist* is able to make a distinction and separate his identity to and from. This was the internal rationality of the nationalist party's project of apartheid deeply enshrined in the institutional effort to invent the "other," to separate the other—"apartness"—*apartheid*. This is the pattern in which the identity of the "nationalist" or a "nationalistic discourse" embodies two ancillary contradictory modes of representations - coherent and fragile. It lays claim to unity through the compass of common suffering (as exclusionary narrative) and the basis of its coherence as a "nation." Yet, this claim is simultaneously contradicted by its location in actual context and history. In the section that follows, I will shift my emphasis to another kind of discourse to highlight the performative representation of another discourse and its symbolism in the making of modern South Africa.

The Miracle of South Africa

During the negotiations leading to the first multiracial elections in South Africa, the ANC reputedly struck a bargain with the apartheid regime in which amnesty will be exchanged for peace and political dispensation. To be exact, the amnesty was only from prosecution for crimes committed in the name of the state. This negotiation in my view was a *progressive-success* in contrast to other pessimistic voices that has described the move

as a failure or *successful-failure*. I say *progressive* since the aim of my current project is precisely to navigate the historical crevice of its modulation as located in the discursive formation of modern South African social imaginary—a nation in the making. In the genesis of events, the ANC has now acquired political authority. While political authority might read as a *conversion* of power into right (legitimacy), it does not follow that such authority in itself has the capacity to sustain that legitimacy in the absence of *raw* power. It was obvious therefore that the National Party (especially its powerful security branch) negotiated within a position of power. It strikes as no surprise that they made claim on amnesty as a *conditio sine qua non* for their handover of power. However, the question is, how does one reconcile the convoluted history of South Africa with the new dispensation? Cessation of hostilities is not an automatic alternative to peace. How do we move forward? How can such peace become sustained? How does one reconcile the competing identities and identity distortions characteristic of South Africa's colonial past—through apartheid—with the sudden infusion of a shared national memory? What kind of social engineering can generate this process of transformation? The institutionalization of the TRC was therefore, in partial fulfillment of this enterprise. It was institutionalized and mandated not only with power to grant amnesty but also a platform to begin a shared story, a shared temporality, and a shared presence. I will return to this point later in the next chapter. The question at this point is how the discourse formation of the TRC can embody a creative imaginative aura or awe to transcend its role as an impartial umpire and modulate a new inclusive, shared memory and temporality? In fact, the proceedings and application of amnesty was challenged from all quarters and even some within the ranks of the ANC. Even the Amnesty International joined in the furor, positing that it contradicts international law; those conventions which prohibit granting of amnesty to persons convicted of crimes against humanity (Gibson 2002:542). For the ANC, it was a political and psychosocial maneuver; focusing on keeping a bargain and healing the scars of South Africa's racialist history.

The concern for the ANC was to come to terms with the emerging times and forge a unity without backlash from the victims who would otherwise feel betrayed and at the same time achieve peace. The question arises how to balance the demand for peace with a genuine need for justice. Is there a substantive conflict between peace and justice? Does the need for peace outweigh the demand for justice? Was justice pawned for peace? Largely however, does this manner of proceeding constitute a failure? Is it a redeemable option or simply the road less travelled?

Some scholars have criticized the TRC for what has been described as essentialist discontinuity between history and memory. Dominick LaCapra

located this discontinuity or dislocation on the basis that all memory is "both more and less than history" for it is often difficult to assimilate traumatic memory into historical discourse because of the inherent violence embedded in its construction (Libin 2003:120). According to Libin (ibid.:120), "the horror of the traumatic event displaces the victim from his or her experience . . . and so testimony can approach the site of trauma only obliquely and imperfectly [because trauma] provokes the dissociation of the subject and therefore . . . a 'collapse of witnessing' . . . an essential barrier." While I do not have the privilege to explore this plethora of ambiguities and complexities, they remain pertinent in pursuing those points of proceeding that would capture an alternative model; a new discourse not bestowed on essentialist attachment to static traditions, but a discourse, which negotiates, between layers of contradictions including those of the past and future memories. The power, that is, the authority of such discourses will henceforth emanate from its ability to produce enabling conceptual frames, which is mutually transformative. It is a discourse that is able to defuse the tensions and anger inflicted on the victims but accommodates old bargains. It is at this juncture that the application of ubuntu becomes all the more legitimate in accomplishing the task ahead.

On the necessity of the current scenario, it became an urgent imperative on the part of the "new" government to secure "foundation" that would generate a new national consciousness, a consciousness desperately needed to consolidate the new nation. It is in this sense that the TRC became a symbolic sociopolitical terrain on which a new memory would become signified. This symbolism of a new nationalistic consciousness is enunciated in the provision of the South African constitution through which the TRC was instituted:

> This constitution provides a historical bridge between the past of a deeply divided society characterized by strife, conflict, untold suffering and injustice, and a future founded on the recognition of human rights, democracy and peaceful co-existence . . . The pursuit of national unity, the well-being of all South African citizens and peace require reconciliation . . . The adoption of this Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the divisions and strife of the past which generated gross violations of human rights [. . .] in violent conflicts and legacy of hatred, fear, guilt and revenge. *These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding but not vengeance, a need for reparation but not for retaliation, a need for ubuntu but not victimization.*
>
> (Commission 2003, vol. 6, sect. 1, ch. 1, para. 1—my emphasis)

My interest is in the last clause that reads, by extension, *understanding* the past, *reparation* (not retribution), *ubuntu* (not victimization). For in this

way, the charter introduces into the public sphere a key discourse in the
making of modern South Africa. Embodied now as the ideological back-
bone for the TRC, ubuntu now assumes the symbolism of a public history.
As a public history, it signifies a break from the past in which forgiveness
offers both essentialist and performative representation. On the one hand,
the power of forgiveness is in the hand of the victim who appeals to his
cultural tradition (ubuntu) as a source of that power (essentialist). On the
other hand, reconciliation is achieved in fulfillment to the bargain with the
nationalist party (performative). There is no doubt that the extent to which
the TRC succeeds in restoring "agency" and "voice" to the subject is highly
debatable. Yet, this attempt by itself offers a "temporality," a "window"
period that initiated many possibilities such as the possibility of a collective
memory. Collective memories according to Brewer (2006:215) are, "shared
images and representation of the past" as it involves the construction of
social solidarity. The *shared images* becomes a panacea for constructing
national, cultural and ethnic identities—a process dependent on "a nar-
rative by which to construct a sense of nation-hood—a historical narrative
of the past, a sense of travails and triumphs on the journey to nationhood, a
sense of collective identity and solidarity and so on—all of which memories
help to supply" (ibid.:216). Shared collective memories therefore help in
the construction of what Benedict Anderson calls "imagined community";
a social cohesion through a reconstruction of the past.

In our case, the possibility of a new historical narrative invokes a rad-
ical transformation of the given socio-anthropological narratives of the
African people. The possibility of an African history would evolve a new
type of discourse, which in the writing of Mudimbe (1988:177), "valorizes
the diachronic dimension as part of knowledge about African cultures
and encourages new representations of the 'native', who previously was
a mere object within European historicity." These new representations
Mudimbe (ibid.:177) continues "open up areas of synchronic investi-
gation, emphasizing the dialectic tension and balance between regional
creativity and universal constraints of the human mind." In writing about
ubuntu, African academics were at the same time expressing their iden-
tity. This is evident in the massive intellectual and sometimes emotive
tensions among Africanist scholars in this regard; sometimes smacking
of intellectual racism: is there an African philosophy? Is there an African
intellectual history?[3] In writing about ubuntu, these African intellectu-
als are writing about their identity and rehabilitation of their subjectivity.
Where apartheid denied him humanity and dignity, the objective of the
African intellectual is now to restore agency and voice to history through an
appeal to his cultural narrative. The African intellectual situates and writes
about himself as located within history. To understand the emotive and

intellectual sentiment of ubuntu is to locate it within specific history and this history is the context of South Africa's colonial past. History therefore becomes a process of writing about one's identity, a method of analytical reference in which myth and reality are implicated as a repository of meaning. The native writes about himself, his beliefs, and most of all, his sociocultural experience that is at crossroad in his attempt at self-discovery. Without doubt, the myth exploited in this arena is only to boost the reality and give meaning to its application. Myth becomes functional in this respect; it mediates between *what is in fact t*rue and that *which is desired to be true*.[4] But, does writing about himself in this manner render his method obsolete or illegitimate? Not in the least.

As I argued earlier, nations do not emerge through a rational mediation of its nationals. Nations emerge through a creative interface of different memories, what Bhabha calls a "hybrid" narrative but what I have called a *confluence of narratives*. Collective memories Jolly (2001:711) reminds us, need not be perceived as maintaining or imposing "a community's (static) traditions, but that which negotiates between a series of contradictions in the community including those between traditions and modernization. Its power, its authority, lies in its ability to create diverse meanings in a world of conflicts, not exclusively in its reification of tradition as a defensive move."

As a political myth, ubuntu has now become a public history, which is not isomorphic with other narratives of the emerging South Africa. Its most significant posture being its symbolism that will accommodate different narratives and memories while simultaneously redefining (not obscuring) hidden antagonisms within the national margins. As part of the reconstruction of our past memory, ubuntu as evident in the TRC was an attempt to re-enact and convert distortions of past historical memories into a shared memory, a common narrative. In the process, a new vision emerges in which competing memories of the past, memories that induced conflict and hate became integrated and remains undivided. There is a transition in which the past becomes our "collective past," as Tutu noted, "*We are all victims of apartheid.*" The history of abuse and hatred, of resistance, et cetera, is now being forged into a single narrative. These competing and antagonistic memories that would have otherwise fuelled conflict became integrated. A celebrated case worthy of further elucidation is the merging of the national day/public holidays in South Africa of December 16 otherwise known as the Day of Reconciliation—the second moment pointed earlier. In this particular case, the memory of the ANC's Heroes' Day in commemoration of the defeat of the Zulus in the Battle of Blood River on December 16 was merged with the Afrikaner's Vow or Covenant Day. This symbolism is crucial for the making of modern South

Africa and I shall pause briefly to examine the events that would specify its high significance for both Afrikaners and black South Africans.

In retrospect, the immediate cause of the battle began with the execution of Piet Retief by Chief Dingane KaSenzangakhona.[5] Although there was an armistice between Dingane and the Afrikaners, Dingane for some obscure, historical reasons attacked the Afrikaner's encampment, massacring as much as 500 people. The Afrikaners were under the command of Andries Pretorius who three weeks earlier (November 26, 1838) had been promoted to a Military brigadier. Prior to the bloodbath, tradition has it that Pretorius and the Afrikaners made a vow that December 16 will be a day set apart for God if they defeated the Zulu army. On December 15, 1838, Pretorius and his group crossed the Buffalo River. On December 16, after several hours of skirmishes, Pretorius sent his Calvary out of their encampment to engage and disintegrate the Zulu army. The Zulu soldiers scattered with the Boers in pursuit, *hunting* the Zulus in a manner described by an eyewitness: "We were endowed with great courage and we left the kafirs lying on the ground as thick almost as pumpkins upon the field that has borne a plentiful crop" (Mackenzie 1997:75). According to estimates, more than 3000 Zulu were massacred with only three Afrikaners wounded (ibid.). With such infamous bloodshed, it is no wonder that the battle become infamously known as the Battle of the Blood River (*Bloedrivier*), for indeed, it was a river flowing with blood. And for the victors, it was a victory for Christianity, of morality over barbarism. In commemoration of the victory, December 16 became known as the Day of Covenant, and for the blacks, it was Dingane's day or Heroes day. Returning to our discussion, we now have a case in which different historical memories that would otherwise facilitate anger and vengeance became integrated into one national memory as a day of reconciliation.

The Ancestors Have Spoken: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!!!

Power is generally tied to discourse. If the Nationalist Party secured its power base on the basis of apartheid discourse, then it seems appropriate that the new black power base will, to some extent, justify itself with a discourse. It is essential not to underestimate the role of such discourse in the making of a national imaginary. Foucault (1980:119) has argued that "what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only weigh on us as force that says no, but that it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse."

Foucault's position is similar to a later discussion of Marx on the end of ideology and power ministrations. I shall now pause to examine what

insight might be learned from this thesis with regards to the situation in South Africa. The extent of any realistic application to the African situation is behest upon a simultaneous claim to universality and objectivity by the hegemony of the dominating class as well as the counter ideology propped up by the dominated class not with the aim of arriving at "communism" but an insight on the "*war*" of ideologies in South Africa. This will involve how performative nationalist representation emerges to challenge the imposed hegemony of essentialist nationalistic discourse. It exposes the fraudulent claim of coherence and unity as represented in these discourses (those that appeal to continuity with an imagined past) for it does reveal different experiences and histories. In ignoring these confluent narratives, such discourses thrive on displacement of narratives and exclusion—factors that renders its claim to coherence false, leaving its internal rationality all but fragile.

Karl Marx in the *German Ideology* (1845–1846) has argued that the historical character of every society is grouped vis-à-vis the structure of its social relation and *superstructural* manifestations. This entails understanding the mode of special relationship within the society. This relationship Marx argues is motivated by forces of production within the socioeconomic and human developmental stages. This mode of social relationship is characterized by conflict between two classes. The dominating class sustains itself by a superimposition of a superstructure of sociopolitical and judicial institutions (ideological maneuvers) which helps it to sustain its hegemony and domination. Some ideology on the other hand lays claim to universalism. Since the relationship between the two classes is one of continuous conflict, the dominated class will develop a counterideology to challenge the very foundation of the hegemony imposed by the dominating class. Prior to this revolution, the real manifestation of conflicts between the two classes remain ideological insofar as it is canvassed through a rationalization of moral ideals by intellectuals. Although every ideology Marx argues makes a universal objectivist claim to truth, this claim is only partial for these ideologies are merely manifestations of series of institutions and ideas (superstructures) and become extinct in the course of history. The "end of ideology" occurs when the universal class, that is, the proletariat has taken over and is able to defeat the historical causes at the foundation of class system by way of a complete overhaul of the forces of production. This final achievement will yield to communism characterized as it were by a classless society and "withering away" of the state and its attendant illusive and false ideological superstructures.

While colonial discourses and especially apartheid discourse sought to sustain itself through power legitimation of discourse; what I described in Chapter 5 as a diachronic appeal, that is, inventing *nations* within a

nation, the significance of ubuntu reveals to us that even the transition from diachronic to synchronic mode of the nation does need a discourse to legitimate its power. Foucault (1980:122–123) argues:

> I would say that the State consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible, and that Revolution is a different type of codification of the same relations. This implies that there are many different kinds of revolution, roughly speaking as many kinds as there are possible subversive recodifications of power relations, and further, that one can perfectly well conceive of revolutions which form the basis for the functioning of the State.

In the South African context, political independence ushers a new audience and autonomy demands ideology. Political institutions and ideological movements are so unprecedented that they invent historic continuity. Political traditions on the other hand are always invented with political purpose in mind. Yet, the success of such traditions is also dependent on a wavelength to which the public are disposed to tune in (Hobsbawm 1983:263). Postapartheid South Africa is arguably a viable context in which South Africans of all races tuned in to different wavelengths in reconstituting and in some cases, reinventing their identity. South Africa immediately after apartheid was in the process of inventing itself with a new national ethos and consciousness different from the apartheid political order. As a displacement narrative, ubuntu is a response to this aspiration. But unlike the colonial/apartheid reason, ubuntu is not exclusive but inclusive and hence forges a pretense of nationalism with a different orientation, grounded as it were by an ideology that is encompassing and in its extremity hegemonizing.

As an intuitive cultural rehabilitation, ubuntu offers a "response" of displacement narrative to apartheid reason, but would also inhabit a character of intellectual nationalism that depended or relied heavily on political nationalism. In the classical thesis, "all that is European is civilized; all that is African is barbarous" is now substituted in the intellectual circle to read: "All that is African is civilized and beautiful" (Mudimbe 1988:169). On the motif of this thesis, (*if such thesis is right*!) ubuntu is easily construed as a reactionary intellectualism against apartheid ideology that denied subjectivity to blacks.

Ubuntu becomes in this sense an anchorage for the African academic elites whose history has been truncated by the legacies of apartheid; appealing to anachronistic history to attenuate the gaze of the "other." The academic recreates his past to challenge his given history. He rewrites his history in an attempt to gain a new identity different from the

identity given to him by the colonial masters: an identity that justified his exploitation and domination through slave trade to colonialism; an identity that has left him materially and intellectually disoriented. An identity ingratiated within his consciousness as a servant, a thief, a slot, a subject that must live separate from human citizens. He tries to discard such identity through critiquing the same logic that has denied him subjectivity.

Construed as a *displacement narrative*, ubuntu is championed as a program to challenge the logic of colonialism as a residue of the Enlightenment. Where colonialism is intended to bring light to primitive cultures, as an instrument to stop the depravity, barbarism and psychopathology of the natives, ubuntu has become an attempt to challenge this logic of coloniality which regarded African culture(s) as barbaric. It is a protest to this putative image that precolonial African society symbolized the *darkest* period of humanity as echoed in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[6] In an attempt to rehabilitate himself, ubuntu becomes a program through which the native intellectual gives the past its history; a program to legitimize the essence of the African humanity before colonial depravation.

Beyond the Margins

The appeal to ubuntu in the TRC is partially based on its presupposition as an authentic/genuine African tradition. This appeal as I argued earlier, empowered victims to recognize that the power and initiation to forgive comes from them as embedded in their cultural tradition. It was a double maneuver for it also offered a foil for amnesty. This premise of either "genuine" or "authentic" tradition will become the central controversy on its intentionality as a national discourse. Scholars like Wim van Binsbergen and Christoph Marx would dismiss the currency of its legitimacy on the presupposition that it was a sponsored political project. As I shall show in a later section, a fundamentalist reading, that is to say, a blind appeal to ubuntu as essentially "African" age-old tradition in continuity with ubuntu as employed in contemporary discourse, adds legitimacy to these criticisms for it is specifically essentialist. However, I also intend to transcend the debate in these terms, that is, between its legitimacy as dependent on its authenticity. I would move beyond these debates to explore what fresh perspective or lessons we might draw from ubuntu as a discourse in contemporary South Africa.

For the sake of argument, if we assume hypothetically that ubuntu is in fact an invented tradition. Some critics could argue that as an invented tradition and national culture, practical experiences does not seem to corroborate or reflect a public expression of consensus rather than a leitmotiv

of bias in favor of nuanced consensual values in which the elites try to consolidate their ideological dominance. But does its appeal as an invented tradition deny it any substantive legitimacy? As I pointed in Chapter 1, traditions are never rigid, they mutate according to the historical tissue of circumstance. Indeed, traditions are invented in the process of accommodating the challenges and threats to established tradition.

In reality, ubuntu as a historical culture need not represent a chronological and accurate representation of precolonial African society. What it does represent is a dominant feature of social life with peculiar patterns of normative features before colonialism. To dismiss the possibility of its legitimacy or potency on the merit of inadequate empirical evidence or to propose a rigidly held interpretation of ubuntu as some Africanist scholars have done smacks of essentialism. The very nature of such essentialism is totalitarian, tyrannical and oppressive. A fundamentalist interpretation is simultaneously dogmatic by conjuring an image of a society with neither alternative worldviews, nor a counter ideology to challenge even a threatening *status quo*; a society that indulges in a naïve adherence to static cultural or traditional norms. The absence of a diverging voice spells hegemony. Africanist scholars of ubuntu have pivoted two dominant ways regarding the discourse. The first is the reading of ubuntu in this essentialist mode. The second is a reading in which ubuntu becomes a critique to colonial reason, a thesis on which ubuntu is located as an antithesis to the apartheid hegemonic discourse. Yet, as I shall show later, both of these methods are problematic; they advance a thesis that is itself questionable insofar as its premise embodies and hegemonizes the particularities and unique characteristics of many "African" cultures and peculiar worldviews as one cultural unit. An essentialist hegemonic reading undermines any possible positive values.

Either mode of the projected narrative discourse of ubuntu remain skewed by a hegemonic appeal to a narrative that will muscle "other" voices while interpreting multiple phenomena through a single index, an index that hegemonizes different specificities into a single narrative—but a method that certainly erases different subjectivities. Understood in this way, ubuntu as a pseudo-dogmatic nationalistic discourse fails. Not only is South Africa a nation with many memories and narratives, to argue either way, (1) that ubuntu is a source of our common past heritage which is in continuity with the ubuntu in the present national memory or (2) that it is a discourse that emerged as a critic of colonial reason—both of these projections are severely limited. The first projected ubuntu as a fictionalized form of essentialized sovereign subjectivity which homogenizes all the people of South Africa over and above the historical and cultural specifics of the different people that constitutes South Africa. The second projects

ubuntu as a hegemonic consciousness which in part is a fiction of the elites and politicians.

Despite the massive divergent and heterogeneous identities in South Africa, ubuntu is yet projected as an ideology aimed at offering a unifying and homogenizing modes of representation in response to the colonial representation of the Africans. This kind of hegemonic representation sometimes expresses itself in form of an essentialized black subject that sums up and epitomizes the black experience and story, in which individual elite becomes both the subject and embodiment of national history. His story is our story, his experience ours.

Ubuntu and its Critics

The South African anthropologist, Wim van Binsbergen (2001) in an essay, "*Ubuntu* and the globalization of Southern African through and society" has offered the most profound and yet what I add, an intrusive criticism of ubuntu. His disillusionment generally emerges primarily with the attempt of Africanist elites and scholars to project or interpret ubuntu in the present national memory as a narrative consciousness that evoke "unadulterated" aspects of traditional precolonial African life before colonialism. His source of disorientation is such "dubious" claims by these elites that such tenets, characteristics and philosophies embodied in ubuntu in the pristine past survive today. In his view, the term ubuntu is productive in the morphological linguistic sense. Morphological because it is in fact a coupling of a prefix "ubu" in Nguni language tree where *ubu* is a conceptual reference to general abstract words and phenomenon. *Ntu* on the other hand is derivative of the copula of the languages spoken from Zanzibar to Senegal and the Cape of Good Hope to the Nubian Desert. Here, the root term "ntu" refers to human where a combination of morphological nuances becomes available in all Bantu languages, for example, "in the Nkoya language of Western Central Zambia, the following forms appear: Shintu (human), muntu (a human), Bantu (humans, people), wuntu (human-ness; the quality of being human, humanity—as a quality not as a collective noun denoting all humans); Kuntu (Mr. Human; Bantu (The Country of human kind)" (Binsbergen 2001:54).

According to Binsbergen, the stem "ntu" is a notional guide to conduct and disembodied ethics. As a guide to conduct, *ntu* is used to maintain a balance between the cosmic order. As ethics, it conjures up a metaphysics that differentiates the living from the dead, the human from the nonhuman and the inanimate objects. On the basis of the former (*ntu* as a guide to conduct), Binsbergen is persuaded that *ntu* is a motif through which

people are "coaxed back into the folds of humanity." This is necessitated by his argument that the role of "*ntu*" is to maintain a balance in the cosmological order—where he argues that maintaining such harmony is necessarily the absolute good of such African community where ubuntu is practiced. The move through which he arrives at this conclusion in my view narrows the wider implication of the narrative as it complicates any genuine search for comparative analysis. Yet, it is a move that allows him to arrive at the conclusion that *ntu* is in fact "not infinitely accommodating, not without boundaries: extreme antisocial behavior is its boundary condition." *Ntu* adopts an indigenous autochthonous humanity in the presence of the stranger, a process, which enables the stranger to become, excluded (Binsbergen ibid.:55). According to this view, insofar as his humanity is excluded the stranger does not acquire the status of "muntu" among the black population of Southern African population during colonial and postcolonial period. To the extent that the practice of ubuntu is mediated as a good internal to the community, I concur with van Binsbergen (cf. Chapter 6). As I argued earlier, goods are internal to practices and what occurs as a basic practice of ubuntu in one community may differ from the other. However, I differ to the extent that Binsbergen dismisses ubuntu as merely an elitist invention devoid of actual historical certainty as a basis on which it lacks authenticity. As I shall show later, Binsbergen will extend his attack on ubuntu to its use in the TRC and as a national discourse. For the present moment, the problem seems to lie in such unanimity of an "unadulterated" past (among other criticisms). To this extent, this charge against Africanist scholars for presuming such unanimity is a legitimate charge. For the current purposes, the following table schematizes this tension between Binsbergen and his charge against ubuntu; reasons for which ubuntu is only a pretentious discourse in an alien format. Binsbergen makes a distinction between his view on the subject and that of Professor Mogobe Ramose, who he sees as a representative of such Africanist mind-set (table 7.1):[7]

Table 7.1   Ramose Vs. Binsbergen Debate

Ramose as representative of elitist construct of ubuntu	*Binsbergen (2001:62)*
A Value Orientation of precolonial Southern African societies	Ubuntu is a Contemporary academic construct that has become a product of the "forces of apprehension, exploitation, and cultural alienation that has shaped South African society" (ibid.).

Table 7.1 (Continued)

Ramose as representative of elitist construct of ubuntu	Binsbergen (2001:62)
A worldview through which these precolonial societies were ordered until colonialism	There is no correlation between the concept of ubuntu and understanding of ubuntu as evoked in the mainstream African academic advocates and the value orientation which informs precolonial African societies
Therefore, colonialism and globalization as a worldview process of European cultural imperialism and hegemony destroyed ubuntu as practiced by these African communities	Hence, while ubuntu might be able to deal with some of the adverse effects and trauma of globalization, it is merely "a new thing in a globalized format, not a perennial village thing in an authentic format" (ibid.)

It is on the basis of such summation that Binsbergen (2001:64) could argue that ubuntu is not a philosophy based on continuity of any sort with the village life rather than an appeal to the recognized opinion of politicians and academics. And ubuntu gains currency because these academics and politicians have cast it in a globalized format: "ubuntu as a model of thought therefore had to take on a globalized format in order to be acceptable to the majority of modern South Africans." At this juncture, Binsbergen (ibid.:68–69, 72) it seems, is reducing knowledge about precolonial Africa to the muses and ministrations of earlier capital adventurists in Africa and the anthropologist's notebook. On this conjecture, the social normative patterns that govern these African societies is not and does not constitute a perennial lived reality rather than a creation of the ethnographer's library. In this reductionism, ubuntu becomes:

> Perlocutionary or illocutionary: constituting not so much the enunciation of an actual practice [. . .], which Southern African philosophers have summarized under the heading of *ubuntu* . . . set in a context of elaborate rhetorical arts in which the available cultural material is presented in a strategic, eclectic, and innovative manner. These verbal elements are often so complex, cryptic, multilayered and internally contradictory, archaic.
>
> (ibid.:69)

On this view, ubuntu does not only lack historical and internal rationality, at best, it represents an *etic* in an alien format; a product of an intellectualist

movement, a residue of the "North Atlantic" intellectual formation; "a tool for transformation in a context of globalization . . . an *etic* rendering in a globally mediated format . . . a regional intellectual elite, largely or totally weaned away from the village and kin contexts . . . largely unsystematic and intuitive" (Binsbergen 2001:71–72). Accordingly, if indeed Ubuntu is to make a difference in a global format, this is only possible based on its appeal as a prophetic ideology which it employs to mask the social ills of contemporary South African society. The illegitimacy of its appeal is not only because of its lack of historical authenticity, it is also, merely a construct of the imaginary wishes of its academic authors and political sponsors as "an exhortative instrument . . . being prophetic, ubuntu philosophy seeks to address fundamental ills . . . the social life world of its academic authors" (ibid.:73).

Undeniably, Binsbergen (ibid.) is right that an adherence to an unbroken continuity exposes ubuntu to a charge it cannot admit. A dogmatic unanimity contradicts its internal rationality in the face of its assumed "ideal" practices vigorously contradicted by those practices within the South African sociocultural sphere. For example, in responding to the charges of "necklacing" as one fundamental contradiction to the given essentialist definition of Ubuntu, the pro-Africanist scholar Allister Sparks (1990:103) went on defense: "It was a time of desperation during which man was reduced to bestiality and the spirit of *ubuntu* disappeared from the land." The practice of necklacing is one the most brutal form of jungle justice in which a person is publicly lynched by hanging tires around their neck, pouring petrol over them and setting them on fire alive. The derivative "necklacing" refers to the actual practice of putting tires around the victim's neck. It was used to expunge the so-called witches from the community and later during apartheid, it was used to martial out justice against spies, collaborators or saboteurs to the struggle. Other authors like Seacong and Shutte (1999:24) do not agree on this point of contradiction but moves on to develop what would remarkably strike as the utilitarian efficacy of ubuntu to serve the need of the majority:

> [Ubuntu] seeks the greatest happiness for the greatest number; it can easily slight the rights of individuals. The majority may forget the interests of the minority. The solidarity of ubuntu may be for wrong reasons. Kangaroo courts and necklacing could be the result of this . . . It is very hard [for one] to distance oneself from mass action.

A dogmatic "traditionalism" of ubuntu is a definition of a totalizing continuous process; a totalizing historical project through which the past, the present and the future become inverted or obviously invented, to measure in equal terms, with past historical circumstances, located traditions and

cultures (Green 1999:124). This dogmatism ignores context and champions a dogmatic chimera of a pristine continuity. This homogeneity in history is what Foucault (1972:12) criticizes for its false epistemological foundation:

> Continuous history is indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject—in the form of historical consciousness—will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode.

This mode of history projected as a broad continuous consciousness dehistoricizes the "subject" of history itself, it becomes a project, which in the writing of Foucault's disciple, Mark Poster (1984:75) remains "a means of controlling and domesticating the past in the form of knowing it [Eze: BUT, and *this is a crucial qualification*] without placing himself or herself [to the context] in question." The absurdity herein is that we are located in a situation in which the historian becomes a master of the past, but a "closed" past. Here what narrative we have is "totalization" and closure, a dead dogma not open to discussion. In this way, there is a danger of ubuntu inheriting a totalizing historical consciousness from whence it loses any potency and meaningful significance for a contemporary historical circumstance. Such unanimous referential to the past imposes rigidity to culture while obfuscating dynamism to cultural change.

In his now classic work, *The political unconscious*, Fredric Jameson (2006:3) was adamant that a reconstitution of a historical narrative involves an acute measure of familiarity and indifference, *presence* and distance: "Our presupposition . . . will be that only a genuine philosophy of history is capable of respecting the specificity and radical difference of the social and cultural past while disclosing the solidarity of its polemics and passions, its forms, structures, experiences, and struggles with those of the present day." As to where the political unconscious finds it expression (ibid.:4) notes that "in detecting the traces of uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of fundamental history, the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity."

Ubuntu as a historical narrative is only able to reconstitute and reconcile our contemporary social imaginary with our past memories when it is open to the past, present and the future without being dogmatically bound within a temporal location as in a rigid appeal to tradition.

Understood in this way, ubuntu avoids the charge of a totalizing narrative and becomes reflexive and open to the future. The merit of this method is aptly highlighted by Green (1999:130–131) in his description of historical fiction:

> A work of fiction may be considered as effectively engaging with history if it calls up the past as a point of resistance to the present, if the past is allowed to exist in the work in all its difference from the present, *if the very act of creating the past in the work is powerful enough to hold at bay the appropriation of that past by the present moment of creation.* [My emphasis]

In retrospect, Binsbergen has focused his criticism on the assumed unanimity and lack of historical authenticity as the basis of which ubuntu is necessarily an invention, a mystifying discourse without any factual certainty, but a discourse nevertheless paraded in a global format to fulfill the wishes and desires of its inventors. Other scholars are not concerned with such diminutive role of precolonial origins of ubuntu as opposed to its adaptation in the contemporary status quo of South Africa. For these critics, ubuntu as expressed in the national imaginary is simply as an attempt to dominate other cultural communities in "a continuing battle to assert African hegemony in the context of a multi-cultural and non-racial society" (Coertze 2001:116). Here ubuntu as a critique of colonial reason is simultaneously viewed as a form of cultural colonialism. For his part, Wilson (2001:13) while admitting the merits of ubuntu in inducing "basic respect for each other on traditional [i.e., African] values," is disillusioned because ubuntu "has now been extended to mean respect for human rights and or the spirit of nation-building [but which at best remains] a polysemous ideological concept which conjoins human rights reconciliation and nation-building in the populist terms of a relatively benign African nationalism."

Thus far, I have outlined a progressive emergence of ubuntu in the public sphere either as a format for nation building or as a critique of colonial reason. The core criticisms I have outlined have generated intense academic debates and counter rebuttals. These debates will define for us the didactic formation of ubuntu in the South African historiography. The following section is an attempt to investigate these *real formations*.

From History to Polemics

The polemical violence that has marred the progress of African intellectual history can be deduced from such criticisms above and later refutation. Some have argued that an attack on a people's heritage—be it imaginary,

real, prophetic or utopian—such an attack on a people's cultural heritage as nonexistent is an attack on their identity. Notable piece in these refutations albeit polemical is an excellent discussion on "The Bewaji, Van Binsbergen and Ramose Debate on Ubuntu" in the *South African Journal of Philosophy* by Bewaji and Ramose (2003). This essay exposes the polemical thrust that has indeed plagued African intellectual history—raising further questions on the motivation of the overall analysis and counter arguments. As I mentioned earlier, most Africanist scholars writing on African intellectual discourse were also writing about their identity. No doubt, a legitimate critique against colonial reason, against imperial coloniality—a coloniality that denied them even the potential to become humans. The passion and intensity, and even the language of these polemics reflect this attitude, a disposition in which philosophy, history, is simultaneously a philosophy or history of identity or its restoration thereof. On the basis of our recent historical past, the terrain of our intellectual history is a road traveled with as much *angst* and care. To criticize unwittingly, is to be accused of racism, at the same time, to criticize without a familiarization of context, to understand and know what in fact motivates these narratives and be sensitive to them is to mask the injustice of the past and become complicit in its doctrine. Indeed, this road is delicate. Many Africanist scholars would respond to such criticisms in the manner of which their subjectivity is dependent on the narrated discourse.

On this deposition, African intellectual history becomes a struggle for reason as a defense for subjectivity. If colonial *reason* denied the African of subjectivity on the basis of reason (rationality), a denial of such reason is simultaneously a denial of subjectivity. Subsequently, an attack on "Africanist" reason is simultaneously an attack on his subjectivity. This is exactly what Binsbergen does with his critique of ubuntu and precisely the reason why Ramose and Bewaji are out in arms. Both camps are guilty of such polemics. Binsbergen's essay for all its anthropological nuance is heavily couched in polemics; the language and the manner of his discourse gives certain justification to the rather *ad hominem* response of Ramose and Bewaji. In my view, Binsbergen's work is laboriously suspect, as it is a tad-bit a residue of colonial reason. At the same time, there is a genuine concern of intellectual racism. Ubuntu as an antithesis of apartheid is revered more than the latter and the only way to attack this reverence is to attack its thesis. Hence, the question is colonial and postcolonial: how can such value-oriented philosophy emerge and subsist in Africa? A new theory is hence needed to defuse and undermine the influence of this philosophy a move which is atypical of intellectual racism.

The Africanists however, while projecting a legitimate refutation of the critic's polemics are certainly seduced by the same disease they want to

cure—polemics is answered with more polemics and so on. In this way, the African intellectual will be certainly justifying the rationale behind the polemics to which they are up and against. Once again, it becomes a question of methodology. Responding in the manner they did, they are continually being reinvented at the gaze of the other, an invented subjectivity through a differentiating *order* of *otherness*. This is where to draw a line in order to secure any progress in the intellectual history of Africa. It is not about defending what others said about us and thereby let them dictate the pace of the discussion; it is about creative engagement, a disposition, an openness that empowers the "other" without losing power as a lead subject. This is my proposal, a creative dialogue that enables our discourse to become open to other worldviews; open to criticism and condemnation, for indeed, (cf. Chapters 8 and 9), it is only when our discourse is open to such polemical *brutality* and engagement can it become more substantiated, but above all more refined in dealing with many vicissitudes of our contemporary times.

Returning to the discussion after what I will consider a *necessary* digression, Binsbergen as noted earlier in his peculiar reductionism, projected ubuntu as a constructed "*archaic*" and "naïve" narrative values of South African elites for the perversion, mystification and manipulation of African *values*. This further highlights the polemics. But the question is what values since the expression of such values in form of ubuntu amounts to its manipulation? Other questions arise: does lack of continuity between precolonial African values, and postcolonial constructed narrative, deny ubuntu substantive authenticity or postulate its reference as archaic and naïve? Questions as these must be located within context: precolonial and colonial South Africa. It involves the consideration of the precolonial situations like the many intertribal conflicts and forced migrations. It also calls to mind the colonial contexts such as discussed in chapters 2 and 3. Furthermore, does appealing to ubuntu (even if to an imaginary nonexistent moral community) undermine its application and relevance in the TRC? I am tempted to consider that seven years on after the publication of Binsbergen's work, his prophecy of a "collapsed South Africa" is yet to happen. Perhaps, it seems that ideology has not failed in this classical sense of foreboding in building an imaginary community through the appeal to a national discourse. Ubuntu as one of such ideology will be indicated in Chapter 9.

Ubuntu might be anachronistic philosophy but it does not and need not yield to such nuances as being in a globalized format to gain legitimacy. As a model of thought, ubuntu represents a new quest for a new national consciousness that can decisively deal with the trauma of globalizations, colonialism and most recently apartheid. The legitimacy on which ubuntu

is dependent upon in my view is not necessarily universal as in a globalized format. Even in the most reductive essentialists reading, ubuntu is an attempt to reconstruct a new national consciousness, an imagined community for a new South Africa. It is legitimate and widely acceptable in South Africa because it displaces the apartheid consciousness and its associative hegemony (*see* Chapter 6 on difference between essentialist and performative role of ubuntu).

Thus far, we know that endorsing a nonhistorical perspective is a fundamentalist reading of ubuntu, it inheres such dogmatic appeal to a historical continuity between ubuntu as a postcolonial construct and its evidence thereof in antiquity. The appeal to historical rigidity of ubuntu is an attempt to validate a culture through a homogenization of a tradition. Such dogmatism also puts a restriction on its availability as a contemporary discourse. This fundamentalism also smacks of nativism for when ubuntu as a contemporary discourse is subjected to historical scrutiny; it yields to collation of different cultures which cannot be represented in one homogenized socio-cultural ideology. A rigid appeal to unanimous historical legitimacy stripes ubuntu of any genuine performative criterion. This is alienating and disempowering for it is a role reversal, in which history is again mediated through a reverse discourse. Such dogmatism is what Mazrui and Tidy (1984:283) criticized with the coinage of the term "Retraditionalization" of African values to gain legitimacy. The danger Mazrui and Tidy (ibid.:238) warn is that such move is "Another obstacle to cultural liberation . . . retraditionalization of African culture can take modernizing forms, especially if it becomes an aspect of decolonization. Retraditionalization does not mean returning Africa to what it was before the Europeans came."

The dogmatic assent to historical appeal is that it closes the door for possible verification; it constructs a primitive unanimity which can neither be verified nor interrogated with regard to its habitual usage or substantive essence. The validity or falsity of such discourse can never be demonstrated insofar as the credibility of such discourse remains imprisoned in a dogmatic past (its source and origin) since we do not in fact have access to such past. Ubuntu here will be nothing but a smokescreen upon which individual authors project their ideologies to gain recognition and credibility. This ideological manipulation is not neutral but indeterminate, it has no end, exposing ubuntu as a "commodity," —and hence ubuntu can become "empty," its essence abused and its nuances very much biased. Such move legitimizes the criticism of Binsbergen as merely intuitive without a substantive object of inquiry. It would inhabit a quasi authority in the name of tradition, which it projects as its repository essence and meaning. And if our identity is dependent on proving the authenticity of our cultural identity by way of "exclusive" reevaluation of our past or a dogmatic

appeal to a questionable historical past, the new charge is that we can only convert our subjectivity from the indictment of primitive mentality with an a-historical, inert or intuitive-immutable philosophy to re-humanize ourselves and thwart the imposed inferiority as an analytical essence (see, Hountondji 1996).

Among the dangers of imposing and assuming a collective consciousness is that, the individual is annihilated and suppressed. It is to assume the nonexistence of alternate capacities even in the primitive societies. Here is the rub! Arguing for such homogenized thought without differentiation is a denial of conceivably plurality of opinions and thought. We cannot assume the mandate to speak for black race. This is how it ought to be? This is "our" culture and civilization, et cetera. What is neglected is that in this manner of speaking for the "race," individual characters are completely denied a voice, originality and responsibility. What we have is an atomistic whole, an unencumbered society. Yet at best, our works point to different or diverging versions of the same story, each expressing the fantasy or fancy of individual narrators. My story is different because I have a different narrative experience.

However, because history has shown that no such homogenized concept exists in precolonial Africa taking into consideration the embedded contradictions in traditional African society that negate every understanding of ubuntu as we have it today, such inconsistencies like the *Osu* caste system among the Igbo, witch-hunting (especially, against the most vulnerable in our society: elderly single women) negated any consistency between the pristine appeal of ubuntu and its application as a contemporary discourse. Herein is located the contradiction and fragility of endorsing fundamentalist approach in any discourse for such discourse (in our case ubuntu) loses any universal significance and application while collapsing in the face of its own contradictions. To this extent, Binsbergen is right. The relevance of ubuntu therefore lies in understanding it through a different lens. Ubuntu as a modern ideology can become rehabilitated and in this case, scholars like Binsbergen would be found wanting for their very unsympathetic reading of ubuntu. On another level, ubuntu would be real in the sense through which every ideology embodies a corpus of action. At this juncture, the determinate question remains: what kind of discourse?

The purpose of the next chapter is to find ways in which ubuntu can become rehabilitated as a new public discourse; it is an attempt to overcome the dangers of unanimity while responding to the underlying criticisms. It begins with a *restaging* of the past with heavy emphasis on the role of ubuntu in the formation of South Africa; it will adduce a response to critics of ubuntu while exploring the normative imperative of ubuntu within the TRC as *a new public discourse*, of *unmasking strange faces*, and a final gravitation *toward a new humanism* (Chapter 9).

8

Ubuntu and the Making of South African Imaginary

Restaging the Past

Benedict Anderson (2001:39) has pointed out the significance of history in the making of modern identity. History can make you a citizen of Honduras, Montenegro, Israel, et cetera. In other words, the exigency of historical fatality locates and grafts one into generic contours of identity formation. This does not exclude immigrants who assume a new identity of the new nation. On this view, even a factitious "excavation" of a nation's cultural value can serve to integrate and harmonize diverging cultural identities. Moreover, just as the "constitution" of a national history bestows on the people the nation, these cultural artifacts of the nation bequeath on the people a national identity. In this context, culture transforms history into an institution, a critical source of national heritage and identity.

In Chapter 7, I made a case for ubuntu as a discourse located at the historical margins of the present and the past, of difference and sameness as embodied within specific cultural tradition(s) and context(s). Context is critical in order to situate our discourse within appropriate historiography. I have outlined several ways in which ubuntu might become problematic as an invented national culture. Without doubt, there are several limitations but this is not the last word. This chapter is an attempt to rehabilitate this process as we become stimulated to further questioning: In what ways can ubuntu become rehabilitated? Would those essentialist aspects of the discourse deny it further possibilities for healthy humanism? In chapters 3 and 4, I dealt with the historical background of the emergence of ideological and millennial movements in South Africa. My evaluation

of these ideological movements is on the merit of their formation in the making of modern South African imaginary. My critique is persuasively more methodological than substantive. Results are *always* influenced by our research method. Wrong method yields false results and are sometimes misleading and this heightens the significance to pay attention to context and method in discourse. However, should we throw away the baby and the bathtub? Despite the weaknesses on the projected image of ubuntu as an essentialist narrative and a fundamental critique of those aspects of its history that has become reflective as an imposed culture and tradition, can we rehabilitate its value by employing another method? Can we transcend these limitations and rehabilitate our discourse? Ubuntu has been heavily criticized but also praised for its imposition on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); yet, one must highlight (or judge) the discursive role it has played in bringing about healing and reconciliation, offering a point of departure and motivating a new beginning. Ubuntu ought not to be understood merely as an ideological discourse invented by elites, but extending focus on its putative character in the emergence of new South Africa. As a new national imaginary, ubuntu would offer a new sense of identity contemporaneous with, and in competition with different historical narratives in South Africa—this is the point of emphasis on what lessons can be drawn in the process of our nation building.

The process of nationhood does not occur in a historical lacunae; it is mediated by constant referent to a past tradition or a presupposition of phantasmal imagination of a past. Indeed, that "the process" of *looking back* is essentially constitutive in the process of nation building is modulated by Kumar (2006:7) in arguing that a nation that cannot invent or imagine its past "cannot be a nation." A view echoed by Hobsbawm (1996:252) that "nations without a past are contradictions in terms." Besides, Ernest Renan (1990[1882]:19) would remind us that "more valuable by far than common customs in the making of the nation, is the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme to put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together." We cannot avoid the role of historical past and memory in the process of nationhood. History becomes a locus of identification and formation of new identities, offering a benign continuity between a [pristine] past and anticipated future identity. The nation is therefore a historical location in which our social formations gain legitimacy by establishing an umbilical cord with the past. The nation is presupposed by the past, but summarized in the present through a common (tacit) consent for a shared sociopolitical life. Yet, the nation is not fixated on the past but a continual process as it is fluid and dynamic, "a daily plebiscite, just as

an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life" (ibid.:19). This imagined historical past need not be "authentic" or "verifiable" as we learn from the writing of Ernest Renan (ibid.:11):

> I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality. Indeed, historical enquiry brings to light deeds of violence which took place at the origin of all political formations, even of those whose consequences have been altogether beneficial.

What Renan means is that the "nation" is essentially dynamic. It is beckoned upon a metaphysical dream that is neither an absolute nor a rigid phenomenon. It is not a static organic; it evolves, adapts, reshapes, and changes. The tendency to absolutism of the national yields to two extremities: (1) that which holds "that blood or race is the basis of nationality," and (2) "the *volksgeist* as an ever-welling source of nationality and all its manifestations," extremities that would only become justified in a mythical prehistorical unanimity (Kohn 2005:13f). Amongst the danger of such extremities is that the national story turns into a national neurosis, devoid of cultural creativity for it is no longer an everyday plebiscite. Where religion for example has become an absolute measure of national core, it would wield so much power to hinder the development of other nationalities that detracts from the official religious doctrine. Sometimes religion divided nationalities according to religious affiliation like in Ireland, Nigeria, or Iraq. The fixation on common descent or race inevitably yields to racialism; the obsession on customs and traditions would capitulate to cultural colonization that thrives on the suppression of other cultures. It is a cultural coloniality since the nation in question finds its meaning only in its culture and tradition; it is restricted to this primordial gesture of excluding the character of the unknown, that is, the barbarian.

The demand for history in the national memory is therefore not only a demand for a mere historical "truth" as it inculcates a demand for a belief in self-determination inspired by an appeal to the past. Hobsbawm (1990:12) notes:

> *Finally*, I cannot but add that no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be committed political nationalist, except in the sense in which believers in the literal truth of the Scriptures, while unable to make contributions to evolutionary theory, are not precluded from making contributions to archaeology and Semitic philology. Nationalism requires too much belief in what is patently not so.

If nationhood is beckoned upon an imagined narrative of the past, it can also be a myth, but a necessary myth, a sacred fable in the process of its realization. But without substantive content, the myth (of the nation) is necessarily fragile. It is at this juncture that traditions become invented to infuse myths with memories, to substantiate the myth of the nation and gain legitimacy. This is what Gellner (1983:47) means by "Nations as a natural, God-given way of classifying men, as an inherent though long delayed political destiny, are a myth; nationalism, which sometimes invents them, and often obliterates pre-existing cultures: that is a reality." In South Africa, this attempt is exemplified by many "evidences" such as I have presented to substantiate the rationale of ubuntu. Even where such evidence thrives on historical myths, they remain sacred to South African national imaginary. Even as a myth, ubuntu infuses a *virtuelle* gemeinschaft [as an ideological basis] for a unified postapartheid South Africa; it functions to preserve an illusion of coherence and contemporaneity. These processes of social engineering are processes that yield to the birth of the nation. If Nationalism is inspired by a desire for self-determination, the nation is a modest "invention" of nationalism. Ubuntu offered possibilities for a national consciousness in offering a modicum for national identification and a geopolitical community. It invoked a new nationalist consciousness where nationalism became a substitute for social cohesion and integration through a historical culture. Projected on the nation, ubuntu is a tradition that is inclusive, a tradition aimed at inculcating a sense of safety, stability, a new shared-infused national consciousness and identity with which to challenge the consciousness and experience of the immediate past (apartheid). It becomes consciousness that promises moral leadership that is above racial and group identification, a symbol of our common humanity in harmonizing our past antagonistic historical memories with a symbolic promise of hope for the future.[1]

Within its practice in the course of nation building, ubuntu in the language of Anderson suggests an intimation of a contemporaneous community. It is a notion that invokes simultaneity across empty time, a sense of imagined fraternity among South Africans. It creates a homogenized, simultaneous empty time of an imagined society. People unfamiliar with each other believed in the same ideology, a fictionalized sense of community. It becomes an ideology that provides incidents of universality for actual realization of the imagined community.

A key point of consideration is the manner in which this "nationalist" consciousness emerged. Binsbergen (2001) has argued that any attempt to forge a South African imaginary albeit ubuntu format is the wrong way. A mere appeal to a national culture does not automatically translate that national feeling is superior to other competing identities—tribal or

religious. In our case, ubuntu as a new discourse offset the lacunae between given (imposed, elitist) historicity and history as context specific. Ubuntu engages both historicism(s), the people believe in it and associate their identity with its pseudo-sacred and cultural origins. Yet at the same time, it remains a given. But through social transformation and performativity of historical memories, continuity is achieved. The process of achieving this continuity is often located on the role of social history. Its significance in the formation of South Africa's imaginary is well illustrated by Gary and Rassool (1998:92, 94): "We wish to suggest that social history in South Africa brought together modernist appropriations or oral discourses with nationalist and culturalist teleologies of resistance to generate a grand narrative of experience read as 'history from below.' "

The question therefore becomes, is ubuntu as an act of social history totalizing? Can it overcome the charge of the aforementioned sentiment? Whose history? "If the 'historical' as a specific category is abandoned on the grounds of the past as a point of reference is simply subsumed by a narrative constructed in the present, how then can the past serve as a point of difference from which to challenge the present?" Can we historicize our subjects "without appropriating that subject into that history?" Green (1999:128–129) asks. What we have is a supple maneuver of our cultural history, a scenario that yields to the politicization of history in which the "past" is a captive of the moment. The emphasis on the history of the present is simultaneously a political project, the politics of "reconstituting the past" but with a caveat that "while we may acknowledge that the categories of the historical and the political are radically implicated, the acts of politicization and historicization are not identical" (ibid.:129).

What we have therefore is a reconstruction of history that is ambivalent in its analytical content, "something both resistant to being simply appropriated by the present and yet relevant enough to relate meaningfully to the present" (ibid.:129). It is at this point that the efforts of Africanist and political elites committed to a reconstruction of South Africa's historical memory may become construed as a political project. This process of reconstruction is profoundly political as it lays claims on political motivation. Being political, it becomes also a discursive question that is profoundly value oriented. On this point, the relationship between our discourse(s) and reality are dialectically implicated.

Values are internal to practices of communities. To understand this confluence of narratives within the sociopolitical and cultural imaginary of our nation, we need to move beyond a vertical or otherwise linear method of history to inculcate a horizontal pattern that accommodates other influences that would otherwise be excluded. History is neither a mere chronology of events nor an absolute fixation on the past. A rigid

fixation on the past evacuates possibilities for creativity, dynamism and originality. History, on this vision, becomes a sterile dogma. A vertical + horizontal appendage approach admits an avowal of a clinical procedure.

On a visit to a physician, a methodical clinical procedure is instrumentally linked to the medical history of the patient. Even before Pasteur's discovery of the germ theory, orthodox and nonorthodox practitioners of medicine would rely on medical history (of a patient) even if as a *variance*, to induce a cure. On this parallel, history offers a clinical representation for understanding our world patterns, a clinical method for the human sciences, and I dare to say, a clinical tool box to redeem us from the absurdity of dead dogmas that masquerade as histories, dogmas that are often characterized by a rigid backward bent on the past. The clinical method so adopted is a continuum—in contemporaneity with the past (as in medical history), the present, and the future (prognosis and diagnosis). On this representation, history transcends chronology of events and a pathological fixation on the past to become a clinical study of society in which the past (as our medical history) helps us to make sense of today, anticipate, and order life patterns in the future. Accordingly, if the health of a society is interwoven with its history, the role of the historian is that of a physician!

This double contrive (vertical + horizontal) broadens our horizon to gain new insights and knowledge. It is a method that makes us subjects, actors and agents of history and not objects of history. Where "vertical" represents a linear account of history, a top-down approach of a given historiography, "horizontal" is not necessarily a bottom-up approach, but represents other multiple influences that converge at the "immediate" point of our historical formation. A mere chronology of events "dislocated" from the sociocultural and political motivation preceding these events and isolated from the *extra-contextual* incidents and influences (such as prejudices, biases, mind-sets) that follow these events—such method of history in my view is a vicious historical solecism. The integrative "capital" of our method is its ability to accommodate these "extra" influences, and perhaps justify the title of this book, *Intellectual History in Contemporary South Africa*. My aim is to locate our discourse at precisely that "confluence" of multiple influences and incidents in order to free our method from dogmatism or such essentialism that will otherwise obfuscate any emergent value of our discourse; it is to unveil its hypostasis.

Good history is not a mere chronology of events; it involves a contemporaneous historicity. My argument on vertical and horizontal is my basic outline for a method in cultural history and serves as the core motivation for my criticisms and "admissions" in responding to critics and criticisms on ubuntu. The virtue of our method (convoluted paradigm) lies in its contemporaneity (note: NOT holism). It becomes "humanistic" for the

focus is on the human person as a subject of history. A background such as this in the reflection of MacIntyre (1984:217) is accordingly

> [determined] by the concept of a story and of that kind of unity of character which a story requires. Just as a history is not a sequence of actions, but the concept of an action is that of a moment in an actual or possible history abstracted for some purpose from that history, so the characters in a history are not a collections of persons, but the concept of a person is that of a character abstracted from a history.

In the previous chapter, I have admitted and critiqued those rather quixotic errors in our discourse analysis inhabited by some Africanist scholars—criticisms that will reoccur repeatedly. In the following section, I will adumbrate these precocious misgivings on the potentiality of our discourse. For the present commitment, I have termed this admixture of the vertical and horizontal formation of our narrative a *convoluted paradigm*. I use the term "convoluted" literally, a conjunctive tissue of narratives, to highlight the dynamism of our discourse and its marginal uncertainty, a fluid diversity within a dynamic progression. It is a method that is open ended and not determined. It is nonessentialist, but recursive.

Apologia

I begin this section with a disclaimer: an investigation into a precolonial worldview for a possible world does not constitute a claim that such worldview is "wholly" applicable and can be used to order a present society as Binsbergen (2001:53) informs us:

> The worldview (in other words the values, beliefs, and images) of precolonial Southern Africa is claimed to survive today, more or less, in remote village and intimate kin relationships, and to constitute an inspiring blueprint for the present and future of social, economic and political life in urban and modern environments, at the very centres of the economy and political system.

This assessment will form the theoretical backbone, that is, leitmotif on the basis of which Binsbergen critiques the performativity of ubuntu in the making of modern South African imaginary. Even then, the obvious limitation of this criticism is that it focuses too much on the assumed unanimity and essentialist mode of the discourse as the only possible hermeneutic thrust available in its application to our context.

Elsewhere, Binsbergen proceeds to distance himself from what he describes as "the trap of accepting the codifier's reifications of ubuntu as

standard philosophical texts, merely offering philosophical criticism but ignoring the specific sociology of knowledge to which this reification owes its existence and appeal." Although Binsbergen (2001:57) admits that "the historical depth of these ideas is difficult to gauge, and their format differs greatly from the academic codifications of ubuntu" he nevertheless arrives at the conclusion that ubuntu is both prophetic and Utopian. Ubuntu as Utopian is indicative of its invocation as a practice of an ideal society existing only in the writer's mind or world of ideals. This moral community so described is necessarily utopian and prophetic for it expresses only the writer's wish and dreams of a peripheral nonexistent past not because the writer or the speaker proposes to return and take up residence in this peripheral past rather than its "inspiring modeling power" as it concerns national issues. Subsequently, Ubuntu does not "constitute a straight-forward *emic* rendering of a pre-existing African philosophy available since time immemorial in the various languages of the Bantu language family" (ibid.:57). On the contrary, ubuntu is a "*remote etic reconstruction, in an alien globalised format*" characterized by a set of induced ideas that informs the general life in contemporary South African settings (ibid.).

The aforementioned conclusion demands further scrutiny. From the Oxford English Dictionary, "emic" approach (as used by anthropologists) "is an attempt to discover and to describe the pattern of . . . [a] particular culture in reference to the way in which the various elements of that culture are related to each other in the functioning of that particular pattern, rather than an attempt to describe them in reference to a general [a priori] classification derived in advance of the study of that particular culture." *Emic* means therefore the attempt to describe a cultural behavior in terms meaningful to the actor, that is, how the actor perceives himself. An "etic" approach on the other hand, is "describing a generalized, non-structural approach to the description of language or behavior. In . . . the etic approach to the data, an author is primarily concerned with generalized statements about data." Accordingly, an *etic* approach is the description of cultural behavior by an "outside" observer in a way that becomes applicable to other cultures.

Understanding the classical meaning of these terms puts Binsbergen's criticism on the spotlight. Whether it is necessary to obfuscate the terms of our discourse in "esoteric" language in order to mediate a *strawman* or if indeed such criticisms are tenable is a different subject. My view considering all these is that of a seemingly discontinuity between the *emic* and *etic* as projected by Binsbergen. Notice the link he imposed between "etic" and "prophetic." By claiming that ubuntu is in fact "a remote etic in an alien . . . format," he was able to arrive at the conclusion that ubuntu is altogether prophetic; it is constantly "addressing the ills, contradictions

and aporias of one's time and age: conditions which one shares with many other members of one's society, and which, once articulate in more general terms on that personal basis are recognized by one's fellow-humans as illuminating and empowering" (Binsbergen 2001:59). Ubuntu remains prophetic by inducing an expression of hope for better future, it "creates a moral community, admission to which is not necessarily limited to biological ancestry, nationality or actual place of residence" (ibid.:60). Every member of human kind is a member of this moral community. This moral community "consists of people sharing a concern for the present and future of a particular local or regional society, seeking to add to the latter's resources, redressing its ills, and searching its conceptual and spiritual repertoire for inspiration, blueprints, models, encouragement in the process . . ." (ibid.:57, 60). But to what extent is ubuntu indeed as van Binsbergen writes, "a *deceptively vernacular term for an etic concept formulated in a globally format*"?

Reconciling the heterodoxy of ubuntu with the paradox and contradiction of South Africa, Binsbergen was right to highlight the difficulties and the apparent contradictions that point to such discontinuity between the pristine claim of some academics and reality on the ground like crime rate and the virulent strain of xenophobism characteristic of South Africa, not excluding what Binsbergen describes as the "caste-like intra-societal divisions, etc." Nonetheless, while these contradictions are real and apparent, Binsbergen fails, however, to consider that these contradictions were in fact a product of a system. Although these (contradictory) actions are in no way excusable, they did not emerge in a vacuum but (are) partially residues of South Africa's colonial past, but residues that must be considered within the context in which ubuntu was invoked even as an academic construction. In addition, while these contradictions are legitimate concern, (and despite my earlier disillusionment of dogmatic infusion approach on the discourse), one still needs to appreciate that ubuntu is by no means isomorphic to the pervasiveness for a new national imaginary where it transmutes an ideological platform (even if) as a displacement narrative—against the hegemonic trend of apartheid consciousness—an ideology that is all-inclusive in opposition to its antithesis. Hence, we need to look beyond these vindictive paroxysms of mere contradictions to reconsider other motives underlying its embellishment as a new consciousness.

The end of minority rule in South Africa is not an automatic reconstitution of a people's subjectivity so denigrated over 300 years of colonial rule. The manner of such reconstitution is an enduring process that only became feasible through a gradual interrogation and interaction of all South Africans. This model is inhabited by an intersubjective narrative in which all South Africans (hopefully) will cease to view each other as a

potential servant or master but as equal citizens, fellow human beings. Even as a projected discourse, our new narrative is "institutionally" dialogic as it is a discursive formation located precociously within the trappings of salutary gestures for a unity in diversity that enables one to *excuse* its embedded essentialism. This appeal to diversity, however, remains ambiguous as to how "common citizenship" can substitute "common national feeling." This switch of terms does not seem to reflect a fundamental radical change in the analytical framework. On this reference I disagree with Binsbergen (2001:65) that the use of ubuntu as analytical point of reference for our model of reconciliation is intricately bound with disaster as he notes that it is a "reconciliation . . . produced by sleight of hand, by pressing into service a grand narrative or myth, which often has been invented ad hoc." Considering this point of validation, one would imagine that ubuntu will become otherwise legitimate if its historical authenticity can be proven. But does this follow? Is it merely an ideological purring? In my view, lack of "verifiable" thesis need not deny our discourse its veracity. Moreover, ubuntu as a discourse need not be restricted to an "essentialist" or "dogmatic" paradigm. And most importantly, isolating other acknowledged features in the formation of our discourse, we might configure its actual role in our national imaginings, at which point, it would seem that Binsbergen did underestimate the power of hermeneutics and interpretation in the common experiences of our daily lives.

As Karl Popper famously noted, progress in science is sometimes attained through *bold conjectures.* Creative dialogue empowers us to transcend our subjective particularism by looking beyond our purviews and mind-sets. The role of dialogue is to help us to reach understanding. Through the hermeneutic process of experience, judgment, interpretation and understanding, one is able to transcend this subjective particularism. At this point, I shall risk arguing that the reflexive role of ubuntu as both a theory and method becomes very poignant. In the context of the TRC, ubuntu would offer a method, a disposition of mind with which to transcend these subjective particularities with a capacity for an intersubjective identification with the "other." Even if a mythical narrative within the context (of the TRC), ubuntu will become a hermeneutic tool. This capacity is not merely an invented sleight of hand; it invokes a capacity to reflect and move beyond our subjective particularism. This is possible through creative dialogue.

A creative dialogue is a dialogue that is flexible, dialogic and mutually transformative. In such dialogue, when one encounters an "other," the person's position improves as he/she moves to another level of understanding. As Thomas Kuhn had written, making sense of what formerly "seemed absurd, then come back for a second look at what seemed clear," enables us

to understand an "other" who is different from us (Bernstein 1991:31). In the process of such dialogue, we cultivate our intercultural competence for "it is precisely in and through an understanding of alien cultures that we can come to a more sensitive and critical understanding of our own culture and of those prejudices that may lie hidden from us" (ibid.:36).

We now recognize that dialogue is influenced by our history, traditions, prejudices, experiences and interests. These background influences must be considered if we are to engage in any creative dialogue. A sleight of hand grand narrative like ubuntu may become a method (for such process) but it is only a method and not an end in itself. This is the sense in which ubuntu might read as a dialogic process. To deny its validity on the strength that it is merely an "ideology" or a grand narrative is to invent a *strawman* one is perpetually enslaved to; it is to objectify one as a product and object of such grand narratives; it means to deny one of capacity of discursive relationship and dialogue. Problematizing ubuntu as one of those "constructed" grand narratives that is at the same time an end in itself is a misleading point of departure. The question shifts from what ubuntu is to what ubuntu can do in the making of modern imaginary—from essentialism (pedagogy) to performative.

In Chapter 7, I have argued that an appeal to historical unanimity is hegemonic; it denies other possibilities of identification amongst Southern Africans as it homogenizes our memories into a single cultural polity. It is a move tantamount to "denying, in effect, the entire moral, historical, informational and cultural *local* basis out of which any nation-state consists, even a traumatized and globalized one like SA" (Binsbergen 2001:75). But this in fact is not the whole point. This charge could be extended to the nuanced definiendum of ubuntu by which its appeal is dependent on the inclusiveness of humankind as a hegemonic "whole." Binsbergen was directing his attack on Ramose's populist conjecture of ubuntu: "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*"—a person is a person through other people. This charge in my view begs the question. If indeed, ubuntu in theory can offer a method for such inclusive notion of humanity, then it has simultaneously created a room for the progressive reconstruction of our subjectivity. Precisely because it "includes" and does not "exclude" gives it a sanction of legitimacy in the TRC. To recognize and include others as equal human beings or accept them as such does not in my view deny them subjectivity. On this point, I invoke the authority of Immanuel Kant: "Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only" (Kant 1959:47). Kant in this imperative affirms the inherent worth and dignity of a person from whence we should neither treat people like things nor objectify them. If Kant is right, the argument is that material things are endowed value by human beings.

In other words, Picasso's work of art or that of Michelangelo could sell for more than 1 million Euros only because many people desire it. Such things are said to have conditional value and they lose worth when they are no longer desired. According to Kant, since we have *noumenal* selves that transcend empirical appearances, we are not things. And since we are the source of all conditional value, that is, we give value to things, we cannot be conditional value but necessarily have absolute or intrinsic value. In other words, no one can give or take away our humanity or worth. We are not means to another end but end in ourselves!

Kantian Universalism has been criticized especially for its indifference and neutrality to context that supports its analytical consequence of abstract individualism. For all its limitations, we do have a point of departure. To this extent, ubuntu might mirror Kantian universalistic unconditional dignity of the human person. Unlike Kant, however, what constitutes this "human dignity" is located within context and culture. The individual is not necessarily a *kingdom of ends*. As I argued in Chapter 6, ubuntu thus understood is sensitive to context in determining what practices constitutes the human person in a community. The content of this practice in turn is constituted by the good of that community with a shared universalism being that every human being must be accorded the right of such recognition as a human being. The appeal to universal-inclusive humankind is not simultaneously insensitive to context. Binsbergen argues that by virtue of its universal inclusivism, ubuntu purports a totalitarian, hegemonic attribute as it erases the entire moral and cultural history of others—this charge is seemingly unnecessary. Such projection of an ethical worldview that gains substantive legitimacy by a *differentiating order of otherness* is one of the many portentous charges against apartheid and its ideology, that is, its desire for *apartness*. And, while it is entirely inaccurate to accuse Binsbergen of such charge, his argument on subjective particularism does seem to echo such travesty.

Furthermore, the frame of reference with which Binsbergen reads ubuntu as a discourse is modulated by colonial and postcolonial context and experiences. To dismiss its validity because it is merely a fictitious narrative is suspect. Natural history provides many a nation a sense of shared origins, a common past and a collective identity. Ubuntu is an attempt to develop this sense of shared origins, of a common past and a collective identity for the present. It is an attempt to forge a common story that will transcend the divisiveness characteristic of colonial South Africa, an attempt to write a new history, a story indicative of our shared humanity. It is on the merit of this endeavor that ubuntu is charged with being hegemonic and totalitarian for its attempt to draw all different histories and stories of South African nation into one fold, one nation. This charge in

my view is presumptuous and belies a problematization incongruent with the actual practice and innovation within which the discourse has been located. I will elaborate this point further in Chapter 9.

The emergence of national memory and its survival thereafter is largely dependent on its own shared history. Communities most often, for their own operation endorse and accept "manipulation of the symbols of institutional power" (Davidson 1992:63). These symbols are usually the ensemble of the charter of self-identity inherent in each society. The art of inventing symbols as representative of a people's conscious self-identity and image is not unique to any culture or civilization. In verity, their significance lies in the fact that different communities share a sense of self-identity that remains open and comparable with other cultural communities. These symbols are not only identical but also share comparative substantial objectives that have the same impact or outcome: the cross of Christ, the Crown of England, the flag of a nation, a national anthem, et cetera (cf. Davidson 1992:63). These symbols enforce unity in diversity where there is no central identity. Yet, it is alienating because while it is able to give a people one voice and one consciousness, it undermines "other" voices of particular groups by assimilation into the greater whole of a nation. Most often, the promise of *one nation* is usually left unfulfilled as it becomes a double problematic. This parody seems to be an irresolute character of all nationalism and constitutes such ambivalence, anxious uncertainty but especially the fragility of nationalism as argued in chapter 6 and 7.

On the sociopolitical, we know that the structural policy of the overall colonial legacy of South Africa through its institutional racialization was extremely exclusive in character. The psychosocial impact of apartheid policies resonated differently vis-à-vis the racial boundaries of individual's experiences. The "colored" experience of apartheid is noticeably different from blacks or Indians. Among blacks, the experience of the black woman is different from that of the black man, considering especially the cultural location of gender status in a typical "African" society, a location in which tradition is used to mask inequality. In a culture where women were usually second-class citizens in the name of tradition, the impact of further depersonalization cannot be measured. And even within specific gender groups, the experience of the more affluent and educated men or women is different from their contemporaries who are less educated or affluent. The question therefore is how to reconcile these diverging experiences with a single narrative that is sensitive not only to sociocultural differences but sensitive to these different divergent experiences. This is a key problem of narrating a discourse that is a given from above. This is a major critique of assuming or adapting unanimity of a discourse without paying close attention to relevant context.

The discourse of ubuntu as a "given" therefore smacks of this insensitivity. But this lack of sensitivity is associative to the general problematic of given historicity, which thrives on homogenous historiography, a move that erases personal memories. This is the way in which ubuntu as used in the TRC becomes problematic—one solution for different stories, histories, and memories. Note, however, that this is *if*, and *only if* we endorse the dogmatic-essentialist infusion as absolute paradigm. This move I have criticized as progressively retrogressive. This was the avenue through which ubuntu critics would exploit to dismiss ubuntu as merely utopian with profound negative impact for the future of the nation-state in South Africa.

Thus far, my argument has been that many a nation were often built on the magic force of one national and sometimes imagined consciousness. The end of utopia does not spell that nations built on such imagined ideologies are bound to fail. I shall explore one of such historical tissues in the European social imaginary: Tacitus' *Germania*.

Although its actual origin has been mired in historical obscurity, the rediscovery of Tacitus' *Germania* was partly significant in the formation of the German social imaginary even before the European Enlightenment project. At this point, its captivation stirred a Janus-faced canon: First, it mediated challenges against the universalist claims of Catholic hierarchy and of the emperor. Second, it was specifically adopted by German humanists during the reformation to challenge Roman Catholicism. Centuries later, it would become a sociopolitical instrument in the hands of anti-Bonapartes in their fight against the Napoleonic ideologies.

In retrospect, in the middle of the fifteenth century, German antagonism toward Rome arose because Germany had become impoverished on account of exploitation by the Roman Curia, a fact lived out in the opulence of the clergy and made worse by Italian taunts and mockery of Germany as an easy prey for exploitation. At the same time, populist language discourses would ridicule the German language as the least of civilized languages: "*I speak Italian to God, French with my lovers, Spanish to my soldiers, business to the English and German to my dogs*" (attributed to Charles V. 1500–1558). This disillusion motivated the German humanists who would confront these denigrations with a new pedagogical narrative. Such narrative was found in history. Appealing to the antiquities, the German humanists were able to find recourse that would otherwise prove that ancient German civilization was not only better, but also superior to Roman civilization. Since they (Germans) have their own history, they would certainly be accorded the dignity of a civilized culture and not taunted as barbarians by the Italians. This resource was found in Poggio Bracciolinis' discovery of Tacitus *Germania* in 1455 in Hersfeld

Monastery. The discovery emboldened German humanists who thereupon "reconstructed an ideal German type from this book, in which Tacitus contrasted the truthfulness, freedom and simplicity of the barbarians with the degeneracy and servility of his countrymen" (Kohn 2005:139–140). A point of legitimacy is that Tacitus was not German and therefore, appealing to the authority of Tacitus who incidentally was a Roman, the German humanists would argue that he who called them "barbarian" was still able to recognize and appreciate "the permanent superiority of the German character" and its embedded feeling for "loyalty and truth." On the basis of such pristine rendition, German nationalistic spirit emerged with German past and virtues being extolled as supreme over other nations. Tacitus became the foundation for the emerging German historical consciousness, a pristine, glorious past independent of Christianity and Roman civilization but also superior and more ancient. On the basis of such new historical consciousness, even Adam was claimed to be German.

The humanist would use the *Germania* to construct an ethno-subjective narrative that showcases the superiority of German historical character as noticeable in the writing of Jakob Wimpheling (1450–1528):

> It must be known that Germans are different from the true Frenchmen by the color of their hair, their face, their tongue, their character and customs. Also, the Germans are in the habit of winning their victories by the physical honesty of their men whereas the French win only by the quantity of their manpower.
>
> (ibid.: 140–141)

Konrad Celtes (1459–1508) would translate the *Germania* into German, in which process, he concluded that even the word *Germanos* is coined from the Latin word "fraternal." An etymological sequence, precisely the reason the Romans would call them *Germani* because they (the Germans) had lived fraternally together (Kohn 2005:141). For the humanists, the ultimate goal of the *Germania* is to constitute this social utopia. On this point, Thom (1990:24) reviews:

> Aspects of the picture Tacitus had painted of the ancient Germanic tribes were in fact claimed as present virtues, so that the war waged against Napoleon, in 1813–15, by the German states, was to become an emblem of martial heroism pitted against despotism . . . The fame of the *Germania* clearly derived from its apparent celebration of the unsullied moral virtues of the ancient Germans, for example, their disregard for precious metals (G, 5) the chastity of the women (G, 18), and their warrior spirit, qualities which earned the praise of almost all European publicists, from the time of its rediscovery in the fifteenth century.

Largely, the significance and value of Tacitus' *Germania* is clearly dependent on its repository substantive content that was to infuse its presence in the currents of many a European nationalistic consciousness. Not that it matters if Tacitus' *Germania* will be historically "verifiable" or not, it only presumes, in my view, the precariousness or our cultural history (ies) as an ideological baggage. It does not matter, it is true and real for the people who believe in it and draw their sense of subjectivity from it.

If we follow Durkheim, ubuntu as an espoused national ideology inhabits a functionalist paradigm. Such Ideology, Cannadine (1983:104) writes highlights the integrative force of its performativity and how it "embodies and reflects, upholds and reinforces deeply rooted, widely held popular values." Since ideology emerges in the service of a people with particular values, methods, and style of different historical persuasion, and since ideologies are defined in terms of different contexts by different people within different traditions, progress of nationalism in Africa does not lie in the imitation of ideologies but in the invention of particular Afro-centric[2] ideologies of African historical contextual persuasions. Ubuntu, and its claim to inculcate the myriads of cultures across sub-Saharan Africa, is a metaphorical solidarity in search of a culture. Considering the role of ideology as a social movement within history, such movements yielding varying degrees of social action, be it of worst kinds—Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany, or Marxism in Eastern Europe—these movements determine social action because of their ideology. I am persuaded that in understanding Ubuntu as a modern ideology, one sees its relevance in the TRC as well as possible potential for the rest of the world. In this way, ubuntu can be enriched, refined to accommodate vagaries of present circumstances; it can be useful in law, in Constitution, and public ethics. As an ideology, it ceases to be dogmatic; it becomes flexible (although it can also be manipulated). On this note, ubuntu ceases to be a displacement narrative in the sense of its availability—not being a mirror of the other, but inclusive. And, if we adopt the populist, definition of ubuntu that Ramose offered us above, "a person is a person through other people" the essential attribute seems to mutate, gravitating toward a paradox. Yes, ubuntu is inclusive but seems hegemonic in the sense of a seemingly compulsory accommodation of all persons, even those who do not want to be part of our "humanity." Yet as I shall point out in Chapter 9, *a person is a person through another person* will also read to mean that a person is a person through the "otherness" of the other.[3] In theory, ubuntu is a hermeneutic process that remains inclusive but allows one to dialogue with people from other historical cultures while being sensitive to differences in context and other historical cultures and traditions. Even if an invented ideology, it still yields an imagination that tries to reconcile the very often conflicting memories of South Africa, not

into a single homogenous consciousness but by bringing these memories into dialogue with one another. A new imagination opens up, an imaginative intersubjective experience to transcend familiar mind-sets and terrains and explore other possibilities of being human. This in my view was the cardinal principle of ubuntu as used in the discursive formation of South Africa and played out in the TRC. In the following section, I shall now address more severe criticisms of ubuntu, which projected that its usage in the TRC constituted a denial of justice to victims of apartheid.

When Does Forgiveness Constitute a Denial of Justice?

The conceptual scheme we have developed on the justification of ubuntu in the making of contemporary South Africa could help us appreciate what it in fact means to be a *rainbow nation*. This understanding in my view partially fulfils the demands of the draft South African Constitution in institutionalizing ubuntu as the theoretical foundation of the TRC. The use of ubuntu in the TRC as a process of negotiating reconciliation is seemingly thus justified. Not only does ubuntu justify the necessity of such policies of reconciliation, it also facilitated the process of reconstituting the subjectivity of "victims" and "perpetrators" within the ambience of a "new consciousness." It strives to maintain a balancing act of reconstituting and reconciling different subjectivities, inducing a transition from victimhood to survivors. Through this understanding, a new humanism is therefore possible. But the question is, is this understanding of ubuntu the author's scholastic nuance? Is it just one of those populist notions of ubuntu? Old wine in new skins? Is it open to new interpretation? Does new interpretation undermine its substantive value? What form of social history is it? Is it a dead end social history or is it an open discourse? Does this form of social history have a historical antecedent? If so, does this antecedent conform to its contemporary usage? If not, does lack of historical continuity undermine its substantive and therefore its appeal in the national imaginary like the TRC?

At this juncture, I would like to demonstrate two essential features of ubuntu as a discourse: (1) it is not a closed system but a history, open ended, and (2) as a historical process, ubuntu (as a discourse) need not be unlinear in its pattern but constitutively dialogical. When I say that Ubuntu (as a discourse) is not a system, I mean that it is not definitive or deterministic as in a set of ultimate truths but discursive in the sense of dialogical continuity. It remains historical but not within history as a closed system of values. If it is to be meaningful and valid, ubuntu must be read as a creative discourse, possessing history but not history itself. To argue that

ubuntu is history itself, as in the end of history, is to reduce it to a closed system, a rigid code of pristine collective thought. But to argue that *it is* a historical process, that is, history in continuity, is to make it available as an open discourse, not restricted, not merely a loosely association of intangible dogmas, proverbs or aphorisms. It is to leave it open and yielding to "presence," relevant presence for a contemporary society. Hence, instead of asking is ubuntu historical, one asks, what are the historical values of ubuntu? To seek an understanding of its role in history is to transcend any imposed homogeneity and limitations imposed on it as a discourse. Such understanding seeks to clarify and relate its values to appropriate context.

The context in which ubuntu must be understood is therefore not irreducible to dogmatism. This context must pay attention not only to the thwarting gaze of cultural mummification, but also to the social, political and economic historical moments in which it is invoked. It must not be reduced to a mere reenactment or reconstruction of a precolonial or pristine past, but must be located within the tensions, discontinuities and revolutions within the society and how the society is affected by these. Understandably, it is an ideology that emerged in an attempt to find a resource as repository for meaning and identity in the face of coloniality. But it need not be reactionary. Despite the flaws in their methodology, the attempts of ubuntu evangelists have served useful purposes. Those ruminations of our past history despite the flawed methodology in its analytical method offered a platform to reaffirm a self so depersonalized by acts of colonial violence.

Arguably, the TRC is an exemplar of a *face-to-face* encounter to reconstitute the subjectivity of a "wounded people," which according to Tutu, includes both the victims and complicit perpetrators of apartheid (*we are all victims of apartheid*). The use of ubuntu in the TRC does not only give voice to the voiceless, it also unmasks the face of the victims and that of the perpetrators to face themselves as humans and recognize their shared humanity. The "other" is no longer an object of ridicule or derision, but a "thou" in Buber's language—not an "it" but a human being. Tim Modise summarizes this insinuation at the end of the hearings of the TRC, "[Journalists] who have covered the beat from day one will probably say that the commission's greatest success is the *face* and *voice* it has put to apartheid. The public space and recognition it has given to the scarred *faces* and broken *voices* of victim, perpetrator and ultimately survivor" (Libin 2003:128—my emphasis). My point of consideration is that this transmutation of ubuntu enabled the transformation of the subject through its encounter with the "Other." It brings leverage, a hypostasis in which the victim and perpetrator realize their shared humanity. This appeal contradicts the systematic masked "othering" of apartheid coloniality through its

segregation policies. An "othering" of "homogenous difference" in which the subject's attempt to encounter the face of the other is inhibited by institutionalized violence and segregation through pass laws, color bar, et cetera. This "othering" is also a denial of subjectivity to the "other."

Some of the emerging criticisms is that the African National Congress (ANC) has become entrapped between the past and present, between a desire to nullify the nation's apartheid memory and a dreadful *impulse* to "memorialize it for posterity." What the ANC doesn't seem to get is that, "however much the rhetoric of national unity insists on the purity of our newness, it needs to do so by contrast to the old, and as a victory over the old, its need to do so at all, contaminates the present with the Klang of the past" (ibid.:133). But these efforts we now know are not empty; they remain symbolic, shifting between the analytical fissure of shared meaning, where restorative justice means restored hope and humanity—but note that this power of restoration is not a given but lies in the subject. This analytical symbol of hope is not "klang of the past" but looking to the future, not frozen on the past for the *past*, *yesterday is another country*. A theory of melancholy is thus transformed into a theory of hope as the "voice" of the victims become located within the interstices of historical fissure of the past and present in which the new South Africa tries to incorporate the vicissitudes of the old order within the memory of the present for a *signifying* future. The survival of the new nation-state is to substitute the melancholy of the past with hope for future and optimism for the present. This transition has become crucial because "unable, indeed unwilling, to abandon the memory of this grim history, the fledging republic remains suspended on the threshold of its inception, struggling to re-embody a disembodied past: the new South Africa is a nation paralysed by its immanent melancholy" (ibid.:133).

Henceforth, the substantive value of ubuntu within the TRC is not as an end in itself but a medium of transitional justice not *necessarily superior* to other forms of justice, but superior in context. Isolating other incidents of juridical validity, our appeal to ubuntu in this context is far more promising. While many critics have tried to simulate a juridical parallel between the Nuremberg trial and that of South Africa, attention to context seems to be the lacunae. Our context is different. For very pragmatic purpose, does South Africa have the capacity to bring to justice over 100,000 perpetrators of crimes against humanity? Relatedly, does punishment–driven concept of justice serve the practical need of South Africa over and above restorative-driven notions of justice?

Historical evidence on International Criminal Tribunal obviously favors a punishment-driven notion of justice. Yet, history tells us that in most of these cases, this method has not achieved its intended purposes but

sometimes *boomerangs*, plunging the conflicting nation into deeper blood-shed and crises. A typical case is the case of El Salvador in which the UN-sponsored Truth Commission had proposed one of such punishment-driven model of justice (retributive justice) for perpetrators who were mostly military generals. Such hard line approach as applied in the present predicament backfired. Although the El Salvadorian's new government opposed this initiative and instead offered a general amnesty for the convicted generals, the amnesty came too late. The commission's proposal already inflamed the military generals who perceived themselves as *victims* of witch-hunting and scuppered the whole process with devastating consequences. In the upheaval that followed, the commission's astute secretary, the Jesuit Fr. Baro was murdered. Ironically, it is poignant to note that Fr. Baro had in fact rejected the commission's proposal as he actually proposed another alternative when he wrote, days before his murder, advocating for amnesty while noting its obvious shortcomings: "[The] problem turns on whether that pardon and renunciation are going to be established on the foundation of truth and justice, or on lies and continued injustices" (Asmal 2000:18). It is precisely for these reasons that the final report of the TRC has specifically outlined their disenchantment with the Nuremberg option. The outline is very persuasive that I cite it at length:

> There are those who believed that we should follow the post World War II example of putting those guilty of gross violations of human rights on trial as the allies did at Nuremberg. In South Africa, where we had a military stalemate, that was clearly an impossible option. Neither side in the struggle (the state nor the liberation movements) had defeated the other and hence nobody was in a position to enforce so-called victor's justice. However, there are even more compelling reasons for avoiding the Nuremberg option. There is no doubt that members of the security establishment would have scuppered the negotiated settlement had they thought they were going to run the gauntlet of trials for their involvement in past violations. It is certain that we would not, in such circumstances, have experienced a reasonable peaceful transition from repression to democracy . . . Another reason why Nuremberg was not a viable option was because our country simply could not afford the resources . . . It would also have been counterproductive . . . It would have rocked the boat massively for too long.
>
> (Commission 2003: vol. 1, ch. 1, para. 21–23)

If ubuntu would remain pivotal in the ideological formation of the TRC, the latter as we have seen and as Jolly (2002:700) argues went further to unmask the face of a society that has historically indulged in a pathological self-deception, an assumed practice of self-exonerating ignorance and presumed innocence in the face of a historical institutionalized violence,

a system in which perpetrators of injustice were conscious beneficiaries. This "unmasking" or "unveiling" of the past if you like, through an appeal to ubuntu is by itself an adequate justification for the institutionalization of the TRC as Antjie Krog pleaded that "perhaps these narratives alone are enough to justify the existence of the Truth Commission. Because of these narratives, people can no longer indulge in their separate dynasties of denial" (Jolly 2001:700). The TRC enabled victims or perpetrators to tell their stories. Inhabiting the role of storytellers enabled them not to be frozen on time, not to freeze as perpetual victims or perpetrator (ibid.:710). The essence is to liberate the subjectivity of the individual whose life would have otherwise been confined and "objectified" with the tag "victim" or "perpetrator." Nevertheless, would the South African experience be a plausible model for future international crime Tribunal? Does punishment driven justice offer a substantive superior juridical and constitutive value for a state? Advocates of penal punishment – driven justice appeal to Nuremberg as an ideal simulation for South Africa. But in our context, is this not tantamount to a state-sponsored terror, a situation that Hannah Arendt (1977:276) lamented in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, arguing that evil became a glorified doctrine – banalized and glorified by the state as justice, celebrated as morality and adored by many like Eichmann: "[T]he trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are terribly and terrifyingly normal." In the following section, I shall pursue the argument if in reality our "humanist" proposal constitutes a denial of justice as advocated by certain detractors.

Some critics have argued, the appeal to ubuntu during the TRC was in fact a betrayal of humanity, a sanctimonious reproof that denied justice because "granting amnesty to those who have admitted gross human rights violations is an inherently unfair policy, in the sense that evil deeds seems to be excused, if not rewarded. Amnesty makes (the desired) retributive justice impossible" (Gibson 2004:249). Accordingly, the critics would conclude that the TRC does not adequately recompense in terms of its claim to restorative justice or even any other form of justice. To this charge, the Stellenbosch Professor of Philosophy Wilhelm Verwoerd, (1999:480)[4] who was the TRC's researcher on amnesty, reminded us that the TRC is not only "just talk" nor "ANC witch-hunt" but that the price of peace is a bargain for amnesty:

Perhaps the best response to this deeply felt opposition to an aspect of the TRC's is … to acknowledge openly that amnesty is unjust. This acknowledgment should also involve recognition of the reality and legitimacy of

the feelings of anger and frustration, the deep sense of injustice at stake. However, this is not the end of the story. It can be made clear, in the second place, that this kind of criticism is misdirected: the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is not trying to achieve justice. Guaranteeing amnesty is the price we, unfortunately, have to pay for peace, for the common good, for a negotiated settlement in 1994 which led to a democratic South Africa.

As noted earlier, Binsbergen (2001:76) has argued that the appeal to ubuntu in the TRC is a classical example of this nuanced bias of what he calls an *etic* in a globalized format by which he means that the TRC is profoundly a Christian model of reconciliation and not African. It is deceptive to portray a "Roman-Anglican Christian model of confession and absolutism" as a signifier of the worldviews of southern Africa. On this judgment, ubuntu is merely a tool for "mystifying ways that deny or prevent time-honored African values, under the pretence of articulating those very values. *In years to come South African society may yet have to pay the price for the massive and manipulative repression of resentment and anger caused by the historically questionable use of ubuntu in the context of the TRC*" (Binsbergen 2001:77—my emphasis). This is a view I strongly disagree with and I shall expose the polemical thrust of this position.

Before further proceeding, however, I shall take a hiatus in coveting any substantive meaning of ubuntu. Exactly what ubuntu means and or become interpreted or even applied I shall not take as given or as *a priori*. My investigation thus far focuses on its (performative) involvement in the modern South African imaginary, especially in the TRC processes and consequent event of nation building. I shall now argue that whether ubuntu can be validated historically or not or even if a prophetic Christian ideology, the point is to differentiate its development and function in the forging of a national memory and consciousness called the "nation." It is an investigation that proceeds with caution, because while my evaluative procedure is to focus on its rehabilitation, I am wary and skeptical of nuanced ideological falsities. The application of ubuntu for all its successful performative practice in the TRC does not define its substantive implication as a genuine *moral* practice. It did not establish that fact. Although Judge Langa (1988) would have exhorted that genuine truth and reconciliation may be achieved through the praxis of ubuntu, "[Heinous] crimes are the antithesis of ubuntu. Treatment that is cruel, inhuman or degrading is bereft of ubuntu" (Marx 2002:52). It becomes necessary to accommodate other criticisms and weigh its balancing trend. As I shall argue later, our discourse can only become refined when it is exposed to constructive dialogue with other discourses and criticisms.

In his peculiar critique of ubuntu, Christoph Marx (ibid.:50) argues that ubuntu is merely a nationalist ideology with conformist initiative paraded as African culture. Marx's point of departure (like Binsbergen) is the "invention" of continuity between the cultural nationalism inherent in ubuntu and that of the Afrikaner nationalism that gave rise to apartheid. He takes as *a priori*, a view that cultural nationalist ideology in the classical sense is "inherently conformist and hence inimical to the pluralism implicit in the democratic project" (Marx 2002:50). Marx's criticisms generally emanate from his adoption of an *a priori* homogenous notion of ubuntu as that which belongs to all Africans. Marx is persuaded that ubuntu as a new cultural nationalism is a precursor for the epiphany of what he calls "flowers of evil" in South Africa. This very polemical thrust nonetheless emerges from his disenchantment with the ANC, which he accuses that "instead of developing and implementing reform programmes, there is a convulsive attempt at 'nation building', the nature of which, and the strategies of exclusion that are employed to promote it, is contrary to development of democracy" (ibid.:50). On the invocation of ubuntu in the TRC, Marx (ibid.:50) accuses the TRC of focusing only on events and human rights violations while "ignoring the systematic character of apartheid." By focusing on events, the TRC in his view has become parochial in its analysis of repression. Marx's (ibid.:51) case for such parochialism is in the TRC's primary focus and concentration on the personal interaction of the perpetrator and the victims, as the TRC itself seemingly admitted: "[I]t (TRC) shifts the primary focus of crime from the breaking of laws or offences against a faceless state to a perception of crime as violations against human beings, as injury or wrong done to another person" (Commission 2003:vol. 6, sec. 2, ch. 2, para. 40a). By adopting this stand, the TRC according to Marx (ibid.:51) is implicated in shifting "the roots and causes of apartheid to 'ethics'; analyzing was substituted by moralizing." The real failure of the TRC is that instead of appealing for democratic institutions that will guarantee justice, it rather appealed to the "idealistic" community spirit and love translated as ubuntu.[5] Drawing an analogy between postapartheid South Africa and post – World War II Germany, Marx argues that by focusing only on the interaction between victims and perpetrators, what occurred in Germany after WWII, may repeat itself in South Africa with a corresponding period of silence on the Nazi or apartheid crimes and the political institutions in which it emerges.

In the manner of van Binsbergen, Marx furthers his criticism on the use of ubuntu in the TRC, amongst other reasons, for its lack of "historical evidence" to "substantiate" the authenticity of ubuntu as opposed to mere "general references to tradition which are made to suffice." Without hesitation, I concur with Marx (as I did with Binsbergen) that absence of

historical investigation masks and problematizes the essential dynamism characterizing precolonial African society. And, a blind appeal to tradition as a blank response to what may constitute ubuntu is not only inadequate; it thrives on mystification and obfuscation of the internal dynamism of this precolonial condition. Nevertheless, I part ways with Professors Christoph Marx and Wim Binsbergen for lack of historical authenticity is not the end of the story and my task has been to look beyond this obvious weakness to consider other merits. As pointed earlier, Marx (ibid.:32) is at pains to give a definition of ubuntu by a tacit endorsement of an *a priori* given composition by some Africanist scholars (see endnote) [6] who informs his reading of the subject:

> Ubuntu could be used to ask for solidarity, which is often a necessary precondition for survival in communities, like South African townships, that are characterized by abject poverty. The other side of ubuntu is ostracism and compulsory conformity. This comes to the fore as soon as a strategy for survival is transformed into a nationalist ideology. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, for example, "Christianised" ubuntu into a form of human compassion, which, as a Christian commandment, could be contrasted to the divisiveness of the apartheid state. This version of ubuntu is ambivalent, in so far as it can be used to support the rights of the individual personality. Nevertheless, it became ethnicized thanks to the of Tutu himself, and was proclaimed to be a special African heritage. In this form, ubuntu was elevated into a central element of a new cultural nationalism.
>
> (ibid.:52)

Marx is not alone in this criticism. In fact, this was the preoccupation of Jacques Derrida in his theory on forgiveness. According to Derrida (2002), such forgiveness so touted by Tutu and the TRC is not necessarily forgiveness but constitutes a denial of justice. What Tutu calls *forgiveness* in the name of ubuntu is not genuine but a *conditional falsity*. Genuine forgiveness embodies the impossible. According to Derrida (ibid.:42ff), the forgiveness peddled by the TRC is not genuine forgiveness precisely because it masquerades itself in the form of amnesty or reconciliation, but it cannot be called forgiveness:

> When Desmond Tutu was named president of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, he Christened the language of an institution uniquely destined to treat 'politically' motivated crimes . . . with as much goodwill as confusion . . . Tutu, an Anglican Bishop, introduced the vocabulary of repentance and forgiveness . . . the statute of Truth and Reconciliation Commission is very ambiguous on this subject, as with Tutu's discourse, which oscillates between a non-penal and non-reparative logic of 'forgiveness (he calls it 'restorative') and a judicial logic of amnesty . . . Favoring a confusion

between the order of forgiveness and the order of justice, but also abusing their heterogeneity, as well as the fact that the time of forgiveness escapes the judicial process, it is moreover always possible to mimic the scene of 'immediate' and quasi-automatic forgiveness in order to escape justice ... The anonymous body of the State or of a public institution cannot forgive.

On this view, ubuntu as a modicum of forgiveness in the TRC is a subterfuge. As a model, ubuntu does not meet the minimum requirement for genuine forgiveness. Genuine forgiveness is forgiving the "unforgivable," where forgiveness in the writing of Derrida (2002:32–33, 38, 42, 45, 49) means

> [m]ad ... madness of the impossible ... [It] is necessary, it seems to me, to begin with the fact that, yes, there is the unforgivable. Is this not, in truth, the only thing to forgive? The only thing that calls for forgiveness? If one is only prepared to forgive what appears forgivable, what the church calls 'venial sin', then the very idea of forgiveness would disappear. If there is something to forgive, it would be what in religious language is called mortal sin, the worst, the unforgivable crime or harm. From whence comes the aporia ... forgiveness forgives only the unforgivable. One cannot, or should not, forgive; there is only forgiveness, if there is any, where there is the unforgivable. That is to say that forgiveness must announce itself as impossibility itself. It can only be possible in doing the impossible.

By implication, Derrida is projecting the idea of forgiveness as a[n] [impossible] relationship. To forgive is hence to be in a relationship with the other, "... genuine forgiveness must engage two singularities: the guilty and the victim. As soon as a third party intervenes, one can again speak of amnesty, reconciliation, reparation, etc., but certainly not of forgiveness in the strict sense ... " (2002:42). But since there can be no such "face to face" encounter without a *third party* (the third party will be variables or mediating influences like motivation, even language discourse, recognition, awareness of the "other" and worse of all, a demand for apology or repentance), then forgiveness as a matter of fact is logically impossible. Derrida speaks in terms of aporias to indicate the impossibility of forgiveness for its (forgiveness) very essence is neutralized or contradicted by the very attempt to forgive. The constitutive essence of forgiveness is dependent on this logical impossibility.

This distinction between conditional and genuine forgiveness in my view is an *unnecessary* problematization. In this circularity, if forgiveness is a relationship but such relationship is logically impossible, (there is no relationship without an "other") then forgiveness is a logical impossibility. Insofar as there is one of such modulating influences, forgiveness loses its

genuineness and becomes conditional on point of those influences. And, if we cannot mediate such possibility that is, forgive without motivation; genuine forgiveness is therefore logically impossible. But if it is a "logical impossibility" by definition, what Derrida as a matter of fact calls "genuine forgiveness" does not exist. This logical impossibility resonates with such arguments that presume the existence of God as dependent on proof of God's omnipotence over logical impossibility: can God create a square circle? Yet, we know for example that a square-circle does not exist—*ex nihilo nihil fit!* And back to Derrida. If "genuine forgiveness" is a *logical impossibility*, then it does not exist and we only have one possibility of forgiveness as a logical possibility or what Derrida prefers to call "conditional" forgiveness. This forgiveness is not conditional, but it is also not neutral for its very essence is dependent on the subject and not on the subject's relationship with the "other." I will substantiate this position in Chapter 9.

This analytical copulation is problematic. It begins with a premise that weakens the victim's position. One would imagine, following this thesis that if an "other" like P.W. Botha (who did not want forgiveness) does not want to be forgiven, then the victim is simultaneously denied of power to forgive for as Derrida (ibid.:25) noted, "It seems to us that forgiveness can only be asked or granted 'one to one,' face to face . . . between the one who has committed the irreparable or irreversible wrong and he who has suffered it." This need not be the case. The subject in my view does posses power to forgive irrespective of who is being forgiven. If I choose revenge or forgiveness, the ability to make this choice is what reconstitutes the subject. In forgiving, I know that I am reconstituting my subjectivity; I am free from burden of victimhood. If I choose revenge, I am only responding in the manner so dictated by the aggressor. To forgive is to stand above this existential fatality by choosing another route, a route that has been initiated by me. It is in this sense that forgiveness can be read as empowerment. My forgiveness is not dependent on your response. Yet, it is a move that calls to mind Voltaire's famous admonishment: "*Appreciation (of the other) is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.*"

Furthermore, to the charge that the TRC is essentially a Christian pacifist project, one might respond by asking if drawing on elements of Christian beliefs undermines its legitimacy—except perhaps when Aristotle, Kant, Jefferson, or some demagogue is cited, then on the force of their *authority* as experts, the TRC would gain a juridical legitimacy. In this respect, many diligent Western academics have assumed spokespersons for victims of apartheid who they think have been denied justice by the TRC. Yet, attention to context is not interrogated, instead, an Anglo-Saxon notion of justice is proffered as alternatives, where "perfect" justice is retributive justice as Derrida, Wilson, Marx and Binsbergen will have us

believe. I do not ignore nor undermine the relevance of objective truths. My point is that such objective truth can only become justified when localized within context. If the South African experience is substantively unique, then the solution demands a unique response within context. Instead, what we have is a new form of colonial miscegenation: to educate the victims how to forgive, when and perhaps what to forgive with a tacit reprimand to those who decided to forgive that their actions constitutes a denial of justice. Above all, appeal to ubuntu is considered an elitist manipulation. But what about peace? Does retributive justice restore the old order of things distorted by the *old regime?* Consider the following dialogue between Cynthia Ngewu whose son Christopher Piet was among the "Guguletu 7" murdered by the apartheid death squad:

> *Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela*: Many people in this country would like to see the perpetrators going to prison and serving long sentences. What is your view on this?
> *Ngewu*: In my opinion, I do not agree with this view. We do not want to see people suffer in the same way that we did suffer, and we did not want our families to have suffered. We do not want to return to suffering that has been imposed upon us. So, I do not agree with that view at all. We should like to see peace in this country . . . I think that all South Africans should be committed to re-accepting these people back into the community. We do not want to return the evil that the perpetrators committed to the nation. We want to demonstrate humanness towards them, so that they in turn may restore *their own humanity.*
> <div align="right">(Commission 2003: vol. 5, ch. 9, para. 33—my emphasis)</div>

This was the extent in which ubuntu became a powerful metaphor in assimilating different memories to forge a new consciousness. Its appeal in the TRC is a discursive formation that proposes a new national imaginary, a discourse through a creative dialogue from which differences do not mutate into a single narrative but gravitate toward a resemblance and difference, memories of a shared history and experience, failures and successes, of the processes of continuous dialogue as *the* process of nation building. As Chukwudi Eze (2004:764) would put it, "one could think of the processes of the TRC as those of a moral and ethical suspension of justice for an equally moral and ethical, more universal aim of, *societal transformation*" [emphasis on the original].

At the present, we have certainly moved beyond a mere negation of apartheid *logos,* to a "responsive" nationalistic ideology in which ubuntu assumes both epistemological and anthropological legitimacy, a discourse that thrives and flourishes on the necessity of political exigency. Ubuntu as inferred into the public sphere, codified in terms of historical and spatial authenticity is an attempt to forge a locus of new memory tied at the

same time to tradition and context. Thus, despite a lacuna of historical associations or authentic historical resource, ubuntu offers a common ground where different memories and its characteristic antagonistic, competing, incompatible and divergent influences potentially converges for a new memory and consciousness. Even as a displacement narrative, ubuntu is an ideology to free the native from his inferiority complex, despair, inaction and a source of dignity. Moving beyond that, ubuntu in the language of Mudimbe (1994) embodies a form of radical reversal within a self-descriptive criterion of doctrinal and cultural lessons conditioned by the principles of discontinuity and inferiority. The first principle enunciates the difference between the apartheid ideological schemata and the post apartheid South Africa where ubuntu gains intentionality as unifying ideology in contrast to the divisiveness created by the apartheid. The second offers a motivation for a shift from ethno-racial nationalism to national-nationalism.

Interrogating the "Prerogative": Forgiveness, Justice and the Nation

To what extent does this form of restorative justice, induced by ubuntu, it is argued, able to move beyond its elitist fetishism to diffuse the anger, resentment and bitterness that will capture full justice for the victims. Is there an alternative form of justice to transform the melancholy of the past into a fortuitous future? To what extent does our restorative justice accommodate other inherent values in other forms of justice such as retributive, procedural and distributive? These are critical and valid concerns. My aim is not to indulge in the mechanics of jurisprudence as opposed to a mere sociopolitical implication of one of such juridical paradigm befitting the South African context. The extent to which academics have argued that ubuntu was a mask or a catalyst for "injustice" within the South African context has been discussed in detail. Once again, my concern here is not to indulge into the psychology or metaphysics of justice but to historicize (the process) and subsequently contextualize the implication of these alternatives for the South African experience. I will proceed to evaluate if indeed ubuntu would offer a milieu of fresh perspective and alternatives and if such alternatives is going to boomerang as scholars like Derrida, Binsbergen and Marx have argued.

Rogue regime sustains its power base through a virtual domination of its subjects. When the power base of such regimes begins to crumble, dissident and opposition voices are pressured or persecuted to elicit conformism. On the African continent, we have had such rogue leaders who maintained

their power balance by means of political thuggery, only to escape into exile when their hold on power begins to wither at the tune of their regime's requiem. As history has shown in Africa, most often, the abdication of power is usually through violent means or military putsches. We have had such dictators like Idi Amin (Uganda), Samuel Doe (Liberia), Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire) and very recently, Charles Taylor (Liberia). As usual, the rival in assuming power turns the table, changing the definiendum of justice, where justice becomes a state sponsored terror against supporters of the fallen regime. A classical example is the case of Charles Taylor of Liberia and the Obote regime in Uganda. For the present purposes, I contend myself with the Ugandan example.

Milton Obote (1925–2005) was the first prime minister and later president of Uganda from 1962 to 1966 and from 1966 to 1971, respectively. Obote was overthrown by his lieutenant, Idi Amin Dada through a bloody coup in 1971. The story of Idi Amin's reign of terror would forever remain horrid in the mind of historians as it became infamously known as a *State of Blood*. Idi Amin was overthrown in 1979 by Tanzanian forces assisted by Ugandan exiles. With the overthrow of Idi Amin, Obote gained another term in office. Obote's second term, however, was no longer that of a national hero, but of a hero turned-killer. His *Second Coming* was notorious for repression, and "disappearance" of dissident voices and political opposition. Former supporters and sympathizers of Idi Amin's regime were hunted down as victims of a state sponsored terror in which *victims became killers*. Such cycle of violence or retributive justice mediated through a vicious cycle has been the lots of most of our regimes in Africa. We know other examples in Liberia, Rawlings's Ghana, Burundi/Rwanda, DRC, et cetera. Daniel Bell (1991:345) in his analysis of Max Weber's *Politik als Beruf* explains the mechanics of this cycle:

> Once a revolution has taken place, the major problem for any chiliastic regime is how to maintain enthusiasm Revolutionary regime must therefore try to sustain the zeal by maintaining an atmosphere of war, by mobilizing emotions against an outside or internal enemy, or by some kind of "revitalized" faith.

The South African Story is an attempt to escape this vicious cycle of violence. Precisely the reason Antjie Krog informs us that the institutionalization of the TRC was interpreted by certain white groups in South Africa as witch-hunting strategy in which whites are victims. She contrasted "real" victims in this case, those brutalized by apartheid and who have a magnanimous desire to forgive, an attitude, a disposition that stands

in contradistinction to those of die-hard Afrikanners who now perceive themselves as victims of ANC witch hunt (cf. Jolly 2001:700). The question it seems to me is not what *ought* to be done but what form of justice is most suitable within the context of South Africa. Writing excellent analysis and theories of jurisprudence in the comfort of American and European universities does not translate to pragmatic solution of the actual situation on the ground nor is it capable of attenuating such emerging complexities. In the South African context, the emerging social order demanded a new process of social formation that differs with the *ancien regime* both in representation and structure.

To accomplish this task, ubuntu would infuse an ideological legitimacy on the TRC and the evolving task of state formation. Admittedly, one does not speak of justice outside the nation; in other words, there is no justice where there is no nation. To speak of justice admits an avowal of the barest minimum condition for nationhood, which implies a shared contemporaneity within a homogenous empty time. It involves at the minimum, sets of rules and practices, of shared values and differences, shared understanding (and misunderstanding) breach of which constitutes a contravention of such contemporaneity within a homogenous temporality. Restoration of such shared temporality is, in the most minimalist and bizarre simplification, what constitutes justice— the process of reconstituting the broken social order.[7] On this basis, justice and its practice thereof are located within context and that context is the community, society, or the nation that guarantees and generates the basic precepts of law and order. I leave this discussion for legal philosophers. My point is merely that justice and its discourse thereof does not precede nor is it prior to the community. From Kantian categorical imperative discussed already, our dignity and worth is not conditional but naturally embedded in our humanity. Yet, this cannot be isolated from the overall sequence of Kant's political theory in which I take as a principle of justice that which I can at the same time will that it *be* a universal law! The subjunctive mood "be" indicates a demand, a duty so to speak. This principle of universalization despite my disenchantment on its metaphysical limitations with regards to making the individual a "kingdom of ends" and neutrality to context still offers a margin for *recognition* of others with whom I would share an imagined contemporaneity.

Most significantly for our present purposes will be the insight from John Rawls' *Theory of Justice*. According to Rawls (1971), individuals are able to conceptualize a notion of justice by an imaginary insertion to what he calls "original position." The people in the original position we are informed are situated behind a hypothetical "veil of ignorance" and they do not know the kind of life style or what fortunes or misfortunes awaits them outside this veil of ignorance. On the basis of this hypothetical ignorance, Rawls

argues that participants would be able to articulate an impartial theory of Justice that is universal. No doubt Rawls is a disciple of Kant. The problem with this theory is that the ability to articulate such theory of justice presumes what constitutes life's value. In the basic sociological sense, the theory is charged with liberal individualism. An individual can only articulate such notions of shared values within a discursive formation of the community where he learns, socializes and begins to appreciate those values articulated as just or unjust—even the knowledge of it. To this charge, Rawls has responded that his proposition was merely metaphysical and not sociological. We are once again thrust back to square one! What is the context? The context is historical in its sociopolitical and cultural milieu. On this basis, it will be horrendous to assume the priority of justice before the nation and it is yet too tendentious to claim that the nation is prior to discourse on justice. The relationship between the two is contemporaneous, and this is why the nation is never fixed, but a project in continuity. As the nation mutates, its practices and what constitutes justice mutates as well in accord to specific historical context.[8] In fairness to Rawls, however, his conceptualization of justice for all its sociological flaws remains only a minimalist definition of justice as *fairness*.

If we locate our discourse of justice within the community or the nation, the task of nation building becomes equally as urgent as the demand for justice without which any aspiration to any form of justice remains a phantasm. As an "African" ideology, black victims of apartheid would have no problem in accessing the legitimacy of the process and reconciling themselves to the initiative of reconciliation, amnesty and forgiveness. Even if it is top-down approach (elitist), it remains an initiative *identifiable* with black people. A source of pride and new identity, we know that *we are the ones offering forgiveness, it is in our culture*. The power is in the subject. Notice that by way of double maneuver, ubuntu as a cultural mandate on the one hand offered a tacit legitimation for the TRC while offering a social platform for the institutionalization of a new political order. Here, the political structure gains legitimacy in the eyes of the victims as well as in the eyes of the perpetrators for a balance of power is attained; a bargain has been struck. At the same time, the amnesty evolving from the project has to be qualified: it was a "political" amnesty granted to errors motivated by political reasons. Amnesty will be denied to crimes committed out of personal motivation. As to who will be granted Amnesty, Tutu (1999:28) was lucid:

> In the South African case there was to be no general amnesty. This amnesty was not automatic and the applicant had to make an individual application, then appear before an independent panel which decided whether

the applicant satisfied the stringent conditions for granting amnesty. So the other extreme, of blanket amnesty, was also rejected . . . it was felt very strongly that general amnesty was really amnesia.

Many appeals for amnesty were turned town as in the case of the Dutch white supremacist, Janus Walus who murdered Chris Hani toward the end of apartheid. Then again, the limitation will be that there was no guarantee for a separation of political crimes from personal crimes; these crimes were all induced by the same ideology of apartheid, or matter of fact, incidents of apartheid structure.

Indisputably, that ubuntu aimed at restorative justice as opposed to other forms of justice is seemingly in the South African context, a superior alternative to retributive justice championed by the likes of Derrida and Marx. It restored the dignity of the victims while not subletting the dignity of perpetrators as common in retributive justice where justice is measured against the level of injustice, and punishment measured against the degree of crime. This measure (retributive) in my view only succeeds on the meta-physical level, but falls short on psychosocial impact on the victims. In the very analytic sense, this approach (punishment driven or retributive system) falters for its demand is inhabited upon my need for revenge! Revenge in my view is a metaphor for "otherness" in which my subjectivity remains a symbolic residue of what the "other" wants me to be—I am *his project* when I precisely induct myself within this rule of engagement he carved out for me. But I have a choice to carve out my pattern of proceeding—refuse his engagement—at which point power remains in my hand, the subject (see Chapter 9).

Now, if the TRC as I pointed out was an attempt to mediate a psycho-logically healing experience as well as becoming sociologically functional, the idea of "truth" becomes therapeutic. But while truth can mediate a healing process, Brewer (2006:220) cautions that it can "re-open wounds and hinder or slow the process of reconciliation because the 'truth' may be used from one standpoint and damn a particular group." This is where it becomes necessary to generate a new narrative for left by itself; "truth"[9] is seemingly incompatible with reconciliation. But what kind of memory can become inclusive as to navigate between the "truth" of the past and recon-ciliation with hope for the future? Once again, appeal is made to ubuntu in an attempt to generate a memory that would allow the nation to tran-scend past violent and divisive historical memories with a substitute of a new narrative for an inclusive shared (not hegemonic) memory amenable to the future and the present. Memories of victims and perpetrators are reconciled. Ubuntu as a locus of intersubjective memory and unifying pad for a national imaginary will become a synthetic voice, a repository of new

memory in which the victim perceives his/her new identity as one capable of forgiveness, self-determination, empathy, and hope; a new national narrative for nationhood that remains a symbolic structure for the legitimacy of the new nation. As a public discourse in the social imaginary, ubuntu becomes an arbitrator between present and past historical experiences.

The actual sense in which ubuntu is treaded in its populist version: *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabanye abantu* (a person is a person through other persons), mediates the view of a milieu of rights and relationships in which people are able to recognize their humanity as inextricably bound up with other person's humanity—an added justification for its emphasis (in the TRC) on the priority of 'restorative' as opposed to 'retributive' justice" (Graybill 1998:47; Eze 2008). Admittedly, while the principles of restorative justice does not specifically demand apology from victims as opposed to confession, some have argued that this specific form of restorative justice does constitute elements of retribution by default. Tutu (1999) would argue that the confession of such virulent and heinous crimes by itself constitutes a punishment. And Goldstone (2000) confirmed that "the perpetrators suffered a very real punishment—the public confession of the worst atrocities with the permanent stigma and prejudice that it carries with it" (Gibson 2004:265).

During the TRC, the appeal and use of ubuntu is employed in the justification of the "stories" of the victims and the subsequent absolution of the perpetrators. In this reading of ubuntu for example, Tutu (1999:31) was able to locate both victims and perpetrators as *all* victims of apartheid in its structural and institutionalized regime of violence and dehumanization. He arrived at this conclusion on the basis that these perpetrators became isolated from the spirit of ubuntu. Tutu it seems to me at this juncture is leaning toward an essentialist primordial notion of ubuntu, a super meta-narrative! Accordingly, without ubuntu the subjectivity of the "perpetrator" is threatened to a vanishing point, and without his subjectivity, the individual is devoid of any sense of humanism. The perpetrator is a victim of the system that therefore separated him from ubuntu. Thus his famous phrase, "*all of us here in South Africa are wounded people.*" Isolating such incidents of essentialist approach to our discourse, we have a basis from whence to envisage a sanction of legitimacy for the inclusion of ubuntu as the ideological backbone of the TRC as Tutu (1999:31, 54–55) noted:

> Let us conclude . . . by pointing out that ultimately . . . amnesty was consistent with a central feature of the African *Weltanschauung*—what we know in our languages as *ubuntu* . . . what is it that constrained so many to choose to forgive rather than to demand retribution, to be so magnanimous and ready

to forgive rather than wreak revenge? *Ubuntu . . .* speaks of the very essence of being human. When we want to give high praise we say, "*Yu, u nobuntu*"; "Hey, so-and-so has ubuntu." Then you are generous, you are hospitable, you are friendly and caring and compassionate. You share what you have. It is to say, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours." We belong in a bundle of life. We say, "A person is a person through others persons." It is not, "I think therefore I am." It says rather: "I am human because I belong. I participate, I share". . . . In the spirit of ubuntu, the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator.

Continuing on the juridical value of ubuntu as "restorative" justice and *via media* for the reconstitution of South Africa's imaginary through the corridors of the TRC, Justice Mohammed in institutionalizing the legitimacy act noted:

The Act seeks to . . . [encourage] survivors and the dependants of the tortured and the wounded, the maimed and the dead to unburden their grief publicly, to receive the recognition of a new nation that they were wronged and crucially, to help them to discover what did in truth happen to their loved ones, where and under what circumstances it did happen, and who was responsible.

(Gibson 2002:543)

Hereafter, the trope defining the breadth of the TRC and its institutionalization was given moral injunction in the postscript to the interim Constitution and appearing subsequently in the introduction to the final report of the TRC:

The Adoption of the Constitution lays the secure foundation for the people of South Africa to transcend the division and strife of the past, which generated gross violations of human rights, the transgression of humanitarian principles in violent conflicts and a legacy of hatred, fear, guilt, and revenge. These can now be addressed on the basis that there is a need for understanding not vengeance . . . a need for ubuntu, not victimization.

(Commission 2003: vol. 1, ch. 5)

Constitutively, ubuntu will then offer a sanction of precedent in the South African Constitution as in *State vs. Makwanyane,* in which ubuntu was used to institutionalize the abolishment of death penalty from the South African Constitution as evident in the celebrated case of Justice Langa in referring his judgment to [ubuntu] as "a commendable attribute which the nation should strive for." At this juncture, ubuntu as a political culture

gains a new intentionality; it is a politics of nation building as it is a method and a philosophy of rehabilitation. Politically, it became a motivation for the formation of the nation. On the psychosocial level, it became an alibi for a context-driven reconstitution of subjectivity.

Without doubt, the application of ubuntu in the prospect of nation building for postapartheid South Africa was both a fluid and subtle project. It is subtle because apart from the mention of ubuntu in the post-amble of the interim Constitution (now deleted), the term did not feature in the final Constitution. Moreover, while it has been arbitrarily employed by Supreme Court judges in adjudication of cases, its application remains a matter of *extended* juridical value—I say extended because its nuance remains vague and its application a salutary procedure. On the other hand, the fluidity of ubuntu in the process of nation building is dependent on this subtle application for its only evidence lies in the (actual) manifestation or use (or abuse) of ubuntu as an emerging public discourse. One would have to admit that if ubuntu has become a success in the making of modern South Africa, the extent to which ubuntu performs this activity remains an unfinished project in continuity. Nonetheless, the measure of such success cannot be empirically verified for the process of nation building is a composite process. That South Africa did not fall into anarchy or civil war immediately at the end of apartheid is in itself a significant achievement. If certainly ubuntu can be credited for such stability albeit a transitional role, then its application is somewhat justified. This will inform the thinking of Desmond Tutu in his celebrated book, *No Future without Forgiveness.* In our case, the paradigm of forgiveness remains a prerogative for it acts as an independent guarantor for actual justice and successful formation of our national imaginary.

The following chapter is an attempt to negotiate a manner of proceeding in which we can speak of ubuntu as our new humanism. Moving beyond its tranistoriness, can ubuntu gain validity as a public moral discourse? How can we mediate a shift from an ethno-cultural practice to an inclusive ethic for all South Africans without being hegemonic and tendentiously promoting a form of cultural apartheid? If as I have argued that goods are internal to practice, does this formation of ethical rules restrict our discourse to fatality of moral relativism? My answer in this concluding chapter is that we can indeed speak of ubuntu as a public moral discourse eschewing the entrapment of cultural homogeneity. I also affirm that even if our goods are internal to practices of our community, our ethical procedures are not censured by moral relativism.

9

Ubuntu: Toward a New Public Discourse

The lesson from ubuntu in the intellectual history of contemporary South Africa is a confluence of multiples perspectives. Ubuntu is not proposed as a substitute to democracy, but given a performative role in reforming the inadequacies of past historical cleavages of national building. My plea is that even as we lay claim on ubuntu as part of our cultural heritage, we should nevertheless acknowledge and be aware that it is a heritage not self-sufficient by itself and therefore not a solution to all our socioeconomic and political problems. Ubuntu must be reevaluated and integrated to adapt to the changing sociopolitical and economic circumstances. In the *Sunday Times* editorial of October 27, 1996, Makgoba (1996) argued persuasively on the limitations of Western liberal democracy within the context of its application in sub-Saharan Africa. Accordingly, he would propose ubuntu as a substitute for South Africa:

> South Africa, as part of Africa, has one big civilization and one heritage; the African civilization, underpinned by the philosophy of African ubuntu. Ubuntu is unique in the following respects: it emphasizes respect for the non-material order that exists in us and among us; it fosters man's respect for himself, for others, and for the environment; it has spirituality; it has remained non-racial; it accommodates other cultures and it is the invisible force uniting Africans worldwide.
>
> (Enslin and Horsthemke 2004:547)

In the previous chapters, I have criticized this kind of generalizations and false proclamations of one heritage, one culture, one civilization, et cetera, as simply an illusion, a historical chimera, and abdication of facts. I have

adapted a historical method because ubuntu as a historical culture cannot be studied or interpreted only in terms of what Clifford Geertz (1977:449) describes as "[its] internal structure, *independant de tout sujet, et de tout objet, de toute contexte.*" As I argued in Chapter 6, goods are internal to practices of a community, by which I mean the location of cultural practices within the context in which they emerge and trying to understand them so. Location of these cultural practices within "the specific social, political, economic and cultural milieu" in which it emerged heightens the process of its interpretation (Cannadine 1983:105). As Skinner notes, "[T]o study the context . . . is not merely to gain additional information . . . it is also to equip ourselves . . . with a way of gaining a greater insight into . . . its meaning than we can ever hope to achieve simply from reading the text itself" (ibid.). However, attention to historical context need not be a dogmatic infusion for as Cannadine (ibid.:105) observes,

> [In] an essentially static age, unchanging ritual might be a genuine reflection of, and reinforcement to, stability and consensus. But in a period of change, conflict or crises, it might be deliberately unaltered so as to give an impression of continuity, community and comfort, despite overwhelming contextual evidence to the contrary.

Therefore, depending on context, a historical culture might gain a new meaning and intentionality. In the South African context, appeal to ubuntu may at one time read as an appeal to a putative past and a critique of colonial reason. At the same time, a new context offers a new intentionality where the same historical culture becomes a symbolic "generator" of a new national memory in the making of modern South Africa. This is how historical cultures remain fluid, dynamic, and vulnerable to "the historical tissue of circumstance" (ibid.:105). Ubuntu (as a heterogeneous culture) underwent change from being an arcane and obscurant philosophy characterized as it were by witch-hunting, abuse, and exploitation of women, social rejects, and pariahs to become a philosophy of humanism, espousing genuine human traits such as friendship, magnanimity. The context defines a new intentionality and meaning. In order to understand the meaning of ubuntu, it is necessary to historicize and situate it within the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural context across periods in which it emerged, developed, and flourished. This process of historical location is already the beginning of the process; it becomes less anachronistic and meaningful within contemporary South Africa.

In light of the aforementioned therefore, would competing notion of ubuntu within a sequence of historical emergence deny ubuntu of actual relevance and dynamism? Moreover, does ubuntu become less humanistic

or illegitimate because our contemporary understanding of what is human eschews, and does not agree, with such previously accepted social norms like ritual killing or witch-hunting in societies that preached ubuntu? Is this substantive discontinuity sufficient to deny ubuntu a contingent legitimacy (considering that absence of historical authenticity does not imply a lack of legitimacy)? Two possible responses follow: (1) dismissing ubuntu (as in the tradition of Wilson, Binsbergen, Marx, etc.) for (a) lacking genuine historical authenticity in terms of *Connexion* between *traditional* ubuntu and *contemporary* ubuntu, (b) mediating contradictions, tensions, and inconsistencies in societies that lay claim to ubuntu discourse, or (2) rehabilitating ubuntu discourse (as I have done). Such revitalization of ubuntu necessarily comes with an awareness that even if there is no continuity with any pristine community, we still need to pause and reflect upon ubuntu's substantive and constitutive value in the making of modern South Africa. Both of these responses are inadequate. I shall interrogate the extent and limits of these responses. The limits of (1) is that to dismiss ubuntu for inadequate historical fact is also to have been able to imagine one as being located in the historical context in which it was practiced; to know and understand the evaluative norms for which it represented as a guide for action and activity in that society. This is not possible since such knowledge at best, is a repository for historical obscurity since what we know of traditional African past is through oral tradition. Such historical cultures definitely mutated along the "historical tissue of circumstance." On analytical level, this criticism falls short for if we cannot logically affirm its *presence* in the past, we cannot also deny its existence in the past. To argue for its legitimacy from a point of negativity is massively fallacious. Consider the following example, *God do not exist because I cannot prove in fact if God exists. Yet, the fact that I cannot prove God's existence does not necessarily entail that he or she does not exist.* The fact that these Africans do not have a written historical evidence to prove the "existence" of a moral practice called ubuntu is not an affirmation that such philosophy did not exist in the past.

Now, we have a need for a different focus and way of proceeding. If ubuntu is acclaimed (even remotely) as part of any culture or tradition, then ubuntu as understood and practiced by certain people fulfilled certain normative role in societies that lay claim to it (this excludes any substantive content of the discourse, i.e., what is *in* ubuntu). Furthermore, an account for different understanding(s) of ubuntu within different contextual setting does not in my view undermine the relevance nor the significance of ubuntu. For our present purposes, the inconsistencies and differences in the account of ubuntu do in fact reinforce its practical necessity, application and theoretical elucidation. The problem with (2) above is that

a peculiar view of ubuntu is being imposed as a definitive and pseudo-universal philosophy whereas the concept of ubuntu is in fact internal to the practices of particular communities (even if our only evidence remains its link to Bantu languages). Nevertheless, the fact that the concept of ubuntu is derived from the Bantu notion of referring to the human person gives credence that there is a socially agreed upon concept of what it means to be a "human person" in these languages or societies. As a socially agreed upon concept, it fulfills the barest minimal condition for a group of persons to be called a human society or community. This in turn implies that its usage has rules within the social framework in which it is applied. The activities and actions of persons in these societies are in turn determined by rules guiding social intercourse within these groups if they form a human society.

Thus understood, ubuntu becomes an evaluative norm in a society in which it is invoked. At the pain of endorsing a relativist approach, this kind of relativism accommodates the possible divergent application and nuances of ubuntu as practiced in many societies in Africa, unmasking yet, those very contradictions in its symbolism. As shown already, an essentialist discourse of ubuntu attempts to move beyond the point of language *sameness* to advance a homogenous normative where ubuntu is adapted and imposed as a cultural universal of different ethnic and cultural identities irrespective of different sociological and political spheres of influence. By contrast, an understanding of ubuntu within a cultural sensitive context explains the many contradictions associated with ubuntu. Paying attention to context is crucial: ubuntu as a good of a community is internal to practices of these communities and not external to them. To impose ubuntu as external reality is a fraud and makes mockery of the discourse; it also opens ubuntu to methodological error. To understand ubuntu so to speak is therefore to locate the context in which it was invoked and recognized as a normative rule governing social practices. Since the social norms and practices of these communities differ, the response to a given human situation is different and hence, no homogenized cultural tradition would be able to capture the myriad pattern of social practices thus homogenized as in the case of Southern Africa or offset the social mores of these different societies. This attempt to deduce a homogenized pattern is an illicit move and lacks legitimacy. Ubuntu can only be understood within its social context, practices and setting—it deals with specific situations, it responds to specific problems of a community. Attempting to find resemblances or cultural commonality with which to make a generalized application is insensitive to context and therefore dehistoricizes the agents and actors in their specific context. Hence, ubuntu or more precisely, its practice among the Shona need not be similar to that of the Zulu. Ubuntu does not invoke

a notion of norms that is neutral to historical sequences. Ubuntu is evaluative both in vocabulary and in practice. Being evaluative means it is context specific. For example, if we consider the following, magnanimity, sharing, kindness, et cetera, as characteristic virtue of ubuntu, these virtues mean different things to different historical cultures, context and communities. Many decades ago, in a West African tribe, it would have been acceptable for a host to "share" his wife with a friend who has come on a long journey. In neighboring tribes, the same action constitutes a taboo. Hence, what does the word "sharing" as a characteristic of ubuntu mean in this context? Subsequently, ubuntu as a norm depends on the structure of particular social frameworks; it is internal to practices of specific communities rather than transcendental or predetermined.

Is the observation of rules or social practices mediated by ubuntu the end of these societies, that is, the *telos* for which these societies strive? If there is no relationship between the actual observation of rules and the ends or *telos* of these societies, we will be gravitating toward certain parochialism, individualism, and moral relativism. It is parochial and individualistic because these rules and the(ir) observation thereof have become ends in themselves and are as such private ends in a/the private sphere. And being private ends, they do not fulfill the criterion nor demand any rationale for social morality. At best, what such rules will bring about is a society with rivaling competing ends and private ideals. Since the ends in this society are private, social morality is nothing but the sum of individual opinions, of private ideals. If ubuntu is to operate successfully as an evaluative norm, then the rule of social practice it inspires must produce what people, irrespective of their sociocultural background would within a specific context judge to be good. This is the realm of social, which offers an avenue in which ubuntu succeeds as a public discourse in the formation of a new South African consciousness and social imaginary as a nation. Its application in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), et cetera, must be located within a context in which all South Africans must judge to be good. In addition, the context for such judgment cannot be private for the private sphere is a sphere of opinion—the context of individual struggles over private ends (*see* MacIntyre 1967).

We know that relationship between facts and value are mutually inclusive. We will have a problem fathoming a society in which facts differs from values evident in such societies. We cannot enquire about the facts of social order of a society without implicitly engaging with values evident in this society, such values accommodating social practices. This is because any attempt to describe a social order is already an involvement in the social world of this community (for further understanding on the relationship between observation of rules and social practice, *see also*, ibid.).

It includes employing their language, notion of duties and obligations that embody values peculiar to that society, a moral vocabulary specific to them. For example, ubuntu as a historical culture could still contain residues of certain social structures and patterns and offer a platform of a unitive and collective life. As a public discourse, those incidents of ubuntu in the making of South African imaginary has induced a transformation of the *very context of ubuntu* to become located within specific practices and context. This transformation is the invention of the postcolonial ubuntu and where it becomes dogmatic; it offers only an elusive foundation. Such dogmatism that ascribes ubuntu as a tradition in continuity is an endorsement of homogenous cultural world.

Exposing ubuntu to criticisms is another way of validating its actual significance and value. The validity of theories is dependent on its ability to withstand those criticisms on which force it gains validity or universal legitimacy. In Cartesian language, it means subjecting our discourse to the *bar (altar) of reason!* Exposing our ethical or political theory to critical judgments is therefore an exposure to other certain plural viewpoints or perspectives to enrich and strengthen the internal coherence of the theory in question. This also involves refining our theory by way of creative-conceptual dialogue in which our theory is relieved of hermeneutic dogmatism to adopt appropriate dialogical relevance. This it seems to me is the barest minimum condition for a theory to attain a valid-relevant criterion as a public discourse. This is hopefully the rationale that informs the methodology in this research. It with this openness that I invite the reader to suspend judgment and appreciate ubuntu as an emergent tradition within a particular historical context and perhaps, one might actually learn one or two things from the discourse.

Conclusion: Toward a New Humanism?

Nationalistic discourses are often mediated by incipient ideologies that remain transitional. While the apartheid nationalist government depended on Afrikanerdom, a nationalist ideology that emerged from the residue of their historical confrontation with the British, ubuntu emerged in the public sphere as an attempt to eradicate the symbolic order of exclusion instituted by apartheid and sought to overcome this subordination by forging a discursive national imaginary. It offered a new subjectivity not constructed on exclusion but on distance and relation, on particularity and difference. As a postcolonial discourse, ubuntu possess the following credentials: (1) a reverse discourse to thwart and undermine the

preceding racial hegemony of apartheid discourse that denied "humanity" to nonwhites through its institutional and structural racism; (2) a project in the making of a new nation, which, unlike apartheid, yields to inclusiveness as opposed to divisiveness; (3) its admissibility and evidence in the TRC mediate its values as a humanistic discourse; and (4) while it has been criticized for legitimizing restorative justice, it offers a blueprint for the very process of reconciliation and possibility of social morality.

As I argued in chapters 6, 7, and 8, the overall emergence of ubuntu into the historical location of South Africa belies trenchant limitations. Yet we need to recognize the ideological bargaining for an imaginary blueprint of a cultural tradition for a symbol that could embody the idea of unity where none existed before. Its historical and present pervasiveness no doubt a critical location of struggle, it nevertheless offers us an appurtenance of continual redefinition of our history that attaches the symbolism of inclusion as core to our narrative(s). In the realm of the TRC, it exculpates those incidents of malfeasance history that exists in immanent tension between our past histories and our quest for a new national imaginary. Within such a historically contingent context, it debunked retributive justice while appropriating restorative justice. It is restorative because of its infused empowerment and "restoration" of the many victims of our violent history.

The ability to forgive in my view is a stronger moral value than vengeance or violence. Institutional violence such as exhibited by apartheid structure(s) is both a sign and manifestation of weakness. It is an institutional weakness on the part of a government that is unwilling to negotiate with the "other" without a spasmodic repression of those it excluded. This model of exclusion as we have seen would become a hitherto sacrosanct symbol of apartheid and otherwise celebrated as a glorified state dogma. In the context of colonial South Africa, it was both a psychosocial deception and institutional weakness for an institution or government to rally on "de-subjectification" and a negation of the "other" to gain its own subjectivity and legitimacy. This model of gaining legitimacy is empty, for it is dependent on *conditional* and not *affirmative* values.[1]

To further substantiate and untangle the discursive constraints on violence of the (other's) subjective, further constitutive examples will suffice. I shall call this model of subjective formation the *colonization of the subjective*. It is a process of attaching the symbolism of morbidity to the victim to gain *subjective legitimacy*. Whatever such action might be, this mode of "subjective" formation constitutes an inauthentic *self-subjectification*— self affirmation through a destructive order of others: I might tell a lie to improve my position and depreciate the "other"; it might be actual violent

actions which aim at strengthening my position at the expense of the other or by weakening another's position. When I kill, oppress or rape someone, I am conditioned on the "successful" denigration or de-subjectification of the victim to sanctify, purify or enrich my subjectivity. I raise the bar of my humanity by a virtual degradation of others.

Consider the apartheid death squad captain who in order to silence his victim executes him. He is afraid of the victim or perhaps, his subjectivity is threatened by that of the victim's; he eliminates the victim to restore the *status quo,* where he feels *significant* again. As a representative of an oppressive institution, he purifies and empowers the state through a state-sponsored oppression. A method akin to sadism, he derives power and significance by inflicting pain on others. If he is a rapist, he relishes his subjectivity by trying to conquer the vulnerable or weaker "other" to mask his own weakness.[2] Note that the aggressor is not engaged in constructive self-affirmation rather than a conditional-destructive mediation which in actual sense is a neurotic sabotage of their subjective formation. He might as well continue to flourish but his subjectivity will have to be continually redefined, a process that feeds upon those same activities. He finds fulfillment in those activities that reconfirms his subjectivity through such circle of vicious individuation. In bizarre cases, he becomes a serial rapist, a pathological liar, et cetera. In the apartheid scenario, a vicious progression emerged: water cannons, tear gas, rubber bullets then torture chambers, death squads and finally state executions. These were all chain of activities indulged by the state to enforce a subjective legitimacy. The content or essence (of the state) will be continuously redefined and the bar of subjective legitimacy concomitantly raised with heightened violence or oppression to enforce such legitimacy. The state has to survive; the redefinition of its essence is to enact new legislations to precisely secure its continued existence.

The delusion is on that "feeling" of being powerful where the victim represents a symbol of such conquest. Consider the following incidents leading to the genocide in Rwanda in the 1994. In fact, these events were rallied upon attaching a symbolism of vile degradation and morbidity to the other. Prior to the genocide, the Hutu controlled radio instigated the massacres with such announcements: "Kill the cockroaches"—in reference to Tutsis. In Kinyarwanda, cockroaches mean *Inyenzi*. The Tutsis in this power play were called *Inyenzi* (cockroaches). René Lemarchand (2009:294) suggests that this is actually a deliberate distortion of another Kinyarwanda word "ingenzi," which means "brave." According to Lemarchand, originally, the Tutsi guerillas (Union Nationale Rwandaise) acquired such aura of bravery and were locally known as "*ingangurarugo ziyemeje kuba ingenzi*" (the brave ones in the service of the King's army). This is

controversial. The announcer continues: *The cockroaches are here, kill them, and fumigate them, these cockroaches . . .* The power discourse here is that in order to mask their weakness as normal human beings who would not commit such crimes; they first have to de-subjectify their victims, make them less humans as in cockroaches. *They are after all killing cockroaches and not human beings!* Our guilt is less, they are just cockroaches! This Rwanda/Burundi scenario does not only justify my thesis that violence is a sign of weakness; it also reveals to us that violence breeds violence as evident in the counter massacres by the Tutsis.

Note the contraposition with the theme of our discourse in which ubuntu means "[a] person is a person through another person, or otherwise, I am because you are, and since you are, therefore we are"—this will be negated with "I am because you are not, and since you are not, therefore I am." In the latter version, my subjectivity is continuously nourished by diminishing your subjectivity. The critical point here is that the aggressor (individual or an institution) attempts to gain a subjective legitimacy by a negative reversal or degradation of the other's subjectivity.[3] This inability to condition oneself toward attaining one's subjectivity by way of self-affirmative values is a sign of weakness. As in most cases, violence is easy way out. In violence, we indulge in a systematic depreciation of other's subjectivity on the impulse of enriching our own subjectivity. We stand on the shoulders of our victims in order to be seen or recognized. In reality, however, such a move only obscures our underlying weakness, which we are trying to overcome and our solution most often, is to wear a mask of violence. The ability to forgive instead of vengeance, magnanimity instead of violence, ubuntu instead of retribution—these attributes enthused by victims of apartheid does not in my view as scholars like Marx, Binsbergen and Derrida seem to suggest constitute a malpractice or a denial of justice. The victims exhibited affirmative values and have therefore enhanced their subjectivity and humanity. As I argued in Chapter 8 the act of forgiveness does not entail a depreciation of humanity; it rather entails a reconstitution of one's subjectivity, an independence from the colonization of the subjective. There is a semiotic of power discourse here. The choice to forgive is to disengage from a cycle of violence initiated by the perpetrator. To respond in the manner of retribution is to admit to his terms and thereby neutralize my own subjectivity for my actions are merely an "invention" of his initiative to become enslaved to his will—my subjective is colonized. To forgive is to empower for I am engaged to initiate my own point of proceeding. The power lies in the subject and not on the other; there is no colonization of subjectivity.[4]

But what is forgiveness? In my view, forgiveness is not absolution but a suspension of resentment for this is the prelogical formation for vengeance.

Forgiveness is an act performed independent of the aggressor (my fundamental disagreement with Derrida). It frees me from his colonizing gaze. Sometimes, people do not want to be forgiven like P.W. Botha of South Africa who never cooperated nor recognized the TRC nor accepted forgiveness until his death! The idea is that forgiveness actually undermines the assumed power of the aggressor whose primary project of violence has become neutralized. Forgiveness is like the art of karate (martial arts). As an expert, I am aware that the mechanics is not dependent on how powerful, weighty or muscular that I am. In our style, "shotokan" literally means "empty hand." The perfection of motion actually involves the successful conversion (manipulation) of the force/power/energy of your opponent against him or her. A perfect motion is least pressure with which you successfully convert your opponent's force against him or her. This is like forgiveness. The following personal account will stratify my point:

> It was a hot summer in 2004. I was an ice-cream/Yoghurt sales assistant in Centurion near Pretoria (outskirts Tshwane, South Africa). He was visibly mad at me because I had asked him to stand in cue behind other customers in a practice of first come first served. Apparently, he does not like being instructed by a black guy. He was angry and even angrier because I ignored his abuses. When it was his turn, he became loud with his abuses and racial epitaphs. When I pleaded with him not to scare the customers, he slapped me! Contrary to his expectation (and perhaps mine as well), I shocked myself because I found myself saying, God bless you! I forgive you! He became angrier when I said this and rushed at me, at which point he was hijacked by bystanders who were watching the event unfolding (including his girlfriend). The whole "world" of Centurion descended on him. I heard later that his girlfriend left him.

The question is why he got angrier when I said *God bless you! I forgive you!* The answer I think is because he feels his power dissipating, simultaneously neutralized, and converted against him in my own terms. I actually felt better. With a senior rank in Karate, I could perhaps challenge him on his own turf but my reason for doing karate is precisely that I detested violence.

The rationality of forgiveness within an ubuntu reference is beckoned upon the awareness that even though the power of forgiveness lies in the subject, my "self" formation is an intersubjective affair. This is the core principle of ubuntu in which our individuality is conditioned upon our creative autonomy.[5] I forgive you because every human being is an irreplaceable subject in our discursive formation. Within this formation, forgiveness does not weaken me it empowers me. *A person is a person through other people* strikes an affirmation of one's humanity through recognition of an "other" in his or her uniqueness and difference. It is

a demand for a creative intersubjective formation in which the "other" becomes a mirror (but only a mirror) for my subjectivity. This idealism suggests to us that humanity is not embedded in my person solely as an individual; my humanity is co-substantively bestowed upon the other and me. Humanity is a quality we owe to each other. We create each other and need to sustain this *otherness* creation. And if we belong to each other, we participate in our creations: *we are because you are, and since you are, definitely I am*. The "I am" is not a rigid subject, but a dynamic self-constitution dependent on this *otherness* creation of relation and distance. I forgive you because I have the power to do so, but more because you are part of my humanity.

A new South Africa has an urgent need for a new humanism. With the euphoria of independence over, heartbreaking images are emanating from South Africa which seems to undermine the promise of freedom; a catastrophic HIV/AIDS crises and government's inadequate response to the crises, high rate of unemployment, institutionalized crime, interethnic chauvinism and rivalry, a virulent strain of ethnic cleansing, otherwise masked as xenophobism. With a minority middle class benefiting from the new dispensation, majority of blacks still live beyond the poverty line. It will be tendentious to imagine a miraculous transformation within a decade in comparison to the shadows of over three centuries of capitalist racialism. We are confronted therefore with an urgent necessity of an investment in human capital.

While reconciliation cannot substitute absolution, the extent to which reconciliation is attainable is dependent on the conviction of facing the past with sincerity and breaking away from bitterness and retribution, not political amnesia, but a demand, a shift from the darkness of the past to the light of the future (*see also*, Marback 2004:25). "Such an approach," writes Neville (2002:117–118), "is the only one which would allow us to look down into the darkness of the well of atrocities to speculate on the causes at the same time as we haul up the waters of hope for a future of dignity and equality." And Minow (1998:147) will concur that the challenge is to maneuver "Vengeance and forgiveness . . . the path of reconciliation and affirmation and the path of facing who we are and what we could become." The arena becomes that of hope, an advocacy for the best of our potentials, what we can become, the uncharted course of the future, "the imperative to remember less as a hope for the future and more as an obligation to the past" (Marback 2004:259).

The mood becomes an integrative call in which our story as South Africans becomes our collective story of hope; hope infused with action for creative nationalism. It is not a call for historical amnesia, but of integrating those benefits of our narrative discourse as the beginning of the process.

The success and enrichment of ubuntu as a political culture in my view is dependent on its successful exposure to other worldviews. A dogmatic approach must be shunned in favor of an open discourse, a robust engagement and constructive criticism. All political cultures become enriched in such dialogue. Since political cultures develop within the context of a tradition (or cultural milieu) adaptation and integration of such political cultures that developed from one's tradition demands a correlation with that of another or alien context. This correlation may be advanced through education. Here, education *precisely* political education becomes key in raising the people's level of consciousness. Political education means the raising of the level of awareness, a political awakening in which the totality of the nation become visible and a reality to every citizen where success and failure of the state becomes the responsibility of every citizen. Political education means awakening the citizens to the fact that dignity and sovereignty are synonymous; where a free, dignified people is a sovereign people and a sovereign people is a free people (*see* Fanon 1963:158ff). Independence is a product of collective struggle at the base and collective responsibility at the top. While our cultural nationalism has played a key role for nation building, it is at the same time utopian that fades soon after. The role of political education is to necessitate a shift from national consciousness to political and social consciousness. In this way, our narrative will become integrated and shifts from merely being a trans-subjective political project to co-substantive constitutive project. But, ubuntu is not the last word; it is only a beginning of the process. Ubuntu is not an end in itself, its job of offering a creative new beginning has been accomplished and we have to follow that part of creative humanity in which memories of the past becomes a victory for tomorrow. A tomorrow in which persons of all races, and socioeconomic background including refugees will find a home, a tomorrow in which "a person is indeed a person through other people!"

Notes

Chapter 1

1. This process is, however, not a one-way process insofar as one can employ historical tissues of contemporary circumstances to reread and reinterpret a [past] historical culture, ritual, or event.
2. "Postcolonialism" is not the same as post-colonialism. Post-colonialism (hyphenated) refers to "after Colonialism," a period or condition of life at the end of colonialism. Postcolonialism, on the other hand, is the theory that attempts to understand the post-colonial condition. Postcolonialism involves the challenge or the attempt to decolonize the mind from its ideological prison.
3. Kant is very much influenced in this imperative by Jesus' teaching in Mtt 7:12: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets."

Chapter 2

1. See, also Appiah (1992:264).
2. No culture is static. Culture evolves, it develops, and it is open and dynamic. Cultural evolution is what happens when a worldview mutates and adapts other worldviews. Sometimes, it enlarges and sometimes it sheds its roots.
3. The search for neutrality ignores context, as it is universalistic and impartial. This approach in my view denies the subject of history a representation, a voice, a presence and subjectivity.
4. Code quotations taken from Mamdani 1996:63–71.
5. This term originally refers to an enclosure for cattle or livestock located in an African homestead (collections of houses of extended family of relatives). In the course of South Africa's colonial history, it ceases to denote animal pen and became used as a general reference to a homestead.
6. This trend continues with the union of South Africa in 1910 where section 147 of the Union's act gave the governor general absolute control of native affairs.
7. Pre-1994 South Africa offers an analytical point of reference to understand the relationship between power and authority. Where power is defined as an ability to control, influence actively or passively the action of others, authority may be defined as power transformed into right—the right to exercise such power. In other words, when power gains legitimacy, an acceptance so to speak,

it is essentially transformed into authority. A powerful state is not necessarily legitimate if it does not fulfill the barest minimal condition to gain legitimacy. It might be able to control the action of its people, but it is still illegitimate. Based on this, apartheid government was powerful but illegitimate state for it did not fulfill the barest minimal condition on which to gain legitimacy. In the section that follows, one notices how through different concessions, attempts were made by the apartheid regime to gain acceptance.

8. It ceases to be a case of racial segregation, but extends to the quality of being human. Since what is "white" only is legislatively allowed to be better, the derivative implication is that these are essentially more human than others.

9. Race and ethnicity are not synonymous. Race is a human construction and invention and neither a biological nor a scientific fact. "Race" is also a political construction at the service of an ideology or interest group. "Race" emerges through the social and historical process of racialization. Racism becomes an ideology that promotes discrimination against certain people on the basis of their perceived "racial" differences and maintains that these constructions of "races" are objective, fact and neutral (see McLeod 2000:110–111). "Race" is an imagined, constructed sociohistorical fantasy and not a biological fact. Racism in my view is a psycho-social deception, it simply smacks of "cognitive incapacity" to look beyond our mindsets.

10. The Consumerist impulse suffered by middle class black South Africans in postapartheid SA lend credibility to the regeneration of an existential obliteration suffered during apartheid capitalist racialism where wealth or access to material resources defined one's humanity. Many blacks in an attempt to reconstitute their subjectivity embarked on a pilgrimage of change from "being to having", where having is symbolized by material goods to show for it and synonymous to an actualized subjectivity. The tragedy being that it is humanity or subjectivity on a borrowed credit! Most of the goods so acquired are usually on credit (see Chapter 5).

11. This Trek was led by Piet Retief in the 1830s to escape the worsening economic conditions and worsening debt in the Cape peninsula. According to Worden (2000:14), "it provided the symbolic images crucial to the ethos of Afrikaner nationalism". Yet, this trek differed significantly from trekkers of earlier generations. The early trekkers were disenchanted with the land tenure system introduced by the Cape government but most significantly about the socioeconomic implications of admitting freed slaves and khoikhoi servants as freeman, "on equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and colour" (Worden 2000:14). The last clause will determine the emergence of Black Theology in Chapter 4 to challenge this kind of biblical distortion and racist Christianity.

12. The cruelty of the passes is not only the restriction of movement, largely, one need to consider the wider psychosocial impact on pass bearers: broken homes, husbands and wives separated from each other, institutionalized depersonalization, etc.

Chapter 3

1. Psychoanalysts will have a field day trying to understand the neurotic power play of Adolf Hitler and the rationality of German populace in the 1930s. At the rise of Hitler, Germany was at its worst socioeconomic meltdown in recorded history. Germany not only lost out in WWI, they were also made to pay reparations, a move that eroded not only the national pride but also heighted acute poverty and worst inflation in history. This was the context in which Hitler emerged and the people were desperate to believe in anything, in anybody who could make them stand up as Germans even for a narcissist psychopath like Hitler. In this way, the Nazi leadership is in some way, a millennial movement. It is no wonder that many ordinary Germans referred to Hitler as *Mein Führer*, literally, a word that evokes a sense of divine leadership.

2. The Greek term, $\Pi \alpha \rho o \upsilon \sigma \acute{\iota} \alpha$ or Latin *adventus* literally translates as the *Second Coming*. This is essentially the core teaching of Christian eschatology on the last days before the second coming of Christ. In the Bible, references to the *Parousia* will be found in Matthew 24.27, 25:31, Romans 2:5–16, 14:10, 1Cor. 4:5, 5:10, 15:23, 2Thess.1:5, 2:1–9, et cetera.

3. Parousian-Christian influence: traditionally, although the Xhosa believe in ancestral worship and Qamata [ancient Xhosa- Ukqamata] (the creator), the latter being an influence of Christianity, they do not believe in the resurrection of the dead nor in reincarnation.

4. The actual number of casualty varies and different accounts give different numbers. Some would put the numbers of the dead as 163 and 129 wounded (cf. Hunter 1961:565; Switzer 1990:75)

5. Biko (2004:85, 24) quotes Jaspers at length in his attack of white South Africans for their complicity in apartheid:

   The very fact that those disgruntled whites remain to enjoy the fruits of the system would alone be enough to condemn them at Nuremburg. Listen to Karl Jaspers writing on the concept of metaphysical guilt: "[T]here exists amongst men, because they are men, a solidarity through which each shares responsibility for every injustice and every wrong committed in the world and especially for crimes that are committed in his presence or of which he cannot be ignorant. If I do not do whatever I can to prevent them, I am an accomplice in them. If I have risked my life in order to prevent the murder of other men, if I have stood silent, I feel guilty in a sense that cannot in any adequate fashion be understood juristically or politically or morally . . . That I am still alive after such things have been done weighs on me as a guilt that cannot be expiated".

Chapter 4

1. For example, Galatians, 3:28 where St. Paul had written, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus".

2. Irrational in this context must be qualified for there exists certain leverage of rationality within this "irrational" particularity. The logic of the irrationality is that apartheid was a system legitimized through a discourse of continuous self-deception usually justified by nascent pseudo-Christian ethics of "separateness". One would say it was a logic of rational-irrationality.

3. The Newspaper citations in this section are culled from Hugo (1988).

Chapter 5

1. One example of such synchronic and diachronic difference is that apartheid emphasized "separateness," maximum exclusion of the "other," what I have described as a diachronic isolationism. The French policy of assimilation, which stimulated négritude, emphasized a synchronic relationship. French colonies were extensions of the French Empire with residents of cities such as Dakar, St. Louis, Goree, Rufisique becoming "citizens" of France. Some of these "citizens," such as Senghor, went as far as becoming permanent members of the French parliament.

2. Note the use of ubuntu to characterize the quality of blacks in contrast to whites by Hilda Kuper as early as 1964.

3. Rene Girard does offer very insightful study on the theory of scapegoatism.

4. I owe this information to Ms. Melody Ngcuka, a University counselor.

5. Professor Michael Neocosmos who protested against this misdemeanor is "white".

Chapter 6

1. It need be mentioned that most of the militant defenders of ubuntu were largely white South African academics such as Augustine Shutte, D.J. Louw, J. Broodryk. It also includes critics like Wim Van Binsbergen. Among blacks, we have the likes of Mogobe Ramose, Mfuniselwa Bhengu, Themba Sono, Lovemore Mbigi, et cetera.

2. I disagree with Mbiti on this communitarian essentialism. Somewhere else, I have criticized this projection of the community over the individual as simply untenable. The community cannot create or invent the individual. The relationship is contemporaneous. (See Eze, Michael O. 2008.)

3. I am aware of the controversy embedded in these claims pertaining to the manner of speaking or referring to a person in these languages. I do not claim expertise in all of these languages. There are possibilities of alternative viewpoint and my aim is mainly a reference point of understanding.

4. I am grateful to Khaya Ntushelo of the University of Florida for drawing my attention to this example. In contemporary South Africa, the term *makwerekwere* is a heavily politicized concept of nuanced capitalist subjective that comes with a capitalist induced xenophobia. The term is used by black South Africans to designate blacks from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa who

are being accused of taking over "black jobs"—sentiments that echo South Africa's history of racialist capitalism (Cf. Chapter 4).

5. For our present purposes, it is significant to note how ubuntu will emerge as the spirit of the nation (*volksgeist*) of post apartheid South Africa, a balancing act that will displace the ethnic nationalism of apartheid era. One would also notice the shift among Afrikaners in South Africa from ethnic to cultural nationalism where Afrikaans language (as opposed to ethnic identity) will become the center of Afrikanerdom.

6. The draft Constitution refers to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa as adopted on May 8, 1996, and certified on December 4, 1996.

7. While I owe the *origination* of the term "hybrid" in postcolonial discourse to Homi Bhabha (1994), it nevertheless ought to be qualified. In many postcolonial writings, this term usually refers to the ensemble of uncertain interstices of historical change in nationalist discourses. It becomes an *uncertain* designation to accommodate the disparate point of narrative identifies. For my purposes, I prefer a *confluence of narrative* identities that would accommodate unique identities within a frame of robust autonomy. Among the danger of a complete assimilation to hybridity is that it might yield to an essentialist identity when we have become hybridized. A confluence of narrative retains us in a contemporaneous reference of relation and distance, of co-intersubjective formation. The difference I have established is analytical and not a substantive designation.

8. Michel Foucault and Giles Deleuze in their anti-foundationalism have challenged the notion of the "sovereign subjects" as represented by the Enlightenment and modernism. According to poststructuralists, the human individual is a product of discursive relationship, by which they construe our "subjectivity" as being "constituted by the shifting discourse of power which endlessly 'speak through' us, situating us here and there in particular positions and relations" McLeod (2000:192). The extremity of this view is that we do not make our identities; in fact, our subjectivity so to speak is dependent on the "other" who is in a discursive relationship with us so to speak. On this view, McLeod argues that, "the subject cannot be 'sovereign' over the construction of selfhood. Instead, the subject is 'de-centred' in that its consciousness is always being constructed from positions outside of itself." Therefore, we are not the authors of our selfhood for even our consciousness "is not a transparent representation of the self but an effect of discourse." I do not agree with such extreme position. The individual has a confluent identity.

Chapter 7

1. The Enlightenment idea of man was the subject of debate in the Romantic era. The Enlightenment scholars have been accused of projecting an image of a free-floating individual whose identity is constituted by a solitary rational capacity; an individual who is guided solely by dictates of reason. Kant, for example, would argue that knowledge was not something that was caused in us by some external forces but something that is innate in us as self-determining

and creative subjects. Proceeding to link epistemology with ethics, Kant continues that we are knowing subjects, capable of judging good and bad actions by virtue of being self-determining and self-conscious individuals. German Idealist following the tradition of Hegel will challenge this conception of man and argue that our thoughts do not emerge through a solitary rational exercise. On the contrary, our thought is a product of our culture as it is of the cumulative effects of many minds that preceded us.

2. On the double bind of this analytical framework, see Praeg Leonhard 2008 and Metz Thaddeus 2007.

3. These have been the perennial questions that have plagued African intellectual history. It is a question that is emotive in content as it is a polemical disambiguity. Some African intellectuals in trying to respond to such question will follow in the footsteps of the likes of Cheikh Anta Diop, Martin Bernal, Innocent Onyewuenyi, Theophilus Okere, et cetera, in an attempt to offer a proof and justification for the existence of African intellectual history or philosophy. Other scholars following the tradition of Césaire, Fanon and Serequeberhan will however pose a demand on the motivation of such questions? Who is asking the question and why? The argument is that no one ever asks if there is a Western philosophy or history. And if such question does not form a locus of European philosophical discussion, it entails an *a priori* assumption that European intellectual history exists. To pose such a question when it comes to Africa is likened to ask: is there an African culture? It becomes a question of identity, of humanity. To ask such a question is an implicit questioning of the Africanist's subjectivity and its denial thereof. Such questioning, these scholars argue, are merely perfidious instruments of coloniality. This debate was the preoccupation of Pauline Hountondji's *African Philosophy: Myth or Reality?* Hountondji attempted to reconstruct philosophy as a pseudo-professional intellectual discourse. What we call African intellectual history may well be ethno-philosophy. Hountondji's work is generally criticized for insensitivity on the necessity of a "conceptual take-off" as key point of departure in intellectual history of African, and indeed, for any intellectual journey.

4. As argued in Chapter 6, myth is not a closed system; in fact, the same procedure applies to narrative—every narrative is a myth and every myth is a narrative. Myth is therefore a narrative coherence, for in every myth, there is always a factual event.

5. While the actual historical reasons for the killing of Retief and his band remains obscure, many Africanist revisionist historians would view the battle as the first indigenous resistance to white occupation, thereby offering a different narrative of events as Simon Maphalala informs us: "Retief and his men moved about looking at the huts. In one of the huts there was a Zulu woman who was pregnant. The shock of seeing whites for the first time resulting (sic) in her giving birth prematurely. This incident was reported to Dingane. As superstition was still rife in those days the king came to the conclusion that Retief and his men were 'Abathaki' i.e. people who practice witchcraft. Consequently an order was given for them to be put to death" (Golan 1991:116).

6. In his celebrated and now classic essay, "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness," the famous Nigerian author Chinua Achebe deconstructed Conrad's work to be as a matter of fact, a glorification of imperial racism. Conrad he describes as a "thoroughgoing racist" whose work caricatured Africa as "a metaphysical battlefield devoid of all recognizable humanity, into which the wandering European enters at his own perils." Conrad's work according Achebe, denied humanity to Africans; a voice of colonial reason that projected Africa as opposite of Europe:

    > A foil of Europe as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely further in comparison with which Europe's own state of spiritual grace will be manifest . . . the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality . . . The real question is the dehumanization of Africa and Africans which this age long attitude has fostered and continues to foster in the world. And the question is whether a novel which celebrates this dehumanization, which depersonalizes a portion of the human race, can be called a great work of art. My answer is: No, it cannot.

    In the novel, Conrad had reminisced on his first experience with a black person: "A certain enormous buck nigger encountered in Haiti fixed my conception of blind, furious, unreasoning rage, as manifested in the human animals to the end of my days. Of the nigger I used to dream of years afterwards." Drawing inference from such reminisces, Achebe concludes: "Conrad had a problem with niggers. His inordinate love of the word itself should be of interest to psychoanalysts. Sometimes his fixation on blackness is equally interesting . . ." (Achebe 1988:251–252, 257–258).

7. I should note that this is only Binsbergen's judgment of Ramose's work, which in my view is not necessarily an accurate representation of Ramose's discourse on ubuntu. I lack space to explore in details the missing link and perhaps the source of the confusion (cf. Ramose 1999).

Chapter 8

1. Hope is not optimism, hope is optimism plus action (Optimism + Action = Hope). If indeed ubuntu fails in this project of restoring hope, then this failure would be located on its optimistic outlook. Optimism without action is redundant. The challenge of the new South African government would have been to transform and infuse the optimism offered by ubuntu with creative endeavors and actions and not as a mere ideological fantasy. It means taking necessary steps to consolidate this outlook, invest in human capital, curbing crimes, creating jobs but especially transiting from moment of "awe" to moment of "action."

2. Not Afrocentric—by Afro-centric, I mean ideologies that are sensitive to historical context and persuasion, not essentialist or nativist, not top-down but convoluted, not binarist but contemporaneous (neither holism nor hybrid).

3. In the introduction, I have qualified this *otherness* in relation to my critique to intimations of apartheid's cultural pluralism that depended on "watertight" difference where cultural pluralism became exploited to problematize a necessity for difference. My *otherness of the other* will construe a creative dialogical formation of distance and relation of mutual discursive intimation of subjectivities on equal terms.

4. In a twist of historical irony, Professor Verwoerd is a grandson of Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, apartheid architect.

5. Marx specifically cited J.H. Smit (1999) 'ubuntu for Africa: A Christian Interpretation', in J.H. Smit, M. Deacon and A. Shutte (1999) *ubuntu in a Christian Perspective* (Institute for Reformational Studies, Scientific Contributions of the PU for CHE, Series F1, No. 374, Potchefstroom University), p. 1.

6. See Note 5.

7. The Romans instituted the cardinal principle that does not excuse "even" ignorance of the law: *Ignorantia juris non-excusat* [*ignorantia legis neminem excusat*]—ignorance of the law does not excuse/ignorance of the law excuses no one. In a very broad simplification, the doctrine means that one is necessarily bound by the law even if he or she is unaware of it. The raison d'être of the doctrine was a need to institutionalize a rigid juridical framework not open to abuse. Against this background is the doctrine of *mens rea – actus non-ficit reum nisi mens sit rea* "the act by itself does not make one guilty unless the mind is guilty too). There ought to be continuity between a motivation (intention) and action on which basis the doctrine of non-excuse of ignorance becomes weakened. This modest explanation reveals to us the inevitability of constitutive social practices as key elements of our deliberations on justice.

8. Consider the case of Armin Meiwes who cooked and ate his lover. Apart from basic insinuations from natural law, cannibalism was not officially listed as a crime in German Constitution, especially when the victim volunteered himself. In any case, this incident triggered a change in the German law that now makes "cannibalism" a criminal offence.

9. "Truth" must be understood in its most brutal rigidity that $1 + 1 = 2$ and will always be so.

Chapter 9

1. By affirmative value, I mean *that* which I can do to *appreciate* and *improve* my well-being unconditionally. When a student studies hard to pass an examination, he is involved in affirmative values, he learns, he improves; his subjectivity is not dependent on any external variable. However, when a student fails to study hard (if and when he can) and subsequently cheats in an exam, his actions de-subjectify him for his improvement (he may pass the exam) is rallied upon an empty promise. It is artificial, for the person's subjectivity is dependent on a puny variable, a false foundation and consequently lacks authenticity.

2. We learn from psychology that one of the most traumatic effects of rape is not only the physical violence but also the degradation and dehumanization that

comes with it. This is all the more evident in times of war when rape becomes an instrument of war—to force people into submission. There is a cruel parallel between what happens in war and sexual slavery in the form of prostitution. Evidence has shown that in both cases, the subjectivity of these women becomes colonized by that of the aggressor. They develop a neurotic dependency since their willpower has become subdued.

3. I am aware of the controversy surrounding these seemingly audacious claims. I can imagine a counterargument. Should I tell lies to save someone from an angry mob? Should I kill a dictator to avoid impending genocide? I do not ignore the complexity of these issues; my aim is merely to outline the tension and fragility between ethics and our social formation on the one hand and the continuity between ethics and history on the other.

4. This view is perhaps the preoccupation of one of the greatest teachers and poets of all times, Jesus of Nazareth, who in his famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:38.42, NIV) had noted:

> You have heard that it was said, "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," but I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants so sue you and take your tunic let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from one who wants to borrow from you.

The last clause is precisely the inspiration for Kant's categorical imperatives. More interesting in this understanding of Jesus's teaching on forgiveness is perhaps better illustrated in Luke 17:2–4: "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times . . . Forgive him."

5. By creative autonomy, I depart from such understanding of the self characteristic of liberal atomism, a self that is ultimately self-contained like a monad. A self in my view can remain autonomous without being rigidly closed like a monad.

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