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Imagining social policy within the framework of Ubuntu: Rejecting use of Ubuntu as an appendage in South Africa

Samkelo BALA

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to imagine social policy within a framework of Ubuntu and to reject the use of Ubuntu as an appendage. The paper joins Africa's continued resistance against epistemicide and strives for epistemic freedom. The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first is to address the epistemological order and normative position of social policy discourse within Euro-Western paradigms. Social policy systems have revolved since post-1994 with inclusions, increments, and the introduction of institutions to coordinate such policies. However, epistemic dynamics continued to be ignored as a significant element. Second, to reject the use of Ubuntu as a footnote and appendage in the social policy domain. Ubuntu is dominantly used as a mere principle applied at later stages than at the foundational level and as an operational framework. This continues to be the norm in South Africa to invoke Ubuntu when a crisis emerges and post development of social policies rather than being at a foundational level. Ubuntu then remains just an appendage, and this limits the success of social policies in transforming communities. In driving forward this shift, the analogies will be used to explain the necessity to reject the rejection of Ubuntu in social policy. The paper concludes by rejecting this rejection, arguing for the primacy of Ubuntu through visibility and being foundational to public policies.

KEY TERMS: constitution, epistemology, social policy, South Africa, Ubuntu

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INTRODUCTION

Africa continues to be dominated by what Professor Valentin-Yves Mudimbe calls the colonial library that has shaped the continent. The colonial library is the epistemological order that invented Africa and has held epistemological supremacy in African instruments of social development and social welfare, while African concepts of analysis and interpretation are put in a subaltern position. Social policy in South Africa is incessantly a reflection of epistemicide, where Ubuntu philosophy and its elements, such as a people-centred approach, are just an appendage. Ubuntu is dominantly used as an inferior concept from the Euro-Western ones, such as individualism and elitism, dominantly not reflected in policies but attached verbally post-development of the policies. This article articulates the above concern, demonstrating marginalisation of Ubuntu that has been espoused rhetorically and yet absent in praxis. The locus enunciation and purpose of this paper are twofold. Firstly, it addresses the dominant Euro-Western epistemological order that has put African epistemology in the periphery. The second fold rejects the use of Ubuntu as a footnote and appendage in the social policy domain. The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first is to address the epistemological order and normative position of social policy discourse within Euro-Western paradigms. Secondly, to reject the use of Ubuntu as a footnote and appendage in the social policy domain. Ubuntu is dominantly used as a mere principle applied at later stages than at the foundational level.

BACKGROUND

This section provides the background of this article to locate the position of Ubuntu within the broader landscape of social policy in South Africa. The first point of departure to locate the position of Ubuntu is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996. This is because the Constitution is the primary determinant of South African social policy, and no law or policy must contradict it (De Vos & Freedman, 2021). There have been two dominant antagonistic interpretations of the South African Constitution and its supremacy. One strand finds the constitution to be the best, while the other critiques its epistemological foundation. Among many, the former South African Chief Justice Raymond Zondo holds that “South Africa has the best constitution in the world” (Bourdon & Hartley, 2025). This is a narrative that has spread across the globe, supported by different activists and legal scholars such as Advocate Tembeka Ngcukaitobi who claimed that ‘South Africa’s Constitution stands as a monument in the world’ (Ngcukitobi, 2018:3). The notion has endorsement from Professor Thuli Madonsela and many other constitutional fundamentals who have gone further to strongly discourage any critical comments of the constitution. Madonsela falls into a paradox in her reflection on 30 years of democracy in accepting persisting colonial-apartheid injustices within the times of ‘best constitution’. Madonsela states that ‘I was too naïve to think that structural inequality created over three centuries could be rooted out in three decades.’ The World Report of 2022 echoed South Africa’s stark inequalities. This disjuncture between the constitution (social policy) and reality has been interpreted differently by other groups of political activities, lawyers, and scholars. This group is among many, Professors Ramose, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Tshepo Madlingozi, Advocate Muzi Skhakhane, and Mr Andile Mngxitama, who reject the notion of ‘best constitution’ and advocate re-writing of the constitution because it embraces Euro-Western epistemology. Social Policies cannot then be immune to this epistemological concern, since the Constitution is the primary determinant.

The leading decolonial scholars Mignolo and Walsh (2018; 135-137) posit that ‘ontology is made of epistemology’. They explicitly note that politics, economics, and history are paraxial spheres that are built on knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). On the same note, the corpus text of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022) echoes with that social policy is an epistemic creation that is later ordered practically. It is at this juncture that Euro-American epistemological paradigms and worldviews and paradigms of political and rational economic theories are given greater significance over African paradigms (Metthews, 2018; Mudimbe, 1988). As articulated by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013), this is the result of colonisation, which facilitated epistemicide and put African epistemology in the subaltern position. The crisis of development (success of social policies) is manifested by this epistemic crisis (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020). Social policy in Africa, and in South Africa to be specific, has been ensnared in this crisis, with African philosophy such as Ubuntu being situated in the periphery when devising policies of development and human rights. This is the gap that has been glaring in South African social policy scholarship, which rather dominantly calls for inclusion and linking social policy with economic policies for development. This is an omission because the same economy was conceived through Structural Adjustment, which was founded on epistemological oppression (Ramose, 2005).

This text ought not to be misconstrued as a rejection of other epistemologies. This is because conservative and liberalist scholarship and politics have continued with the project of African epistemicide by vilifying the resurgence of African epistemic freedom as reverse Euro-Western epistemicide (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). The latter are gambits to deny other imaginations and epistemes their right to survive. Walsh and Mignolo (2018) in their text proffer valuable grammar that texts similar to the one of this paper are not by means of eliminating Western-Europe epistemology but to disturb the totalizing nature of Western-Europe paradigms from which

universalism is one side. They eloquently argue that ‘if “another world is possible,” it cannot be built with the conceptual tools inherited from the Renaissance and the Enlightenment’.

In its unfolding, the discourse of this paper will draw from a variety of decolonial-epistemic and Pan-Africanist thinkers from Africa and in the diaspora. The conceptualisation of Ubuntu in this paper is located on the work of Professor Mogobe Ramose’s re-conceptualisation of Ubuntu with a hyphen that is *ubu-ntu*. In his philosophical analysis, *ubu-* is a prefix and *-ntu* as a stem. A glimpse of his conceptualisation is that:

Ubu evokes the idea of being in general. It is enfolded before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity. In this sense, *Ubu* is always oriented towards *ntu*. At the ontological level, there is no strict separation between *ubu* and *ntu*. *Ubu* and *ntu* are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of being as a one-ness and an indivisible wholeness. *Ubu*, as the generalized understanding of may be said to be distinctly ontological; *ntu* as the nodal point at which being assumes concrete form or a mode of being in the process of continual unfoldment may be said to be distinctly epistemological. Accordingly, Ubuntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. (2005, 35).

The corpus text of Ramose bestows upon us philosophical maxims of Ubuntu that were in the yoke of colonial epistemicide. Therefore, such philosophical maxims will serve a significant role as analytical tools through the discourse. The discourse will also make use of the methodology-pedagogy suggested by Walsh and Mignolo (2018), founded on subjectivities, views, and local voices.

METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, this paper adopts a qualitative discourse analysis (QDA). The discourse methodology entails meaning making, understanding how language in use reproduces social reality, and examining spoken and written text material (Taylor, 2013). Even though discourse analysis tends to be traditionally referenced to Michel Foucault, its definition has developed and differs in context from different social science disciplines (Wodak & Krzyzanowski, 2008). The discourse methodology includes the use of relevant material to interpret the subject and may include pictures and letters. Phillips and Hardy (2002) note that the discourse analysis collects an interrelated set of texts and practices that make up a discourse to produce a meaning. In this paper, the discourse analysis meant scanning and reviewing the Constitution and overarching policy frameworks to check the explicit mentioning and absence of the word “Ubuntu”. The following is the discourse material that was both scanned and reviewed: Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996; Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR); New Growth Path (NGP), and the National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030. The scanning was conducted by searching for the word “Ubuntu” in the discourse material, and the review was done by assessing how Ubuntu is used in the NDP policy document. After the discourse material was scanned and reviewed, literature was used to construct the meaning of the use and non-use of Ubuntu. For example, in the NDP, Ubuntu is mentioned on page 463 only in relation to the 2002 Schools values Manifesto rather than being integrated into the broader policy framework. Therefore, the literature interpreting the former and the latter is presented in Table 1 and was made up of hardcopy books owned by the author and soft copy academic articles, and newspaper articles searched from Google and Google Scholar. The books were read and later reread in conjunction with the subject of this paper and notes of applicable sections and phrases were taken. The articles were also read with the interest to understand the interpretations of the absence of Ubuntu and how Ubuntu is used in the discourse material.

RESULTS

Table 1 presents results on the explicit mentioning and absence of ‘Ubuntu’ in the discourse material.

Table 1: Results from the discourse material

No#	Discourse material	Results
1.	Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996	No explicit mention of Ubuntu.
2.	Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)	No explicit mention of Ubuntu.
3.	Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR)	No explicit mention of Ubuntu.
4.	New Growth Path (NGP)	No explicit mention of Ubuntu.
5.	The National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030.	Ubuntu is mentioned.

Three themes of discourse emerged in response to the above results: (1) Ubuntu exists outside the ‘legitimate’ boundaries of social policy in South Africa; (2) Use of Ubuntu as an appendage; and (3) South Africa's liberation politics abandoned Ubuntu.

Table 2: Literature used in the discourse analysis

The table below presents literature and sources used to interpret the results presented in Table 1.

No#	Details of each literature piece, title, author, year, publisher, where found, eg, library or database	Main findings from the piece and main quotes
1.	Chipenda, C. (2021). Land reform as social policy: Exploring the redistribution and social protection outcomes in Goromonzi District (Zimbabwe). <i>Social Policy in the African Context</i> . Dakar: CODESRIA. Google Scholar.	These sources address the need for land reform for Social Policy to succeed in Africa.
2.	Chipenda, C. (2024). A Transformative Social Policy Perspective on Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe. <i>Africa Spectrum</i> , 59(1), 89-118. Google Scholar.	
3.	Dladla, N. (2017). Towards an African critical philosophy of race: Ubuntu as a philo-praxis of liberation. <i>Filosofia Theoretica: Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions</i> , 6(1), 39-68. Google scholar	This source echoes the work of Ramose on the use of watershed Ubuntu.
4.	Lechman, A. (2024, October 26). The price of average food basket increases by R92.97 in October. IOL.	This source addresses food increase prices, which affects the social grants.
5.	Madlingozi, T. (2017). Social justice in a time of neo-apartheid constitutionalism: Critiquing the anti-black economy of recognition, incorporation and distribution. <i>Stellenbosch Law Review</i> , 28(1), 123-147. Google Scholar.	Among many things, this source argues deification of the South African constitution.
6.	Madlingozi, T. (2018). South Africa's first black lawyers, amaRespectables and the birth of evolutionary constitution—a review of Tembeka Ngcukaitobi's <i>The Land is Ours: South Africa's First Black Lawyers and the Birth of Constitutionalism</i> . <i>South African Journal on Human Rights</i> , 34(3), 517-529. Google Scholar.	This source provides a critique that the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa is exclusive of African epistemology, even though Black lawyers were involved.
7.	Mafeje, A. (2002). Multi-party democracy and ethnic divisions in African societies: Are they compatible. <i>Breaking barriers, creating new hopes: Democracy, civil society, and good governance in Africa</i> , 53-86.	“(T)he difficulty in the African case is that, while we can point to the authoritarian character of African regimes, their venality, and to the kleptocratic tendencies of their bureaucracies, we are not able to find what might be called the guiding ideology of the emerging African elites since the Pan-Africanist movement. We hypothesize that it is a lack of this broader vision of society and the region, which has produced the degenerate political culture of ‘ethnicity’, clientelism, and petty dictators. This makes African political elites particularly uncompetitive in the global setting. It

		is the same, which accounts for the disintegration of the African states and the unparalleled decay of their economies”.
8.	Mashwama, N., Thwala, D., and Aigbavboa, C. (2018, September). Challenges of reconstruction and development program (RDP) houses in South Africa. In Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management (Vol. 2018, No. SEP, pp. 1695-1702).	Argue the conceptual level of the RDP cheap house.
9.	Mbaku, J. M. (2003). Entrenching economic freedom in Africa. <i>Cato J.</i> , 23, 217. Google scholar	Gaining political independence in the 1990s.
10.	Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). <i>On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis</i> . Duke University Press. Hard copy book.	“For the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”.
11.	Mkandawire, T. (2004). Social policy in a development context: Introduction. In <i>Social policy in a development context</i> (pp. 1-33). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.	The safety net system is incapable of addressing colonial-apartheid inequalities.
12.	Mkandawire, T. (2006). Transformative social policy: lessons from UNRISD research. UNRISD Research and Policy Brief, 5.	Residual nature of African social policy. “Ideologies are important to social policy because they determine the underlying motives and norms for several policy measures..... It is ideologies that determine the weights attached to various costs and benefits of social interventions, that underpin the moral entitlements of individuals to social support, and that shape the purpose of social policy to empower citizens or to pacify them” (2006, 2).
13.	Mkhize, B. (18 July 2024). Political School Bulletin Third Edition: Strengthen Workplace Organization to Defend Collective Bargaining, Deepen Class Consciousness and Advance Internationalism. NEHAWU.	GEAR policy was a strategic breakthrough for monopoly capital, and its repercussions are still felt in South Africa.
14.	Mokhutso, J., Marumo, P. O., and Motswaledi, T. R. (2023). Ubuntu: An Antidote to Service Delivery Crisis and Political Instability in South Africa. <i>Journal of Nation-building & Policy Studies</i> , 7(2).	Argue on how Ubuntu, if given its rightful place, can be an antidote to the Service Delivery Crisis and Political Instability in South Africa.
15.	Murunga, G. R., Ogachi, I. O., and Adesina, J. (2021). Reflections on Social Policy in Africa. <i>CODESRIA Bulletin</i> , (6), 2.	Incapacity of safety nets to address colonial-apartheid inequalities.
16.	Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. (2018). The dynamics of epistemological decolonisation in the 21st century: Towards epistemic freedom. <i>The Strategic Review for Southern Africa</i> , 40(1).	These sources argue for African epistemology being in the subaltern position.
17.	Google Scholar.	
18.	Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2013). <i>Coloniality of power in postcolonial Africa</i> . African Books Collective. Hard copy book. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2020). <i>Decolonization, development and knowledge in Africa: Turning over a new leaf</i> . Routledge.	

	Hard Copy book.	
19.	Ngcukaitobi, T. (2018). <i>The Land Is Ours: black lawyers and the birth of constitutionalism in South Africa</i> . Penguin Random House South Africa. Hard copy book.	Historical land dispossession and its consequences.
20.	Ngugi wa Thiong'o. (1986). <i>Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature</i> . Hard copy book.	African languages do not form part of economic exchange concepts.
21.	Ramose, M. B. (2001, May). An African perspective on justice and race. In <i>Polylog: Forum for Intercultural Philosophy</i> (3),14. Google Scholar.	Ubuntu is being excluded from the Constitution of South Africa.
22.	Ramose, M. B. (2005). <i>African philosophy through Ubuntu</i> . Mond Books Publishers.	Ubuntu on social injustices through the restoration of the equilibrium.
23.	Ramose, M. B. (2022). Better see than look at Ramose: A reply to Cees Maris. <i>South African Journal of Philosophy</i> , 41(1), 1-27.	Omission of Ubuntu is a philosophical racism.
24.	Ramose, M. B., and Hook, D. (2016). "To whom does the land belong?" Mogobe Bernard Ramose talks to Derek Hook. <i>Psychology in Society</i> , (50), 86-98. Google Scholar.	Land wealth disparities.
25.	Sibanda, N. (2021). <i>An Evaluation of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP): South Africa's Employment Creation Tool</i> (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria (South Africa))	Inability of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to address structural inequalities.
26.	Sithole, T. (2020). <i>The black register</i> . John Wiley & Sons. Hard copy book.	This source argues deification of the South African Constitution.

DISCUSSION

Ubuntu exists outside the 'legitimate' boundaries of social policy in South Africa

In this section, 'legitimate' is used under protest to illustrate the universality of Euro-Western ontological over de-legitimation of African epistemology. Colonialism, as it is indicated in Mudimbe (1988) it was not only a physical violence but also an epistemological one. The material power of colonialism delegitimized African epistemologies and established Euro-Western paradigms and legitimate producers of knowledge (Ramose, 2005). Ramose further highlights that decolonisation has struggled to abolish the Euro-Western epistemological dominance. However, the epistemological protest continued to resurge and emerge in different periods (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, 2018, 2020). Hence, Ndlovu-Gatsheni asserts that it remains a new question until addressed (2013). Since the late 1950s to 90s, Africa has gone through political shifts after centuries of resistance against the unjust wars of colonialism. These are the periods pronounced as remarkable political times, with Professor Tshepo Madlingozi emphasising the 1990s in South Africa. This is because of gaining independence and political freedom (Mbaku, 2003). While appreciating this era and its gains, decolonial, Pan-Africanist, and proximate scholarship is concerned that epistemic freedom remained behind (Ramose, 2005, 2016; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). Ndlovu-Gatsheni goes further and amplifies the frustration of African scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o on the continued import of Euro-American epistemology and institutions to inform African ontology. The continuing epistemic violence of subjugating the existence of African knowledge has put African philosophies, such as Ubuntu, in the subaltern position.

In South Africa, to be specific, the Interim Constitution of 1993 had Ubuntu in the epilogue. However, Ubuntu did not survive long into the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Ramose, 2001). Ramose further argues that 'Ubuntu was included in the interim constitution to justify the necessity for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. Hence later discarded. Now the constitution enjoys its supremacy position, making it the basic law (Ramose, 2001; Sithole, 2020). Importantly, anything that conflicts with this constitution is

considered invalid. It is beyond the comprehension of any logical inquiry or empirical reasoning to believe that South African social policy is founded on Ubuntu, as White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997 suggests. It would be a paradoxical inheritance for the two characterising elements of the South African constitution (1) deity constitution (Sithole, 2020; Mandlingozi, 2017) with (2) Euro-Western epistemology to produce an Ubuntu-traits social policy, unless the watershed Ubuntu (Ramose, 2001). Professor Raymond Suttner describes this watershed Ubuntu through the tactical use of it by business entities because of its salience for profit-generating purposes. Dlala (2017), in his expansion of Ramose's work, argues that the watershed Ubuntu is a hollow version that is anthropologically and culturally unfounded. This version, he argues, is selective and neglects the full range of Ubuntu. Concerning the elements, social policies give effect to the constitution rather than bringing something new. This is emphasised by the National Policy Development Framework 2020 that 'A vision set out in a policy should be aligned with the Constitution'. The above is best described by Walsh and Mignolo (2018), amplifying Audre Lorde, "for the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house". The above exegesis should suffice to construe that it is delusional to expect social policy to dismantle its master (constitution) by embodying Ubuntu. As given in the background, the corpus text of Ramose confers us with more than three decades of philosophical exploration of Ubuntu (Dlala, 2017). His work is a manumission of African philosophy (Ubuntu) and delinks from the hollow version. Ramose's articulation of Ubuntu presents us with the grammar that enunciates mutual exclusivity between the two elements and Ubuntu. I will not attempt to analyse Ramose's work but apply its philosophical evidence to enunciate the above mutual exclusivity between the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (and its product, social policy) and Ubuntu. The first departure point is the Sotho maxim of '*Feta kgomo o tshware motho*', which means that when one is faced with a decisive choice between wealth and the preservation of the life of another human being, then one should opt for the preservation of life (Ramose 2005, 150). Wealth disparities and inequality rooted in the colonial-apartheid are ubiquitous features of the post-1994 South Africa and confirmed by one of the hegemonic and global financial powers (World Bank report, 2022). A plethora of evidence across faculties recognises that the haunting disparities are because of historical land dispossession (Dlala, 2017; Ngcukaitobi, 2018). The land wealth disparities are protected by section 25 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Ramose & Hook, 2016). As the National Policy Development Framework notes, social policy is aimed at addressing the social injustice of apartheid. Then Ubuntu holds that social injustices can be addressed through the restoration of the equilibrium (land dispossession) (Ramose, 2005). Extensive research by Chipenda (2021; 2024) also articulates that land restoration and reform remain a significant factor for the success of social policy in ensuring development in Africa. It is then at this juncture that social policy cannot be founded on Ubuntu and restore the equilibrium that is deserted by the constitution.

Use of Ubuntu as an appendage

Ubuntu being used as an appendage, in this discourse, is conceptualised through the expression of Ngugi wa Thiong'o that the language of economic exchange, development, and law in Africa is still European, and African Languages become subordinate to those of Europe (1986). This is complemented by Ramose that the legal institution (public and social policies) merely translates 'Westminster and Roman Law legal paradigms into the vernacular languages of the indigenous conquered people' without embodiment (2001). From the above, Ubuntu is not given primacy in its use by either policies or institutions of social development. This presupposition is proven through two constituent conditions: (1) Ubuntu not put in writing, and (2) material facts of overarching policy documents not embodying Ubuntu. Firstly, the series of post-1994 policy frameworks in South Africa, from Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) to the New Growth Path (NGP), Ubuntu as a word has not reflected or been put in writing. Then, in the National Development Plan (NDP), Ubuntu reflects on page 462 only under the section of 'Fostering constitutional values using schools and the school curriculum'. This can be argued that Ubuntu is a verbal constitutional value as it is not reflected in the constitution. The justification for this silencing remains the same, as, even though not implicit, these policies embody Ubuntu. Ubuntu becomes a verbal appendage by presidencies and ministries when sanctioning the policies, but 'not seen. On the 18th of July 2024, President Cyril Ramaphosa engaged in this appendage using the maxim *umntu ngumntu ngabantu* in his speech on the opening of parliament to justify the Government of Unity. It is then a justified inquiry to ponder when Ubuntu becomes visibly put in writing, if it can be embodied in silence by policies.

The decolonial protest the fixed reasoning of theory-then-praxis by Mignolo and Walsh (2018) best explains African reasoning. In that, as they argue, the interdependence of theory-praxis can happen at any sequence. Consequently, in an African context, ontology and epistemology are not always governed by a fixed order. Thus, the analysis of *ukungabonakali* (to be invisible) of Ubuntu can be deduced through the simultaneity of onto-epistemology. The first point of departure is clear that the omission of Ubuntu in social policy is a philosophical racism (Ramose, 2022) inherent to African colonisation. In an African ontology, to make what can be 'seen' not seenable is a rejection of its existentialism. On the same view, its existence is perceived as not serving a significant purpose in the event. This is evident in the history literature where African languages and philosophies are perceived as inferior to communicate science (social policy included). Considering the above, Ubuntu is relegated

to the periphery of a slogan rather than having binding precedence in the policy framework.

Considering the material facts, Ramose (2001) notes in African philosophy of Ubuntu, 'a debt or a feud is never extinguished till the equilibrium has been restored, even if several generations elapse'. Ramose further notes that according to Ubuntu, 'the individual human being is to be regarded not only as the giver of values, but as the basic and primary value of all values.' Since the past three decades, the post-1994 period has not shown success in ameliorating the systematic injustices of apartheid. This is to say, South African social policy has failed to restore the equilibrium affected by colonial-apartheid. Two great African social policy scholars, Professors Tandika Mkandawire and Jimi Adesina, have located that the African countries, like South Africa, depended on residual models to restore the equilibrium disturbed by colonial-apartheid (Mkandawire, 2006). The residual or better pronunciation evasive policies like social grants have not succeeded in protecting dignity as Ubuntu urges. The safety net system is nowhere near addressing colonial-apartheid imbalances of wealth and income inequalities (Murunga, Ogachi & Adesina, 2021; Mkandawire, 2004). This disjuncture is exposed by the juxtaposition of the SASSA old-age pension (the Older Persons Grant) of R2 180 per month and, in October 2024, the Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity Group's (EDJG) released Household Affordability Index, where the average cost of a household food basket in different provinces is R5 348,65 (Lechman, 2024).

Professor Jimi O Adesina indicates that the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was also a form of residual housing meant for the poor, while social housing was for the rich. Mashwama, Thwala, and Aigbavboa (2018) note that at the conceptual level, RDP houses were small and built in the outskirts where the government could get cheap land. The size of these houses infringed on the dignity of the Black people, and being on the outskirts facilitates the lack of access to economic opportunities. The philosophy of Ubuntu further embraces that economic fundamentalism should not replace the human being as the primary value and preserve life (Ramose 2005). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) presents a mosaic that articulates the failure of post-1994 social policies to protect Black people's dignity and prioritise their value. He argues that life in informal settlements is a good example 'hellish life where human beings live in an unsheltered shack without protection from lightning. There are no toilets and no sources of clean water. Ramose (2001) uses the Xhosa word *Matyotombe*, which presents the squalid living conditions. He provides that the above 'signifies a situation of extreme poverty, dirt, and moral degradation. It speaks to conditions unbefitting of human habitation and derogatory of human dignity. Nonetheless, in GEAR, redistribution through economic growth was primacy over human dignity. Because of that, NEHAWU still holds strongly that the GEAR policy was a strategic breakthrough for monopoly capital, and its repercussions are still felt in South Africa today (Mkhize, 2024). Sibanda (2021) finds that the catch-up policies like the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in South Africa to structural inequalities, poverty, and unemployment is scratch on the surface. He argues that EPWP policy 'remains a low-tier poverty trap'. This then shows the colonial-apartheid debt continues to transcend beyond democratic policies.

South Africa's liberation politics abandoned Ubuntu

Politics and government are the prominent determinants of the shape of social policy in any given country (Mkandawire, 2006). Social policy is sometimes referred to as the translation of the leading party's manifestos and ideologies. Importantly, politicians and government representatives serve as the primary bearers of social policies through implementation or policy development. Therefore, this section is not exclusive to one but includes all role players. To begin with, Mkandawire, on his transformative social policy project with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), strongly stressed the significance of ideology on Africa's new policy direction:

Ideologies are important to social policy because they determine the underlying motives and norms for several policy measures..... It is ideologies that determine the weights attached to various costs and benefits of social interventions, that underpin the moral entitlements of individuals to social support, and that shape the purpose of social policy to empower citizens or to pacify them (2006, 2).

Ramose amplifies Wamba-dia-Wamba's work, which calls for beyond elite politics in Africa, to articulate the politics and governance through Ubuntu. However, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) notes that in the process of resisting colonial-apartheid after having 'imbibed Christian faith and Victorian ideas of liberalism', early educated elites were not fully opposed to colonial modernity. This group of elites was largely members and the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC). Mafeje (2002: 61), in his work, lamented this elitism:

The difficulty in the African case is that, while we can point to the authoritarian character of African regimes, their venality, and to the kleptocratic tendencies of their bureaucracies, we are not able to find what might be called the guiding ideology of the emerging African elites since the Pan-Africanist movement. Our hypothesis is that it is a lack of this broader vision of society and the region, which has produced the degenerate political culture of 'ethnicity', clientelism, and petty dictators. This makes African political elites particularly uncompetitive in the global setting. It is the same, which accounts for the disintegration of the African states and the unparalleled decay of their economies.

Sithole (2020) argues that the elitist politics represented by Black elites maintain white supremacy and

apartheid diswelfares. Therefore, instead of '*Feta kgomo o tshware motho*', people's representatives focus on self-actualisation rather than devising and implementing social policies to bring equilibrium. Hence, Nzimakwe (2014) believes that Ubuntu is a crucial framework that can bring success to the policies only if the politics of elitism can be abandoned.

Ramose on politics through Ubuntu analyses how multi-party politics undermine Ubuntu in Africa. This is because Ubuntu of the view that '*go ya ka magore gase go Tswana, moleto re a rerisen*, which means that even if we may go our own way, whenever urgent and vital issues arise, we still have the obligation to come together and try to find a common solution to these issues'. However, the above has evidently not been the case in South Africa, where political parties prioritise their difference at the expense of oppressed people. Currently, ANC, after losing its 30-year parliamentary majority, found itself mobilising for the Government of Unity (GNU) with multiple parties. In a few months of its existence, GNU has had political differences that affected policy development. Ramose further argues that the multiparty system has undermined the principle of solidarity with party interests, nepotism, and corruption without sympathy. Louw (2010), through the lenses of Wiredu, calls for the government leaders to willingly compromise and voluntarily let go of the momentary minority. Mokhutso, Marumo, and Motswaledi (2023) have comprehensively shown how Ubuntu, given its rightful place, can be an antidote to the Service Delivery Crisis and Political Instability in South Africa. They argue that the lack of basic service delivery from municipalities is a lack of Ubuntu, to the extent that children die in trying to get water from the rivers without guilt. Lack of or false adherence to Ubuntu is evident in frequent protests for service delivery in South Africa. The response has been live ammunition and rubber bullets, as it has happened in the Marikana massacre when Black workers were protesting income inequalities. On the other hand, despite enshrining the constitutional right to education, some children still study under the trees due to a lack of adequate infrastructure. Sithole (2020) pronounces the above as a continued Black precarious existence that is 'militated against by the Black elite who are managers and guarantors of neo-apartheid with its infrastructure of white supremacy.' Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013: 76) has this to say:

Instead of delivering services to the people, African leaders engaged in deluding their own people by pretending to be in charge and inviting the hungry and angry population to partake of annual celebrations of flag independence that did not change their well-being.

CONCLUSION

This paper is founded on triadic concerns. First, showing the mutual exclusivity of Ubuntu with social policy in South Africa. This has been shown through how the rejection of Ubuntu by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1994, is also the rejection by policies. Philosophical maxims of Ubuntu, as we have learned through the work of Ramose, are not embodied by the policies. The South African social policy measures have failed to protect the dignity of the Black people. The majority of Black South Africans are still living in abject poverty, and President Cyril Ramaphosa also confirmed this quagmire. The poverty and unemployment interventions are just scratching the surface rather than addressing systemic causes. The social grants and employment opportunities, such as EPWP, do not match South Africa's economic conditions. Secondly, rejecting the use of Ubuntu as an appendage where government echelons attach Ubuntu to the policies verbally, rather than being seen in the policy documents. Ramose has also lamented this epistemological elimination of Ubuntu and later applied the water-washed version to justify certain activities, as it has been for the TRC. Ubuntu is rather reduced to a slogan without having significant binding on either law or policies. The third leg rejects this rejection and rather argues for the primacy of Ubuntu through visibility and being foundational to the public policies. It is important to note that policies are largely dependent on governance, and without politics and government embracing Ubuntu as an operative framework, the policies cannot embody Ubuntu. The continuing dominance of Euro-Western politics sustains the Manichean structure even in post-1994 beyond the "equality" democratic policies. If the epistemology-ontology or ontology-epistemology of a certain group of people is denied existence, it is not clear how that policy serves the concerned group. This epistemological suppression has proven to be sustaining the colonial-apartheid injustices. The discourse of this paper outlined compelling evidence for a shift in social policy and politics.

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