

EVALUATING *UBUNTU* IN RAMOSE AND ITS IMPLICATION FOR GOOD GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA

J. Chidozie Chukwuokolo, Ph.D, FRHD

Department of Philosophy, Religion & Peace Studies, Ebonyi State University
Abakaliki,

chukwuokolo.chidozie@ebsu.edu.ng

&

Victor Oghenechuko Jeko., Ph.D

Department of Philosophy, University of Benin.

&

Nnamdi Ambrose Nwankwo, Ph.D

Enugu State Polytechnic, Iwollo

DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.21646.33605

Abstract

The problem of massive socio-political and economic corruption in Nigeria bring to the foreground the need for moral rebirth or re-evaluation. The concept of Ubuntu in Ramose, as an African holistic humanism elicits the need for African brotherhood and the need for the enthronement the summum bonum of the people in Nigeria. Nigeria as a country has been bedeviled by a myriad of fundamental politico-developmental malaise that impede its development. Given the above, this paper proposes that the concept of Ubuntu if well natured and nurtured could serve as a springboard for responsible governance in Nigeria. It also adopts the analytical framework in discussing the contemporary and the politico-epistemological relevance of Ubuntu to the Nigerian democratic setting. The findings of this paper is that the concept of Ubuntu requires the need for democratic accountability, common engagement and effective leadership structure that is people-oriented. It is a reflection of African holistic humanism. This arises from the fact that Ubuntu is not based on the Western notion of individualism but fundamentally inspired by the principle of African communalism. Thus it concludes that the concept of Ubuntu presupposes an ontological, metaphysical and politico-epistemological imperative for African politics and development.

Keywords: African Politics, Good Governance, Nigerian development, Ontology, Ubuntu

Introduction

Mogobe Bernard Ramose is a South African philosopher. He remains one of the key thinkers in African political philosophy. He popularized *Ubuntu* philosophy as the springboard for African liberation. In his essay entitled "The Struggle for Reason in Africa", Ramose argues for the critical importance of opening up Western philosophy to the range of philosophical traditions originating and spreading beyond the borders of Europe. He furthers his view in another notable work his "*African Philosophy through Ubuntu*", published in 1999. The theoretical work discusses how the concepts of justice and law can be understood through *Ubuntu* philosophy, and demonstrates how colonization and racial discrimination negate the shared humanity of the settler and the settled. In 2013, Ramose edited a collection of essays entitled "Hegel's Twilight", which contrast Hegel's view of Africa as a dark continent outside of history. Ramose's work has been influenced by the political writing of South African non-conformist and founder of the pan-Africanist Congress, Robert Sobukwe. Ramose has contributed immensely to pan-Africanist thinking and political activism. Ramose popularized African philosophy

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

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

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

The fundamental question to ask in this theoretical discourse is: has Africa really been liberated from the shackles of poverty, ethnicity, economic deprivation, political instability, ignorance, illiteracy, under-development, ritual killings, secret cults, diseases, poor road networks, poor health care facilities and corruption? The answer is an emphatic 'No'. *Ubuntu* as a concept should be able to resolve some of these fundamental human challenges or epistemological quandaries and ethical quicksands facing the African continent. It should not just be a mere theoretical construct but it should be characterized by a practical demonstration for African liberation. *Ubuntu* as a concept has something to offer if well natured and nurtured. Politics is all about thought and action. What Africans need is “radical openmindedness, social change and social action. A lot still needs to be done in Africa. The concept of “*Ubuntu*” as a traditional African political culture reflects on the need for human emancipation and holistic humanism. It is quite at variance with the

Western-style of democracy, because its basic tenet depends on African communitarian principles. Ramose argues that many prominent African political philosophers have argued strongly in favour of the Western style democracy.¹ *Ubuntu* showcases the decolonization of Africa and African democratization of shared common objective, value system and the self-reliance of the African continent. It reflects on the material, practical and spiritual restoration of the African's right to life or existence.² Thus, the forcible impoverishment of Africa introduced a new law of economics that undermines the socio-political development and economic survival of the African peoples. This forcible impoverishment of Africa was caused by irresponsible or mystifying leadership structure due to massive corruption by African political leaders. The philosophical foundation of the struggle of the African person showcases the culture of human rights and shared common destiny.³ Worthy of note is that *Ubuntu* brings about the smooth foundation of African democracy and African brotherhood. This form of shared common destiny has surreptitiously eluded the people of Africa due to the evils of corruption in the African continent. Many African people are wallowing in abject poverty because some of their political leaders are busy stealing public funds for their own selfish aggrandizement. It is germane to note that corruption in Africa is antithetical to our humanity. Corruption in Africa is closely connected to lawlessness and social disorderliness. Many African countries such as Nigeria, Niger, Central African Republic, Somalia, Gambia, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Lybia, Egypt, and Cameroon have been characterized by various socio-political logjam and poor economic system. Many African countries are at the verge of collapse in terms of socio-political upheavals and poor economic reality. This has led to hunger, underdevelopment and poverty in the African continent. There is nothing like environmental sustainability and sustainable development among many African countries due to the evils of massive corruption and incomprehensible leadership structure.

Furthermore, the Ubuntu situation requires a leitmotif test for African democratization.⁴ The philosophy of Ubuntu is a clarion call for African objectivity and moral rebirth or value reorientation. The teachings of Ubuntu in Africa was to de-contextualize the Western epistemological paradigm to retain primacy and dominance in decolonized Africa.⁵ Ubuntu showcases the experience and refinement of an

establishment of the philosophical tradition of the African people. It reflects on their African humanness. The indigenous African people have not abrogated their humanness on philosophical grounds.⁶ Thus, the concept of *Ubuntu* advocates African oneness or African wholeness. It is deeply rooted in African philosophy or African holism or humanism. The concept of *Ubuntu* is not merely an abstract term rather it has practical demonstration. Like the concept of *Ujaama*, it tells on the African continent that it is not all *uhuru*. African philosophy should be more practical rather than being theoretical. For Ramose:

The philosophy of Ubuntu advocates the need for African wholeness. Ubuntu is the root of African philosophy. The being of an African in the universe is inseparably anchored on 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. Ubuntu reflects a 'family atmosphere', that is, a kind of philosophical affinity and kinship among and between the indigenous people of Africa. Ubuntu is simultaneously the theoretical foundation and the edifice of African philosophy. Just as the enviroing soil, the root, stem, branches and leaves together as a one-ness gives meaning to our understanding of a tree, so is it with Ubuntu.⁷

Broadly speaking, the foundation, the soil which it is anchored on, as well as the building must be one continuous wholeness rather than independent fragments of reality. Accordingly, African ontology and epistemology must be understood as two aspects of one and the same reality. The philosophy of *Ubuntu* demonstrates the meaning and import of existential condition of interrelationships or human interaction.⁸ *Ubuntu* is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. Placide Tempels started the whole idea of *Ubuntu* philosophy. The concept of *Ubuntu* as espoused by Ramose's work is deeply rooted in Placide Tempels' work "*Bantu Philosophy*". It is the indivisible oneness and wholeness of African ontology and African epistemology. *Ubuntu* means inter-subjective-recognition and relationships of the African peoples characterized by the need for a shared common objective or common destiny and sense of belongingness in African communitarian consensus. *Ubuntu* philosophy affirms one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and on that basis establishes human existential relations with others.⁹ It reflects the Sartrean being-for-itself and the being-for-others. However, these philosophical underpinnings of *Ubuntu* have great theoretical affinity with Levinas's and Aristotle's ethical metaphysics and political philosophies. It recognizes the need for hospitality and moral answerability or ethical responsibility. The philosophical concept of *Ubuntu* as a theoretical re-orientation is invariably against the fragmentation of being.¹⁰ Ramose argues that the logic of *Ubuntu* is distinctively tripartite in character. He asserts that it is the logic of and for the preservation of being as wholeness.¹¹ Ramose, however, further argues that:

*The rheomodic (triadic) character of Ubuntu underlies the widely recognized view that the African philosophic view of the universe is holistic. Africans are persistently in search of harmony in all spheres of life. The conclusion that Africans are persistently in search of harmony in all spheres of life is pertinently true of African thought. The concrete expression of African thought is the continual quest for rational consensus aimed to establish harmony. Harmony gives excellence and beauty to music.*¹²

Worthy of note is that *Ubuntu* is founded on the triadic relationship of being – the living, the dead and the yet-to-be-born. The concept of *Ubuntu* as the onto-triadic-structure of being reflects on the critical understanding of an established harmony. It reveals African spirituality and African metaphysics¹³ which in the words of Ramose is outlined in the following expression:

There is no metaphysically distinct entity that one can point to as African spirituality. African spirituality is concrete expression; it is the lived experience of the reality of the feeling of immanence and transcendence in the life of African people. African spirituality then is worldly, it is here and now in the sense that it is the manifestation of the subjects concrete expression engaged or cognizant of the reality of the experience of transcendence. But concrete subjective expression is neither uniform nor homogenous throughout and for the whole of Africa. Africa is a heterogeneous cultural entity although similarities are observable in the lives of the African people. To some extent there is an underlying unity (similarities) in the diversity of African culture.¹⁴

Nevertheless, *Ubuntu* as a comparative approach recognizes or takes seriously the history of the subjugation, colonization, and the acculturation of Africa as well as the subsequent restoration of sovereign independence (decolonization) and the ongoing tension between an African indigenous culture and Western European imperialism or culture. The reality

of the African personhood is characterized by an existential imperative of social relations and holistic humanism. The African personhood is more mystical, metaphysical, ontological, or is more existential rather than being theoretical. The human-individuality or the African philosophy of the human person is a necessary but not sufficient condition for being a person.¹⁵ *Ubuntu* recognizes the freedom of the human person. The human person from the African perspective, is deeply rooted in the principle of communitarian consensus. In other words, the African person is deeply communitarian because he does not live in total isolation from others. His freedom is realizable when he identifies himself with others in the democratic community. Human freedom was a living reality in the democratic political culture of traditional Africa. The same cannot be said about contemporary African politics in contrary to the Western tradition of democracy – a concept that is not an alien one. *Ubuntu* recognizes an emancipative political paradigm of intersubjective recognition.

Furthermore, this is precisely why the search for an emancipative politics is imperative to be obeyed by all African philosophers who wish to see the indigenous conquered people of Africa as liberated and dignified people within their continent and beyond.¹⁶ It is on this theoretical premise that Ramose explains that in politics the

ideal is not only in communication but also in tension with the real.¹⁷ Worthy of note is that *Ubuntu* reflects on the relational dimension of the common good. This relational dimension is basic towards critically understanding the contemporary relevance of the common good in existential situations of life in the African person.¹⁸ A philosophical analysis of *Ubuntu* represents a search for a collective identity of a whole people.¹⁹ *Ubuntu* reflects on true Africanness of the African as an individual and as a member of a societal group and continental expanse. Oyekan Owomoyela holds that a true African philosophy would aim at reconciling Africans to Africanness, not at advocating dissolution in a European cultural *mélange*.²⁰ *Ubuntu* aims at African normativity. This African normativity necessitates the pursuit of a better understanding of African phenomena in all their differences and specificities.²¹ *Ubuntu* thrives on consensus, mutuality, cooperation and accommodation rather than conflict of interests; for it reflects on a communalistic ideal.²² *Ubuntu* recognizes the unity in the diversity of African peoples and culture. This is why Owomoyela argues that Africa is diverse in nature, and so are its peoples and their cultures.

Moreover, it is also a dynamic continent that bears the marks of its passage through time. *Ubuntu* is aimed at the heart of the vaunted African principle of communalism, which is after all based on African kinship.²³ This summation, here, is therefore, a reconciliation between the philosophy of *Ubuntu* and that of *Ujaama*, which are both indigenous to the African continent and peoples. Although, some scholars have argued that Julius Nyerere's concept of *Ujaama* was more pragmatic or realistic than that of Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu*; but both concepts (*Ujaama* and *Ubuntu*) represent a form of African ideology. Ideology is simply a set of belief system that form the habits or behaviour of a group of people in society. On the other hand, ideology as a set of belief system is simply people-oriented and action-oriented. *Ubuntu* is the normative foundation of African philosophy – an anthropocentrism which is “community-based”, in so far as the African person is perceived as a member of a specific community, that is to say, his or her being-with-others is always the paramount one.²⁴ In the contemporary world, all human persons must come together to work out their destiny in common.²⁵ Those who prefer to remain in a private world of their own cannot of course be compelled to join the mainstream of humanity; but such a choice, would condemn them to permanent stagnation and deprive them of the

material benefits which all men need and to which all should have access.²⁶ African philosophy is made up of the basic principles that underlie the African values, behaviour, beliefs system and customs.²⁷

Worthy of note is that Ubuntu philosophy should be seen partly as a search for African ontology, African epistemology, African metaphysics, African ideology, a political strategy and a methodology that would work for Africans in their quest to reclaim their dignity and rightful place among other members of the human race.²⁸ The notion of being is articulated around the concept of Ubuntu.²⁹ Ubuntu is the indivisible one-ness and wholeness of ontology and epistemology. The idea of ontology is characterized by certain injustice or difficulty.³⁰ There appears to be a moment of arbitrary opposition introduced between diverse regions of being where diverse regions of being constitute themselves unduly to such a stumbling block that makes a holistic understanding difficult. The notion of 'Ubuntu' could be successfully weaved into African political thought through the process of real communication and holistic *cum* humanistic understanding amongst the African peoples.³¹ On the other hand, Asouzu affirms that:

There appears to be an arbitrary moment of dubiousness introduced into this type of African ontology, which upholds the silence of being, no matter how hard diverse regions of being try to communicate with each other. This hitch needs to be resolved to make the hearing linguistic slant of this ontology manageable. We cannot be speaking and not be speaking at the same time. If the ontology of Ubuntu should be understood as "being human (human-ness)" then it should first resolve its tendency to isolate itself and constitute not an obstacle for real communication to take place.³²

Broadly speaking, this type of difficulty might arise when ontology has no sufficient inbuilt mechanism that checks excesses arising from within its own theoretical formulation. For this reason there is the need to give a broader spectrum or a wider connotation, failing which there will be instituted an ontology that is at war with itself and with everyone; its lofty claims notwithstanding.³³ The goal set by an ontology of *Ubuntu* is very praiseworthy; however, it seems that the mechanisms put in place to attain these objectives need to be reexamined, re-defined or refined to permeate the community-based thinking and acting subject through and through. Such difficulties may arise when there is conscious effort to build ontology on worthy maxims.³⁴ *Ubuntu* reflects on the normative basis of African philosophy and the liberation of Africa. It reflects on emancipatory political agenda, democratic paradigm and the democratic tradition of the indigenous peoples of Africa. *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system, good governance and the liberation of African people re-emphasizes the return to African traditional society, which is antithetical to the Western system of society. This antithetical relationship between the African traditional society and the Western culture presupposed an alien culture injected into the indigenous African traditional society. This alien culture has become part and parcel of the African politico-existential experience.³⁵ The emancipative epistemological paradigm of *Ubuntu* subscribes to a specific concept of the human being and proceeds on that basis to organize inter-human moral, political and existential relationships, as well as relations between humans and other nonhuman entities in the universe.³⁶ Broadly speaking, for Ramose:

Ubuntu reflects the basis for the preservation or retrieval of African tradition. Ubuntu assumes the contemporary significance of practical realism. However, it has been emphasized that the alien European culture has become an African way of

life in the sense that most Post-colonial sovereign independent African states have finally accepted the view that the Western style democracy, symbolized by the existence of plural-political parties, is the best answer to the problem of political organization in Africa. Ubuntu as the basis of the liberation of Africa reflects the sufficient condition for the political emancipation of Africa. This line of argument, presupposes an inauthentic expression of African political culture precisely because, it is an imposition which continues to resist dialogue with traditional African political culture.³⁷

A point at prominent relief here is that *Ubuntu* reflects the basis of an indigenous democratic politics in Africa. *Ubuntu* emphasizes the enunciation of African politics and the emancipation of Africa. Ramose argues that traditional African political culture is at the very minimum, unlikely to make any meaningful contribution to the quest for a fundamental solution to the political problems of the African continent. Ramose argues further that both Gyekye and Wamba are engaged in the refutation of this normative assumption by showing that traditional African political culture can still speak authoritatively on finding an emancipative paradigm of African solution to African political problems.³⁸ *Ubuntu* emphasizes the philosophical basis and the establishment of humane relationship with other human beings. *Ubuntu* is logically understood as being human and having a humane (respectful and polite) attitude towards other human beings, which constitutes the central meaning of African wholeness.

Nonetheless, it presupposes the fact that for a human being to be truly human, it must be in the African context of actual relationships with other human beings in the indigenous African traditional society. The relational context always conceals and reveals the potentialities of the individual human being.³⁹ Thus, the concealed potentialities become revealed whenever they are actualized in the practical sphere of human interrelationships. Ubuntu enunciates the significant elements of traditional African political culture of oneness and the expression of the principle of human equality, human rights, moral reciprocity and communitarian consensus. The pivotal sphere of human relations is predicated on the principle of social solidarity and politico-existential relations. This principle of social solidarity and politico-existential relations reveals the infinite request for rational or communitarian consensus in traditional African political culture.⁴⁰ However, the concept of Ubuntu as championed by Ramose in his book, "African Philosophy through Ubuntu" is the normative basis of traditional African political culture that was communally-based and geared towards oneness, rather than division or fragmentation. Ubuntu emphasizes the unrelenting quest for African oneness. Ramose further posits that the reincarnation of the indigenous African traditional principle of communicative solidarity in contemporary African politics can be a significant step towards the emancipation of the indigenous people of Africa.⁴¹ Ramose's concept of Ubuntu is a theoretical construct of a mode of politics responsive to the political problems of contemporary Africa.⁴² According to Ramose, from the African point of view, life is an incessant drift and egress of forces and in this process, the individual is necessarily placed in a position to receive from others and to give to them. The conceptual analysis of Ubuntu guarantees the normative possibility of universal moral order and radical openness to being.⁴³ Ubuntu reflects on the mutual understanding and care for one another as human beings. It precedes concern for the accumulation of wealth as well as an end in itself.⁴⁴ Ramose's concept of Ubuntu reflects on the ethical principle of sharing as the regulative element of African social organization. Ubuntu as the ethical and normative principle of sharing *vis-a-vis* the regulative element of social organization is animated by the contextualization of African communalism.

Furthermore, communalism is a philosophy that is given institutional framework and expression in the social structures of African traditional societies. The principle of communicative solidarity, the principle of sharing has also been undermined in contemporary multi-party politics in Africa. It is essential to underline the fact that this communitarian principle covers a broader spectrum and the whole range of human politico-existential relations.⁴⁵ Ramose succinctly observes that now that the principle of communitarian solidarity is undermined in contemporary multi-party politics in Africa, nepotism, corruption and lack of sympathy for the other have become widespread in African politics. African politics has been bedeviled by ethno-religious crises, Islamic fundamentalism caused by terrorism and terror, greed, godfatherism, political gangsterism, electoral malpractices such as vote buying and vote selling, weak government institutions, massive corruption, human sufferings and oppressive governments in Africa. For Ramose, the sufferings and oppressions characterized by this existential conditions are well known in African continent. In order to reverse and correct this politico-existential tension, it is crucial to re-incorporate the ethical principle of sharing in the ideological construct of an emancipative mode of politics in contemporary Africa. Good governance is a fundamental element of traditional African culture. Human freedom was a living reality in the democratic political culture of traditional Africa.⁴⁶ *Ubuntu* assumes the true liberation of Africa and the traditional principles of sharing; oneness, consensus, and radical openness are guided by the emancipative epistemological paradigm of *Ubuntu* as the fundamental element of traditional African political culture.

The Concepts of *Ubuntu* and Good Leadership Structure

Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* could serve as an ideological template for African democracy. His concept of *Ubuntu* envisages the need for good governance or deomocratic accountability for the peoples of Africa. The African man is not only emotional but perceptive. He believes in African brotherhood. The concept of *Ubuntu* could serve as a veritable platform for effective leadership and the notion of the common good. It is germane to note that leadership in Nigeria is an abysmal failure. Leadership in contemporary Nigerian society has been identified with manipulative tendencies and the evils of corruption. Corruption in Nigeria is endemic and it is invariably against our humanity. Corruption is not only against our humanity but it is antithetical to effective leadership structure and sustainable development. African leaders ought to imbibe the spirit of *Ubuntu* as a springboard for the common good of the people. It is quite unfortunate that the concept of the common good has eluded the people of Nigeria due to the evils of corruption and manipulative system of democratic governance. The concept of *Ubuntu* seems to be transnational, cosmopolitan and international. Worthy of note is that the concepts of *Ubuntu*, leadership and good governance are interrelated. Leadership is fundamentally inspired by the concept of *Ubuntu* and the concepts of *Ubuntu*, leadership and good governance are concepts that ought to be tilted towards the public good of the people. Thus, the sort of leadership and good governance enunciated by the ubuntu principles would never enthrone such malaise that we have enumerated earlier. This is because the ubuntu principle of familyhood would never allow one to impoverish his family members. This is the sort of leadership and governance we are proposing as ubuntu oriented.

Evaluative Appraisal

Having critically examined Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system and good governance, it is, therefore, germane to note that his theoretical reconstruction has both strengths and weaknesses. One of the strengths of his

emancipative political paradigm is that his integrative philosophy is built on African culture, custom and tradition. His African political philosophy showcases holistic African humanism and the need for radical openness. One of the weaknesses in his philosophy is that it has not been able to grapple with the present complexities of our contemporary times. His conceptualization and contextualization of *Ubuntu* philosophy advocates the need for national integration and the spirit of African brotherhood. The concept of *Ubuntu* as postulated by Ramose advocates the need for human emancipation, equality of opportunities, national paradigm, sustainable development and the beneficial scheme of social cooperation. It guarantees the normative assumption of peaceful coexistence or social relationship, social coordination, harmonious relationships or complementation, a sense of goodwill and purity of intention or honesty of purpose in African societies. For Asouzu:

The reality of the goodwill, as a bulwark against self interest, must not be postulated only as a theoretical necessity but must be seen as the consequence of any efforts towards liberating the ego from the limitations of its own laws. It is in this way, that the principle of harmonious complementation finds its consummation and completion as a principle progressive transformation. When now in the principle of harmonious complementation one says that anything that exists serves as a missing link of reality, this is an attempt of the mind to seek the unity linking being in the most harmonious complementary manner, their limitations notwithstanding and indeed towards a total synthesis in the one eternal and true absolute reality that gives all things their being and ultimate joy. It is this joy that the principle of progressive transformation demands.⁴⁷

In the light of the above, Asouzu and Ramose shared many things in common. There is a strong theoretical affinity between Asouzu's concept of *Ibuanidanda* philosophy and Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu*. Both concepts represent the need for African harmonious relationships which is deeply community-based. Asouzu's and Ramose's theoretical reconstruction has pedagogic implications in African societies. Of prominent relief is that Nigeria as a country has a lot to learn from Ramose's *Ubuntu* philosophy because it could serve as a veritable platform for effective or visionary leadership structure. For Denis Venter:

Leadership is a political and relational concept involving the rulers and the ruled. Politics in a very real sense is about leadership, and, conversely speaking, leadership is a critical dimension of everyday political life. Leaders must have the charisma to provide their people with a national vision and purpose- and the ability to galvanise their efforts towards, and to sustain their enthusiasm in, the pursuit of those objectives. Leadership is essential in all human activity: social, economic and political. The general perception is that Africa needs strong, dedicated and self-confident leaders who must be creators of great ideas, command the loyalty of their people, and be totally committed to the development of their countries. Skillful, visionary and capable leadership is the key to the reforms Africa needs and the policy actions that as required for the development of the continent; a true leader must have the courage and ability to communicate reality to his followers.⁴⁸

In the light of the above, the Nigerian leadership structure is in a sorry state. There is a disconnection between leadership and followership in contemporary Nigerian society. It is germane to note that corruption reigns supreme in Nigeria. Many leaders and followers are corrupt. Corruption flows in the veins of many Nigerians. Many Nigerians see corruption

as a sign of smartness. When you are not corrupt in Nigeria you are seen as a failure. Corruption has become a norm in contemporary Nigerian society. Nigerians celebrate political thieves even when it becomes glaring that these thieves have looted the national treasury for their own selfish aggrandizement. Corruption has become a cankerworm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of the Nigerian society. Many Nigerian leaders have become self-centred, corrupt and manipulative whenever they are given political positions. They are fond of looting the national treasury at the detriment of the Nigerian populace. Nigeria as a country has become a laughing stock in the international community due to the evils of massive corruption and a myriad of other social vices that have become prevalent within the Nigerian government. The Nigerian government has become an oppressive government and this has led to the stifling of the fundamental rights of the Nigerian peoples. The courts that supposed to be the last resort of the Nigerian peoples have become very corrupt and manipulative. There is no longer independence of the judiciary in the Nigerian government. This is a shame and it has placed the Nigerian government as a colossal failure in our contemporary times. The Nigerian State could no longer be regarded as a welfare state due to its oppressive nature of government. The Nigerian people are subjected to all kinds of dehumanization. Many Nigerians are currently experiencing economic hardship and abject poverty. Poverty has become very endemic in our contemporary times due to bad leadership structure. Poverty has reduced the humanity of Nigerians due to oppressive government. The Nigerian government is not a normative government due to certain inherent contradictions that have characterized the Nigerian State. These inherent contradictions are poverty and hunger, sicknesses and diseases, ethno- religious crises, inter-tribal wars, farmers-herders clashes, terrorism and terror caused by Islamic fundamentalism, electoral malpractices, massive political and economic corruption, high inflation, police brutality, bad road network, poor educational system, bad democratic governance, poor health care system and poor power supply. Worthy of note is that the magnitude of massive corruption in Nigeria has led to the emergence of weak government institutions. The judiciary, the police, the mass media and other institutions are all at the mercy of the Nigerian government. In other words, these institutions of government have been stifled by some tyrannical laws that are at variance with the objectives of these establishments. The courts and the mass media, for instance, are not objective enough in their legal verdicts and reportage due to the whims and caprices of the Nigerian government. They tend to bend their knees to the tyrannical or dictatorial tendencies of the Nigerian government. The Nigerian State has become an instrument of oppression and economic subjugation of the people. The Nigerian government has used poverty as an instrument or a ploy to perpetually enslave the Nigerian peoples. This has made the people to easily fall prey to the evils of bribery and corruption during electoral promises and campaigns in Nigeria.

Ramose's *Ubuntu* philosophy demonstrates the critical importance of African value systems and moral re-evaluation of the African peoples. It advocates the ontology and the epistemology of the common good as “a spiritual metaphor” in Africa's quest for leadership responsibility and democratic accountability. It is worthy to note that the theoretical proposition and the conceptual clarification of *Ubuntu* could bring about liberal-humanist ideal of African personhood.⁴⁹ Ramose's *Ubuntu* philosophy advocates African personhood, African familyhood and African value system. The African value systems include respect for human life, respect for custom, culture and tradition, the comprehensive conception of the good, harmonious relationships, we-consciousness, sense of belongingness, rational/communitarian consensus, and a sense of shared common destiny in African society.

Worthy of note is that Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* elicits the need for the decolonization of Africa. It demands the clarion call for the rationalization of African society. It represents African worldview. However, he advocates the struggle for reason in Africa. His theoretical reconstruction is built on the solid bedrock of the social ethos of African communities and societies. His work upholds the entire process of the decolonization of Africa through his conceptual clarification of *Ubuntu*. Decolonization has neither abolished nor diminished the will to dominate on the part of the condescender and the will to dominate currently manifests itself in the name of “democratization”, “globalization” and “human rights”.⁵⁰ The concept of *Ubuntu* is just like every other African ideological constructs such as Ibunya, Negritude, Ujaama, Consciencism, and Neo-welfarism. These ideological constructs or theoretical templates were seen as the most viable tools and veritable platforms for the decolonization of Africa. It stipulates the need for African freedom. Dukor asserts that:

Freedom is an ideal and dream of individuals, groups, societies, and nations, no matter how primitive they are. It is a metaphysical term translatable into concrete historical reality. It is arguably a free and liberal gift from nature to man for his self-creative process, and which enhances and nurtures distinctiveness, creativity and originality in man's intellectual, aesthetic and material undertakings. Freedom, when perscoped within African context is a philosophical problem, and the fact that it is so presupposes her 'unfreedom'.⁵¹

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

Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes the notion of African value system; and values showcase the critical importance of “the idea of inherent normativity”.⁵² Ramose's views on *Ubuntu* philosophy postulates a comprehensive, reflective account of moral reasoning and the social ethos of African personhood.⁵³ Ramose's philosophy of *Ubuntu* showcases the evaluative, the normative and the practical idea of the comprehensive conception of the good life in African society. The *Ubuntu* philosophy as postulated by Ramose offers normative governance of the collective will of the African people. Broadly speaking, *Ubuntu* philosophy brings to the foreground motivational internalism of African society; the demands of morality are necessarily and overridingly motivating.⁵⁴ Ramose's African political thought resonates an emancipative political paradigm and democratic realism or liberalism; and liberalism depends on a moral background culture in a society; it demands duty of self-restraint required of citizens in a practically liberal society.⁵⁵ However, the concept of *Ubuntu* ought to be given an accrued political currency and should be used as a tool for social inclusion in Africa.⁵⁶ Ramose has left his footprints in the sand of time

through his theoretical reconstruction of *Ubuntu*. He remains one of the prominent African philosophers just like Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Kwasi Wiredu, Leopold Senghor, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Sekou Toure, Cheikh Anta Diop, Aime Cesaire, Frantz Fanon, Kenneth Kaunda, Olusegun Oladipo, Paul Hontoundji and Odera Oruka.

It is germane to note that Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* envisages the need for African holism or African humanism. It is invariably African socialism. The common denominator of all proponents of African socialists is this: African socialism must express the African experience.⁵⁷ Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* is another form of African ideology; and an ideology is essentially a value system in theory and in practice.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the concept of *Ubuntu* reveals the flowering of humanist and ethical thinking in Africa.⁵⁹ The concept of *Ubuntu* could be understood as practical guides to Africa's quest for normative governance.⁶⁰ Venter in consonance with Thomas, asserts that governance has strong normative overtones: it is the practice of good government, and it remains, essentially, a fragile process that depends on the restraint of the ruler and the tolerance of the ruled.⁶¹ The normative outcomes of governance calls for liberalization and democratization: development will take place only if political leaders abandon their authoritarian practices. Governance, then, is also the conscious management of natural resources or regime structures with a view to enhancing the democratic legitimacy of the public realm.⁶² Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system and normative governance envisages the need for an established harmony; lived experience and ethical immediacy; African unity in their diversities and it assumes the contemporary significance of the practicalization of democratic realism and the decolonization of the African continent. Africa is a paradox; as in other regions of the world, the base of African society is the family. A critical element in promoting and sustaining development in Africa is to keep African families intact. Achieving this will involve what we might call the "reintroduction" of the African man to his family.⁶³ It is germane to note that Ramose's *Ubuntu* philosophy demonstrates that the liberation of Africans from foreign identity and the regaining of African identity can only be done by Africans themselves. Only Africans can save themselves. This is in finding oneself in oneself and not finding oneself in someone else.⁶⁴ However, Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* philosophy is a clear pointer to the call for African familyhood which is communally-based. African pedagogic community has become a form of internal colonialism in our contemporary times; and internal colonialism as the highest form of imperialism is however more subliminal in Nigeria.⁶⁵ Dukor succinctly observes that:

Nigeria's own unique case is that of a structure well laid and protected jealously by the former colonial masters for sustaining the dependence of the component units or nationalities through the empowerment of the hegemonist group holding the awful and all powerful state craft: an internal colonialism that hardly brooks no disintegration or true democracy. The failure of all forms of democracy ranging from communism, socialism, West minister to Presednetial system in Africa and low conception of identity and citizenship is nothing but one of the vestiges of colonialism as an *agent provocateur* aiding and abetting internal colonialism. It could to a large extent be correct to still characterize Africa as a colonial society, the political independent status of the states notwithstanding.⁶⁶

Ramose's *Ubuntu* philosophy could be described as African family hood or theistic humanism.⁶⁷ Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* does not give room for egocentric calculation or the pseudo-interest of the individual human person in African society.

Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* discloses the epistemic, metaphysical, ontological, and ethical significance of the place of Africa in the world. For Levinas, then, and many other thinkers, questions of place and dwelling are central concerns of ethics and political philosophy.⁶⁸ It has been asserted that philosophers have been devoted to understanding our emplaced condition, and how this situatedness influences the production of philosophical inquiry.⁶⁹ However, African communalism is deeply rooted in the normative assumption of harmonious situatedness.⁷⁰ African society is defined by the community based pedagogies of our African politico-existential situations. Ramose's philosophy stipulates that the aim of the Nigerian State is to educate the citizens into a community based on moral principles; and the inordinate ambition and unwillingness to make necessary sacrifices for the unity of the country, crass ignorant and inexperienced leadership, corruption, and greed and inability to learn from history and turn a new leaf are some of the ills of the African elites and these are responsible for our inability to govern ourselves.⁷¹ Ramose's concept of *Ubuntu* is not just another form of African ideology but African existentialism or "theistic-holistic- humanism" in African society.

Concluding Considerations

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

At this stage we must state that many Nigerian leaders are corrupt and that they do not understand the ethics of governance and leadership. Nigeria as a country have been bedeviled by a myriad of fundamental problems such as weak institutions of government, corruption, lack of ethno-religious tolerance, electoral malpractices, lack of independence of the judiciary, police brutality, abuse of human rights, lack of respect for human dignity, poor welfare of the people, political godfatherism and gangsterism, ethnic chauvinism, lack of cultural integration, lack of environmental sustainability, poor economic development, poor value-system, get- rich- quick- syndrome, lack of hardwork, attitudinal problem, poor leadership structure, poor road networks, poor communication system, poor educational system, poor water supply, epilectic power supply, high inflation, poor health care system, brain drain syndrome and the problem of crisis of identity. The concept of *Ubuntu* if well natured and nurtured could serve as a springboard for responsible governance in Nigeria. This paper argues that the contemporary and the politico-epistemological relevance of *Ubuntu* envisages the need for democratic accountability and leadership responsibility in Nigerian society. The concept of *Ubuntu* requires the need for African ideology and ideology is people- oriented or action-oriented. The concept of *Ubuntu* is communally-based; and it is not based on the Western notion of individualism but it is fundamentally inspired by the principle of African holistic humanism or African communalism. The concept of *Ubuntu* presupposes an epistemological imperative and national paradigm for African politics. The advantage of this is that it is homegrown and easily adaptable for good governance and leadership.

Our advocacy of this stems from the fact that the concept of *Ubuntu* as the basis of African philosophy, value system and good governance has not been truly practiced in Africa just like Julius Nyerere's *Ujaama* that did not see the light of the day in Tanzania, but, it remains the true basis of African liberation and the practicalization of African democracy or African communalism. This lack of good democratic governance has led to the sorry state of human degradation, human sufferings, and economic subjugation in Nigeria. Secondly, this has led to the mass exodus of Africans out of the continent of Africa seeking greener pastures overseas. This mass exodus of Africans from the shores of Africa has led to the problem of brain drain syndrome.

Endnotes

1. Ramose., Mogobe., (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare, Zimbabwe: Mond Books, p.1
2. *Ibid.*, p.3
3. *Ibid.*, pp.3-4
4. *Ibid.*, p.5
5. Ramose., Mogobe., (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, p.29
6. *Ibid.*, p.35
7. *Ibid.*, p.40
8. *Ibid.*, p.41
9. Ramose., Mogobe., (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, p.43
10. *Ibid.* pp.45-46
11. *Ibid.*, p.46
12. *Ibid.*, p.48
13. *Ibid.*, p.50
14. Ramose., Mogobe., (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, p.63
15. *Ibid.*, p.65
16. *Ibid.*, p.116
17. *Ibid.*, p.97
18. Asouzu., Innocent., (2004), *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and beyond African Philosophy*, Calabar: University of Calabar Press, p.382
19. Omi., Ruch., and Anyanwu., C., (1984), *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, Rome: Catholic Book Agency; Officium Libri Catholici, p.20
20. Owomoyela., Oyekan, (1996), *The African Difference: Discourses on Africanity and the Relativity of Cultures*, South Africa: Witwatersrand University Press, p.37
21. *Ibid.*, p.95
22. *Ibid.*, p.117
23. *Ibid.*, p.167
24. *Ibid.*, p.178
25. Donohue., John., (1994), *New Wine and Old Bottles: A Study of the Concepts of Traditional Africa and of Their Continuing Influence Today*, Sweden: Reprocentralen HSC, Uppsala University Press, p.4
26. *Ibid.*, pp.4-5
27. Odhiambo., Ochieng., (1995), *African Philosophy: An Introduction*, Nairobi: Consolata Institute of Philosophy, p.42
28. Imbo., Samuel., (1998), *An Introduction to African Philosophy*, p.14
29. Asuozu., Innocent., (2007), *Ibuanyadanda: New Complementary Ontology: Beyond World-Immanentism, Ethnocentric Reduction and impositions*, Zurich: LITVERLAG GmbH & Co. KG Wien, p.206

30. *Ibid.*, p.207
31. *Ibid.*, p.209
32. *Ibid.*, pp.209-210
33. *Ibid.* p.208
34. *Ibid.*, p.209
35. Ramose., Mogobe, (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, p.108
36. *Ibid.*, p.106
37. *Ibid.*, pp.106-107
38. *Ibid.*, p. 111
39. *Ibid.*, pp.111-112
40. *Ibid.*, p.112-113
41. *Ibid.*, p.113
42. Ramose., Mogobe.,(2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, p.115
43. *Ibid.*, pp.114
44. *Ibid.*, pp.114-115
45. *Ibid.*, pp.117-118
46. *Ibid.*, p.117
47. Asouzu., Innocent., (2003), *Effective Leadership and the Ambivalence of Human Interest: The Nigerian Paradox in a Complementary Perspective*, Calabar: University of Calabar Press, p.155
48. Venter., Denis., (2004), "Democracy, Good Governance: What Prospects for African Renaissance" in JObi Oguejiofor (Ed.), *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Government in Africa*, Enugu: Delta Publication Nigeria Limited, p.258
49. Adorno, quoted Horowitz, A. (2002), "By a Hair's Breath: Critique, Transcendence and the Ethical" in Adorno and Levinas, *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28 (2), pp.213
50. Ramose., Mogobe., (2002), *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, pp.1-2
51. Dukor., Maduabuchi., (2009), *African Freedom: The Freedom of Philosophy*, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, p.36
52. Thomas., Alan., (2006), *Value and Context: The Nature of Moral and Political Knowledge*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.54
53. *Ibid.*, p.53
54. *Ibid.*, p.54
55. *Ibid.*, p.295
56. Howie., Gillian., (2009), *Teaching Philosophy in Context: Or Knowledge Does Not Keep Any Better Than Fishin* Andrea Kenkmann (Ed.) *Teaching Philosophy*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, pp.5-6
57. Omi., Ruch., and Anyanwu., K. C., (1984), *African Philosophy: An Introduction to the Main Philosophical Trends in Contemporary Africa*, 58.
58. *Ibid.*, p.342
59. Oguejiofor., Obi., (2001), *Philosophy and African Predicament*, Ibadan: Hope Publication (Nigeria) Limited, p.87
60. Thomas., Alan., (2006), *Value and Context: The Nature of Moral and Political Knowledge*, pp.294-295
61. Venter., Denis., (2004), *Democracy, Good Governance: What Prospects for African Renaissance* in J Obi Oguejiofor (Ed.), *Philosophy, Democracy and Responsible Government in Africa*, p.234
62. *Ibid.*, p.235
63. Maathai., Wangari., (2009), *The Challenge for Africa: A New Vision*, London: Heinemann Books Limited, pp.274-275.

64. Dukor., Maduabuchi., (2009), *African Freedom: The Freedom of Philosophy*.316
65. Ibid., p.323
66. Ibid., pp.323-324
67. Ibid., p.325
68. Edelglass., William., (2002), “Philosophy and Place-Based Pedagogies” in Andrea Kenkmann (Ed.), *Teaching Philosophy*, London and New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, pp.74-75
69. Ibid., p.74
70. Bloom., Alan., (1986), “Rousseau on the Equality of the Sexes” in Frank S. Lucash (Ed.), *Justice and Equality Here and Now*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p.71
71. Aigbobion., J.A., and Idjakpo., O.G., (2010), Communitarian Consensus: A New Social Philosophy of Good Governance for Africa, *Journal of the Department of Philosophy*, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, Vol.2, No.2. Pp.5-6