The relationship between spirituality and culture in Africa:

A Christian ethical perspective

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Thabiso Given Thoka

T.G Thoka

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Summary

This study will investigate the relationship between spirituality and culture using a Christian ethical perspective, specifically, Hauerwas' universal ethics. The study intends to examine the nature of the relationship between both spirituality and culture and evaluate if there's an intersection that exists and if so, what it means. The context under which the two phenomena will be analysed will mainly be an African context. The context itself will be examined which means that the study will look into what is African and what is Africa.

Key Terms

Spirituality – The entire life experience of an individual that is expressed in a variety of ways outside or within organised religion.

Culture – The whole way of life of a people.

Religion – Expressed way of life of an individual or group of people through organised belief in something bigger.

African Spirituality – The entire life experience of an individual expressed within an African context.

African traditional religion – Organised expression of spirituality in an African context.

Ubuntu – The African thought principle of community-based moral formation.

Christian ethics – Varied system of ethics that emphasizes morality.

Universal ethics – A line of ethical thought that believes in a set of ethics that governs everyone.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 4: CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND HAUERWAS' PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 5: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE AND THE ROLE OF HAUERWAS' PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND COMMUNITY

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Growing up in a black household on the continent of Africa, I have experienced how the topic of spirituality has always been closely linked to culture. In my experience, Africa as a continent is rich in both culture and spirituality, and usually when a discussion about culture took place, the topic of spirituality followed closely after. So, it seemed as though the two were not separate but were one in some way and therefore the way these two connected, was worth exploring further.

When I was younger, I never thought that much about the two terms but upon further exposure to them I began to see the need for them to be explored. In Sepedi (Northern Sotho), which happens to be the culture with which I identify, the word for culture is *setso* and I heard this a lot. If my family had to have a ceremony for the ancestors and I asked why, the answer would be*, "Ke setso sa rena"* which means "It's our culture". Now, the ceremony and the ritual acts that are done have a spiritual implication. A ceremony for the ancestors, for example, is either for thanksgiving or intervention.

So, culture in this regard is not only the clothes, celebrations, art, and similar features, but it is also the spirituality that is practiced. Although culture as a notion and phenomenon is complex, spirituality seems just as complicated. The implications of both are immense to an African community that value both. That there is a connotation between the two cannot be denied, particularly in an African context. The way they intersect, requires further investigation.

In this study, the phenomena of spirituality and culture will be examined to determine the way they intersect (or influence one another) and the way this intersection has an impact on the African context. This investigation will look at the discussion of

spirituality and culture through looking at the roles of culture. Culture is broadly conceived as all that individuals learn from others that endures to generate customs and traditions" (Whiten *et al.* 2011:938) In this sense, culture is learned from others, it is what is learned within a group or community and thereafter formulates customs and traditions. Spirituality refers to what Kalilombe (1994) describes as, "The relationship between human beings and the invisible, since such a relationship derives from a particular vision of the world, and in its turn affects the way of relating to self, to other people, and the universe as a whole." (Kalilombe, 1994:115).

I refer to both culture and spirituality in this study as phenomena. McWilliams (2021) uncovers that the English word phenomenon is derived from the ancient Greek word *"phainomenon"* which is the noun form of the verb *"phainesthai"*, "o appear" itself in turn the passive form of *"phainein"* meaning *"to show".* This then means that, we may understand a phenomenon as that which shows itself. A phenomenon is dependent on an observer as it's not about the thing itself but about what can be observed about the thing. In this study, both culture and spirituality will be considered and observed in this way.

Kalilombe's understanding of spirituality relates to what Wakefield describes as spirituality, namely, "those attitudes, beliefs, and practices which animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards the super-sensible realities" (Wakefield, 1983:549). The two different phenomena manifest in different contexts and as such the way they intersect will different. This study will focus on an African context. This investigation about spirituality and culture in an African context is conducted from the perspective of Christian ethics, which in this study entails a consideration of the ethical character of these two phenomena. The purpose is to be able to see what the two phenomena give birth to and see the presence of any intersection with Christian ethics.

In investigating the African context, the nature and scope of African ethics will be part of the investigation of this study, as it relates to spirituality and culture. This is discussing the values and understandings of morality that contribute to the African context. One of the terms that will be looked into which relates and speaks to a sense of community, which is a common theme when looking into African thought, is

the term *ubuntu*. The term will be discussed as an African ethic. What does this mean and what are its implications and requirements.

African spirituality and culture will be discussed to grasp the context of Africa for this study. Christian ethics will be discussed and then related to African ethics. We will also examine Hauerwas' perspective on universal ethics as his perspective can contribute to the discussion of moral formation by the community in relation to African ethics. The relationship that exists within the different themes as the discussion continues is the intention and to eventually analyse the implications that are present.

1.2 Overview of existing literature

This study will look at spirituality as a lived experience more than a theological one. We will follow this frame of reference, because matters of African spirituality are predominantly based on lived experience and not on theological or even heavy theoretical orientation. Therefore, for the purposes of this study I will accommodate African spirituality.

The lived spiritual experience is very important in African spirituality. It is the lived experience that informs a lot of the cultures and traditions in Africa. Waaijman (2006:4) points out that within the field of experience there are two newer approaches, the psychological and the socio-cultural approach. Both approaches work with a factor of people first. The approach that he uses is a phenomenological one that goes from the phenomenon to the deeper structure of this phenomenon and from that deeper structure back to the phenomenon (Waaijman, 2006:5).

Exploring the phenomenological approach requires the breakdown of the phenomenon. He notes that the three basic forms that can be distinguished in spirituality (Waaijman, 2006:5). Firstly, the well-established schools of spirituality. Secondly, primordial spiritualities (lay spirituality or indigenous spirituality, etc.) and lastly the counter-movements. Schools of spirituality are defined as historical syntheses that show a diversity of forms.

> We define a school of spirituality as a spiritual way that derives from a Source-experience around which an inner circle of pupils takes shape which is situated within the socio-cultural context in a specific way and opens a specific perspective on the future; a second-generation structures all this into an organic whole, by means of which a number of people can share in the Source-experience.

(Waaijman, 2006:5)

The school of spirituality according to the definition by Waaijman needs a founding experience. An experience of transformation and of encountering God. The definition also speaks to the need for a community to live out the spirituality so that it lives on. The circumstances of the school of spirituality, the contexts of its birth, contribute to the form of spirituality. The school also needs values and a value system. One of the most important parts is that the school also needs a generation to pass it on to keep it going.

Primordial spirituality is a form of spirituality that does not belong to the schools. In this form of spirituality, there are sub-forms such as everyday spirituality (lay spirituality), indigenous spiritualities, and forms of secular spirituality. These forms of spirituality are identified as being closely linked to life as it is directly lived and experienced.

The last of the structure of the phenomena that is spirituality to be looked at is counter-spirituality. "Counter-movements in spirituality are found outside the sphere of power structures and established relations: outside of their concepts, their spatial orders, their time period, their hierarchies, their great narratives. But they do not let themselves be locked up in this "outside" state." (Waaijman, 2006:10). A countermovement is there to go against an existing "power configuration".

In the evaluation of the forms of spirituality, there seems to be a "relational process" between God and persons. Their emphasis falls on the divine pole at one moment and in the next moment, it falls on the human pole. The divine pole is awesome, the Holy, the Infinite One, and the human pole is the application, dedication, and

awakening (Waaijman, 2006:13). There is a process where the two poles interlock with one another, where the divine and humanity are connected. We then see the presence of the connection in the transformation of humanity, in the substance of human existence.

Spirituality is a complex phenomenon that has layers and forms that carry sub-forms. It is a relational process where there is a mutual exchange between God and humanity. The different forms carry a different way of bridging the gap between the divine and humanity. In this paper, the focus will be on lived spirituality more than the theoretical area. The focus will look at elements of both the school of spiritualities and primordial spiritualities. This is because of the nature of African spirituality and culture as well as African religion which we will briefly evaluate for the purposes of the tie with African spirituality.

An overview of existing literature reveals that the relationship between African spirituality and culture is important. According to Dube (2012:109) "African spirituality is embedded in the living traditions and cultures of the African people". This statement emphasizes the importance of spirituality in African tradition and culture. It reflects that spirituality, culture, and traditions often find themselves in a constant working relationship in most African communities.

Olupona (2000: xv-xxxvi) states how African spirituality has been affected by slavery and colonialism. He gives prominence to the idea that African spirituality must be studied and investigated before its contact with the rest of the world. "African peoples today, especially the elders, look at their classical religious heritage with a nostalgia for a paradise lost. In the beginning, they often argue, was a deeply religious and spiritual heritage vouchsafed in myths, rituals, and symbols. But as a result of Africa's contact with the outside world, especially under very ignominious circumstances-exploration, slave trade, and colonialism-significant aspects of these traditions were lost or modified to conform to the taste of the conquerors and the new rulers" (Olupona 2000:xv)

There is also discussion on the nature of African religions and spirituality in the way that they are part of every aspect of life (Nnamani, 2015). This emphasizes that

African spirituality is not only an individual matter, but also it is by its nature collective and it hinged on every aspect of life. "The impact of religion in the African life seems to defy the influence of modernity and Western culture and is as pervasive today as it has always been in the past, inspiring and influencing every aspect of life – actions and thoughts" (Nnamani, 2015:332).

Although African spirituality seems to be very collective, Steenkamp-Nel (2018:3) suggests that the nature of spirituality is versatile. She maintains that spirituality can be both collective and individualistic. There are also debates about the definition of spirituality, with others saying that it is not about the faith of a supernatural domain but that it is personal (Koenig, 2009) and others (Hill, 2003) who believe that it is a search for the sacred.

In most cases, one finds that African spirituality will lean towards what Hill would have to say about spirituality because of the prominent role that the supernatural plays in African spirituality. Mosha (2013) draws attention back to the concept of African spirituality and its holistic approach. He highlights that although the spirit is important in African spirituality that what takes centre stage is a holistic approach and coins the term 'life direction'.

"In this African context, one might say that the seeker is in a 'life direction' process rather than a 'spiritual direction' process. The phrase 'life direction' suggests a more holistic view of that process than 'spiritual direction'" (Mosha, 2013:108). Mosha is not denying the importance of the spirit but emphasizes how all things hold together in African spirituality. He further continues to emphasize this by studying the life of indigenous people in Africa. "To appreciate how indigenous people see and understand all being holistic, we need only look at the importance for them of the circle. Many indigenous African people build circular homes. They dance in a circle. They make circular stools and chairs. The circle, in this tradition, is the ultimate symbol of interconnectedness. Life and death are interconnected; this life and the life to come are interconnected; likewise, our past is connected to the present and the future" (Mosha, 2013:106)

The circles as being the symbol of interconnectedness show the constant connection between what is done in African spirituality and daily life. This shows that the connection is constant with all things that are done to something as simple as the shape of the stool and the house. The "life direction" is evident and relevant in talking about African spirituality.

In the discussion of culture, Scaer (2017) outlines the nature of culture and how it always evolves and changes. If one looks back at the culture of many communities how they change although they may be rooted with constant factors that guide may give provision for the change. "Like time, culture is more easily described than defined. Each period has its own culture and each culture is limited by place and time. No culture lasts forever. If you haven't noticed—and you have—our children live in a different universe than we do" (Scaer, 2017:344) Each period having its culture or rather a dominant culture is a reality. Some cultures die out because they have no one to preserve them. After all, culture needs humanity for it to exist.

"If we attempt to preserve a particular period with its culture, we soon discover that it slips away like sand through our hands. Culture is like time in being in constant flux, and it separates one generation from another and one people from another. Particular times can be identified with its prominent persons." (Scaer, 2017:344) If we look at the definition of culture according to Nida (1976), although an old source gives a helpful term for culture.

"We should be fully aware that in a sense 'culture' is an abstraction, even as the divisions of culture into the material, social, religious, linguistic, and aesthetic are abstractions. Culture is a way of behaving, thinking, and reacting, but we do not see the culture. We see manifestations of culture in particular objects" (Nida, 1976:29) An important part of Nida's elaboration of culture is how it is learnt behaviour which is socially acquired. He also underlines that it passed on from one generation to the next. Although over time culture evolves, if it is passed on from one generation to the next it stays alive.

A more recent source agrees with the departures of Nida (1976), "Culture, broadly conceived as all that individuals learn from others that endures generating customs

and traditions, shapes vast swathes of human lives." (Whiten *et al.* 2011:938) This support the notion of culture being learnt and being passed on from person to person or generation to generation. The many communities that we have bring across different cultures because of the context (Whiten et al. 2011:938) (Nida, 1976:28). Culture has a way of evolving even in topics such as wisdom as an important element of many African cultures and other around the world (Grossmann, 2012: 159-160). Culture is an important element of humanity as is spirituality whether minimally practised or strictly observed. The current study has given more weight to the study of African spirituality than culture as a phenomenon.

1.3 Research gap

From the brief overview of existing literature on the phenomena of spirituality and culture connected to the context of Africa, it seems as if there has not been much research that has been done on the influence of culture and spirituality on one another. It may be that for the most part in some African communities it may be seen as the same thing. One of the reasons I chose this study is because of the work of Miller (2012), who speaks about the forms of spirituality among ethnic minorities, specifically a "coloured spirituality". This term is phrased to refer to African Americans and by expansion all other minorities. She firstly starts to speak about the relevance of religion but highlights that spirituality gives a sense of greater belonging. "Although religion plays a major role in the lives of many people of colour, spirituality offers them cultural relevance" (Miller, 2012:197)

One of the key things she mentions is the fact that a history of cultural oppression is a common denominator for individuals who endorse a coloured spirituality (Miller,2012:198). Therefore, the culture of the group, in this case, African Americans, is the end goal of the spirituality in which they participate. This means that spirituality is practised to inform the people of that community of their culture. This could mean there is an obvious link between spirituality and culture that is not thoroughly explored in Miller's work. Pato (2000:93) although a more dated source speaks about the interconnectedness of secular, material and spiritual life for Africans. He argues that nothing in African spirituality can be separated from each other thus bringing into relation the factors of spirituality and culture.

Therefore, although the concepts of culture and spirituality cross paths within current literature, the ethics that are birthed by each phenomenon have not been explored. The two undoubtedly intersect with one another but their connection is currently not at the centre of the current discussion. In addition, it seems that in an African context spirituality will commonly give a framework to culture but can culture do the same for spirituality?

In this study I will be investigating the question, what is the relationship between these two phenomena? What effect does this relationship have in the African context? Furthermore, what ethics do they give birth to individually and their influence on one another? Therefore, the intention is to look deeply into these phenomena to uncover their different ethical vision and then reduce the focus to Africa and compare it to Christian ethics. The purpose is to see the implications of these ethics and explore them.

It is important to note that when I refer in the study to an African context the implication or insinuation is not that there lives only one context in Africa because there are many contexts as there are cultures and forms of spirituality. The African context speaks specifically to the common threads that seem to exist within Africa. This is the marginalisation, the historical oppression, the great emphasis on spirituality and culture as well as the profound sense of community. The context also includes the social environment of Africa and how social dynamics are understood and engaged.

1.4 Methodology

In this study, Christian Ethics will be utilised as a lens through which the relationship between the two phenomena of culture and spirituality in Africa will be investigated. In this study, the postliberal ethics of Stanley Hauerwas will be utilised because of his understanding of ethics. As Wells (reference) has indicated 'ethics' for Hauerwas entails/ is focussed not primarily on the individual in crisis.

For Hauerwas, ethics is not fundamentally about the individual in crisis and uncertainty in decision-making. Although he submits that decisions have a place in ethics an ethic that makes them a priority is in danger. He holds that the most important things in ethics are those that are taken for granted. The habits and practices of the community that brings about moral formation (Wells, 1999:82). Hauerwas' understanding of ethics is of more than just decisions but about the understanding of the "the self". It is an ethic that moves from "what should I do?" to "what should I be?". The African Sotho proverb, *"motho ke motho ka batho"* meaning, "a person is because of others" suggests a possible link with Hauerwas as it also focuses on being and not doing. The 'being' in this case is influenced and cultivated by others around you such as a community. One might be interested to find that most Christian ethics have been active in African spirituality and culture but because they are articulated or expressed differently they are not given attention.

Hauerwas also believes that there should be no separation between theology and ethics, and he further explains that the same can be said about practical theology and theology proper (Hauerwas, 2015:5), this is significant because of his understanding of being. McGrath (2017) mentions Hauerwas as a noteworthy theologian in the topic of postliberal approaches to ethics. "Hauerwas argues that Christian ethics is concerned with the identification of the moral vision of a historical community (the church), and with bringing that vision to actualization in the lives of its members. Thus, ethics is intrasystemic, in that it concerns the study of the internal moral values of a community" (McGrath, 2017:130)

In using Christian ethics as a methodological lens, the intention is to be able to identify an existing intersection that African spirituality and African culture may have with Christian ethics and to examine what role can African spirituality and culture play in Christian ethics. This is to ultimately explore the ethical implications that come from both culture and spirituality.

1.5 Conclusion

The goal of this study is to find investigate the relationship between spirituality and culture in the African context. Furthermore, it is to understand the possible role or relation that can exist with Christian ethics. Matters of spirituality and culture are very

central to Africa or much of the African population. It is important therefore to understand those two phenomena. Christian ethics is important to look into in relation to the two phenomena to see the possible influence or rather the relationship can Christian ethics have with the two phenomena under the African context.

In looking into Christian ethics it is the intention of the study to see the connection that is present or that can be detected. The work of Hauerwas in the discussion of Christian ethics displays a great connection to African spirituality and African culture. His work accommodates certain key principles that are found within the African understanding of spirituality and culture. It is through his understanding that the two phenomena will be examined. This is because many developments in Christian ethics are present and thus the work of Hauerwas will be more appropriate for this study.

At the end of this study, the intention is that the reader may understand the layers of culture and spirituality specifically in Africa as well as understand the effects that these two have on each other. In addition, the reader might also see the link that the work of Hauerwas creates between the African context and Christian ethics in general.

1.6 Structure of the study

Chapter 1 provides the background and reason for this study and sets out the approaches and methods. This is followed by chapter 2, spirituality, especially the African context. I will also be considering the formulation of spirituality and examine its development. A spirituality in Africa and the implications of the ethics that arise from that will also be assessed. Religion and spirituality will be examined in collaboration.

In chapter 3, I will be exploring culture, African ethics and the concepts of Africa. In addition, I will evaluate the moral values of an African context and what it might mean to be African. I will also investigate the influence of external factors on the understanding of Africa. Then in the next chapter, the study will analyse postliberal Christian ethics, specifically the ethical understanding of Hauerwas. I will break down

Christian ethics and what is ethics. Furthermore, I will consider Hauerwas' take on Universal ethics which is central to this study as his perspective will help see if Christian ethics can participate in the African context.

In chapter 5, I will be engage all the information to understand the relationship between spirituality and culture. I will also look at how the perspective of Hauerwas on universal ethics works with African culture and spirituality. In the closing chapter, I will summarise and present the findings of the study and consider a way forward.

CHAPTER 2

INVESTIGATING THE PHENOMENA OF SPIRITUALITY

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the phenomena of spirituality will be examined. The elements of spirituality will be discussed and the intersection with the African context. Therefore, as this study focuses on an African context, this intersection will further be analysed by considering African culture and African spirituality. This examination will highlight the dynamics and character of African spirituality, its contribution to African culture and possible omissions in this regard.

The reason for this examination of African spirituality as it relates to African culture is to determine the impact of the possible interrelatedness, what type of foundation it provides and what ethics or morals arise from it. This will help in achieving the ultimate purpose of this study: to consider the ethical implications of the relationship of spirituality and culture. The outcome of the examination in this chapter will ultimately be considered through a Christian-ethical perspective, namely that of Stanley Hauerwas' ethics in the understanding of 'the self'. This will be done in Chapter 4 of this study.

Both African spirituality and African culture are very broad, a general introduction to both will situate the rest of the examination. Religion will also be discussed because of its key role in African society. This chapter will therefore be a breakdown of the two, focusing on African culture, African religion and African spirituality.

2.2 Spirituality

When it comes to spirituality Holt (1993) states that the term spirituality was first used among Christians. The term was more specifically used by Roman Catholic theology. It is with this that we understand that the contemporary use of the word spirituality can be traced back to Christianity (Perrin, 2007:26). Etymologically, the word is derived from the Latin noun *"spiritualitas"* that is associated with the adjective *"spiritualis"*, for spiritual (Sheldrake, 2014:6). These terms ultimately derive from New Testament Greek – the word *"pneuma"*, or spirit.

Principe (1983:103-131) notes that the use of the root of spirituality which is "spirit" keeps the same meaning in the New Testament from the Old Testament which is understood as the presence of God. The modern-day meaning and understanding have differed but the development of the word is particularly fascinating because of the insistence of some Christians that religion and spirituality are not united. Although this could be credited to the newfound understandings of spirituality

Holt (1993:5) notes that spirituality "encompasses the whole of human life and will develop in a variety of styles, depending on cultures, denominations, personalities and gifts" (Holt, 1993:5). This would also include the invisible and the interconnectedness of life.

Spirituality is at times compared to religion, and to some, it is the same thing as religion. Singleton (2014:10) notes that Western societies use the term "spirituality" as an alternative to religion. As a result, some view spirituality and religion as rivals and conflicting realities. They prefer to be called "spiritual" rather than 'religious' and are not supporters of organised religion. Schneider (2003:164-165) holds that the two are "two dimensions of a single enterprise which, like body and spirit, are in tension but are essential to each other and constitute, together, a single reality". This suggests that religion and spirituality can't be separated but are joined.

Singleton (2014:11) explains spirituality as "any enduring, meaningful experience or consciousness of something greater than the self. This something 'greater than the self' might be some ethical ideal, a supernatural concept, supernatural beings or it might be something more nebulous, like a sense of oneness with all living things". Kalilombe (1994:115) and Wakefield (1983:549) agree with this understanding of spirituality, emphasizing the connection with the super-sensible realities.

2.3 Characteristics of Spirituality

Spirituality is lived out in different ways across the continent of Africa and the rest of the world. Although there are differences present there is also connecting factors that characterize the way it is lived out by millions around the world. These similarities speak to the characteristics of spirituality. By this I mean, the building blocks that are essential and are key connecting factors in living out spirituality. These might not be all of them, but these are what I see as the core characteristics.

- Expression

Expression speaks to the nature of spirituality to vary in expression although seeking a common goal. I call it expression instead of 'understanding' because spirituality infiltrates your being and thus your doing. Spirituality is understood in living it out, in times of expression. The understanding of spirituality speaks only of knowledge, but expression speaks to living.

Spirituality cannot only be understood it must be expressed, although it may be related to systems some kind of belief, religious or philosophical or others, it is primarily focused on how life is lived, and lived meaningfully, with reflection and usefulness. (Sheldrake, 2014:55). So, these expressions take different forms and typologies. Sheldrake (2014:14) speaks of four broad types of spirituality

- Transformation

The role of spirituality is to transform the one who participates through living it out. Spirituality requires one to live in light of certain principles that help the individual move away from one space of thinking to another that changes behaviour and outlook or perception. So, spirituality transforms, it is a tool for transformation from one mode of living to another. This is even seen in the foundational understanding and development of the word spirituality.

> It is important to note that in the theology of Paul, 'spirit' and 'spiritual' are not meant to be the opposite of 'physical', 'material' or 'bodily' (Greek *soma,* Latin *corpus*) but rather the opposite of 'fleshliness' (Greek *sarx,* Latin caro). This concept has a moral sense and refers to everything contrary to the Spirit of God.

> (Sheldrake, 2014:6)

What Sheldrake is bringing to light is that even in the original places where the word spiritual was first commonly used, in Christianity, before it developed into the concept of spirituality we know today it was about the change of self, the transformation of one's self. One had to subscribe to a new way of life and live out their lives beyond "fleshliness". This is a common fabric in types of spirituality, transformation is a part of the expression.

- Transcendence

Kuhl (2005) distinguishes three kinds of transcendence, ego (self: beyond ego), Self-transcendence (beyond the self: the other) and spiritual transcendence (beyond space and time). Ego transcendence speaks to the ability to overcome the barrier between the two functional systems called "implicit and explicit self-regulation" (Hanfstingl, 2013). Kuhl says that ego transcendence could be willingly changing from an analytical, intentional memory, and a holistic, extension memory.

Hanfstingl notes the connection between the meaning of life and self-transcendence. This is living beyond one's self, this consists of care for others, religiosity, spirituality, unison with nature and social commitment. Spiritual transcendence speaks to seeing a larger view, gaining a bigger perspective, "standing" out of space and time.

The three kinds of transcendence identified speak to the character of spirituality, depending on one's endeavour in entering spirituality. Although in all of these elements there's a seeking element. This is the connecting aspect of all the three mentioned overall characteristics of spirituality.

2.4 Religion and spirituality

There is a historical understanding that spirituality and religion are one. Singleton (2014:11) has noted, some people see spirituality and religion as different, defining the two is important even if they are seen as enemies by some people. Darnell (2015:134) holds that the ordinary conception of religion includes the notions of a self-conscious 'church'. This self-conscious church has religious officers who function according to early defined customs and perform rituals that are the "symbolic expression of the life of the church". Darnell (2015:134) also notes the common presence of a canon that has grown up around a body of sacred texts that are supposed to have been given or revealed by God or has been set by the founder of the religion.

Religion according to Bouma (1992:17) is a shared meaning system that grounds its answers to the questions of the meaning of existence. He says that not only does it deal with questions of existence but also of a greater reality and its related practices.

Religion according to the examination of Morris (2006:1) is not static or unitary but there are several "dimensions" that characterise it, which are called "attributes" by

Southwold. These attributes include ritual practices, a body doctrine, scriptures or oral traditions or even a tendency to create a dichotomy between the sacred and profane. This also includes beliefs, church, or moral community, an ethos that gives scope for emotional or mystical experience.

> If we leave the more sophisticated peoples and study the social habits of prehistoric or primordial persons, we shall find that it is very difficult to discover religious institutions that are highly formalised as those that go under the name of the Roman Catholic church or of Judaism. Yet religion in some sense is everywhere present. It seems to be as universal as speech itself and the use of material tools.

> (Darnell, 2015:134)

This understanding gives us an opportunity to be aware of the fact that because of the universal nature of religion, it is almost as if it is a language that is spoken everywhere, and languages take different forms and different alphabets. So, even prehistoric peoples with the absence of religious officers or a lack of authoritative religious texts nor the lack of anything that is "ordinarily" seen as a common attribute for religion should not be denied true religion or being seen to that effect. So, unorganised religion is still religion.

"Ethnologists are unanimous in ascribing religious behaviour to the very simplest of known societies. So much of a commonplace, indeed, is this assumption of the presence of religion in every known community - barring none, not even those that flaunt the banner of atheism — that one needs to reaffirm and justify the assumption." (Darnell, 2015:134). Religion is found everywhere around the world, and this is important to note because that means it will demonstrate itself in different forms. This means that in the analysis we look at the most common factors and examine those as it is not possible to extensively apply analysis to the varied demonstrations of religion.

So, religion and spirituality have several similarities that include being expressed everywhere around the world and in different forms. Just as spirituality there are typologies of religion that are found across the globe.

The concept of "God" in the topic of both spirituality and religion cannot be avoided. God is associated with religiosity which is commonly accepted. When God is mentioned with spirituality there is opposition in that "God' is linked with religiosity. This means that secular forms of spirituality, such as mental spirituality, nature-mysticism and some non-theistic forms of spirituality are excluded (Waaijman, 2002:427).

This could be the greatest differentiation between spirituality and religion. The concept of "God" isolates many forms of spirituality that are present. Although this is true, Waaijman (2002:427) notes that with that being so the word "God" is not only in religion-bound "language games" but it is found in some secular spiritualities. It is therefore incorrect to say that the word "God" is exclusive to religiosity. Ultimately, religion and spirituality largely overlap so one must therefore treat each religion and form of spirituality as a distinct form of expression.

2.5 The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is an important part of Christian belief and Christian spirituality. When it comes to religious association, the Holy spirit is associated with the Christian religion as well a few others such as the Jewish religion. The Holy spirit is understood as the spirit of God. The reason it is important to mention the holy spirit is that it is part of the spiritual experience of people. It plays a big part in what people of the Christian religion call experiencing God.

The concept of the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God) has been one that has been given interpretation across the various church denominations. In some denominations the Holy Spirit plays a central role as part of an evident moving of God, showing itself through miracles and speaking in unknown tongues but in some denominations it seems to have almost a passive role, where the Holy Spirit is mentioned but immediate outcomes are expected but there just simply a trust that the Holy Spirit is at work. There are other ways in which the Holy Spirit plays a role in other denominations, but the point is in the degrees of function given to the Holy Spirit by different groups.

In all these interpretations of the Holy Spirit one finds that experience and the culture may have played a part in the understanding that is subscribed to by the group.

Ruffing (2012:63) quotes Paul Elie, 'There is no way to seek truth except personally'. A concept of the Holy Spirit seems to have a lot of unpredictability and thus maybe this contributes to the differentiations that exist.

In order to have a foundation in speaking about the Holy Spirit I believe that one must start with the origin of the idea, or at least where we can see a trace of the origin of idea which is through the bible. Rees (1915:1) notes that Hebrew life and thought has evolved over time and one of the most unique ideas is that of the conception of the Spirit of God. He does note that there are some parallels of the concept in other literature.

> It may have had its origin in the common semitic heritage of primitive ideas, but it shared in the unique development that made the Hebrews the religious teachers of the world. It was not central, nor even a constant idea in Hebrew religion, but it emerged into prominence at several of the decisive crises in Hebrew history, and kept pace with the development of the nation's thought.

(Rees, 1915:1)

Although the concept itself may not be one that is distinctively Hebrew, it is through its kept pace with the nation's development in the Old Testament that it is well known today. If we aim to get the full account of the Hebrew idea of Spirit Rees (1915) suggests that it must be gathered inductively from the accounts of its appearances and activities. One thing that we know for sure is that the Old Testament does not give a formulated doctrine about the idea.

Before going further, it may be important to lightly understand what the Spirit meant in Old Testament as an attempt to continue building the foundation of understanding that is necessary. Ramsey (1977:10) argues that the Old Testament writings do not have the Holy spirit as a person or a definable object or substance. It is used to describe how the Holy God is "active in persons in whom his purpose is fulfilled". In moving from this the understanding of the Spirit is to function within persons and help push and fulfil the purpose of God.

Rees (1915:3) notes that the earliest appearances of the Spirit in the Old Testament are those associated with the Judges. Othniel as the first of the Judges is accounted

as having the Spirit of the Lord upon him and he judged Israel. He led Israel into war, and it is through the Spirit being upon him that he was able to win the war. There are several instances that we find whereby the Spirit of God came upon a specific individual and they were victorious for the nation of Israel, one may even call the constant occurrence of the phrase, "The Spirit of Yahweh came upon him", as a prerequisite to almost any victory in the Old Testament narratives.

Ramsey, highlights that there are two Hebrew words which appear a 'spirit' in English versions of the Bible. The words are *"nephesh"* which means breath.

> It is in virtue of having breath within him that a man is alive, for the breath animates the physical organs. Thus when Elijah prays for the restoration of the dead child of the widow at Zarephath 'the child's nephesh came also to be used of the inner consciousness (Exod. 23:9) or the emotional life (Job 20:3) ; and in post exilic times it is no longer specially associated with physical energy, for now denotes what we might call the 'spirit' of a man, in the sense of his 'character' (Zech 12:1).

(Ramsey, 1977:10)

The other word that Ramsey (1977) mentions is the word ruach, meaning wind. He points out that according to him no writing depicts the meaning of the word better than Psalm 104, where all living creatures, including humans, are described as depending on God's ruach.

Ruach is used in Judges 14:16 and is responsible for the physical strength of Samson. In Numbers 12:18 it is responsible for the leadership of Joshua, Proverbs 1:23 the wisdom of the sages and the ecstasy of the nations of the prophets in 1 Samuel 10:10. Ruach is also for the prophets to prophesy, and this communicates that the Spirit does not only inspire ecstasy but the message and impulse to deliver it (Ramsey, 1977:11-12)

The difference between "*nephesh"* and *"ruach"* is simply that, nephesh it speaks to a person's breath within them that keeps them alive, but it can also mean the character of the person as seen in Zechariah 12 verse 1. Ruach on the other hand means, the spirit of God and even further, God's active nature upon the world, which can be translated as the Holy Spirit. Although the concept of the Holy Spirit is not frequent in

the Old Testament the Spirit mentioned carries the meaning and characters of what we find in the New Testament as the Holy Spirit.

When we investigate the times of later Judaism of the Greek-speaking Judaism we find that the word they used was the word *pneuma*, which could be used in ways both akin to and very different from the Hebrew word, *"ruach"*. In general, when one looks at the names given to the Holy Spirit across the bible from the Old Testament to the New Testament, they move from *"pneuma"* or *"ruach"* to names that are descriptive, that explain the active nature of God. One word that is also well known in regard to the Holy Spirit is the word *paraclete.* "The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete, who proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son. Christ sent the Spirit to his disciples, as he said himself, to show them his love, to assure them that on the way they would not be alone" (Kinnamon, 1991:29)

In the Holy Spirit being described as different things according to its function and role, this will find itself in culture too. The culture will adapt the notion of the Holy Spirit to the function and role they need it to play or have previously found it to play. The one thing that can be said is, since the Holy Spirit seems to be describing God in action then a development of the understanding of the Holy Spirit will automatically influence one's understanding of God and vice versa. The two cannot be separated from each other for the two understandings ultimately interlink.

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament seemed to be more of a bestowal of strength and capabilities. It seems that this is the main function of the Holy Spirit as there are many accounts of how the spirit fell upon a person to enable them for an obstacle. In Exodus 31:3 we see that Bezaleel said to have been filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding and all manner of workmanship.

Moses is also spoken to have had the Spirit of God upon him as he was spoken to by God saying that, he will take the spirit that is upon him and bestow it upon 30 elders that Moses was to point out (Num 11:17). In the book of 1 Samuel 10:6 before he became a ruler, Saul experienced 'the spirit of the Lord' upon him and he was turned into "another man". The narrative continues to speak about how Saul won the battle against the Ammonites through the help of the Spirit of God. It is also stated in the passage that Saul prophesied with a "company of prophets."

It is during the time of the divided monarchy that there is an increase of the ministry of the prophets. This then saw the increase in the ministry relating to God's Spirit. The prophets during this time such as Azariah and Elijah and Elisha. The text speaks of the influence of the Spirit of God on their prophesies. In some cases, the text does not say that the Spirit of the Lord fell but rather the prophesy seems to be "thus" characterized, meaning it is seen to be from God and thus the Spirit of God is almost implied.

The New Testament speaks of the Holy Spirit in action without Christ first within the book of Acts. The narrative speaks of the Holy Spirit coming down and resting upon, bringing people to experience speaking in a language or tongues that they did not understand (Acts 2). The one thing that the texts in the New Testament carry about the Holy Spirit that is not found in the Old Testament is the Spirit of God being able to fall on anyone. In the Old Testament a charismatic leader would come forth or a prophet would be called and then the Spirit of the Lord would be upon them. The Spirit would be what would enable them to secure victory for the nation and as the prophets to Judge the nation.

In investigating the Holy spirit, we must note that the bible is part of a culture and therefore thus might cause a problem as you might be interpreting another culture with the context of another culture which in this case is the bible. Riches (2000:10) notes that writing was very important in the culture during the Old Testament even though the texts were largely in the hands of specialists.

The techniques of the recording the information found in the bible developed over time. Throughout the time of composing the bible orality and literacy are interrelated. It is seen in through the different degrees of literateness among the texts. Riches (2000:10) argues that some come from circles with a high degree of proficiency in composing written texts, while other seem to be closer to the oral recitation of narratives and discourses. In the New Testament, the gospel of Mark is generally agreed to be the earliest of the four and is also the least literate and Riches (2000) also mentions that the gospel is also has a certain "roughness" in its Greek and closeness of its contents to the oral tradition of stories and sayings of Jesus.

These are some of the things that challenge the authority of the bible in terms of using it as a baseline for most things such as a solid ethical or even theoretical

construction. Wright (2005:23) holds that the phrase 'authority of scripture' can make Christian sense only if it is a shorthand for "the authority of the triune God, exercised somehow through scripture." When continuing to speak about the authority of scripture he points out that scripture constantly points the authority to God.

The bible is not a rule book with a list of rules even though it has many commandments that are of various contexts. Although it carries truths about Jesus and God, all of its parts put together can simply be seen as a story (Wright, 2005:23). This is one of the biggest stories about using the bible as a main source that is to establish a theory outside the premises of Christianity. In relation to this investigation the bible as a source of culture itself is helpful to the intentions of the paper. Looking at cultures and what role the Holy Spirit plays, if any, makes the bible a good tool to compare and measure variations and similarities.

We have already seen that the bible already has a differentiation of the functioning of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, although it is the same spirit it carries a new function in both canons. So even in analysing another culture there is a guarantee of a new function and role of the Holy Spirit as even the bible itself has contrasting functions in both the New and Old Testament

2.6 African Culture

The ancient Egyptian culture has a term that is similar to that of the concept of the Holy Spirit in their culture, especially within the sphere of the Old Testament writings.

> The vital energies of heaven and earth were believed to merge in a human breath-energy body called ka . !Kung healing is based on a form of boiling life-breath, spiritual energy called n/um and a state of enhanced consciousness called !kia that are invoked in healing dances.

> (Edwards, 2009:84)

In the Old Testament we find the understanding of the Spirit of God as the wind or breath. The Spirit would be the one to administer any form of healing or deliverance to people. When we look at the narrative of David and Saul, when Saul was left by the Spirit of the Lord and was inhabited by an 'evil spirit' and when David played the lyre and strummed a tune, the spirit left him and he found relief. In the New

Testament we find that the Spirit of God empowers for every good work and also brings healing.

African culture bares many similarities in terms of the interpretation of what the spirit's role is and it seems to function mostly within the context of the Old Testament in the notion of inhabiting an individual. In most African traditional Churches, this notion is prominent, and it is derived from the African cultures. So, the African Indigenous Churches have had a combination of African culture and the culture of the time and area of the Israelites by virtue of using the bible together with the concepts of the cultures of Africa. This understanding is derived from my earlier note that the bible itself is a product of culture and tradition.

"In the South African context, the African Indigenous Church movement revolves around receiving the Holy Spirit (Umoya Oyingcwele) through various circular symbols of spiritual perfection. Such meetings often replicate Luke's description (Acts 2:1–13) of the public Pentecostal advent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a wind blowing from heaven, tongues of fire, and gifts such as speaking in tongues, prophesy, teaching, preaching and healing" (Edwards, 2009:87)

In the African Indigenous churches the characteristic that is of the Old Testament is when one is called into the prophetic ministry. In the Setswana language a person would be told that they have what they call *"Moya"* which is Spirit. This word is not equivalent to the concept of the Holy Spirit but rather almost that the Spirit is heightened or is upon them. This would mean they are different or set apart such as the prophets in the Old Testament.

When my sister went to initiation school because of having been told she has *"Moya"* and that would mean that she would have to be trained but the training is not within the concept of the Holy Spirit, is through the concept of the Spirit world and being able to communicate primarily with the ancestors. In the process of initiation, it would be that she would be given a name, and the name that she was given was of my father's mother, Ntebe. She was told it was her Spirit that was chastening her into the prophetic.

So, the element of *"umoya oyicwele"* which is the Holy Spirit is only an element that comes later on in the church settings but is not solely the reason for the impartation of gifts. The playing of the drum during a meeting is very important in the whole

picture and the dancing triggers the Spirit to come upon the people in the sitting (Edwards 2009). This element is common in the African Indigenous churches. It seems that the role of the Holy Spirit is simply for healing and speaking in tongues as well as other spiritual activities.

In general, it seems that the AICs claim to use both the African concept of ancestral connection and the concept of the Spirit of God. What is very interesting is that when my sister came from initiation, there was a ceremony that had to be held and she was dancing to the drum, there were points where she stopped and started speaking and prophesying and it would be in a language that she had never learnt in a different voice at times. She was speaking in the language of my grandmother whom she was named after. Although, is not understood as necessarily the Spirit of God but of an ancestor it shows the understanding of Spirit and relation to it in some African contexts.

The African traditions seem to carry a lot of emphasis on the power of the Spirit to heal. The African cultures, where the spirit world is an understood concept or rather a concept that is acknowledged makes it easier for Pentecostalism to be a prominent move in Africa. This is because the notion of the Spirit world is expressed and notions of healing and divine intervention that are already a thread in African culture exist.

> It is commonplace to state that African traditional religion has a major impact on the health-seeking behaviour of Africans, whether they are Christians or not. Daily newspapers are filled with advertisements of African healers, promising healing for all kinds of illnesses and problems, while Christian ministers vehemently warn their congregants not to visit traditional healers with their evil practices.

> (van den Bosch-Heij, 2012:25)

This makes it an understandable reality that in Africa the Pentecostal movement is growing rapidly. The closeness that it carries with the African culture and traditions makes it gain a lot of support and even following. This seems to be something that must not be ignored. Even if one looks at the ZCC (Zion Christian Church), the elements of African culture seem to be drawing people in and thus making it the largest church in South Africa.

The Holy Spirit in most African cultures and in their traditions falls onto their understanding of God. In their understanding of God comes the understanding of the Holy Spirit. African cultures are more open to the idea of the Holy Spirit healing and causing one to experience divine experiences because it is not outside of their African experience and seeing the 'mystical'. This is the reason for my direction towards church tradition because church tradition that leaves out the African concept of spirituality seems to find itself dying as the numbers decline and go towards what one may say, 'something closer to home' or even a language that they already understand and therefore easier to associate with by that virtue.

Therefore, the Holy Spirit in African culture seems to play a role that is of mostly action and tangible activity. It is agreed upon that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God or even God active in the world. We see culture influencing what the understanding of God is in Africa and this also become a reality in the church. So, when one looks at the AICs one sees that the Holy Spirit is not the only recognised Spirit at play, especially when one goes into the prophetic ministry. We see that culture finds its way into religious tradition.

It is mostly the Old Testament that is used as a reference in AICs as there are great similarities between them. The Holy Spirit in both seem to function to come do a specific job and then depart until the next time. The central players in African traditions is usually, the dead, the living and the unborn. God is seen as being present although not constantly mentioned.

> In Black Africa humans belong at the same time to the world of the living, the dead, and the not-yet born. They can identify with spirits, animals, plants, minerals. They know that between them and the cosmos there is a vital flux making up the solidarity of creation as a whole and ultimately connecting them to the supreme being, God, the source of all life.

> (Bujo, 2005:425)

The role and function of a Holy Spirit in African Culture and even in culture generally is influenced by the understanding of God. Therefore, the relationship that African culture mostly has with God is one that is not personal but rather that is mostly of knowledge and recognition. But the cultures subscribe to God through the

interconnectedness of the world as He is the creator. So, the role of the Spirit of God is channelled through the created and not directly from the creator.

2.7 Altered States of consciousness

Altered states of consciousness should be mentioned in this study as they are part of the spiritual experience. There are many religions and cultures that have built their morality or ethics from what would be called altered states of consciousness. These experiences are called source experiences as they are the start of a formulation of a belief system or community.

Altered states of consciousness are states whereby an individual is experiencing a reality that is often deemed divine activity or hallucination. These states of altered consciousness have been investigated and they are common in many religions and cultures. The term ASC is a term to categorise the experiences or activities.

In this regard the work of Pilch (2004:23) has been very insightful. According to Craffert (2017:100), Pilch has popularised the use of an ASC model for understanding the visions, sky journeys and other ecstatic experiences reported in biblical texts. This is important because the bible is the basic faith document of Christians, which is a source of the Holy Spirit encounters. It is the bible that first accounts of witnesses of an understanding of the workings of the Holy Spirit. In today's rational world the events described in the bible as being the works of the Holy Spirit are labelled to not be true because they cannot be explained scientifically.

In most cases the bible is interpreted through a lens of one's culture from the culture which the scripture originates. Ones find that when the bible is read and there are traces of a characteristic that one cannot relate to one's own culture that part of scripture will bring doubt to the individual because they cannot relate to it. In this regard we can view ethnocentrism as a factor in events that cannot be explained through human understanding.

Pilch has contributed heavily to the understanding of the ASC through his application of the ASC model. Pilch's contribution starts by establishing that text of the bible contain references to ASCs, these ASCs can be taken as "culturally plausible" and

secondly, these biblical texts can be treated impertinently by means of an ASC model (Craffert, 2017:101).

Pilch argues in favour of people experiencing ASCs and that indeed act as described by biblical literary reports. He goes as far as saying that ASC are not only plausible but are veridical, real events. In his model he does not explicitly state the Holy Spirit as a factor in the ASC but he focuses on the event or act itself that is attributed to an ASC. If we look at his interpretation of Ezekiel 8:17 we find that Pilch (2011:23,25) the putting of the branch on the nose as a breathing technique which he references as a gesture of a finger in the nose that usually serves to induce a trance of an ASC by manipulating breathing.

Furthermore, he speaks about other scriptures that he links to different methods of inducing ASC. His method suggests the notion that ASC can be induced by Human effort and may not necessarily need divine influence. He is not the only one that links what scriptures testifies about in regard to the Holy Spirit as something one can induce if they so willed. Cartledge (1998:119) notes, "Middlemiss compares some of the common features in charismatic gatherings with hypnotic techniques and observes points of comparisons" (Cartledge, 1998:119). One of his key notions is that the main technique by charismatic leaders is that of suggestion. Which he states is that people are aware of what kind of phenomena which occur and are encouraged to be passive, in this he says that this passivity is ideal for hypnosis.

It seems easier to associate ASCs with the suggestion that there are actions that can physically be taken to get to the ASC. Taking the event of an ASC as stated in literary documents as one that was influenced by the Holy Spirit seems to be harder to accept while connecting the ASC with a physical technique to induce it is easier to accept because it seems to have some explanation.

The Holy Spirit is very important to the Christian movement and is seen as a key factor in many supernatural events. In many cases the Holy Spirit is attributed to healing especially in charismatic and Pentecostal movements.

> Other similar spiritual healing traditions variously extol a form of healing breath-energy called Ruach Ha Kodesh (Hebrew), Prana (Hindi), Nafas Ruh (Moslem), Baraka (Sufi), Spiritus Sanctus (Latin for Holy Spirit), Pneuma (Greek), Chi (Chinese), Mana (Figian), Ni (Sioux), Manitu

(Aloquin), Chindi (Navajo). This healing energy is holistically experienced through the life-breath as a form of bridge between nature, God, ancestors, body, mind and word.

(Edwards, pg.84)

It seems that every culture or religion has their own understanding of how things such as healing can be had through means of spirit or the divine. It is also evident that the concept of breath is very important in many cultures. To the Egyptians the vital energies of heaven and earth were believed to merge in human breath-energy body called ka (Myers, 1993:52). The Holy Spirit is known to some as the breath of Heaven. Although some cultures only carry the notion of Spirit and Holy Spirit that brings healing but rather just simply spirit. The Holy Spirit is a name given to what is known as a guide and comforter to Christians, but other cultures may have received a different revelation of or about the same power.

The experience of an ASC is attributed to different energies and spirits. There is even a suggestion that they can be self-induced of one willed it. The one that that is good to note that each culture and religion gives credit to different forms things when it comes to these experiences. It is through these different experiences that movements start and communities and believing communities are established. This makes ASCs important in investigating spirituality, religion and culture.

2.8 Christian Spirituality in Africa

Christian spirituality in African is appropriate to look at in this study even if it is briefly. The assessment of this spirituality is necessary at it helps us to look at the influence of Christianity, particularly western Christianity, in Africa. When I refer to western Christianity, I refer to the principles, practices and rituals that are practised in the Western churches to express their faith. Vellem (2014:1) argues that it is well known that western Christianity together with capitalism in Africa seeks to do away with indigenous African spiritualities.

He holds that Western/Euro Christianity presents itself as the "truthful belief system". This goes back to the times of colonisation; Christianity was presented in a western format, and it brought forth the idea that anything African is evil. This means that all

the practices of spirituality and culture that were practised before Christianity was presented to Africans should not be practised anymore as it is not acceptable. So, the standards of worship and faith practices were Western and African spirituality and culture did not have a voice when it comes to how the faith is expressed.

There is another powerful presentation of Western Christianity that is important to mention, the presentation of salvation. The presentation of western Christianity suggests that the western standard is the one that can save from suffering and pain, it is presented as the saviour. The expression of faith in this way is the only way to find peace and to find salvation from this world. It is the package of the faith that was emphasized more than anything. This means that before anything before you can be saved and find salvation you must fit the standard set by western Christianity and no other form of expression is appropriate to reach salvation.

Steve Biko (1978) asserts that when Christianity was introduced it was corrupted by elements that made it the ideal religion for the colonisation of people. This then made the religion a good way to keep people, particularly black people under domination. So, it would be correct to say that Christianity is a religion that has historically been a tool for immoral conquests to the disadvantage of African people. The ultimate attack on African spiritual and cultural expression was and is an attack on the identity of its people.

It is also important to note that slaves in colonies and the indigenous people were forced into the religion, they were to convert to Christianity or die (Ramose 2009:18). So, it is through this historical context that one must see the importance of preserving African spiritual and cultural forms of expression of faith. Investigating the connection that can be made between Christian ethics with African spirituality and culture is important in preserving the two while collaborating with Christian ethics instead of the historical way of imposition.

2.9 African religion and African spirituality

African religion at its core focuses on the relationship between the visible and the invisible. When one investigates African religion, one finds that its point of departure is more spiritual than religious although it is both. This is because African religion is a way of living in the world of the visible in the relation to that which is invisible. This

relationship pervades life in its entirety, of individuals in the community (Kalilombe, 1994:115).

How one relates to the invisible is central to African religion. It is a core understanding of their spirituality. Therefore, to understand African spirituality in its uniqueness one might need to understand African religion. Spirituality is firstly determined by the fundamental worldview of a person or a people. It is shaped by their life context, history and many other influences that occur in their life (Kalilombe, 1994:115). That said, it is important for one does not to assume that all Africans have the same approach to and view of spirituality, one must not fall into generalisation, as Kalilombe notes:

> Does it make scientific sense to speak about African spirituality? The African continent is so vast and diversified. It consists of such a variety of ethnic groups, each with its customs, history, and ways of life, that sweeping generalisations about things African are always dangerous.

> (Kalilombe, 1994:116)

Life context and history play a part in the type of spirituality of a person, the constant transformation of African societies must be taken into consideration when spirituality is discussed. There have been interactions with the outside that could have an influence, but the main reason for transformation is due to the changing life conditions, although at times very gradual the transformation is important to note.

Ackah (2017:1) examines the dynamics and diversity that is present with the religions and spirituality of the African communities. She notes the factors that both religion and spirituality in Africa have been shaped by, geographic location, organised religious settings, enslavement, colonialism, social oppression, and the contemporary globalised world. These are not the only influences that are present because factors such as creativity and spiritual insight play an important role, as well as a sense of collective agency. One of the most central aspects of African communities is the invisible reality and the concepts of the spirit. It is a part of everyday practice.

> African descendants are people of the spirit. Whether it is invoking the spirit of ancestors in family locations in West Africa, the Caribbean, and North America, bowing down to pray in mosques and churches of Europe

and the Americas, or formal gatherings and informal settings, people of African descent are infused with beliefs in connections to realms beyond secular rationality.

(Ackah, 2017:1)

She continues to examine the importance of spirituality to African communities and identifies it as a guiding element and thus African spirituality. It may be that there are African descendants who are atheists, but they are fewer compared to those who are not because for the most part African descendent communities foundationally have spiritual underpinnings and are guided by their spirituality. This is the framework of their lives wherever you may be, regardless of location (Ackah, 2017:1).

Generally, forms of religion, culture and spirituality changed and was influenced by certain modernising influences like colonialism, industrialisation, and new religious, particularly Christianity (Kalilombe, 1994:117). Due to these new influences, former traditional ways of life have been "modified" and therefore they are taking on new forms. Kalilombe (1994:119) points out that it is good to look at both sides of African life. Firstly, from what comes from the past and then what results from more recent influences. The interaction between the two is the "underlying contention" but the first is more determinant.

. If one wants to go looking for African spirituality Kalilombe (1994:118) suggests that one begin by "examining the African way of life and following up, as per his definition of spirituality, "those attitudes, beliefs, and practices that animate people's lives and help them to reach out toward super-sensible realities".

One of the things also worth noting is that in African spirituality most things are "jointly owned by the group". This is not an element shared by African religion although the understanding of the interconnectedness of all things is shared. So, in African spirituality Ownership of land by an individual was not a practice. This is speaking to a certain level of influence by outside factors (Biko, 2017:47-48). The land was owned by the people and not by a person. Although the land was under the control of the chief it was on behalf of the people.

The idea of property was a truly foreign concept in most traditions a foreign concept. If this was discussed it was in the idea of the land that has been allotted to one or

where one resides. Even farming had elements of joint efforts, it was never looked down upon for one to ask assistance from their neighbour, as the particular season would bring about certain struggles but poverty because of the sense of community was never a pandemic (Biko, 2017:47-48)

It is also important to note that African spirituality is different from the spirituality of "revealed religions". It is worth noting that African traditional religion is so centred around African spirituality that they could be regarded as one thing because of their inseparable nature, and this is what I will be doing as we proceed. Zahan (2000:3) explains the basis for both are different, as the latter is mostly based on relationships with the invisible and functions under a "code of love". "The religious experience, in this case, results from the love of God for his creatures and the love of these creatures for their Creator" (Zahan, 2000:3). The former has a different starting point, they do not have the notion of original sin. Therefore, it bears no tragedy of redemption where God plays the redeemer.

Zahan (2000:3) indicates that "the destiny of the African is linked neither to the original drama in which the premortal ancestor played the leading role nor to the tragedy of redemption in which the essential role is played by God himself.". Although original "sin and redemption" are not present, it does not mean that there will be no final judgement. Zahan (2000) further observes the differences demonstrated by African spirituality and revealed religion:

> The religious experience of upholders of revealed religions has a linear time scale; humanity, in this case, is on a path that has neither a beginning nor an end. The experience of the followers of traditional religions, however, is the product of a cyclical, repetitive time that lacks the mark of eternity
>
> (Zahan, 2000:3)

She also states that this does not mean that the concept of salvation does not exist in African spirituality but salvation itself also becomes a repetitive undertaking whereby the protagonist is the individual. So, the responsibility is with the one who "believes" not to give over their redemption to transcendent beings but to own their redemption by "spiritual techniques".

Zahan (2000:3) observes that the differences that are present with revealed religion and African spirituality. There is also a big difference when it comes to the idea of "supreme divinity". In African religion, you may find that the idea of supreme divinity may be present but the name is not known. Although altars are sometimes dedicated to the supreme being and offerings are brought to him. At times the very existence of the supreme being is unknown.

African religion is very interesting in its varied understanding of a supreme being. "Revealed religion" such as Christianity from what we now know differs especially in the duties of the supreme being. What we understand are the concepts that give function to the spirituality and understanding of the supreme being. African religion sees the supreme being as the most respected and least consulted as it is a matter of hierarchy while in Christianity the supreme being is first to be consulted as He is the only one who needs to be consulted.

Kalilombe (1994:120) notes that in African religion God seems almost a paramount chief in the tribe. His will and authority are above all but in daily events and relationships, the normal processes on a lower level must be respected, it is only after this fail is God brought in and a means to a required end.

This knowledge changes the understanding of the role of God in African religion. The hierarchy is active as means of respect and as a shadow of how it is spiritually in African traditional religion or more so how it is understood. Although this may not be the conceptual understanding across the board it gives a different meaning to the role of God. Spirituality in this regard follows a certain protocol.

African religion is centred around spirituality and therefore breaking the two apart is impossible. This is very important when it comes to understanding the ethics that develop from African spirituality which African religion seems to thoroughly express. Kalilombe (1994:119) indicates that if one was to begin to search for spirituality, specifically, African spirituality one would have to start in the context of traditional religious practice. This is again because of the interwoven nature of the two as African traditional religious practice is fuelled by African spirituality.

Kalilombe (1994:119) highlights the practices in African religious practice that can help one in the search to understanding African spirituality. "The most obvious place to search for spirituality is in the context of traditional religious practice: in worship, ritual, and prayer. Here the shape of a people's spirituality becomes easier to grasp, for their deepest aspirations are made manifest and their underlying outlook on the world of realities is revealed, not in theories or formulas, but in practical attitudes" (Kalilombe,1994:119)

The practices that are mentioned could give light to what we want to explore about African spirituality. We have pointed out that a prayer is a tool that can help us understand the relations between the people and the deity. The hierarchy has then indicated that the first thing is reverence and respect. The way that a chief is respected even in terms of how disputes are handled, through elders first and so forth.

> The prayers are made to the Supreme Deity, but also other spiritual realities such as divinities, spirits, the living dead, and personifications of nature. All these can be subsumed under the notion of 'the invisible' or 'the other-world of spiritual realities'. Prayer is based on the view that the world of realities consists of two interrelating spheres, the visible and the invisible, of which the visible is in some ways dependent on the invisible
>
> (Kalilombe, 1994:120)

The understanding of the main African principle of unity is extended in the observation. This concept tells us that the realities of African spirituality are all-inclusive to its environment and everything around it. This will also help us in looking at ethics that are derived from African spirituality which is the goal. This all encompassed way of understanding and seeing reality feeds the concept that everything is affected by everything, including the invisible realities.

According to Vellem (2015:4) it is the African indigenous churches that embody African spirituality. He references first the establishment of the AICs as a response to the problems encountered in the missionary church models. These churches he refers to as "struggle churches". Although he does not explain the term, he alludes to

the fact that the establishment of these churches was more of a resistance than it was just normal church establishments.

Vellem understands the AICs as helpful to the black resistance as they speak to the condition of black Africans. He sees that there are dominant paradigms of ecclesiology in the settler and missionary models. AICs are founded on African culture, values, and experiences (Kobe, 2021:7). AICs act as preservers of the African values within the context of modernity. The spirituality of the AICs is understood as keeping the sanity with the complexities of navigating through western thought and systems.

African spirituality is embraced and is practiced in the AICs and Kobe holds that within the context of Christianity in Africa it is the AICs that have the greatest possibility in creating a spirituality of liberation that comes from African culture. It is from African values that Africans will be encouraged and built up because it would be something that speaks to their souls. African spirituality and the African religions support and accommodate African culture.

2.10 Conclusion

Spirituality is a very broad topic and therefore one must be able to grasp the understanding that it's expression is varied. Nowadays, people are more likely to claim being spiritual rather than religious. Spirituality according to that understanding can be separated from religion, in other words, religion does not have a monopoly over spirituality. African Spirituality becomes more specific although there are varied ways of expression for it just as the broad term of spirituality. What we see that it influences greatly the way the community functions and it hinges on the participation of the community.

CHAPTER 3

INVESTIGATING CULTURE, ETHICS AND THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1 Culture

It is a word that we use regularly to describe and explain social aspects, traditions, rituals etc. of life. Jenkins (1993:1) is aware of the complexity of the concept extracting from Raymond Williams' understanding of culture as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language. Although he doesn't give the other two one can still capture what he aims to convey.

In unpacking the concept Jenkins (1993:11-12) in summary lists the accounts of the genesis of the concept of culture through a four-fold typology:

- "Culture as a cerebral, or certainly a cognitive category: culture becomes intelligible as a general state of mind. It carries with it the idea of perfection, a goal or aspiration of individual human achievement or emancipation." (Jenkins, 1993:11)

- "Culture as a more embodied and collective category: culture invokes a state of intellectual and/or moral development in society. This position is linking culture with the idea of civilisation and one that is informed by the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin (1809-82) and informative of that group of social theorists now known as the 'early evolutionists' who pioneered anthropology, with their competitive views on 'degeneration' and 'progress', and linked the endeavour to 19th century imperialism" (Jenkins, 1993:11)

- "Culture as a descriptive and concrete category; culture viewed as the collective body of arts and intellectual work within any one society: this is very much an everyday language usage of the term 'culture' and carries along with it senses of particularity, exclusivity, elitism, specialist knowledge and training of socialization" (Jenkins, 1993:11-12)

- Culture being understood as "a whole way of a life of a people". This comes into the areas of sociology and anthropology. So, a way that people live out

their lives and how they interact with their environment, each other and others.

"Culture as a social category; culture regarded as the whole way of life of a .people: this is the pluralist and potentially democratic sense of the concept that has come to be the zone of concern within sociology and anthropology and latterly, within a more localized sense, cultural studies." (Jenkins, 1993:11-12)

This study is utilising culture as a "social category" to evaluate the nature of the concept. As it has already been shown the concept has many directions that can be understood from the genesis of the concept until now.

Culture is the one phenomenon that cannot be escaped by any of us. It is found everywhere in its varied types. Culture is a developing reality; it is influenced by multiple factors and has different implications. For some, as Nida (1974:28) notes, "culture" denotes "music, art and good manner". This however is not the social definition of culture which is the focus of this study.

According to Nida (1976:28) socially culture can be defined as behaviour that is learned and is acquired socially. This refers to material and nonmaterial traits that are transferred or passed on from generation to generation. They are transmittable and accumulative and they form part of culture in that they are transmitted by the society and not through genes.

He further explains that it is important to be aware that "culture" is an abstraction, even as the divisions of culture into social, religious, material, linguistic, and aesthetic are abstractions. Culture is a way of behaving, thinking and reacting but we cannot see it, we see the manifestations of it in particular actions and objects (Nida, 1976:29).

This helps understand the essential elements of culture and one that is very necessary to note which is that culture is lived through people. On its own culture cannot survive because it moves through the hands and lives of people. Through the hands of people that people can give culture a certain form or a direction. Through a life that, needs to be lived out and passed down to other people for it to survive.

Human culture needs the presence of human society in order to express the culture and transmit it (Nida, 1976:28). It seems that the most important element of culture is

about keeping it alive. In the transmission of culture, one finds that it is hardly questioned. Culture is a separation feature, it separates humans from the lower animals. In God's creation, humans are the only ones that have a cultures. (Grunlan, 1981:41)

While investigating culture, one also has to speak about the adoptions of culture which are traditions. Tradition cannot be separated from culture, the two work together. Spirituality may differ from culture to culture and maybe even evolve as the culture itself evolves. Culture on its own already has many complexities, in relation to Africa one might think first of spirituality if culture or even tradition is mentioned. On a general scale culture has many layers that may need unpacking from time to time.

The traits of culture may be mixed and combined to create several cultural complexes. Grunlan (1981:41) hold that it is often smaller units that are called subcultures that are found in bigger cultures. A subculture is "a cluster of behaviour patterns that are related to the general culture and yet at the same time distinguishable from it" (Grunlan, 1981:41).

Therefore, the complexities of culture make it that more difficult to analyse especially if you are trying to see elements of spirituality between cultures. The concepts may carry the same origin or basis, but their branching out is different. But the very thing that makes it difficult to analyse makes analysing that more important and insightful. There is a term that is sometimes used which is "counterculture", this is a person or group who behaviour is counter to that of the general culture, but anthropologically there is no such thing as counterculture. You would find that in many cases there is a certain conforming to their culture, one would rather call these cultures as a subculture (Grunlan, 1981:42).

Grunlan notes that Tylor's definition of culture introduces another term, society. Grunlan then defines it as a "social organisation" that consists of a group of people that share a geographical area and culture and thus making society and culture dependent concepts (Grunlan, 1981:42). Although the concepts are dependent, they are not the same. Society refers to people and their social organisation while culture refers to their learned and shared way of life.

The concepts of spirituality, culture and society are constantly working together. There is a constant motion of interwovenness that exists, and we can use this to

understand the dynamics of culture and see the role of many elements from society and spirituality. Tradition also finds its way into the mix by virtue of culture.

3.2 The manifestation, preservation and evolution of culture

The manifestations of culture vary, they come through objects and actions. Some factors could affect culture in a significant way, these factors include geography. Culture evolves and changes over time and reasons for certain things evolve as well as an emphasis on certain practices and values that the community ascribe to daily.

Ancient traditions that are embedded into culture are hardly ever questioned or challenged. The longer the tradition within the culture remains, the harder it is to uproot the certain tradition that is tied together with the culture. Nida (1976:28) examined that patterns of behaviour as a result of culture are not questioned. She notes that one often finds that when asked why a certain practice is done and why it is engraved in the culture the answer is often, "We have always done it".

In passing down culture some reasons for practice may be lost as they are passed down, that even the practice will over time move away from the original form and the reason it was established. One of the things that are important to most cultures is marriage. This is important to mention because it is a question of identity and plays a big role in keeping the culture alive. There is no biological reason for the insistence for a person to marry within the clan it's strictly cultural in most cases.

The notion of marrying only within the culture or clan in some practices one may marry their cross-cousin (the daughter of his mother's brother or his father's sister) (Nida, 1976:31). This is how important cultural preservation is in many cultures. Passing down culture and its practices and losing certain reasons for cultural practices can pose a problem at times.

> Purpose in culture may be easily perceived in the practice of female infanticide and the suicide of old people in Eskimo culture. In many instances, there simply was not enough food, and hence the killing of female babies (who were primarily consumers rather than producers of food) was a kind of protection for society as a whole

> (Nida, 1976:47)

The Eskimo culture also applied a similar practice for men. When men lived beyond the age that they are unable to be active hunters or women unable to "chew hides" and prepare them, they were expected to commit suicide or to get friends and relatives to kill them (Nida, 1976:47).

There are instances where cultural practices of a similar nature continue to be practised even after it is "necessary". The practices become such a great part of the culture that as it is passed on the initial reason for the practice fades and the practice may acquire a new reason or no reason at all but just be, "what they've always done". Most of these similar practices may be seen as if they are inhuman, but they are purposeful according to Nida (1976:47)

Another great example of what may come in the passing down of cultural practice is through examining a certain practice among the Indian farmers of the Guambiano Indians of southern Colombia. It is odd to think that although one assumes that they would gain prestige as a good farmer by fixing their home, buying more cattle, extending their holdings or better his conditions, they do not practice this, but they go on a prolonged binge.

Nida (1976:47-48) notes what one Guambiano told her, 'We cannot improve our homes or farms, for if we do, the Spanish-speaking neighbours will find some way (by legal trickery or force) to take away from us what we have, but if we have had a good crop, we can be drunk for several weeks, and then everyone will know that we have been successful farmers". So, drunkenness is a symbol of prestige because of what it symbolises in that culture's context. In the culture being passed on and the danger of the "Spanish-speaking" people is no more the expected result is that that practice would also be no more, but in some cultures that would not be the case.

Nida (1976:48) points out that not all things of culture that are 'purposeful' are justifiable:

"Not all purposes are valid in that they correspond to real needs; nor, are all purposes justifiable by their results. Most human behaviour, however, does respond to either real or imaginary needs, and to this extent it is purposeful" (Nida, 1976:48). So, there is a need to evaluate each circumstance and measure the appropriate response and typically morality will need to be applied.

3.3 Heritage and Identity

Heritage is that which can be inherited, regardless of the value it carries (Sandis, 2014:11). The word heritage nowadays is usually used for touristic reasons to market and sell everything. This particular sense of heritage might be seen as anti-cultural. What sometimes is necessary is to differentiate between heritage and history, David Lowenthal has said that Heritage is a celebration and that's what sets it apart from History. This presupposes that one's cultural heritage is usually celebrated.

To this argument, Sandis (2014:12) holds that even when one's cultural heritage is always or even usually celebrated it does not follow that the said celebration is of the past rather than it being a continuity that remains present. The celebration itself also does not even need to be a justified one. Africa has a strong sense of cultural heritage. African cultures celebrate the past and the present. One of the most important parts of African cultures and many cultures is that the culture stays alive and that it is passed on.

Culture is only alive through people; it is people that keep culture alive. Heritage is linked to the survival of any culture. This is also important to the issue of identity, the identity of a people. Culture forms part of the identity of people, it becomes an expression of the collective lived out in the individual. One may even say that culture also gives people belonging.

The contemporary use of the word identity is used to refer to such features as race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, or sexuality. The contemporary reference first achieved its prominence in the social psychology of the 1950s. The use of the term in this way reflects the understanding that each person's identity is infected or influenced by social features (Appiah, 2005: 65).

An individual's identity is built by several social features, culture falls in with these social features. Culture contributes to the overall individual's interaction with their surroundings. One may say that culture carries a lot of power in terms of forming an individual. So, to start to understand a person or place one must start by understanding or learning the culture.

Heritage and Identity are tools used by a culture to stay alive. These two tools keep the culture within the world of the living. Culture can be the way people celebrate and

tell stories or their art or forms of expression. These elements of culture use heritage and identity as tools as they are passed on and as they form part of how people identify themselves.

3.4 African Spirituality and African Culture

African spirituality seems to carry the view of the world in a collective understanding. No one must try and create a fracture in this collective understanding of "community". Community refers to everything around your environment, therefore "community" may also include respect to a deity that may be regarded as a creator. It is also important to note that anything that may be seen as trying to create a divide or cause friction in the community is shunned upon as it poses a danger to the well-being of the community.

Kalilombe (1994:123) notes that "there is also a great number of those who renounce the duties and rights of solidarity: those who are notoriously cruel, quarrelsome, egotistical, unforgiving, or unkind". These people are seen as a danger to the unity of the community. People who exhibit such actions are in danger of being labelled as witches. At times people like this are named eaters-of-human-flesh.

> The widespread fear of witchcraft, and consequently the frequency of beliefs and accusations about witchcraft and sorcery and practices to counter it, are signs of the central importance of kinship solidarity. M. G. Marwick (1965; and 1970, 1983 ed.) and other scholars have demonstrated that witchcraft and sorcery are really about feelings of breakdown in family and community sense of solidarity.

(Kalilombe, 1994:123)

The importance of solidarity is emphasized in the practices and the way that the members of the community are expected to behave. This is the centrepiece of their understanding of community and also how the universe is a part of this community. The universe is not seen as a thing to conquer or to thoroughly understand but a thing to work with and garner mutual dependence.

The communal relationship that is found in African spirituality is foundational to moral status. "I propose the view that, roughly, the more a being is capable of being part of

a certain communal relationship, the greater its moral status. I contrast this modal theory with other relational accounts, deeming it to be a prima facie improvement over them, and explain the sense in which it counts as 'African'." (Metz, 2019:9)

The morals or ethics that are birthed by African spirituality seem to be fuelled by the values or core beliefs. It is therefore important to understand and look into the ethics or moral status that is brought by African spirituality. Metz (2019, 10) speaks about an individual account of moral status, a holist account and a relational theory. Although he equates African spirituality and tradition to relational theory it is important to note the three theories or accounts with which he compares relational theory.

The first one is the individualistic account:

> An individualist account of moral status is the view that properties intrinsic to an entity ground the capacity to be wronged or to be the object a direct duty. An intrinsic property, as understood here, is a property that is internal to an individual and that includes no essential connection to any other being.

> (Metz, 2019:10)

The forms that influence this form are those of egoism, possessing a soul (monotheism), capacity for autonomy and other elements that can be purely internal to an individual.

The second one is a holist account of moral status. This is the view that the ones that carry it are groups, in this regard a group is a collection of entities that are near. These entities are can either be similar to one another or they can be interdependent with each other (Metz, 2019:10). Metz holds that Leopold's land ethic is a "clear version of holism", but this is also true to accounts that give moral status to species and not just to individual members.

The last theory which is the one that he equates to African spirituality even African tradition is the relational theory:

> A relational theory implies that something can warrant moral consideration even if it is not a member of a group, or, more carefully, for

a reason other than the fact that it is a member. Similar to holism, though, a relational account accords no moral status to organisms based on their intrinsic properties.

<div align="right">(Metz, 2019:10)</div>

This theory is important because he highlights that there is a great level of dependence on the functioning community. After all, even the level of moral status is determined by the group. This is due to the causal effect that is present within a group dynamic. A relational theory holds that a being only has moral consideration if and because it shows an attitudinal or behavioural element with regard to another being (Metz, 2019:10).

African spirituality is known for its communal relations understanding and it is a practice and a lifestyle that is found across Africa and Africans. A relational theory supports the standing of African spirituality, that one does not become themselves by themselves. It takes a community to give direction to the moral core of an individual, so the community gives a sense of direction. In the person is accountable to more than just themself they are more like to focus on behaviour that could be deemed as harmful to the community in one way or the other.

Molefe (2019,59) argues that "the best account of the foundations of morality in the African tradition should be grounded on some relevant spiritual property". This is the essence of African tradition that it is mostly dictated by the spiritual properties and foundations. One must always remember that when one speaks about African tradition and African religion these are to an extent the same. This is because of the spiritual foundation that they both carry, but more than that one must remember that African people are spiritual. They don't need a building or writings or any of the common things that are ascribed to tradition or religion.

African spirituality is lived in all parts of life and is also not designated to a day of an event in the year. It is the constant of living that is spiritual even as the people who we meet are deemed as important and a guest is the most important person in the house from the start until the end of their visit. To understand this properly one must go back to the core of African spirituality and its nature.

Steve Biko (2017:46) holds that "a visitor to someone's house is always met with the question "what can I do for you?" This attitude to see people not as themselves but as agents for some particular function either to one's disadvantage or advantage is foreign to us. We are not a suspicious race. We believe in the inherent goodness of man." This again speaks to the ethics that African gives birth to, which in this case is an ethic of value in another human.

Biko (2017:46) notes that African spirituality does not accommodate one to be suspicious of another but to expect the best out of them. There is an understanding that one is not burdened by the other but rather there is a common dependency that exists between the members of the community. This may be the ethic that holds all of them together. African spirituality always calls on such a moral status in the community.

Literature has been dominated by humanism as the best interpretation of African ethics. He opposes this dominant narrative being brought by current literature but argues that African spirituality and tradition is founded on some relevant spiritual property (Molefe, 2019:59).

> I reject humanism as a basis for African ethics because it fails to capture some of the prevalent thoughts and intuitions we Africans typically have about our duties towards the natural environment—the idea that, in some sense, we are one substance with nature (Murove 2007) and that some aspects of nature matter for their own sakes to some degree. I observe that a truly African ethics must cohere with a holistic and supernaturalist tenor that often characterises African ontology, which in turn demands that we accord moral status to some aspects of the environment, like animals, for their own sakes.

> (Molefe, 2019:60)

Molefe opposes humanism as the basis for African ethics because it fails to capture the understanding of the universal connection of everything. It fails to recognise the most important and central idea in African ethics which is derived from spirituality. He notes that African ethics requires that holistic tenor and it calls for the respect of the

environment. The community understanding in African spirituality includes the connection with the environment.

Religion for Africans could not be featured as a separate part of our existence on earth. It was manifest in our daily lives. We thanked God through our ancestors before we drank beer, married, worked, etc. (Biko, 2017:49). African spirituality is a daily lifestyle that is bound by the existence of all things and living in harmony with all things. Jentile (2018: 96) points out that outside influence may have confused modern day African living.

Jentile (2018:96) further examines that the introduction of scary concepts such as hell and eternal fire and labelling African spirituality as superstition while missionaries labelled them as scientific was a part of the influence that brought confusion to Africans. His stance is that missionaries demonized African spirituality and that it was discarded leaving nothing of African spirituality for the African Christian. African descendants are the same everywhere you go, whether it is in West Africa, the Caribbean or North America, we are people of the spirit (Ackah, 2017:1)

"A common perception is that African ethics places so much emphasis on the community and its well-being that it loses sight of the individual and her autonomy. To what extent, if any, is an individual permitted to follow her conscience or 'better judgement', even if this may contravene the traditional, cultural beliefs and practices of the community?" (Horsthemke 2015:4) African ethics which is derived from the spirituality has a great emphasis on the community and seems very little attention is given to the individual.

African traditions are not fixed or static but just like all cultures and practices, there is an evolution that takes place according to circumstance and challenges (Horsthemke, 2015:4).

"Female genital excision is a case in point. Although this form of circumcision is still practised in certain regions on the African continent, it has been outlawed in a vast number of countries…stating that they constitute a violation of individuals' dignity and psychological and bodily integrity, and they ought therefore to be abolished" (Horsthemke 2015:4) There is an evolution that happens in all cultures and African traditions are not exempt from that as circumstances and challenges change.

Mbiti's argument that the realm of the spirit is integrally related to both the historical and natural realms existence is affirmed by Paris (1995:51). The example that is shared gives light to this understanding.

"For example, the integral relation of the realm of spirit with that of history is seen most vividly in the African conception of life, which, incidentally, differs markedly from Western understandings. In the African worldview, there is no death in the sense of radical separation from either the family or the tribal community" (Paris, 1995:52) The understanding of life is not linear but it is cyclical and that human life is continuous.

This builds on the knowledge that we are connected with all things because of the continuous nature of life. One of the things that are brought by African spirituality that is built on the knowledge of interwovenness and dependence is the concept of family. One of the things that are important to note is that African spirituality calls on a level of unity and harmony in the family dynamic in the same way it calls for it in the community dynamic.

> Under the conditions of slavery, Africans were subjected to an alien social order in which they were bought and sold as property and deprived of the most rudimentary conditions of civilization such as the preservation of family life and maintenance of traditional customs…yet, despite such severe prescriptions, the African slaves maintained their cosmic understanding.
>
> (Paris, 1995:57)

This is one of the key elements of African spirituality and it hinges on the understanding that as an individual you cannot be the best of yourself but you become amongst others and also that you must live in relation with others. This is where concepts of honour are taken from and are passed on as a culture. You must honour the elders around you and honour your environment and this behaviour benefits the community.

"(T)here can be little doubt that traditional African society was communitarian unless it is a matter of exceptions that prove the rule…. Communalism is an embodiment of the values of traditional Africa" (Wiredu, 2008:333, 336). The community aspect is a

constant variable when it comes to speaking about African tradition. This is because it may very well be all that African tradition and spirituality are trying to communicate to us. Whenever a conversation about African spirituality and or tradition is started the key discussion point is the communal nature.

This nature is the core of African spirituality and it is therefore very key in understanding most reasons that may be given for certain practices and rituals. When rituals are done they are to connect to the invisible by way of communicating although the relationship is already there by way of the constant connection. For one to truly be able to measure the moral status one must understand that harmony and unity are the key elements of African spirituality.

When it comes to matters of social injustice, the starting point for applying African ethics is to just the circumstance by the harm it does to the community or the good or upliftment it brings. In the cases such as abuse, one would think that African tradition promotes dominance over women but it does not as per its core values. The act of dominance leads to violence and then disharmony in the community. The hierarchal system as indicated earlier on in one of structure and not of control and dominance.

There are elements in African traditional practice that have shifted from the core value, but it is to be expected because evolution is inevitable. One must remember that traditions are lived out through us as humans, we are the imperfect incubators of traditions. We, therefore, are in danger of corrupting traditions as we pass them down because at times, we wish to interpret the tradition and as we pass it on it gets a new meaning and therefore loses its initial reason.

African spirituality brings about an African ethic that is centred around the interwovenness of life and all elements of nature, this will be further explored in the next chapter. One must live under the knowledge that they are not themselves by themselves and that there is a dependency that exists and must always be recognised. This seems to be how African spirituality functions and survives. This form of ethics stands against any form of injustice that threatens danger to the community, this includes the environment and the animals.

The principle of *"Ubuntu"* that speaks to "A person is because of other persons" as opposed to "I think therefore I am", as central as it is to African spirituality it is important to understand it in application. This principle is one that helps people be

accountable to the next person. It gives being a human the responsibility of considering other humans. There are points where it can be very complicated to apply it especially in matters of social justice.

Boesak (2017:119) in examining the work of Bishop Desmond Tutu, argues that Tutu's use and application of the principle of *"Ubuntu"* is "Christianised". Without explaining what "Christianised" thoroughly means he points out that Tutu's application resonates with the Christian gospels, which could be all that he meant by "Christianised". Bishop Tutu applies the principle in the situation of the proceedings of the TRC (Truth and reconciliation commission). Where victims of Apartheid human rights violations were called to make statements about their experiences and the perpetrators given a chance to ask for forgiveness without prosecution.

Tutu spoke of Ubuntu being compassionate and hospitable, it gives people a great sense of resilience even when they are dehumanised by others. Boesak (2017:122) holds that in the case where justice has been forfeited, and people do not get punished for their violent acts is that still "ubuntu" the African spirituality principle or is that Matthew 18:22 which states not to forgive seven times but 77 times? To Boesak, this is not a result of ubuntu but Christian principle, as he puts it ubuntu as used by Tutu is "Christianised". To him if that is ubuntu then ubuntu needs ubuntu (Boesak, 2017:122).

"I am because you are" as a key in African spirituality speaks to the point of both Bishop Tutu and Boesak in that there is a responsibility to all that is connected as well as a need for compassion. The goal is life and not destruction and resolution instead of confusion and frustration. Ubuntu is applied differently, but both have solid reasons for that application, thus both in my observation are justified.

Spirituality regulates and governs the lives of the bantu people. *"Bantu"* being a word that is associated with ubuntu. Bantu meaning people and ubuntu meaning humanness. Biko (1978:45) stretched that spirituality manifests itself to African people daily. Spirituality is not associated with a day or just one experience or even a person but it is interwoven into life's very fabric to Africans. African spirituality is daily spirituality.

3.5 African Cultures

There are so many kinds of cultures, in a sociological sense, in Africa, as varied as the types of spiritualities that are present. I spoke to a pastor, Dr Rev Thembelani Jentile, who did his PhD on *The spirituality of Steve Biko: A Theology from below* at the University of Free State, about my intention to look into African spirituality and culture, he simply remarked, "isn't that the same thing?". To him, spirituality and culture were cut from the same cloth if not even the same thing.

His reaction to African spirituality and culture is not at all a surprise because most African cultures are centred around spirituality. As I said earlier, there are more African cultures than there are forms of African spirituality, this is important because the different African cultures are more likely to have the same spiritual principles than they are other cultural principles.

One of the things that tie strongly to African spirituality is the identity that is found within the community and cannot be found by one's self. This is a cultural concept that is shared throughout most of the African culture.

 "To be human is to belong to the whole community, and to do so involves participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundation, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his existence." (Mbiti,1970:135)

If we look at this understanding, we will see that this is the same thought that is in African spirituality of the interconnectedness of everything. So, we see by this one principle that African spirituality has a strong connection with African cultures. Most of the time, African spirituality seems to give reason to the culture or cultural traditions. Some of the traditions and practices that are found within African culture are there because of a spiritual understanding. If certain rituals are not done then there will be consequences, if certain rites are not performed life will not go well for the family, community or individual.

Some rituals and rites must be performed strictly because if they are not done it will displease the super-sensible or the unseen. More specifically the ancestors will not be pleased. So, when culture is not followed there are spiritual consequences that

manifest themselves through circumstances affecting one's life and reality. So, the cultural guidelines are accountable to the unseen spiritual reality.

To gain more understanding about the emphatic similarities that make spirituality and culture the same thing in an African context one may refer to African thought. Brown (2004:158) explains traditional African thought. "By 'traditional African thought', I mean the philosophical perspectives that were indigenous to sub-Saharan cultures before the infusion of Islamic, Judaic, and Christian ideologies. Central to traditional African thought is the belief that intentions of ancestral spirits can be known." (Brown, 2004:158)

In traditional African thought, the spiritual gives reason for the physical. Furthermore, the ancestors are believed to be very central to the understanding of the spiritual activity. It is also believed that they are recognizable as physical occurrences and can be identified with their once living human counterpart (Brown, 2004: 158). In understanding from this study that culture how we behave and react, in an African understanding that is because of spiritual reality.

So, it is through this conceptualization that one might suggest that culture is a product of spiritual reality. So, the form that it has now is because of spirituality and it will thus continually accommodate spirituality. Biko (2017:49) explains how "religion" featured and in some cases still does in the daily lives of Africans:

"We thanked God through our ancestors before we drank beer; married, worked, etc. We would find it artificial to create special occasions for worship. Neither did we see it logical to have a particular building in which all worship would be conducted. We believed that God was always in communication with us and therefore merited attention everywhere and anywhere" (Biko, 2017:49)

The aspect of communication with a supreme deity daily everywhere and everywhere is a very important one to note and further extends the understanding that is brought forth in the nature of the similarity and relationship of spirituality and culture in an African context. The two seem to be one and the same. Even in this understanding there still lies conceptualization that culture does not wholly capture all things that have to do with the realm of the spirit. Culture understood in this way will continually be analysed in the fourth chapter about thoughts of Stanley Hauerwas regarding habits and practices of the community forming the character of

their members influencing an ethic that is slowly formed and not pushed by the panic of decision.

3.6 Africa as a concept

The word Africa is generally understood to mean the continent and African to be of Africa, but what makes the word 'Africa' or and or 'African' possible? Although answering this will need a more in-depth discussion, I want to just look into this not looking for a conclusion or define and fully-fledged answer but as a discussion of the concept of Africa. In other words, I will look at how 'Africa' is viewed in different ways and thus carries different meanings through the different perceptions.

As I have already stated the term Africa is generally understood as a word that refers to groups, institutions and structures found on the continent of Africa but the concept more than that, is there more to understand about it? Fourie (2015:1) argues that the terms 'Africa' and 'African' are not only geographical. He rightly highlights that there must be a different meaning of Africa that is not fully covered by the generic understanding of the terms as he points out both historical and identity factors as reasons.

Central to my discussion is going to be the "four concepts of Africa" that Fourie (2005) uses to break down the possible meanings of Africa. These concepts come from an understanding that there is more than one concept of Africa. These four concepts are Africa as a place, Africa as a commodity, Africa as a condition and Africa as an ideal. I will not discuss them in-depth but enough to let each concept be understood.

Firstly, Africa as a place is what most people think about when they think of the word and as already indicated there is more to the word Africa than just the geographical place. Africa as a continent is home to many different religions and several different languages are spoken. There are also different cultures that exist on the continent. So, there exists great plurality as the inhabitants do not share the same race, culture or even language.

Although many differences are amongst the people who live in Africa, there are still many who believe that the designation of the meaning of Africa should be specific to the continent and its inhabitants. The argument is that this gives the most neutral

and "descriptive explanation" (Fourie, 2015:2). It is very much possible to view Africa as a place, but for Fourie (2015:2) this meaning is "neither neutral nor purely descriptive".

The Romans were the first to make Africa a place or to refer to the place as Africa. The way they understood Africa as a place was more restricted than we understand it to be today (Fourie, 2015:2). The foundation of the formation of Africa Vetus, which was Rome's first colony and also what is called North Africa today, is the destruction of Carthage (found in what is today modern Tunisia) at the end of the Third Punic War (146 BCE). The Roman later took over Thapsus as a second colony in the region expressing the expansion of the Roman Empire.

Before the Romans took over that region, the word "Africa" was not yet used to mark the region. The Greeks were present in northeast Libya which was called Cyrenaica at the time. There are several Greek texts that speak about societies that are today referred to as Northern Africa. So, with this clarity what about the etymology of the word Africa?

The etymology of the word Africa is not clear according to Fourie (2015:2). There are a few explanations, some of these are, the authors from the Hellenistic period held that the word refers to the descendants of the mystical hero-god *"Afer"*. Another is that of Leo Africanus where he argues that the word refers to the Greek word *"aphrike",* meaning the without cold. The most recent one is by Shaw (2014), He states that the name Africa is derived from the name of the *"Afri".* The *"Afri"* are a small ethnic group that lived in what is known today as Tunisia and those were the first Africans that the Romans encountered (Fourie, 2015:2).

All these explanations carry one characteristic which is the fact that they show that the first use of the word Africa was as a result of the Roman empire's colonisation of the region of North Africa.

Secondly, Africa as a condition is seen through the lens that the General Act of the Berlin Conference commodified Africa. "The document is permeated by the belief that the African condition is one in need of betterment until it is 'civilised', and that the signatories of the Act have the responsibility to better this condition by means of trade and political development." (Fourie, 2015:5). The "condition" of Africa was used

as an excuse by the countries at the Berlin conference, without a single African present to take advantage of the value that the continent carried.

The argument was that creating a place that is favourable for industry and trade will bring about civilisation. This argument presupposes a universal standard of civilisation and that notion of what is civilised was then placed upon Africa and its inhabitants. So, Africa from this understanding is a condition that needs to be changed and developed and more fittingly "healed".

Thirdly, Africa as a commodity leads us immediately to the colonial period of the commodification of Africa. This was seen have been started by the French protectorate over Tunisia in 1881. It is from this point that Africa became a place of value that also signified political power in Europe. This then brings back into discussion the Berlin Conference that has already been referenced regarding the concept of the commodification of Africa.

"The primary aim of the Berlin Conference was to settle disputes on different claims to the Congo, and to lay the foundation for settling European claims to African land and trade in the future." (Fourie, 2015:4). Although there were treaties that happened between some European leaders and the local leaders they were never fully beneficial for both parties but heavily benefited the Europeans.

The partition of Africa does not seem to have been the initial intention of the conference. There were only three agenda points that were given by Bismark namely, agreement on the consensus of trade in the basin and the mouth of the Congo river, freedom of navigation on the now DRC and Niger rivers (Fourie, 2015:4). The partitioning of Africa was supposed to start after the conference. It is the uncontrolled imperialist hunger in Europe that increased the need for natural resources as Africa was believed to have untapped riches. The concept of Africa as a commodity only lights Africa as a victim as Fourie (2015) notes, and it does not capture the full length of the word.

Lastly, Fourie (2015:17) argues that Africa or African could be used to speak to representative ideals that reclaim and reinterpret the African socio-cultural resources. In a nutshell, this concept pushed the idea that Africans can speak with their own voice and reimagine itself beyond the other concepts of Africa that have been stated. This is a concept where although there may be variations in

understanding of reclaiming and how it is done, this concept has what Fourie (2015) notes as an internal coherence.

Now, notwithstanding that there are probably more concepts of Africa that can be brought it was never the goal to say these concepts that have been mentioned are the only and the most definite. What these concepts of Africa show is that there are great variations in the view and in relating to Africa. These variations exist for both those that reside within the geographical place and those outside. The effects and history of the world meeting in Africa is one of the most obvious and is unavoidable.

Although the focus of this paper is closely linked with the concept of Africa as a place as such the inhabitants of Africa. The different concepts play a role in the full understanding of Africa and there influences that come through analysing the different concepts are felt in the African experience, I know this as Africa is where I call home.

3.7 African Ethics

To begin to talk about African ethics one can start in many ways such as talk first about the spirituality attributed to African values. Personhood is where I want to start, as African ethics weighs in heavy on personhood. Personhood is understood among many traditional people, specifically below the Sahara as being less or more of a person. While being more of a person is the goal, this is also referred to as humanness or ubuntu (Metz, 2013:144). Ubuntu is a term used by Nguni speakers in southern Africa.

The question that follows the understanding of personhood as "being more or less of a person" is how does one acquire personhood? What does it look like? Masolo (2010:265) argues that there is a close relationship between an individual and the society that they reside. He holds that if a person were to be isolated from society and never engage that they would become "less" of a person, that it is a recipe to not possess that humanness.

To him isolation is enough of a circumstance for a person not only to have a bad life but to not acquire personhood as understood in the traditional sense of African thought. This however, this does not fully complete the picture of how personhood is

acquired as being in society cannot be the only thing that is required. So, his explanation in that sense does not really answer the question although it might give a start.

Although society is necessary for development and growth it does not guarantee a virtuous life or a life of humanness. His argument is that human needs and interests are best served in union and that being depraved of this is to be depraved of something that is in one's nature (Masolo, 2010:245). One naturally has a need to participate in the world of persons. A person is dependent on the community for their development. The participation of one in the community's common customs, traditions and the culture and other communal activities are important.

There are several complaints about ubuntu that are often brought forward. One is that the term ubuntu and its meaning are vague and do not speak to requirements from an individual. Metz (2011:534) notes that another common criticism of *"ubuntu"* is that is has a "collectivist orientation", as there are some that believe that this might require a form of "uncompromising majoritarianism" or extreme self-sacrifices for society.

Another argument against ubuntu and its relevance to public morality (specifically about South Africa) is that "it is inappropriate for the new South Africa because of its traditional origin. Ideas associated with *"ubuntu"* grew out of small-scale, pastoral societies in the pre-colonial era whose world views were based on thickly spiritual notions such as relationships with ancestors (the 'living-dead') (Metz, 2011:534). The argument being that if that is the source of the values then one might and can assume doubt that they fit or belong to a large-scale, industrialised and modern society that has many cultures with many of them being secular.

According to Metz, it is up to the people that live in the contemporary context to refashion the interpretation of ubuntu so that it fits and characterises the best current understandings of what is morally correct. So, one does not have to remove themselves from the term ubuntu simply because they think that contextually its differently from current understandings.

Metz (2013:154) agrees with the community-based conception of personhood that Masolo holds. "The first major argument for the community-based conception of personhood is that it, unlike the welfare-based one, can account for the moral

relevance of decisions people have taken" (Metz, 2013:154). This ethic makes it possible to account for the relevance of past actions in deciding how to treat people in the present.

To Metz (2011:537) understands ubuntu as a way of capturing a "normative account" of what we must value the most in life. This speaks to personhood, self-hood and humanness. The part where *"ubuntu"* states that "a person is a person…" is more of a call for one to develop one's own self in order to exhibit that which is human and carve out one's personhood. This also speaks to the complaint of "group-thinking" that some believe ubuntu suggests for the suggestion is that the development should be done within the context of community.

> To seek out community with others is not best understood as equivalent to doing whatever a majority of people in society want or conforming to the norms of one's group. Instead, African moral ideas are both more attractively and more accurately interpreted as conceiving of communal relationships as an objectively-desirable kind of interaction that should instead guide what majorities want and which norms become dominant.
>
> (Metz, 2011:538)

Solidarity and identity are recurring themes in typical African discussion as Metz (2011:538) notes, and these explain the bases of community and its importance in African thought. It is important for one to think of themselves as "identifying" with members of the same group. This is for conceive oneself as "we". The failure to identify with one another can result in division amongst the community.

To Metz this division is people looking at themselves in terms of an "I" that is in opposition to a "you," not only that but also looking to undermine one another's ends (Metz, 2011:538). Solidarity is for the community to engage in mutual aid, to act in a way that the members of the community can benefit. This solidarity also speaks to the attitudes of people, and this also includes good intentions and helping people for their sake.

"While identity and solidarity are logically distinct, characteristic African thought includes the view that, morally, they ought to be realised together"

(Metz, 2011:538). The communal relationship with one another is necessary and is promoted in African thought. This is to confer ubuntu upon one another and thus the combination of identity and solidarity.

There is an examination by Gbadegesin (2005:414) that African traditional religion is the place from which African ethics strongly moves. He speaks on the element of reflection that is required in the processes that involve moral philosophy in African traditional religion.

There is a sense of devotion and reverence in the response of the traditional but is it motivated by seeking the well-being of humans. It is therefore for the traditional African that when they contemplate the cosmos there is an awareness or a conviction of a greater and higher power. It is this higher power that directs and control destiny. This is the definition of religion in accordance with the Webster dictionary.

The effective nature of the gods is important in there is no separation of the divine and secular. Gbadegesin (2005:414) holds that if the gods are valued for what they can deliver then the separation cannot exist. The effectiveness of the gods must be felt in a person's life. "The gods are subject to human evaluation and assessment", and therefore, one must find their anchor, identify a god that can provide that safe anchor (Gbadegesin, 2005:414).

The uniqueness of African traditional religion is in its ability to be reflective and speak to the impact of an individual on the cosmos. So, when one has consulted with the moral philosophy of African traditional religion, they must realise that they are one piece of an entire cosmos and that they must account for present actions to that cosmos. If morality comprises of moral beliefs, rules, principles, and problems then each society has an incentive to develop a solid but vibrant moral institution for communal existence and community enhancement.

Dladla (2017:56) supports Bujo in saying "there is no ethics as such, but only different ethical systems with identical ideas. The ethic of ubuntu which is a key ethic in African spirituality, is bound to the recognition that motion is the principle of "BE-ing". This makes the ethics of ubuntu to centralise contingency and mutability (Dladla, 2017:56). Dladla holds that being born may qualify one as human but it is

not sufficient as one has to be active in being. This means that one's be-ing is always dependent on one's doing in relation to others.

Therefore, I one is defined by their relation to others, their being in a philosophical sense is dependent on that according to Dladla. Kobe (2021:6) holds that the human centredness of African ethics is primarily based on the community model and this also includes the living and the living dead. There is support by Bujo that in order for one to engage with the African ethical community there isn't a limitation to the living community. The invisible world of the ancestor's forms part of the society.

Kobe (2021:6) notes that "The unseen world of the living dead plays a significant role in shaping morality within the community. So, therefore, in the aftermath of life on earth, the ancestors are responsible for their offspring remaining brave and resilient and thus, they are to set up moral directives for the welfare of their children." The moral directive that is given by the living dead are seen as much needed wisdom and life-giving. These are taken to be important as whoever does not follow the directives has chosen death.

An ethic that is founded on community can bring challenges, Bujo (2009:116) argues that there is not a conflict between the individual and the community as the two compliment one another. Bujo goes on to mention the custom of name giving and how it speaks to the value of the individual. The giving of a name is not simply the father's name being passed on from one generation to the next, but a child also receives a name according to the circumstances of their birth. "The name that a child is given is never without particular individual meaning; it always expresses something of persons' being. 'It characterises the personal ontological reality'." (Kobe, 2021:6).

One of the most prominent figures in southern African when it comes to African thought and that is worth briefly mentioning is Steve Biko. His understanding of African culture and what it is to be a black African is important in conversations of African ethics and values. The values of humanness and the spirituality of black Africans were central to his understanding of morality and how black Africans relate to the world around them and the influences that are present. This made up the driving force behind black consciousness.

Black consciousness is in essence the realisation by the black man of the need to rally together with his brothers around the cause of their operation – the blackness of their skin – and to operate as a group in order to rid themselves of the shackles that bind them to perpetual servitude. It seeks to demonstrate the lie that black is an aberration from the 'normal' which is white.

(Biko, 2017:34)

It is a manifestation of a new realisation that by seeking to run away from themselves and to emulate the white man, blacks are insulting the intelligence of whoever created them black. Black Consciousness, therefore, takes cognisance of the deliberateness of God's plan in creating black people black. It seeks to infuse the black community with a new-found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion, and their outlook to life (Hook, 2004:105). Biko is giving fundamental layers of an African ethic, personhood and community. One must "be" also to themselves and the community functioning together in a unit formed by personhood.

Jentile highlights that to Biko black consciousness is a process of looking inward to lift up the spirit. Biko speaks of "Spiritual poverty" which is black Africans negating their nature of spirituality and taking the western form of spirituality that he believed was morality without spirituality, but Africans are moral because they are spiritual (Jentile, 2018:92). Bantu Stephen "Xhamela" Biko saw Christianity as a religion that within itself was a solid message of redemption but believed that the western missionaries infused the Christian tradition with their own. This then forced Africans to adopt even the traditions of the west as that is how Christianity was packaged. Jentile (2018:101) points out that Biko believed that the missionaries were the first people to come and relate to the indigenous people in a human way, but he puts them at the center of the colonization process.

Biko knew the value of the African cultures and was very concerned at the inability of the missionaries to bring Christianity to Africans on an African plate. Biko's interpretation of the consequence of receiving a Christianity infused in Western tradition was 'spiritual poverty' which manifests itself in two ways, "people are

distracted from issues that affect their communities" and secondly "black people read the Bible with a shocking gullibility" Jentile (2018:93).

Black consciousness works from the premise of African ethic of community, an ethic of ubuntu. This is because his call for "consciousness" is a call of self-realisation and community engagement and collaboration. The coming together and knowing one's own self and one's culture. Consciousness, black consciousness can only be achieved through ubuntu as one has a responsibility to conscientize one's self but also to engage and relate with their community because of the responsibility one has for their community.

3.8 Divination and moral philosophy

There's an evaluation by Grillo (2005) that African religions offer divination as a way to get a reflection on personal actions and their consequences. This is also used to reflect on the role of the individual in the cosmos. Commonly, the technique of divination is used to determine the future and to make pronouncements about said future. Foundationally, in West African religions this is not the main role of divination because more than just finding out about the future divination speaks to the significance of today, the present (Grillo, 2005:438). The aim is to diagnose rather than just predict.

People come to the diviners in search of answers about their lives. They may come to try and understand the misfortunes of their lives and try to find a way forward. This is where the diviners come in to assist, in diagnosing their current circumstance. There may be a sickness that one suffers from or just misfortunes in their life. The diviner will use sticks, shells, bones or seeds etc. that will carry an encoded message.

> Its interpretation draws the client into a reflection about the self in relation to others and one's hidden desires. The divinatory consultation invariably culminates in a prescription for a sacrifice, that aims at re-establishing a dynamic equilibrium among individuals, society, and cosmos.

> (Grillo, 2005:438)

The diviners bring the client in reflecting on their current predicament and recommend a way to come back into "equilibrium" with society and the cosmos. This is because the individual's life is affected and affects all that is around them so moral reflection is then called upon by the diviner. A reflection of the past and present is brought forth and therefore a course of action is given, in some cases a sacrifice is called upon.

The nature of divination is that the addresses the current issues that a person is facing. Just like ethics, divination addresses "the interface between a system of values" and the uncertainties of experiences to which it should be applied (Grillo, 2005:439). And thus, divination is not an articulation of principles and "moral philosophy" but applies a sense of reflection and discernment to moral problems.

We then may say that divination and practising ethics both need more than just a standard application to the moral problems and cultural standards of good and evil. There needs to be an interrogation of the moral dilemma and both divination and the practice of ethics promote this fact.

West African traditions hold divination as a practical religious system although the ethnic diversity of the city means that clients and diviners are not of common ethnic background. "In the urban situation, every instance of divination is a deliberate undertaking, for it is the client who decides to initiate an inquiry" (Grillo, 2005:446). There is a great amount of control that the client holds in the entire process. This includes choosing the diviner and their engagement or choosing to participate in the "interpretation of signs".

Grillo holds that divination will continue to be actively present even in urban life and a relevant affirmation of what may be considered a distinctively West African ethic because of the unpredictable daily context of urban life:

> In the alienating context of contemporary urban life, where the negotiation of daily existence is increasingly difficult and unpredictable, divination is perhaps more critical than ever as a mechanism by which a sense of communal identity and moral purpose can be asserted, and a sense of personal agency is grasped and affirmed.

> (Grillo, 2005:446)

In general, there is a moral outlook that is present within African ethics. Gbadegesin (2005:418) notes the following elements in this regard. Truthfulness, this is rewarded in the Yoruba culture. Those that tell the truth will be rewarded through promotions through divinities. Secondly, industry, working as a means of avoiding poverty is a present element. Thirdly, in moderation, Gbadegesin notes that moderation is endorsed and is an important piece in the evaluation of character or building it.

Generosity and patience follow as these are both appreciated by the gods, they both are required. This is because they both speak to the human relational nature of each other. The last two are respect for elders and the community. All of these speak to the moral outlook present and speak also to the need for harmonious living with everything and everyone.

3.9 Conclusion

Culture tends to address the varied needs of the community. It gives reasons explaining why certain actions must be taken. At times it is extreme while at times it is just the thing that is needed or both. So, culture is adaptive as much as it is an identity marker. It is also dependent on people for its survival. African culture finds itself within the very element of adaptivity and preservation for posterity as a matter of identity. The firm basis of community is a great way to keep African culture alive.

Moreover, in this chapter we saw that there is a lot to talk about when it comes to African ethics and what that looks like today. The core values and fundamentals of African thought and the requirements thereof. The term ubuntu comes forward a lot and it is practiced or promoted more specifically by the southern part of Africa. The understanding of being because of the community around you is an African ethic. It is the source of many "rules" that are present in African culture.

Being because of others has an implication that one cannot survive on their own and that relationship and relating and engaging with the community is essential to be developed morally as well as developing one's personhood. Although, simply being in a community does not guarantee moral development but being alone guarantees that the development will not happen. A community-based way of living that makes

everyone responsible for each other has a higher chance of creating a more formed personhood. This might sound like only philosophical thought but it a source of community empowerment and self-improvement.

Therefore, there exists African ethics that must be acknowledged as just that, ethics. Christian ethics does not contend with African ethics, but it can blend with it. The intersection between the two will be discussed in chapter 5. The understanding of what it means to be African is important as it gives context. African values and ways of moral formation are built on the foundation of community as the environment that enables morality to be developed in individuals.

The development of a moral vision by African communities for their own community is very important. One must recognise that African cultures have been more than able over decades to create their own standards of morality. The recognition of this by western philosophers is not very relevant although it must be noted as disregarding the ability of African cultures to establish their own moral vision.

CHAPTER 4

CHRISTIAN ETHICS AND HAUERWAS' PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the life and work of Hauerwas to analyse the background and root of his ethics. I will also look into Hauerwas' understanding of 'the self' and moral formation. This is necessary and important because, in the chapter, African spirituality and culture will be further analysed along with the theology of Hauerwas. This will be to see the possible relationship between the two phenomena and Hauerwas' ethics.

In looking at his background I will investigate the development of the theology that he introduces. This is to give background to the thinking of Hauerwas and look at what were his influences over the years of his life. This then will lead to the analysing of his theology and the way that he chose to think about ethics. It is in the following chapter that I will put my analysis against the understanding of African spirituality and African culture that will be derived from this study.

4.2 Ethics

The understanding of ethics has evolved over the decades and with that the attachments that have been given to it. Singer (2011:1) reflects that around the 1950s conversations on what is ethical and what is not were attached to specific acts. These would include acts such as promiscuity and other sexually associated acts. These conversations and understandings hardly spoke about the moral obligation to the poor and the marginalised.

So, there was a "narrow sense" of morality that was active and popular at the time. In the current contemporary reality, this is no longer the case although you still find the then narrow understanding even today, it is not greatly pushed as in those days. Today there are greater discussions on matters of climate change even in the church as well as the reality of global poverty.

It is in reflection of the past understanding of ethics that I believe it would be better to know primarily what ethics is not instead of what it is, in this way the parameters of ethics become clearer. Singer (2011:2) notes several things that ethics is not, and he starts with highlighting that ethics is not only good in theory and not in practice. He reflects that ethics is not about an ideal system that is great theoretically and is not practised or cannot be practised. "People sometimes believe that ethics is inapplicable to the real world because they assume that ethics is a system of short and simple rules like "do not lie", "do not steal" and "do not kill"." (Singer, 2011:2). This view of ethics makes it difficult to understand that ethics can be anything else and thus it is difficult to apply to life complex situations. These simple rules can make it difficult in many situations that are not black and white. This is especially true in countries where there is a system of oppression.

In situations such as those of Apartheid in South Africa where people had to be hidden away by secret organisations because of fear of the government killing them or wrongly persecuting them, the "ethic" of do not lie is very problematic and in this case extremely dangerous. This is the same for a predicament that had befallen Germany. As a person hiding a Jewish family so that they would not be killed the ethic of do not lie poses an issue.

Singer (2011:2) has a suggestion for those that still think of ethics as a system of rules, he proposes that they find more complicated and more specific rules that do not conflict with one another or by ranking them in a hierarchical structure to resolve any present conflict between them. He also notes that there is an approach to not greatly hinders by the complexities that the rule base carries this is the consequentialist view. This view does not begin with rules but with goals and thus asses' actions to the extent that they further the goals. One of the well-known theories of this is utilitarianism.

"The classical utilitarian regards an action as right if it produces more happiness for all affected by it than action and wrong if does not" (Singer, 2015:3). This means that there is no set action to a circumstance. This helps to remove rigid adherence to rules or ideals.

Ethics is also not based on religion; it is independent of religion. There are many views regarding this as many theists believe that ethics cannot exist without religion.

Singer (2011:3) points out that traditionally, the most important link between religion and ethics was that religion was believed to give a reason for one to do right. Although not all thinkers have accepted that link such as Emmanuel Kant who held that the moral law must be obeyed for its own sake and not because of self-interest. Ethics can exist outside of religion or that motivation. The idea of heaven and hell can lead people to make an ethical decision but the ideas to not always lead to ethical acts.

Overall, ethics is complex by nature as it is not even easy to get a universal ethical judgement as circumstances change the cases. Singer (2011:11) states, "From an ethical perspective, it is irrelevant that it is I who benefit from cheating you and you who lose by it. Ethics goes beyond 'I' and 'you' to the universal law, the universalizable judgement, the standpoint of the impartial spectator or ideal observer, or whatever we choose to call it" (Singer, 2011:11). This approach has been attempted and has not yielded much.

The great struggle with getting a universal ethical judgement is that the existing contexts are too many that universally covering an ethical vision that will fit is not possible. But on the other hand, one might argue that is a matter of preference or is a real requirement to accommodate these contexts. Singer (2011:11) highlights that even though a universal ethic might not be ideal it might just be a starting point.

Do my needs and wants outweigh those of every one since they are my preference? This is something to consider when looking into the Universal ethic, that is the push against having to not live within my preference and desires? If so, why are my preferences and desires above everyone else? So, this argument can have validity in the larger sense.

The problem with a universal judgement is that it excludes many factors that affect a community. It excludes contexts that do not make life black and white but contexts that are complex. Hauerwas' rejection of them is not about personal preference but it's about sustainability and effectiveness. Universal ethics can be seen as a good starting point perhaps (Singer, 2011:11), but they cannot be applied without further development and accommodation of different contexts and experiences.

4.3 Christian Ethics

For early Christians ethics was a matter of attitudes rather than rules and commandments. This does not mean that laws such as the Ten commandments did not play a role as they did, but Christian morality was fundamentally based on the practice of several virtues. These virtues included love, hope, justice, forgiveness, and patience (Van Gerwen, 2005:205). Christian morality was committed to fighting things such as envy, lust, hate, sloth and anger.

The New Testament with its 27 books has brought a variety of ethical stances instead of just one. Van Gerwen (2005: 205) holds that all authors of the New Testament seem to agree on a few issues. Firstly, all moral commitments find their relevance is a prior acceptance of God's redemptive coming into the world in Jesus. One must affirm themselves in the faith as this is the foundation for all ethical orientation. Secondly, the commands to love God and to love your neighbour are intimately linked with one another and represent the core of Christian ethics. Thirdly, "The message of Jesus cannot be limited to a Jewish audience; it has a universal meaning. However, some authors, such as Paul and Luke, move further than others in directing the Christian message to non-Jewish followers" (Van Gerwen, 2005:206).

It may be important to note that there may be an existing biased on the present knowledge of Christian ethics. This is because of the selection process to which the primary sources have gone through over history. All of early Christianity's texts have been mostly transmitted by monks. "These members of religious orders tended to show more interest in the ascetical and mystical aspects of the Christian life than in the urban and professional life of married lay Christians." (Van Gerwen, 2005:204).

Being celibate males that live in a patriarchal society they had a one-sided gender perspective. This means the filter through which the read and transmitted the texts was not inclusive. So, the primary sources of reflection for early Christian ethics must then be approached with this understanding in mind and must be of the one-sided perspective that may be present within the primary sources.

Over the history of Christianity, there have been several approaches in Christian ethics that are worth noting and looking over. Porter (2005:227-236) goes through the several approaches of Christian ethics. Firstly, moral norms as divine law, "The image of God as lawgiver, and correctively, an approach to moral norms that

construes them as God's commands or laws, is central to the Hebrew Bible." (Porter, 2005:228). Although there have been reflections that speak to the legalism of the Old Testament and the contrast of the defining characteristic of grace in the New Testament, Porter notes that there are scholars that pointed out that God is characterized as a "lawgiver" in certain parts of the New Testament too (Meeks,1993:119-210).

Duns Scotus (1266-1308) was the first Theologian to defend the divine command theory of ethics. In his defence, he claimed that the will of God is not bound by any considerations of order or justice as in his view the will is nobler than intellect and therefore cannot be constrained by it (Porter, 2005:228). He further states that it is only those laws that govern our relationship with God that are to be Natural laws for it is only these that follow by strict necessity from divine nature.

John Calvin and Martin Luther (1483-1546) from the point of Duns Scotus then affirmed that the ultimate source of justice and morality is God. "Not only does this mean that moral norms derive from God's will; it also implies that God's actions cannot be evaluated by our standards of justice and consistency" (Porter, 2005:228).

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) later brought another expression of the approach, *fear and trembling*, where he starts with God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac and thus raising the possibility of a "teleological suspension of the ethical", where the direct command of God can suspend the demands of universal morality (Porter, 2005:229). Karl Barth also made a defence, for him, any attempt to bring an ethic based on considerations of nature, reasonableness or the like reflect human rebellion again the sovereignty of God. God faces humanity with a word of command that is both "heteronomous and absolutely binding" (Porter, 2005:229).

"Barth insists on this, not only to uphold the omnipotence of God but also to uphold God's character as one who establishes a relationship of authority and obedience through divine commands" (Porter, 2005:229) He further holds that it is also through Jesus Christ that freedom is given through God's commands even as they bind to obedience.

Secondly, moral norms as Natural Law, viewing the idea of law as an "intrinsic principle of order" (Porter, 2005:229). There have been different forms of Natural law, that emphasise the significance of prerational natural processes. There are also

some that stress the dominance of a requirement for reason. The Hebrew scriptures may lend a hand to the approach of natural law as the book of Psalms and other wisdom literature in the scriptures puts weight on God's law as an expression of wisdom.

Thirdly, ideals of virtue, by mid-twelfth century Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard had brought forth two distinct approaches to virtue ethics. Abelard held that virtues are human excellences that can be attained without grace. He was of the view that virtues were in existence among the best of the pagans (Porter, 2005:232). Lombard on the other hand understood virtues as expressions of Christian charity.

Thomas Aquinas brought these two understandings of virtue together and explained their place in Christian life. "In the place of the widely accepted distinction between political and theological virtues, Aquinas introduced a distinction between the acquired virtues, which can be attained through human effort, and the infused virtues, which can only be attained through grace" (Porter, 2005:232) There have been several scholars who have opposed virtue ethics. Luther saw virtue ethics as moving towards the tendency of relying on one's own works instead of God's grace and thus did not promote it.

4.4 Hauerwas's background

The dirt that Stanley Hauerwas is made, as Berkman (2001:18) describes it, is the black gumbo of north Texas. Hauerwas was not aware of it at the time but he grew up poor in the town of Pleasant Grove where he was also born in 1940. He did not always want to be an academic and certainly did not think of being one that has had so much contribution to post liberal ethics.

When he decided to go into ministry a whole new side of him came forth as he began to dive into literature. Reading was not a habit that he had learnt from home as Berkman (2001: 26) puts it, he only began to read diverse literature as he began to be serious about ministry. At home as he was growing up the only books available were the bible and a set of Mark Twain. After putting himself under the tutelage of the associate pastor of Pleasant Mound he specifically started to read on religion, mostly prim Protestant primers of the Christian life (Berkman, 2001:19)

Hauerwas' family spent most of their time at Pleasant Mound United Methodist Church. Although the Theology and practice of the church were not exceptional it was at Pleasant mount that Hauerwas learned to 'identify community as that group of people with a claim on him, and thus realize that one's life is not entirely, or even primarily, one's own.' (Berkman, 2001:18)

Although we can never be certain to what extent his early childhood experience influenced his thinking, we can be certain that it was experiencing such as those had at Pleasant mound Methodist church that can be referenced as seeds to some of the trajectories that Hauerwas has taken. Today Hauerwas is well respected and known for his work on postliberal approaches to ethics and rejecting the enlightenment idea of a universal set of moral ideas.

4.5 Stanley Hauerwas' postliberal theology

"…Hauerwas's attention to performance, and particularly to how Barth's theology performs its task, enables him to work with the grain of Barth's theology to develop surprising but consistent theological impulses in his American theological context." (Hunsicker, 2019:20)

Hauerwas' theological contribution cannot be denied specifically his contribution to postliberal ethics. Hunsicker (2019:19) argues that Hauerwas' theological ethics is influenced by Karl Barth. He has even coined the theological ethics of Hauerwas as Barthian Postliberal. He explores this through highlighting some of Hauerwas' stances. Firstly, he notes that to Hauerwas, Protestant liberalism is stuck in a particular Christian response to enlightenment rationalism. One of the responses being that the idea of God is beyond comprehension, beyond "the possibility of empirical knowledge" and this then should make theology more about morality (Hunsicker, 2019:19-20).

In addition, there was a determination that it is possible for morality not to be linked with any religion. This was proved to be a problem for Hauerwas as to him to reason theologically from any point except God is obscene. In this, he agrees with Barth that theological reasoning should start with God. Barth also famously rejects natural theology. Hauerwas adopts the stance of Barth and extends it in his rejection of universal law – this is also the Christian ethical lens of this study.

Hauerwas is very critical of Protestant liberalism to the point that he preferred to be called a theologian and not an ethicist. There are two things that are linked with why he has this preference. Firstly, the rise of Protestant liberalism which he sees as the end of theological ethics and the liberal Protestant project as "Christian ethics" in America (Hunsicker, 2019:22). To Hauerwas there cannot be a divorce between theology and ethics.

Early Christianity was mostly focused on how Christians should live. It was predominantly about how to live a morally substantial life. This began to change with the rise of Christianity. With Christianity transitioning from a persecuted minority in its time to the majority in the Roman Empire people were being born into a Christian society behaving morally became secondary to theological belief (Hunsicker, 2019:23). This is because before Christianity was the majority how Christians lived was their defining characteristic as it distinguished them from everyone. Now, being the majority ethics had to be an "inward disposition" as everyone was Christian.

The transition created that although early Christianity had a focus on the type of morality that was from Christian convictions about God, post-Enlightenment Christianity moved from that space. Christian morality was an attempt to show that human moral consciousness was separate and more primary than any theological conviction. Ultimately, this was a greater attempt by the theologians of the time to add and be included in the secular conversations. To be relevant and be in a conversation with science and other dominating fields, and it is through doing this form of development that they began to question if you need to be Christian in order to be morally upright.

4.6 Stanley Hauerwas: Universal ethics

Stanley Hauerwas is regarded as the most distinguished writer to explore postliberal approaches to ethics (McGrath, 2010:129). In his writing he rejects the enlightenment idea of having a universal set of moral values. He argues that Christian ethics is concerned with the identification of the moral vision of a historical community (McGrath, 2010:130). He not only speaks of identifying the moral vision but also how this vision is brought to life in the lives of the members of the community.

This would make ethics, in Hauerwas' view, intrasystemic, as it focuses on the study of the internal moral values of a community. "To be moral is to identify the moral vision of a specific historical community, to appropriate its moral values and to practice them within that community" (McGrath, 2010:130) So, to Hauerwas morality is appropriated to the community that one may find themselves.

Hauerwas holds that the practices and habits of a community form the type of individuals the members of that community become and therefore this must be the primary focus. The community habits and practices create a process of moral formation within the members (Wells, 1999:82). So, morality is a communal process of formation rather than an independent factor of one's ideals. He extends that an ethic that gives individual crisis, the tragedy of moral dilemma and the agony of uncertain choice first place is doomed to irresolvable frustration (Wells, 1999:82). Although he does hold that decisions have a place in ethics, they just should not be the primary focus.

The approach of Hauerwas relates to that of Mbiti in his analysis of African morality. Mbiti (1970:135) states that being human is to be part of a community and this also means that one participates in the community, through rituals and beliefs. He holds that one cannot just detach themselves from the community for it's like being severed from one's roots. In this, we understand that the connection with the community creates moral formation. The individual and the community are one, they are connected and live life while considering the effect of an action on the entire group.

"In African religion and ethics, everything in the world is intimately connected (see chapter 13). For this reason, humans and the rest of creation have a dialectic relation. All the elements in the universe imply each other and interlock. One cannot touch one of them without causing the whole to vibrate." (Bujo, 2005:425)

This carries forth the argument of Hauerwas as the community plays a role in the moral formation of members. This is not only an African ethic as Hauerwas proposes that this understanding be universally considered, the understanding that moral formation is not individualistic but the community of the individual influences members greatly and they have the moral ideals formulated in them by the community. Therefore, the ideals will be community-specific and therefore the

approach of universal ethics becomes much more difficult as Hauerwas already points out.

John Mbiti's statement that reflects on African religions which says, "African religions are evolved slowly through many centuries, as people responded to the situations of their life and reflected upon their experiences" (Mbiti, 1991: 14) can be understood as African religion is an outcome of reflection on life's different circumstances. The statement may be understood as saying that there is active participation by members of the community on experiences that come forth. So, when situations come one must apply reflection even in a community, although the community influences a member it does not have full control of members, members are independent and participate in the overall evolution of the community.

Even as a member of a community's moral formation is found within the community, the member must still apply reflection and apply moral understanding to experiences.

Hauerwas approach to ethics is important as it gives light to the role of the community in the moral formation of individuals. Gbadegesin (2005:415) says, "The purpose of a "morality" is the furtherance of a harmonious relationship within a particular society, the control and enhancement of its other institutions and individuals, the protection of its land and its members, and as a result of success in that area, the survival of that society as an entity.". In reflection of what Gbadegesin points out then one may say that a community decides for itself what it needs to survive and that universal moral principles cannot be placed on a community. Therefore, each community should establish their moral understanding for their survival.

Morality is important in African culture as it brings about order and promotes self-actualisation through practices and principles. Ultimately, the point of Hauerwas is that universal ethics ignores the fact that there are communities that have identified different ways to sustain themselves and live within the premises of their culture and apply moral and ethical understanding outside of those universal ethics.

So, Hauerwas believes that morality should be anchored through belonging but also in Christian belief. Universal ethics is not something he believes that we must give that much attention to. One's connection with people makes them who they are or plays a huge part in the making of an individual.

Overall, Hauerwas rejects universal ethics as his understanding of people being anchored through belonging also includes communities developing their own moral values. This perspective carries the understanding of communities being able to be responsible for their own moral identity into independence. Into independence in expressing any form of spirituality or culture that births the moral values that the community want.

4.7 Conclusion

There has been an evolution of ethics over the decades, from being about acts to the moral obligation to the poor and the marginalised. The same way that ethics has evolved, Christian ethics has transformed just as much. The conversations of Christian ethics have led to different perspectives that exist today. Christian ethical study moving into conversations of science and philosophy have contributed to its change.

This prompted questions of, 'do you need to be Christian to be ethical?'. The answer is that no religious affiliation is necessary for ethical and moral behaviour. Hauerwas is one of the people that reject this and hold that any theological standpoint must start with God. This development in Christian ethics was not promoted by Hauerwas.

His perspective on Universal ethics is key that he understands ethics to be extremely complex. He argues that one must take into consideration community more than anything as it forms part of the development of the standards of morality for the individual. The development of a person for him is in the sense of belonging and in God.

CHAPTER 5

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE AND THE ROLE OF HAUERWAS' PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSAL ETHICS AND COMMUNITY

5.1 Spirituality and Culture

Both spirituality and culture are important in the larger context of Africa. There is such a great number of forms of culture and spirituality present in Africa. In investigating both it seems as though they work together in the context of Africa. As already stated, when the context is referred to it is not under the presupposition that there is only one contextual reality but rather the more common one that seems to be active.

Spirituality is a phenomenon that seems to depend on the culture of the society (Holt, 1993:5). It holds and touches the entirety of human life and culture is one of the things that give it its shape. I told the story of when I was younger and I asked my parents about why we do certain practices that are said are spiritual such as appeasing the ancestors or thanking them through a ceremony and I was told, "It is our culture". It seems that culture precedes culture, it is the culture that determines spiritual practice.

The relationship between spirituality and culture seems to be dependent. Spirituality seems to rely on culture. Holt (1993:5) not only associates culture with spirituality, but also adds denominations and gifts. Denominations determine the type of spirituality practised. Denominations also may be said to have their own culture that they subscribe to, the culture of the church. So, it is the shape of culture that will determine the shape of spirituality.

The comparison of religion and spirituality must come down to the fact that religious practices spirituality. The type of religion will also give direction to the spirituality that is practised. Although some Western societies do choose to use the word spirituality as an alternative to religion. They prefer to be called "spiritual" instead of being called religious. Although spirituality can be practised without organised religion, organised religion and most religions do not practise their religion without spirituality.

Both culture and religion are normally starting points from which spirituality finds its definition. Spirituality speaks to an experience of something greater than the self. Kalilombe (1994:115) points out that this greater experience or consciousness might be an ethical ideal, a supernatural concept or being, or the oneness with all things. Usually, the experiences attached to spirituality in religion and culture are associated with super-sensible realities.

Ultimately, culture and spirituality are both evolving phenomena. Culture evolves with the society that expresses it. Spirituality changes according to the culture it finds itself. It cannot be separated from "a culture," whether indigenous African or western modern culture. If we refer to culture as a social category, then spirituality cannot separate from culture. Through this understanding culture is learned behaviour that is socially acquired, that can be material or nonmaterial passed on, which is transmittable and accumulative and they cultural in that society transmits them and it is not transmitted through genes (Nida, 1976:28).

Furthermore, culture is abstract and can be seen through social, religious, material, linguistic, and aesthetic. It is behaviour, a way of thinking and reacting but it cannot be seen but we see manifestations through action and objects. This then tells us that culture has many divisions. While the divisions of culture have divisions themselves. In modern we have terms such as pop culture to speak of the popular culture of the masses. This transcends borders, it is global, it includes the shared experiences that include entertainment and politics.

Culture is a strong phenomenon as it transforms to into many divisions, and this makes it extremely complex. The one thing that is certain about culture is that whatever we do is driven by a type or form of culture. So, spirituality as a phenomenon is also at the mercy of evolving culture and the varied divisions that come out of it.

The strong characteristic of culture is how it needs preservation. Spirituality is preserved in the same way as culture, it needs people. It can be passed on from one generation to another. In most Indigenous African cultures this rings very true as spiritual gifts and practices of the culture are passed on and are kept alive through things such as being initiated as a healer. It could be that one's grandmother or

somebody before them had the gift and after their death, someone in the family then receives the same gift as that person who has passed on.

This is just an example of spiritual practice within the premises of culture and specifically African culture. That spirituality is a big part of what is considered culture, spirituality is a result of cultural understanding. Cultural practices and what is considered moral or immoral have spiritual implications in African culture. Let us use the same example of having to be a healer as a form of inheritance. If an individual would deny that inheritance and not go to initiation school to be a healer the belief in African cultures such as the Sepedi, Isizulu and many others is that bad things would happen. This includes sickness, death or even deep lack or poverty and this would stay until the person says yes to "the call."

As an individual who has had a family member who had to go to initiation school to be a healer as they were told that their grandmother was a healer, and that spirit has now fallen on them and thus they have the responsibility to heed "the call." This was linked with their misfortunes, that unless they do this nothing good will come to them. So, spirituality just as culture is preserved through varied ways according to the culture and space it is practised.

Ultimately, culture and spirituality have a working relationship with the former being primary and the latter being secondary specifically in an African context. Culture is the primary as it can change spiritual practice but is not common that spiritual practice changes the culture. The culture gives direction and the reason spiritual practice is present.

Culture notably gives birth to morality or ethics as in the social category it speaks to behaviour. Spirituality gives reasons why morality or ethics are important to follow. The idea of the invisible world and or the super-sensible reality plays a role in reinforcing morality within the culture. The consequences of straying from that which the culture and by default the community says is immoral has spiritual ramifications.

In the end, spirituality gives reinforcement, it helps in enforcing the rules or "laws" of the community. This is the same role that religion plays to most people; it gives the reason why one acts ethically. This then begs the question, can these two be separated? To answer we need to go back and review the definition of the two that we have used in this study.

Firstly, we start with spirituality and look at three definitions that come together to capture what it is.

"Any enduring, meaningful experience or consciousness of something greater than the self. This something 'greater than the self' might be some ethical ideal, a supernatural concept, supernatural beings or it might be something more nebulous, like a sense of oneness with all living things" (Singleton, 2004:11)

This definition speaks to what spirituality is in terms of the supernatural and experiencing something greater than the self. This also includes the feeling of oneness with all living things. This is the definition of spirituality that this study links to even in the idea of spirituality being a oneness which we will discuss later in the chapter when we speak about African spirituality and what this study highlights.

The other three definitions relate to spirituality as a complex phenomenon. In the first, Waaijman (2006:7) speaks about a division of spirituality, a school of spirituality. This is a spiritual way that comes from a "source-experience" that a group of people adopts, and it is situated within the socio-cultural context and over time a second-generation adopts it and share in the source experience of the first. So, a school of spirituality is formed after a first encounter and develops from that point.

In the second, there is primordial spirituality which is related to life and how it is directly lived. It speaks to and is connected to realities such as but not limited to birth, suffering death and work.

"In the field of primordial spirituality different sub-forms can be distinguished: (1) the so-called lay spirituality, or everyday spirituality, developed in the micro-world of the (extended) family; (2) the indigenous spiritualities, not yet transformed by a dominant religious tradition; and (3) forms of secular spirituality, emancipated from religious dominance." (Waaijman, 2006:8)

Thirdly, there are counter-movements in spirituality that are not associated with any structure. They are found outside of established relations such as concepts, great narratives, "they swim against the current" (Waaijman, 2006:10).

Now that we have looked at the definitions used in this study of spirituality let's finally review culture.

Culture for this study is looked at in a social context. It is then seen as learned behaviour that is acquired socially, whether traits that are material or non-material which are passed on from one generation to the next. They are transmittable and accumulative, and they are cultural in that they are transmitted by the society and not biologically (Nida, 1976:28).

Spirituality and culture have a working relationship but the two can exist without the other. This is because culture is not limited to spiritual practice, there are many elements that make up culture, including materials and habits that may not necessarily be linked to any spiritual practice. Spirituality can also exist without culture as Waaijman (2006:7) points out a division of spirituality which is a school of spirituality that is based on a "source-experience".

Culture is not a prerequisite for a source experience if anything at times it is outside of the bounds of culture. This even means that a culture can form as a response to a source-experience. Therefore, the two phenomena can both co-exist within each other and also live outside of each other. Although it seems as though the two can be separated African culture and African spirituality are types of the two phenomena that are not practised or lived out independently. They are closely tied together, almost inseparable.

5.2 The nature of African Culture and African Spirituality

African culture and African spirituality are not separate from the divisions of spirituality and the nature of what is culture. The defining factor that sets these two apart is context. The African context, how life is lived and understood and how that affects everything else. I have alluded to African culture determining African spirituality and want to explore this even further.

The identity of African spirituality is within the sense of community, that one's life attached to that of the community. This is not only an African spirituality element, it is also an African culture element. This is shared throughout most of the African cultures. As Mbiti (1970:135) pointed out, in an African context through the understandings that come from culture and spirituality to be human is to belong to a community.

This includes participation in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals, and festivals of the community. These practices that are spiritual also play a part in the understanding of community. This principle of community is not only a cultural one, but it is a spiritual principle, a central one. I tell of asking Doctoral graduate of black consciousness and African spirituality of spirituality and culture and they answered saying, "isn't that the same thing?".

To the African mind spirituality and culture are synonymous to one another. The graduate further said, "To be Africanis to be spiritual, everything I do has spiritual significance. I how I relate with my neighbour, how I engage with my children and my connection with my community". Spirituality is not designated a day or a building, but it is daily practice and that is why it seeps so deeply into African culture. It is a habit and understanding that is passed on to one generation after another.

African culture and African spirituality hold that there is an interconnectedness of all things. African spirituality falls under the division of primordial as it is concerned with how everyday life is lived. African culture focuses on community and the traditions and shared beliefs of the community. The spirituality and culture of most African communities cannot be separated as they constantly inform each other, and they affect the daily living of the community.

Singleton (2014:11) in his definition of spirituality adds that something greater than self can be "like a sense of oneness with all living things". This is the case with both African culture and African spirituality. There lives a greater sense of oneness with all things. There exists an interconnectedness and this central factor in both binds these two together. Spirituality and culture may be separable in the larger sense but in an African context, the two are married to each other and cannot be removed from one another.

5.3 Christian ethical perspective: Hauerwas' ethics
Hauerwas' perspective of universal ethics is important to this study. His understanding of ethics accommodates different contexts and allows different communities to define the standards of their own community. This is important because context play a major part in ethics. Universal ethics fails to take into consideration that not every situation is black or white.

To begin, He holds that to be moral is to identify the moral vision of a specific historical community and thus appropriate its moral values and to practice them within that community (McGrath, 2010:130). This understanding takes into consideration that communities to a large extent get to determine their own moral values. This makes morality a communal process and not a universally set moral or ethical vision.

The ethical perspective of Hauerwas works with the nature of African culture and African spirituality. His perspective is one that insists that ethics is more than just "what should I do?" but "What should I be?". One's being is cultivated by their community and their surroundings. So, it is the perspective of being and that of being because of the community and also the community formulating their own moral values that link Hauerwas' ethics with African culture and spirituality.

The two phenomena have at their centre an understanding of interconnectedness. A great sense of participation of the community in the formulation, the "being" of an individual. So, his ethics accommodates and gives room for African culture and spirituality and therefore creates a bridge that the phenomena and Christian ethics to connect.

Christianity over history has tried to be the centre in every community and historically at times would push away anything that does not look like it. Christian ethics can participate in the other moral values of communities without creating a universal code. Therefore, the ethical perspective of Hauerwas is important in that there is room for collaboration and development in finding a relevant ethical framework for different contexts.

African spirituality and African culture connect well with the perspective of Hauerwas as it anchors being in one's community, it promotes a moral vision of the community, and it does not impose universal ethics but gladly rejects it. The base of Hauerwas' perspective may be Christian, but it encompasses many different communities and contexts.

African ethics can relate to Hauerwas' community approach to ethics because the ethics are primarily based on the relationship between the living and additionally the invisible world of the living dead. The interconnected, the circular connection that breeds African ethics. Mostly, western ethics carries a linear motion about life while

African ethics holds a circular motion that involves the living, the dead and the unborn.

There are directives that can be given by the living dead and anyone that chooses not to listen has chosen death because the directives are there to bring life and wisdom. So, the relation of African ethics to the theological reflections of Hauerwas is in the sense of community being the primary director in the formulation of morality. For African thought, a human being cannot be defined in terms of the single physical or psychological characteristic with exclusion of all other things.

This is mainly because in African thought a human is defined by the active community because community takes precedence over individual life histories (Kobe, 2021:6). This does not mean that the individual has not a separate value from the community but that their value is even more recognised within the community as they participate in it.

Hauerwas' denial of Universal ethics is also anchored in that the starting point of any theological argument is God. Universal ethics is a partly a product of questioning whether you need Christianity to ethical. The development of this was that you do not need any form of religious affiliation to act ethically. Although, this is the case his perspective accommodates a larger spectrum and thus the conclusion of this study.

5.4 Conclusion

The intention of this study was to look at phenomena of culture and spirituality. To investigate them and examine the relationship that exists between the two in an African context. The investigation was for purposes of understanding the two phenomena better in that context. This investigation also was looking to see what the two give birth to individually.

The two have been found by this study to have a working relationship in the larger sense. Culture gave spirituality form in certain context. The relationship between the two is not an inseparable one but it is one where both the phenomena can be independent of one another. The two can stand independent of one another and they can evolve by themselves.

Although on a larger scale they can be separated, in an African context they cannot be separated. This is because African spirituality and African culture are the same, they are woven together. Both African culture and spirituality have at the core a sense of interconnectedness and community. The responsibility to community is both a principle of African culture and African spirituality.

The two affect the daily living of the community they are in; they are the reason for the type of engagement with neighbours and friends. This is a cultural practice and a spiritual practice. The two meet so greatly that they cannot be differentiated properly to most African people because they are synonymous to one another.

Your being is ultimately directed by the community you find yourself in as they play a great part in your development. It is a process of moral formation, that includes the ceremonies and traditions that are participated in by the community. Even the understanding of the super-sensible reality is not another element of the culture or spirituality, it is a common understanding within the context of the culture and complexities of spirituality.

The ethical perspective of Hauerwas promotes and recognises that a community creates its own moral values as well as the role it has in the development of individuals. In rejecting the notion of Universal ethics and promoting a community developed ethics it gives communities recognition in their independence to formulate a moral vision. This is what AICs sought to find for themselves when the separated from the western model of church.

Ultimately, the perspective of Hauerwas connects with African culture and African spirituality. He understands the role of the community on the individual and that is a big factor in understanding both African culture and African spirituality. The connection between his perspective and African culture and spirituality is in the notion of community and development of moral vision by the community it affects. The link between African culture and spirituality to Christian ethics in this study is created by the Christian ethical perspective of Hauerwas.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND OUTCOMES

6.1 Summary

The study started with understanding culture and looking at how circumstances contribute to its form. We found that it tends to attend to the varied needs of its community, thus culture is adaptive, and it is also an identity marker. It explains what a community does certain things that they do. The most important element of is that it depends on people for its survival. We then established that African culture is not exempted from the nature of culture.

We then continued the investigation by examining African ethics. The study looked at the core values and fundamentals of African thought and it's requirements. One of the most important terms of African thought *"ubuntu"* was discussed. This term finds prominence in the Southern part of Africa. The basic claim of the term is that one is because of their community, a key African ethic. This ethic implies that one cannot survive on their own and that engaging with one's community is essential and that it develops one's personhood.

The ethic promotes a community-based way of living that makes everyone responsible for each other. This then creates a better chance at one having a more formed personhood. Therefore, this ethic is not only philosophical, but it is a source of community empowerment and self-improvement. This means that there is an African ethic that must be understood as just that, ethics. African ethics is more than just morality and philosophy, it does not have to contend with Christian ethics it can blend with it. African cultures have been more than able over many years to create their own moral standards. Western philosophers can choose to ignore this or recognise that African cultures have the ability to create their own moral vision.

In addition, the study examined the evolution of ethics over the decades, from being about acts to the moral obligation to the poor and the marginalised. Ethics is not left alone in terms of evolving, Christian ethics has also evolved over time. The conversations of science and philosophy have contributed to its change. This gave us certain understandings that we have today such as knowing that for one to be

ethical they do not necessarily need to a Christian. Although, there are some contentions that exist to that understanding.

One of the people contending that understanding is Hauerwas, as for him all theological thought must begin with God. Hauerwas' understanding of ethics is complex, but it still has a level of simplicity in it. He argues that one must take into consideration community more than anything. He holds that the development of a person for him is in the sense of belonging and in God.

So, for the African ethic of community correlates with the thinking of Hauerwas. They both see being as ultimately directed by community. The development of the individual is ultimately created by the community they find themselves in. Moreover, Hauerwas does not see universal ethics as a good way to approach thinking about the moral formulation of an individual. For him, moral vision is created by the community and therefore a universal ethics is not key. In rejecting the notion of Universal ethics and promoting a community developed ethics it gives communities recognition in their independence to formulate a moral vision.

Ultimately, the perspective of Hauerwas connects with African culture and African spirituality. He understands the role of the community on the individual and that is a big factor in understanding both African culture and African spirituality. The connection between his perspective and African culture and spirituality is in the notion of community and development of moral vision by the community it affects. The link between African culture and spirituality to Christian ethics in this study is created by the Christian ethical perspective of Hauerwas.

The study saw an intersection between African spirituality, African culture and Hauerwas' perspective on universal ethics. His rejection of a universal ethics supports the African ethic of community – *"ubuntu".*

6.2 Outcomes and Suggestions

The outcomes of the study are that there exists the relationship between spirituality and culture. The two cannot help but intersect, this is especially so in the African context. It is in that context where we see that the two phenomena coexist and they

both influence expression and moral vision. Both phenomena give reason for action, the give expression to both the community and the individual.

Moreover, there is a reliance of both phenomena on people, for they need to be passed down from generation to generation. One's cultural expression and spiritual expression give way for moral vision. This is the main element that both of these phenomena give birth to. An ethic such as *"ubuntu"* becomes more than just a philosophical term but an ethic that finds full expression through culture and spirituality.

Hauerwas' perspective on universal ethics supports the ethic of *"ubuntu"* or a community-based ethic. This is because according to him universal ethics are not able to realise the role of the community on the individual. So, not only did this study find that there exists a relationship between spirituality and culture but that there is a Christian ethic that corroborates and supports the nature of spirituality and culture as seen in the African context.

In proceeding forward, I believe that ethics should be understood as something that is mainly formulated by a community for their own moral formation. Although, I believe that this topic is more complex than just accepting everything of the moral formation of the community. There are some communities that practice what is rendered as human rights violation but they are understood differently by that community. That is the part where the complexities of spirituality, culture and the Christian ethical perspective of Hauerwas begin to require a bit more assessment. Nevertheless, this study holds that it is important to allow communities the right create their moral vision and also realises that spirituality and culture in the African context are inseparable.

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