African Cosmic Complexity, Food Production, and the Situation of (Meta-)Polycrisis

By

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If I have left anybody out, it was not intentional. My cup overflows and I am grateful to know each of you and to have been made more human by it.

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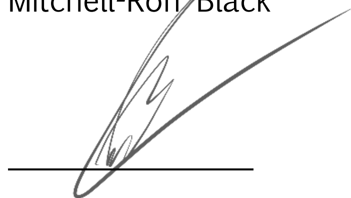

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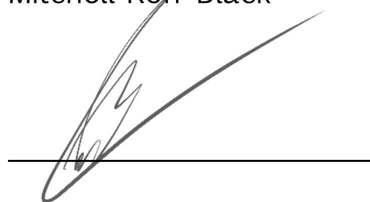
Signature: 

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Abstract

The Industrial Agricultural Complex (IAC) and its impact on soil agroecosystems is generally underexplored in the literature on environmental ethics, but specifically underexplored from an African thought perspective, raising the question: How could we justify and then defend the moral value of microcosmic life in relation to other-than-human Life from an African thought perspective? Using a Bricolage method constellated between (Post-)Interdisciplinarity, Conversationalism, Critical Complexity Theory, Afrocentricity, Decoloniality and Engaged Philosophy, this thesis posits and defends an apparent moral obligation to abandon the IAC in favour of transitioning towards an agroecological food system. After reaching this seemingly (im)possible conclusion, which calls for a radical transformation of our food systems on a scale without meaningful or practical precedent, this thesis then raises the prospect of a future South African society that is agroecologically sustained in a way that is equally beautiful, just, and good. By exploring the insights and implications of said transition related to aesthetics, political ontology, and the question of order, the analysis reveals a key set of insights termed 'Afrignosis' that frame certain African thought perspectives as inherently sensitive to Cosmos and Complexity, as a view on ontology giving way to a notion of Being-Becoming as cosmic unfoldment. In doing so, this work interrogates the dominant Eurocentric instantiations of order that create and perpetuate the IAC as a matter of urgent Situational politics by (re)articulating alternative mythocentric forms of order from Africa to provoke (re)generative thinking about the (im)possibility of societal (re)orientation.

Keywords: African Philosophy; Polycrisis; Food Systems Transformation; Mythocentrism; Eurocentrism.

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Dedication

To the Ancestors, who upon our passing shall weigh our innocence and virtue against *Maat,* and to the Cosmos, alongside which we move, we submit these words as *Afrignosis*.

Speak Maat

Do Maat

For Maat is Mighty

Maat Endures

And so shall we who (re)member her

Introduction

i. Overview

Against the context of *the Situation as (Meta-)Polycrisis* in which it is thought, this thesis aims to consider *two paradigms of food production* in society from *an African thought perspective on the world, order, and future-imaginaries* towards a *complex cosmic 'rupture'.* The purpose of this thesis is to gesture at that which lies beyond said rupture, "the possibility of reasserting the values that would make our existence endurable" (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, p. 229).

To make sense of the above, we will now clarify the italicised terms.

ii. What is the Situation, and why is it (Meta-)Polycrisis?

To describe where we find ourselves as 'in a bit of a Situation' seems almost pithy, but nonetheless accurate. It would however be more accurate to describe the situation as a state of (Meta-)Polycrisis.

In a recent interview, Dr Crispian Olver, the executive director of the Presidential Climate Commission in South Africa, declared just how critically unprepared the nation-state is to either adapt to, respond to, or to mitigate the impacts of climate change (Olver, 2024). His words came on the back of a week of back-to-back climate shocks along the Kwa-Zulu coastline, killing many and displacing many more (McCain, 2024). This preceded a spate of even more damaging climate shocks along the Western Cape coastline (News24, 2024), among a slew of other climate shocks all over the world, too many to enumerate here.

As a conversation with just about any young person will tell you - the reality of the climate crisis, here and now, is increasingly apparent. Given the scale of the crisis, it is a clear sign that both our society and civilisation in its entirety is heading into a time of unprecedented uncertainty, and is more or less completely unprepared to cope with climate breakdowns. If the work of the United Nations Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change is anything to go by (IPCC, 2023),

we have a paralyzingly small window of time in which to bring about a seemingly (im)possible shift in the way society is organised.

The term 'polycrisis' is increasingly associated with the nature of this situation (Lawrence *et al.*, 2024). First coined by Edgar Morin and Anne Bridget Kern (1999), the term has come to represent both "the causal entanglement of crises in multiple global systems in ways that significantly degrade humanity's prospects" and the intuition that "the world's conjoined crises must be understood and addressed as a whole" (Lawrence *et al.*, 2024, pp. 1–2). Advancing Lawrence's definition, Mark *et al.* (2024, p. 10) define Polycrisis as "a 'state' in which multiple, macroregional, ecologically-embedded, and inexorably interconnected systems face high – and advancing – risk across socioeconomic, political, and other dimensions".

From the polycrisis perspective, climate change, while a threat multiplier (Huntjens and Nachbar, 2015), presents as only a single aspect of polycrisis. Alongside it we see crises in health and mental health, ranging from soaring obesity rates (Roth *et al.*, 2004) to increasing rates of depression (Twenge, 2020; Moreno-Agostino *et al.*, 2021); crises in economics, such as multiple debt crises (Song, 2020; Meier, Rodriguez Gonzalez and Kunze, 2021; Sachs, 2021); crises in global peace-building, such as the ongoing genocides in Gaza (Nijim, 2023), the Congo (Ntanyoma and Hintjens, 2022), South Sudan, (Wise, 2020), and Myanmar (Bakali, 2021), among other crises too numerous to list. So plural, and so ubiquitous, has crisis become, that new crises barely register in the awareness of everyday people's lives.

Admittedly, this everyday 'Situation' – taken in the sense of 'Situation' as the "everyday arrangement of society [where] no matter how drastically we change the distribution of power within the situation we cannot disrupt the monotony that characterises the situation" (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, p. 19) or shake the apparent consensus that "Capitalism in the economy and parliamentary democracy in politics is, basically, a really good combination" (Badiou, 2013, p. 3) – renders the compiling of this work into an experience of pointlessness, characterised by a persistent and profoundly alienating anxiety. [1]

Such anxiety compounds daily as we watch planetary risk trendlines begin to verticalize, at first slowly and then in an increasingly exponential manner over the three years of this study. All the while, as the world destabilises around us, as a direct result of seemingly unshakable consensus, we have been split between, on the one hand, trying to agitate for change in the distribution of power through political engagements in the political arena and, on the other, trying to analyse the Situation in the academic arena. It has also become increasingly clear through the experience of a PhD in Philosophy that the nature of this academic arena is also one that is either fundamentally unwilling or unable to shake the self-same consensus governing the trajectory of the system.

Where we recognise this limit of the framework in which we are attempting to address the situation, we suggest a characterisation of Polycrisis as (Meta-)Polycrisis, thereby better representing the list of "multiple, macroregional, ecologically-embedded, and inexorably interconnected systems" to include those systems supposedly able to address it, such as the knowledge production system, the political system, and the food system.

Given the massiveness of the Situation, we have chosen to anchor our scope in relation to only the food system and concepts related thereto.

iii. What are the two paradigms of food production?

Within the Situation, food production is largely approached from two paradigmatically different perspectives, resulting in two very different practices of food production. For the purposes of this work, we shall refer to one as Industrial Agriculture and the other as Agroecology and will provide here only a summary view as they will be discussed in much greater depth in later chapters.

'Industrial agriculture' refers to a certain type of agriculture that came to prominence over the last century and a half, during a period known as the "green revolution" in agricultural development.[2] This period saw the mass-scale adoption of intensive farming techniques, including the use of artificial agricultural inputs or '(Agri)chemicals';[3] the use of methods that involve disruptive soil preparation;[4] the

use of industrial scale production systems;[5] the use of Genetically Modified Organisms; [6] the use of monoculture cropping strategies;[7] and, the prerequisite availability of substantial financial resources to cover both initial expenditure and ongoing operational costs. These characteristics make industrial agriculture a form of highly intensive and economically exclusionary agriculture due to its large labour and capital requirements relative to landmass.[8]

As will be shown, these techniques and processes have resulted in multiple devastating impacts (Kimbrell, 2002a; Marques, 2020, pp. 91, 259–261), including a profound and far reaching, though underacknowledged, impact on microcosmic community of life; those small life assemblages who together enable the productivity of the living soil as regards agroecosystems.

From this, it appears that at the base of all other systems, as the food system that (re)produces an increasing proportion of humanity, industrial agriculture and more accurately the Industrial Agricultural Complex (IAC),[9] presents as a driving force of the Situation, contributing at multiple levels to the Situation of (Meta-)Polycrisis. As will be shown, some of these levels such as that of ecosystem interaction present as strong indicators that we find ourselves in a state of civilisational collapse (Tainter, 1988).

As opposed to industrial agriculture, agroecology is an approach to agricultural development that has sustainable and regenerative food systems as its goal. Where the IAC chooses to impose onto nature an intensive and highly mechanised food production regime, agroecology chooses to mimic the natural relationships between parts of the agroecosystem through conscious stewardship. For instance, where industrial agriculture would choose to irrigate soils with chemical fertilisers to feed GMOs the specific nutrient cocktail designed to ensure their rapid growth and commercial viability, agroecology would rather use techniques such as composting, mulching, intercropping, and integrated livestock management to mimic the conditions under which the soil food web would naturally flourish. Agroecology thereby aims to enable vegetation to grow healthily and robustly without the need for artificial inputs.

Agroecology emerges from a dialogue between indigenous farming practices (Williams *et al.*, 2018; Szerszynski, 2019), the movement for food sovereignty (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2014; Canfield, 2022), and contemporary ecological sciences (Anderson *et al.*, 2021, p. 21; DeClerck *et al.*, 2022; Wynberg *et al.*, 2023).

However, it is increasingly the case that governments, persuaded by the lobbying efforts of the IAC, are increasingly opting for, or into, legislative regimes that support, and in some instances even require, that the industrial paradigm be deepened. This is even more the case in the context of the so-called Fourth-Industrial Revolution, where some actors seek to completely eliminate the human factor from agriculture in pursuit of abundance via the imposition of mechanised uniformity under the guise of Artificial Intelligence powered 'precision agriculture' (Shiva and Shiva, 2020).

iv. African thought? The world and its order? Future-Imaginaries?

To consider in relevant philosophical depth the two paradigms of Agriculture, we choose to take up a perspective familiar to us – that of African thought.

At this point, one may reasonably expect to have seen the term 'African philosophy' instead of 'African thought', considering that this is a thesis in the discipline of philosophy, and we should explain why it is that we have chosen the latter.

For a long time, it was thought that Africa was a place without philosophy, primitive, backwards, and incapable of philosophical engagement (Eze, 2003; Chimakonam, 2017, 2018). Much of this attitude towards Africa can be explained purely as racism because it took as its evidence the peculiarities of African peoples and their societies, as opposed to any substantive engagement with them or attempts to make sense of African worldviews in an emic, as opposed to an etic, manner (Mostowlansky and Rota, 2020), fashion (Dladla, 2018).

A decades long 'struggle for reason' began in response to this attitude (Ramose, 2002b) that has seen a great many thinkers attempt to conform African thought to European grids of intelligibility (Praeg, 2019). We suggest this struggle can be alternatively described as a rigorous movement to fit an 'African thought shaped

peg' into a 'European *professional philosophy* shaped hole', whereby the latter had taken on a definitively narrow sense, following the period of Enlightenment and Modernism and the penchant for structuralism with which 'philosophy' as such emerged.

We like the analogy of fitting pegs into holes because it captures the sense in which, in order to fit, African thought, more generally as the totality of thinking done by those with strong ties to Africa and an affinity for its ways of being, necessarily had to assume a specific shape, cutting away parts of itself in order to fit-the-mould and be considered Philosophy by European standards. In so doing, African thought, which we would more specifically characterise as a complex[10] intermingling of the six trends in African philosophy identified by Henry Odera Oruka (1990)[11] became, for all intents and purposes, Eurocentrically disciplined (Gwaravanda and Ndofirepi, 2021).[12]

While we respect the efforts of those scholars who attempted this task,[13] too numerous to list here, following Jonathan Chimakonam (2018), we are not as much interested in justifying the existence of African philosophy, as we are in undertaking African philosophical reflections on the world and its order. For us, in the context of the Situation, this means taking up a more general and (less)disciplined perspective that we call 'African thought' in order to draw on the fullest resource base we can, including alternative modalities of knowing such as orality, movement, music and art (Graneβ, 2022), in the style of Bricolage. [14]

Of African thought, our presentation thereof will focus on two elements: African conceptions of the world, that is, its nature and how it can be understood in specific relation to how it is organised under the Situation;[15] and Afrocentric liberatory visions of the future which emerge therefrom, more simply called future imaginaries.[16]

What is to follow will be an exploration of these two elements of African thought, in relation to the two paradigms of food production mentioned above.

v. A Complex Cosmic 'Rupture'

As we have moved our "non-consensual mind" [17] through this investigation, taking up an African thought perspective with its inherently transgressive attitude towards disciplinarity, we have been filled with an increasing "conviction that something needs to be done that escapes the law of the world" (Badiou, 2013, p. 3), or that the solutions to the Situation lie outside of its Order. We have been confronted at each step by repressive governmentalities (Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, 2012) and technologies of Self (Nilson, 1998), operating in academic spaces to, consciously or unconsciously, maintain the territorial sovereignty of Eurocentric Order and the power/knowledge relations that accompany it. These determine the limits of acceptable discourse and discipline any transgression thereof, especially the (un)discipled thought of Africans. From these experiences, the Situation increasingly proves resistant to its undoing and renders the possibilities of a future that is flourishing, survivable, and beautiful seemingly out of reach.

For Paul Eisenstein and Todd McGowan, the concept of 'rupture' serves to confront the limits of the possible (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, pp. 3–5). As a theory of signification, periods of rupture denote the emergence of signifiers from an Order to which they are other and so (re)constellate other-wise a new terrain of possibilities, for which they constitute the possibility, and upon which they reverberate beyond the moment of their emergence (ibid., p. 4, 11). Rupture is akin to Event in the Badiouan sense of "something that brings to light a possibility that was invisible or even unthinkable [and] indicates to us that a possibility exists that has been ignored" or otherwise repressed (Badiou, 2013, p. 9). Against the backdrop of a certain political Order, "rupture is the occurrence of the impossible, when the very ground beneath our feet shifts in order to transform the point from which we see" (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, p. 4). It is that which "names a different starting point for political theory" more fundamental than the distribution of power (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, p. 11).

As an example of rupture, Eisenstein and McGowan look to the eruption of capitalist modernity during the 'disaster' of the enclosure of the commons in Europe which

led to the emergence of abstract values like the commodity ("the sacralisation of the profane object"), productivity, and private property, which prefigure a certain type of power distribution and require the constant repression of rupture and heterogeneity for the order of capitalist modernity to persist (ibid. pp. 14-19).

Said rupture could not however have named itself, its cause, or its consequences with any great amount of certainty. The values which were the source on which the pre-rupture political Order depended still determined the terrain of possible signification from the moment of pre-rupture (ibid. p. 18-19). When they ceased to do so a gap formed in which new but previously (im)possible signifiers were able to emerge, at least in so far as their possibility i.e. the real of thinking them of them as valid, previously lay outside the territory of possibilities determined by the legacy of the still pre-ruptured Situation (Badiou, 2013, p. 13). It is herein that periods of rupture inaugurate the conditions of possibility for an alternative ordering and distribution of power and make that which was impossible, possible.

Ruptures depend on conditions for their own possibility, such conditions arising from a Situation wherein its (im)possibility stands on the grounds of an exhaustion *ad absurdum* of the signified possibilities of signifiers made possible by past ruptures combining with a time of crisis and where the grounds of meaning turn fertile by revealing the possibilities of new meaning.

Moving from this grounding, this thesis seeks to argue that African cosmic complexity is, alongside an agroecological food system for which it serves as justification, among the conditions of possibility for advancing a rupturous horizon in the Situation, or at least making the Situation more fertile for such ruptures to occur.

vi. Outline of Chapters

Towards these ends, the thesis will proceed as follows:

The type of philosophy in which we are to engage is unlike much philosophy in so far as it is a journey across constellations of thought cultivated as a response to the Situation and not necessarily a philosophically extensive contemplation of

a single idea or concept outside of its contextual relevance, though is still obviously philosophical in some way given that we still engage philosophically with ideas and concepts.

As such. Chapter one precedes the substantive work of this thesis to explicitly detail the multidimensional philosophical method with which we have approached the current topic. Five dimensions will be discussed and arranged in relation to one another so as to provide us with a base from which to philosophize: disciplinarity, logic, Critical Complexity, attitude, and engagement.

Chapter two will detail the aspect of the Situation that is our initial focus by exploring the two paradigms of agriculture and their impact on microcosmic life. This chapter will accomplish three things: first, we shall contrast and compare the two paradigms of agriculture in how they approach and practice food production, as well as their consequences, drawing heavily on the work of acclaimed Agroecological activist Vandana Shiva (1991, 2008, 2016b, 2016a). Second, we will provide ecological (*Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*, 2020; Talukder *et al.*, 2022; IPCC, 2023) and socio-historical (Tainter, 1988; Montgomery, 2007) perspectives on said consequences to draw them into the future and show how they prefigure different future outcomes for society. Thirdly, we will reflect on the discussion in the chapter as a whole and draw out some philosophical themes relevant to this aspect of the Situation, such as ethics and justice (Cockell, 2005; Gardiner, 2011; Wienhues, 2022), eco-aesthetics (Cheng, 2013, 2016), and peculiarity (Sepúlveda, 2002).

Turning to African thought, Chapter three provides our reflection on the Situation by way of analysing what we identify to be three approaches to ethics in African thought and comparing how each of them conceives of microcosmic life, the impact of the IAC on them, and any conceptions of right action that may flow therefrom.

These approaches are: the ‘complex’ approach, characterised by a sensitivity to complexity (Morin, 2008; Woermann, 2016) and located in the work of Mogobe Ramose (2002a, 2009) and Keven Behrens (2010, 2011, 2014); the ‘hard’ approach,

characterised by a vehement religiosity and penchant for anthropocentrism, located in the work of Bénézet Bujo (1998, 2009) and Laurenti Magesa (1997, 2013); and the 'soft' approach, characterised by a paradigmatic simplicity and a rationalist disregard of African cosmological metaphysics, located in the work of Thaddeus Metz (2007, 2013, 2021).

Placing these perspectives into conversation with one another gives rise to a combination position supported by the complex and the hard positions, which we shall call Afrignosis. Herein, as will be shown, an (im)possible moral obligation to abandon industrial agriculture in favour of agroecology arises, stranding us in a situation with a fundamental wrong at its base and nowhere to go in order to address it, while yet holding onto a conception of the world that is both cosmic and complex, or Afrignostic.

This (im)possible obligation prompts Chapter four to take up an African aesthetic mode of thinking to imagine a future in Africa where said obligation has been fulfilled. Drawing on Afrocentric Aesthetic literature (Ani, 1993, 1994; Myer, 1993), Chapter four seeks to develop a theory of Afroaesthetics, and apply it to two sources of said future imaginary, being Afrofuturism (Womack, 2013; Zamalin, 2019) and the solarpunk movement (Reina-Rozo, 2021). A complex and multi-levelled Afrignostic model of purpose(s) emerges from this engagement in conceiving of purpose as the Afroaesthetic performance.

With a future imaginary in mind, and a conception of the relationship between it and meaning, in the form of Afrignostic purpose(s), Chapter five turns to the question of political ontology (Escobar, 2010, 2020; Escobar, Osterweil and Sharma, 2024) to link the Afrignosis of Chapter three with the Afroaesthetic vision of Chapter four. This Chapter will return to the aspect of the Situation that is our focus to achieve three things. First, it will (re)conceptualise the thing produced from the perspective of Afrignosis to transform it from food-as-commodity (Marx, 1976) into food-as-Afrignostic-substance and place it in a relation of cosmic-value with the society that produces it. Second, it will develop a political ontology for said society, taking on the form of Afrignostic Ecology, a merging of Social ecology

(Bookchin, 1982; Sepúlveda, 2002) and Afrignosis. Thirdly, it will gesture towards a set of pragmatic political strategies through an *ecognomic* (our term) motion of symbolic alchemy, capable of being implemented right now, that gives way to an agroecological food system as a condition for the possible emergence of the Afroaesthetic vision detailed in Chapter four on the grounds of Afrignosis established in Chapter three.

At this point, what will have been covered in Chapters three, four, and five appears to be non-sense from the perspective of the Situation-Order. And as beings sitting in the shadow of that Order, we would agree. It is for this reason that Chapter six (re)turns to the very concept of Order in order to make sense of the (dis)order so proposed.

The sixth and final Chapter will be a consideration of the 'Terms of Order' (Robinson, 1980) by which the Situation is organised and the "terrain of possibilities" (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012) it determines. Here we shall consider the Law, and specifically its instantiation as constitutional law (Bekink, 2012) in South Africa, which we will argue to be the most present and repressive Term of Order.

Beginning with a deconstruction of the law as a Eurocentric enterprise (Ani, 1994; Nunn, 1997) and constitutional jurisprudence as a paradigmatically simple and colonial expression of it (Modiri, 2018; Ramose, 2018b; Woermann, 2018), we will then go on to (re)consider alternative terms of Order from the African canon by which Afrignosis, Afroaesthetics, and Afrignostic ecology can be made sense of. These terms are Maat (Karenga, 2004), Taboo (Chemhuru and Masaka, 2010; Ajayi, 2022), and ubu-ntu (Ramose, 2002a), presented together as an everyday tripartite ritual structure (Assmann, 1992; Turner, 2017) aimed at the prefiguration of Afrignosis and agroecology, as conditions for the possibility of the Afroaesthetic vision presented in Chapter four.

In closing Chapter six, we will briefly reflect on the normative dimension of Order, and thereafter offer some concluding remarks.

Notes

[1] We understand Anxiety in a Heideggerian sense as that mood which suddenly shifts our perception of the world from home to one of "inauthentic spectacle, a kind of tranquilised and pointless bustle of activity [whereby] the everyday world slips away and [our] home becomes uncanny (unheimlich) and strange to [us]" (Critchley, 2009). The effect of this is that anxiety "discloses the various possibilities open to Dasein and even the possibility of Dasein at all" (Whalen, 2015, p. 33).

[2] The green revolution could be described as a "technopolitical and technoscientific economic strategy for peace aimed at creating the conditions of abundant living in terms of food by attempting to go beyond the limits and variabilities of nature." However, this is not how it has unfolded in practice globally (Shiva, 1991, p. 22). See Sect. 2.1, The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture, for a more detailed discussion of its character.

[3] (Agri)chemicals include artificial fertilizers, as well as pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides.

[4] Preparing the soil on a commercial farm involves tilling the soil via ploughing and thereafter levelling it before adding agricultural lime and sulphur, or other soil quality additives.

[5] Industrial Agriculture is highly mechanised in order to produce on massive scales, making use of increasingly large and specialised tractors, combine harvesters, planters, seeders, chemical applicators, and trucks, among other more niche equipment.

[6] Genetically Modified Organisms (abbr. GMOs) are laboratory-modified crop varieties that have been genetically altered in order to enhance favourable traits or introduce genetic characteristics not found in natural variants, such as herbicide resistance to allow crops to survive crop-spraying and dwarf varieties which are designed to mature more quickly.

[7] Monocropping refers to the farming of a single crop at a time in a given field in order to grow the largest amount of that crop possible. The impact of monocropping is well studied (Norberg-Hodge, 2002; Jacques and Jacques, 2012).

[8] These characteristics are also shared by Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (Abbr. CAFO), which we can include within the purview of Industrial Agriculture even though they are not the focus of our current enquiry. One can refer to the 2003 UN special report *Livestock's Long Shadow: Environmental Issues and Options* noting the "significant share of environmental damage" caused by CAFO, including Green House Gas emissions to biodiversity loss (Steinfeld *et al.*, 2006).

[9] We will be using the term 'IAC' (abbr. for Industrial Agricultural Complex) as an encompassing term to refer to the complex assemblage that emerged from the relationship between the Agri-chemical, Agri-equipment, (agri)biotechnology, and Intellectual Property industries, among others, which together form a unifying nexus of effects. We conceptualise the IAC as the productive component of what could be called the 'Corporate Colonial Food System', alongside Fast-Moving Consumer Good retailers, food standardization bodies, and advertisers. These latter components of the Corporate Colonial Food System fall beyond the analytical scope of this thesis but are no less subject to its socio-ecological critique.

[10] We use the term complex in a very specific sense. See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory

[11] These trends are ethno-philosophy, which specifically focuses on attempts at understanding the thinking of specific ethnic groups such as in the work of Placide Temples (1959) and John Mbiti (1970); nationalistic-ideological philosophy, which expressed itself in the projects of African socialism tied to the work of thinkers such as Kwame Nkrumah (1970) and Julius Nyerere (1987); artistic (or literary philosophy), which consisted of works in prose and play, such as those produced by Léopold Sédar Senghor; professional African Philosophy, such as the work of African thinkers trained in 'formal' philosophy of a Euro-Western style as exemplified in the work of Kwasi Wiredu (1980), Peter Bodunrin (1986), Paulin Hountondji (1996), and Oruka himself (1972) philosophy, philosophic sagacity, as works focussed on the transcriptions of African Sages such as Marcel Griaule's *Conversations with Ogotemmeli* (1970); and hermeneutic philosophy, which "seeks to explore the problem of the relationship between culture and philosophy, as well as the relationship between universality and particularity" (Maluleka and Mathebula, 2022, p. 74) as embodied in the work of Kwame Gyekye (1997) and Barry Hallen (2006) among countless others as this is the most common trend in the now dominant field of professional African philosophy.

[12] See Sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity for a comprehensive discussion of disciplinarity and Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity for a detailed discussion of Eurocentricity. For those not interested in the full discussion and who merely want a definition, see Ch. 1. n. 69.

[13] See Introduction n. 11.

[14] A Bricolage is a form of creative artwork made using the tools at hand, or a method of philosophical practice that uses the tools of thought available to forge a method fit for a purpose, in its usage by Brandon (2004, p. 33), which does not wait "upon the final answers or custom-built tools and materials" to pursue its ends. As Jaques Derrida (2002, p. 360) puts it in his interpretation of the interpretation of Bricolage as advanced by Claude Levi-Strauss, *Bricolage* is the practice of a *Bricoleur* who uses "the instruments he finds at his disposition around him, those which are already there, which had not been especially conceived with an eye to the operation for which they are to be used and to which one tries by trial and error to adapt them, not hesitating to change them whenever it appears necessary, or to try several of them at once, even if their form and their origin are heterogeneous." When faced with a situation such as polycrisis, it does not serve the interests of people working to address the Situation to have to first wait to dig through the broom-

closet of history to find the perfect pump and hosepipe to put out the fire. Rather, it is prudent that in the interest of action they grasp every vessel at hand to ferry compost, bird-fountain water, or left-over bottles of Coca-Cola onto the fire in an attempt to do something to put it out. As such, the Situation relegates us to building the tools to approach it while approaching it. Such an approach is echoed by Itaru Ohta, Francis B. Nyamnjoh, and Motoji Matsuda in their edited volume *African Potentials: Bricolage, Incompleteness, and Lifeness* (2022). In plain language, the key takeaway of a bricolage approach to philosophy is that it is the attempt to reach an objective using what one finds along the way *without* becoming sidetracked going down every rabbit hole that each tool can inevitably turn into.

[15] We suggest that the current order of the world is structured according to the political and the economic, both of which are Eurocentric in their current instantiations. See Sects. 2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture; 4.1.1 What Aesthetics is Not: A View Beyond Eurocentric Aesthetic Abstraction; 5.1 On the Nature of Food; and 6.1 The Colonial Concept of Order for thematic discussions detailing this viewpoint.

[16] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity for a conception of Afrocentricity and Chapter 4: An Afroaesthetic Vision for the Future for a discussion of Afrocentric future imaginaries.

[17] To reconcile "mind" (singular) with the we (plural) standpoint from which we write, we find it suitable to substitute 'mind' (lowercase) with 'Mind' (uppercase) to signal a movement from the individual psyche to collective psyche, or 'Mind at Large', a concept from the work of Carl Gustaf Jung as articulated by Bernardo Kastrup (2021). While not the focus of this work, we are influenced by Jungian thought and so will at times make reference to contemporary Jungians to signal where certain ideas root themselves in our thinking.

Chapter 1: Method

Introduction

As can be gleaned from this work's introduction, the scope of this thesis is very large, and one might reasonably ask how it is that we hope to weave it into a coherent form. This Chapter will answer this question. Its purpose is to introduce and relate four pillars that will together (counter)discursively[1] constellate[2] our bricolage[3] method for comprehending the Situation, envisioning paths out of it and what an ideal world beyond it could look like and engaging in the collective political project of manifesting elements of it through the engaged practice of African thought as gnosis[4] in political spaces.

Following some introductory remarks on the dominant Western[5] episteme[6], interdisciplinarity (Schmidt, 2022), and various (post)structural writing techniques in use throughout this work in Section 1.1, this chapter will proceed to introduce each lodestar constellating our method in the following order: Section 1.2 will introduce Conversationalism (Chimakonam, 2021a) and particularly its focus on 'meaning-making' as our approach to logic and rationality; Section 1.3 will introduce Critical Complexity Theory (Woermann, 2016) as our approach to questions of ontology; Section 1.4 will introduce decoloniality (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b) and (Afri)centricity (Asante, 2014) as our attitudinal dimension and approach to 'doing epistemic justice' to African thought. Finally, Section 1.5 will introduce Engaged Philosophy (Wolff, 2020) as the praxis dimension of this project, and also our mode of being, knowing, and doing philosophy *with* and *with-in*[7] an African place (Janz, 2009).

Our method, as we will explain in the coming chapter, can be summarised as follows:

We approach this research from a (post)structural (post-)interdisciplinary perspective to conversationally engage the Critical Complexity of food system transformation in relation to the Situation, using the question of microcosmic ethical considerability as a starting point. Our aim is an Afrocentric and decolonial conceptualisation of the future implications that follow from positing Agroecology

as a solution to the food production element of the Situation. Engaged Philosophy is our framework for taking this research beyond Academia and bringing back to this research what we learn through living it.

1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity

This section will introduce (post)structuralism as a postmodern[8] critique of the disciplinary project in Academia and a set of tools for revealing the governmentalities at work therein; frame this project within the aftermath of this critique, placing it in the interstitial methodological terrain between interdisciplinarity and postdisciplinarity; and highlight some specific (post)structural writing techniques that the reader can expect to see in this work. The purpose of this section is to constellate our method in relation to disciplinarity.

Let us begin with a lengthy quote from Jacques Derrida's now infamous 1966 essay *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences* (Derrida, 2002, p. 352) as a way of introducing the central thrust of (post)structuralism:

> *"It would be easy enough to show that the concept of structure and even the word "structure" itself are as old as the episteme - that is to say, as old as Western science and Western philosophy – and that their roots thrust deep into the soil of ordinary language, into whose deepest recesses the episteme plunges in order to gather them up and to make them part of itself in a metaphorical displacement. Nevertheless, up to the event which I wish to mark out and define, structure – or rather the structurality of structure – although it has always been at work, has always been neutralized or reduced, and this by a process of giving it a center or of referring it to a point of presence, a fixed origin. The function of this center was not only to orient, balance, and organize the structure – one cannot in fact conceive of an unorganized structure – but above all to make sure that the organizing principle of the structure would limit what we might call the play of the structure. By orienting and organizing the coherence of the system, the center of a structure permits the play of its elements inside the total form. And even today the notion of a structure lacking any center represents the unthinkable itself."*

Disciplinarity is a form of structuring that remains heavily at work in the academy today, prefiguring *a priori* a certain organisation and delimitation of discourses[9] related to a certain subject as operative only within historically determined limits.[10]

We suggest that this disciplinarity functions as the centre to which Derrida refers – in as far as there exists a terrain of possible relations around a historical discipline, such as 'philosophy', that creates a "total form" within which one is said to be engaging in said discipline. Transgressing said limits by positing something outside the limits of acceptable play presents to disciplinarity a form of (un)disciplined work that is "unthinkable", or more accurately in specific relation to the character of African thought, irrational (Ramose, 2002b, 2018a; Chimakonam, 2018).

We suggest that the problematic of oral traditions in African philosophy offers us a case in point for this argument in that disciplines have historical limits representing their structure, but not their nature.

In a sustained body of work on the question of 'what is African philosophy?', Anke Graneβ (2015, 2022) points us towards the difficulties of understanding oral traditions in relation to the discipline of philosophy, which conceptually takes on and (re)enforces a specific centre as its legitimate expression, being the written form whose dominance gives rise to "fundamental methodological questions and problems that have been infrequently reflected upon so far" (Graneβ, 2022, p. 181).

The (under)interrogated assumption that philosophy is a written discipline, ignorant of its foundation in the mode of orality in ancient Greece, maintains an epistemologically dubious centre as the base of its coherence as a discipline. It thereby functionally excludes and renders philosophically unthinkable alternate modes of relevant philosophizing, including orality, and also "rituals or bodily practices like meditation, dance or martial arts" (ibid., p. 189). Considering these other forms of expression as legitimate modes of engagement with, or love of,

wisdom, as is philosophy's etymological *raison de etre*, constitutes a form of play that is, as we suggest, still largely not accepted.

We would not claim that there is a rulebook or codex that determines the rules of play. However, we infer that the weight of the history of Western philosophy, especially its recent structuralist history which still predominates Academia, exerts a force of disciplinarity onto those who attempt to 'qualify' as philosophers, or at least have their work 'qualified' as philosophy. Governed through the coloniality inherent in publishing (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b)[11] and the expectation to *write* in a way that would be accepted for such ends, we argue that structuralism, despite its ample critique at the hands of (post)structuralists, still functionally disciplines the disciple, and thereby excludes the possible "significance of other epistemic fronts and the viability of other manifestations of reason" (ibid.).

Disciplinarity, as the name for this type of structuring, functions as a type of governmentality[12] that experientially manifests through technologies of the self[13] and the strong suggestions (insistences) of established academics to 'produce' knowledge in a certain form, use a certain language, conform to a certain structure and style, and uphold a certain standard of citationality, lest one risk exclusion. It is a do-or-die structure, the limit of acceptable play, and also an element of the Situation as it bears on a project of this sort, requiring that it jumps through the hoops of terminal superstructure whose base it seeks to deconstruct and reconceptualise as a matter of prosperity or collapse.

The result of such intense disciplinarity, almost a doubling-down on structuralism in the aftermath of (post)structuralism, has been a decline in the utility of disciplinary knowledge partly attributable to the economic imperative at work in Academia (Schmidt, 2022, p. 23) to produce meaningful, workable solutions to the Situation of the sort that actually impact the direction of society. (Inter)disciplinarity has been proposed as a curative in reaction to this state of affairs.[14]

(Inter)disciplinarity is a critical reflexive approach to disciplinarity that "urges us to rethink disciplinarity, particularly with regard to the institutional constitution of the

academy, to the authority and power of disciplinary gatekeepers, and to the criteria for what counts as scientific knowledge" (ibid., p. 24). Premised on the existence of boundaries, both between disciplines and between academia and society, and their transcendence, (inter)disciplinarity is often associated with the goal of bridging disciplines and integrating the disparate pieces of disciplinary knowledge. It seeks to thereby facilitate the transfer, circulation, synthesis, integration, or unification of disciplinary viewpoints (ibid., p. 25). Focussed on overcoming the declining utility of disciplinarity, (inter)disciplinarity is a 'problem-oriented' modality underpinned by "integrative non-reductionism or non-reductive integrationism" (ibid., p, 38) in the vein of Sandra D. Mitchell's (2012) 'integrative pluralism'.

Concisely stated, (inter)disciplinarity is a way of doing research that approaches problems in the world *multidimensionally*, which requires holding in tension multiple knowledge types, such as "system knowledge" of the problem, "target knowledge," being normative knowledge about a "desired state in the future," and "transformation or action knowledge". It seeks to move society from its current system to a target system (Schmidt, 2022, p. 81), while also requiring "self-awareness, self-critique, and self-re-flexivity" (ibid., p. 100) of the system of knowledge production. This makes it a relevant framing device for this work, as the chapters to follow, while pursued within the discipline of philosophy, will draw on knowledge from disciplines as varied as microbiology, constitutional jurisprudence, sociology, and film theory.

However, in addition to its own inescapable disciplinarity, (inter)disciplinarity is rooted in a kind of "disciplinary dialectic" of the Hegelian variety (ibid.) – with which we take issue in Section 1.2 – requiring the tension between disciplines to be resolved by the negation through synthesis in (inter)disciplinarity. In light of this and in order to maintain the (post)structural lens integral to Critical Complexity Theory – discussed in Section 1.3 - we position this work between (inter)disciplinarity and (post)disciplinarity.

(Post)disciplinary, as differentiated from (inter)disciplinarity, carries "a transformative claim on the organization of disciplinary knowledge, its institutionalization, and the

concomitant hierarchical relationships that structure academic institutions" (Darbellay, 2019, p. 99). As a (post)structural response to (inter)disciplinarity, in the sense of being a critique of the disciplinarity of (inter)disciplinarity, (post)disciplinarity recommends that the boundaries between disciplines – and even the concept of disciplines itself – be redefined (Klein, 2005, pp. 60–62). It was developed in relation to, and partly as a response to, discourses on (inter)disciplinarity as both a recognition of the shortcomings of (inter)disciplinarity as a movement in Academia. (Inter)disciplinarity often succumbs to commodification under Neoliberal frameworks, as noted by Robert Frodeman (2014), or functionally reverts back to its shallow form, which Schmidt (2022, p. 6) calls the "instrumental approach" to (inter)disciplinarity, against which he posits a "critical interdisciplinarity" compatible with our understanding of (post)disciplinarity in recognition of the potential of " follow[ing] ideas and connections wherever they lead instead of following them only as far as the border of their discipline" (Sayer, 1999, p. 5).

As will be compounded by the attitudinal dimension of our method discussed in section X3, a (post)structural relation of (inter)disciplinarity and (post)disciplinarity is an epistemically legitimate framing for this thesis. This is because it is a) a product of a disciplinary education, undertaken within a discipline, b) critical of the history and power of disciplinarity, especially as it pertains to the coloniality of disciplinarity, and c) aimed at overcoming the boundaries of the disciplinary solution proposed to the problems of disciplinarity by way of a (post)structural *playfulness* and unbounded curiosity to think about solutions to the Situation that are sensitive to its meta-systemic reality, or aware that disciplinarity is a limiting condition curtailing attempts to theorise and actualise pathways through the Situation.

In line with this framing, the reader should be prepared to encounter sections of writing that are (un)disciplined,[15] creative,[16] and experimental,[17] as well as citations which play beyond the disciplinary limits;[18] and engage with deconstructive writing

techniques such as disambiguation and bracketing,[19] writing under erasure,[20] and various types of linguistic playfulness as a means of lexical innovation.[21]

1.2 Conversationalism

Having constellated this method in relation to disciplinarity in the previous section, this section will outline the basics of Conversational Thinking as developed by Jonathan Chimakonam. It will do so by discussing its three dimensions – foundation, architecture and doctrine – and methodologically relating them to the project at hand. The purpose of this section is to ground our work in Ezumezu, an emic African system of logic,[22] through which the rationality of African ideas can be meaningfully comprehended.

Emerging from the (post)modern movement towards "alternative logics" taken up in Africa (Chimakonam, 2019a, p. 4), Conversational Thinking has *meaning-making* as its objective, as opposed to the derivation of absolute or universal Truth (Chimakonam, 2021a).[23] It consists of three dimensions: Ezumezu Logic, its foundational dimension;[24] the Conversational Method, its architectural dimension;[25] and, Conversational Philosophy, its doctrinal dimension.[26]

Beginning with the first, Ezumezu is a new system of logic for grounding African philosophy and allowing it to forge ahead beyond the litany of irrationalism charges levied against Africans and their ways of thinking (Chimakonam, 2019a).

Unlike the Aristotelian logic that grounds the natural sciences, premised on a system of bivalency (two-valuedness) reducing the rational to the dialectical opposition between true and false, Ezumezu is a systematised variant of a trivalent (three-valued) logic system from Africa, which replaces the dialectical relationship of absolute opposites with a conversational relationship between complementary binaries mediated by a truth-glut variable (ibid.) as a way of *extending but not replacing* bivalency.[27] By taking the classical laws of logic (identity,[28] contradiction,[29] and excluded-middle[30]) and supplementing them with three additional laws (*Njikoka*,[31] *Nmekọka*,[32] and *Ọnọna-etiti*[33]) Ezumezu describes a logic where truth (*ezu*) and falsity (*izu*) are held as sub-contraries, as opposed to contradictions,

within a complimentary mode of interpretation mediated by a third complemented value or truth-glut named ‘ezumezu’ (lowercase ‘e’) (Chimakonam, 2019a, 2021a). Such a formulation of logic is consequential for making sense of Critical Complexity.[34]

In this mode of interpretation, *ezu* and *izu* are held in fundamental tension by ezumezu, allowing us to suspend their truth value and render them both true and false in a state of binary complementarity. This movement subverts the Hegelian *aufhebung* by allowing *izu* and *ezu* to maintain their identities instead of forming a synthesis in which one is negated.

This takes place through an oscillation represented by a conjunctive movement towards the complementary mode of inference, and eventually, as needed, a disjunctive movement towards the contextual mode of inference wherein context replaces ezumezu and fixes the ‘Context-Dependent Truth Value’ of relative statements. In this way, Ezumezu does not deny that there are facts or truths, but only that the claim of truth or facticity is contextual. Outside of contextual analysis, it is more productive to transition from bivalence to trivalence as a means of inaugurating creative struggle, the realm of meaning-making (Chimakonam, 2021a)

It is here where the structural dimension of Conversationalism in the form of the conversational method kicks in.

Conversationalists hold that meaning is an experience that can be cultivated when the bearers of ideas processually put ideas into conversation with one another in search of complementarity – the points at which the strengths of one reveal and complement the weaknesses of another, and vice versa – without resorting to negation. It is their interaction and struggle that results in the formation of meaning.[35]

By including the ‘bearer of ideas’, Conversationalism extends the sign-signifier–signified model of language from Saussurian semiotics to include the ‘significists’, called the *nwa-nsa* (the speaker) and the *nwa-nju* (the listener) as integral variables

in the process of meaning-formation and locating 'meaningfulness' (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 35).[36] [37]

This brings us to Conversational Philosophy, the doctrinal dimension of Conversationalism. Essentially, Conversational Philosophy is any philosophical work which operates on a ground of Ezumezu and uses the conversational process to both "break down the whole into parts to understand the whole in terms of its parts" (disjunctive movement)[38] and "constitute parts into a whole to understand the parts in terms of the whole" (conjunctive movement)[39] with conversation, and therefore meaning-making, as its goal (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 33). Concomitantly, our goal, we suggest, is to generate meaningful insights related to how we live our lives, and so, this thesis can be considered in part to be an exercise in Conversational Philosophy.

On the relationship between meaning-making and Conversationalism, it is prudent to note that Chimakonam is not without his critics, none of which, however, seek to derail his development of Conversationalism, but rather hope to further its robustness (Harris, 2022), or appropriately locate it in relation to the African canon more generally (Matolino, 2022) as a valuable contribution thereto.

Among them, Bruce Janz asks the important question "whether meanings are first internal and impossible to know, and/or whether they align with others" as it seems that "Conversationalism might already have a commitment to a world in which meaning already exists and is handed down, making possible the formulation of propositions at all, rather than a world in which meaning is created through conversation" (Janz, 2022, pp. 112–113). Chimakonam's response indicates the several ways Janz had misapprehended Conversationalism as either a thought space where propositions exist or as a search to generate meaningful propositions, and corrects him in as far as meaning-making can be internal (individual) or external (communal) and reinforcing meaning as present-absence in the world, as in something already in the world but pre-formed and so having to be carved out through Conversation as a process of creative struggle experienced by those seeking to make-meaning (Chimakonam, 2021c). We further argue that Janz's

critique struggles to maintain conceptual clarity, conflating questions related to meaning-making with questions related to changing beliefs.

At no point does Chimakonam advance Conversationalism as a method by which to change the beliefs of people, recognising that such might require something he regards as impossible, as what we "mean by the same expression" of an idea we each believe "might be similar at best, but never the same" (Ibid., p. 156). Rather, Chimakonam makes it clear that he only ever maintains the prescriptions of Conversationalism as guidelines intended to "help one another mutualise the meanings we make internally", or a way by which the process of Conversation can help us to advance the degree by which a meaning-made is made-meaningful enough that such shared-meaning between individual significicists "leads to the formation and sustenance of relationships, groups, communities and even the society" (ibid.).

We contend that such shared-'meaningfulness' is central to *collective considered* action.[40] Regardless of how we define the 'why' behind our decisions – be it a duty, obligation, value, virtue, or otherwise – we attach an idea of meaningfulness to some or other idea that motivates us to make certain choices and act in certain ways. While we hope that the meaning that moves most people is justified, it is not always the case. What often moves people is the meaning at which they arrive through experiences, of conversation, of anxiety, of having to make an (im)possible choice, and not through 'rational' inquiry. It is however obvious that experiences of meaning are not all equal, and not all of them will drive people to action.

What we are seeking are conscious experiences of meaning at the intersection of African thought and ways of being-knowing-doing sensitive to the Situation and the emancipatory, decolonial ecopolitical potential of Agroecology.[41] We believe that the set of meanings that lie at this very broad intersection allows us to understand how and why we are provisionally[42] obligated to interact with our environment's *vis-a-vis* food production in an agroecological manner. Moreover, we also believe that this set of meanings attains a degree of meaningfulness to

African people where such means draw on cosmic complexity, as will be discussed in Chapter three.

With this perspective, we can define the relevant meanings we seek to make as those attached to modes of being that comprehend cosmic community and cultivate experiences of interbeing in light of it.[43] The types of meanings we aim to generate are those that will a) solidify the context-dependent truth value of our claim that there exists a moral obligation to abandon industrial agriculture in favour of agroecology, b) allow people to collectively comprehend the moral value of the microcosmos and the wrongness of our destruction thereof, and c) motivate communities towards practical action (policy, protest, or practising agroecology) towards protection of the microcosmos.

We suggest that these meanings lie in experiential modalities, such as myth, ritual, and taboo, which allow people to connect with the impact of the IAC on the cosmic community. However, we require alternative frameworks of rationality to do so, such as Conversationalism, which do not assert the existence of absolute truth or the Eurocentric progress narratives (Ani, 1994) that flow from such assertions to (re)enforce the superiority and dominance of the IAC over alternative food production methodologies such as Agroecology.

Conversationalism would consider agroecology and industrial agriculture as sub-contraries in a state of creative tension - both ideas affirmed and denied at once to infer the complementary aspects of the other.

An example of an argument from Chapter 2 may help to clarify what this means in practice. For instance, if we consider the fundamentalist reductionism (Woese, 2004) at work in the IAC as 'true' or even simply unproblematic, there would have been no need to draw a distinction between it and empirical reductionism as he does, meaning that we could not consider the role of the latter in the value proposition of Agroecology, and vice versa, as each proposition's claim to truth denies the truth-value of the others. We must allow for a conversational flux, admitting the grey area between proclaimed truths and falsities, to consider

reductionism *qua* agriscience and other variables like history and colonialism, society's food production needs, etc.

It is only when we advance to mode of contextual inference – where we consider the Context-Dependant Value of each idea - that values become fixed, *but only within a specific contextual reality.* Under this mode of inference, when fundamentalist reductionism is weighed up against the (socio)ecological and (socio)historic context to be established in Section 2.2, the Context-dependant Truth Value of methods reliant on it becomes untenable and leans towards falsity.

The hope is that each idea rises through the conversational process to a higher level of understanding than before, pointing towards the generative question: what industrial agriculture can learn from Agroecology and vice versa. The conversational school of philosophy offers us one way to get around to such questions while engaging the program of decoloniality and seeking an ethical agricultural praxis that motivates material change.

Of course, it is a consideration whether this thesis will actually motivate any type of change in society by exploring avenues for experiential meaning-making through the medium of text. Such is unlikely, given the Eurocentrically disciplined style[44] in which this work is presented and the archival fate that awaits it, closeted behind layers of institutional bureaucracy (re)enforcing the disciplinary barrier between society and the academy. However, this thesis and other work like it is but one avenue for potential change. The work of taking what is theorised here, invigorating it with a spirit of praxis, and contributing its insights to the collective project we call 'the future' through 'Engaged Philosophy" will be covered in Section 1.5.

1.3 Critical Complexity Theory

Box 1

A system is considered complex if it exhibits the following features (Woermann, 2016, pp. 27–37):

1. Complex systems are characterised by richly-interconnected and organised components.
2. Complex systems cannot be fully known.
3. Complex systems are structured and self-organising/autopoietic.
4. Complex systems exhibit emergent behaviour.
5. Complex systems are incompressible due to the workings of a complex notion of causality.
6. Complex systems are open systems, as well as operationally closed and bounded systems.
7. Complex systems are thermodynamically and organisationally open.
8. Self-organisation is the key feature linking the interrelations between systemic components to the emergence of a system, defined as a *unitas multiplex*.
9. The component parts of complex systems have a double identity, irreducible to either themselves or the whole.
10. Complex systems are non-additive due to how the parts and the whole are related.
11. Complex systems are defined by organisational recursion, which implies that the identity of components and systems are coterminous.

Having now introduced Conversationalism as the foundational element of our method, this section will introduce our understanding of Critical Complexity Theory and situate it within this work. It will do so by providing a brief overview of Critical Complexity Theory, describing three insights that it provides, and providing an example of a complex concept from this work to show its methodological relevance. The purpose of this section is to inform the reader about our view on ontology.

Complexity is used in this thesis in a both very technical and highly philosophical sense.

In its technical sense, it is used in reference to *complex systems theory* as the study of those assemblages, material or otherwise, which exhibit all of the features

described in Box 1, as opposed to complicated systems.[45] These can include social systems like societies, economies, and communities; physical or living systems, like humans, animals, plants, mycelial networks, or *Ohanife,*[46] known in the European lexicon as ecosystems; or conceptual systems, like spaces, places, ideas, or even knowledge itself.

In its philosophical sense, Complexity is used in reference to *Critical Complexity Theory* (hereafter referred to as Critical Complexity), a (post)structural[47] reflection on iterations of Complex Systems Theory.[48] Critical Complexity emerges from the work of thinkers like Edgar Morin (1992a, 1992b, 2008) and Paul Cilliers (1998), and was notably advanced by Minka Woermann (2016) who has to date produced the most sophisticated account of the theory in her work *Bridging Complexity and Post-Structuralism: Insights and Implications.*

As such, the terms 'complex' or 'complexity' are not used colloquially. Critical Complexity has developed them into the signifiers of a highly sophisticated philosophical "view of ontology" that "seeks to explain the world as inherently complex" (Woermann, 2016, p. 2). From this perspective, the world is not merely technically, scientifically, and mathematically complex, but argued to be philosophically complex, meaning that it is, at least, ontologically, ethically, and epistemically complex.[49]

We regard two of the insights provided by this position as methodologically relevant to the structure of this work. These are a) the difference between the paradigm of complexity and the paradigm of simplicity described by Morin (2008), and b) the provisional imperative and ethics of living as a result of critical reflections on the former as described by Woermann and Cilliers (2012). [50]

Regarding a), if we are to consider disciplinarity from the complexity perspective, we see that in its structuring of knowledge. In Philosophy, for example, it has constructed borders that separate it into sub-disciplines of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, politics, ethics, and aesthetics, among others. Each discipline and sub-discipline (and sub-sub-discipline etc.) forms a 'restricted economy of

knowledge', which has become understood in itself as a discrete object of study existing in a silo separate from others like it. This same tendency has played out across the 'realms' of knowledge: physics, biology, and human 'sciences', in what Morin (2008, p. 39) has termed the "paradigm of simplicity".

Morin posits the existence of two paradigms in thinking about the world. A paradigm, in his usage, refers to "a certain kind of extremely strong logical relation between master notions, key notions, and key principles [that] command all propositions that unconsciously obey its empire" (Morin, 2008, p. 39). While his language is provocative, we can consider the relationship between the master notion of order, the key notion of separability, and the key principle of disciplinarity to explain its appropriateness as the logical relation between these concepts explains the dominant structure of Academia today: an 'empire' of 'ordered knowledge' which requires obedience.

The paradigm of simplicity revolves around order – it "puts order into the universe and chases out disorder" by conceptualising order in terms of "one law, one principle" that can "see either the one or the many" but is blind to the reality that "the one is perhaps at the same time many" (ibid.). Methodologically, it does this through techniques of reduction (separating that which is linked) or disjunction (unifying that which is diverse). In either sense, this amounts to a pathological (Morin, 2008, pp. 3–5; Kastrup, 2016) bias towards explanations that are simple, or complicated, over those which comprehend complexity.[51]

However, at the beginning of the twentieth century paradigmatically simple explanations began to come up against increasingly difficult sets of paradoxes with advances in fields like thermodynamics and biology, such as those between processes of order, disorder, and organisation in the universe (Morin, 2008, pp. 40–45). Confronting these paradoxes both required and inaugurated a new paradigm in thinking capable of holding together seemingly contradictory positions, such as the human experience of a world that is locally real and the 2022 Nobel Prize in Physics laureates who have disproven the assumption of local-realism (*The Nobel Prize in Physics 2022*, no date).

This paradigm shift led to complexity thinking, or the paradigm of complexity, which “arises from something logical, that is to say from our inability to avoid contradictions” but requires that we engage them as a part of reality using new notions of reason, rationality, and rationalisation (Morin, 2008, p. 45). We have therefore included Conversationalism as our logical dimension, as without its need to resolve paradoxes in thinking outside of a certain context, it allows for us to hold the tension created by uncertainty and so avoid the reductive activity required by bivalency.

Frustratingly, and in spite of the growing acknowledgement of complexity, the paradigm of simplicity is still very active in the world. It still dominates how we organise knowledge (disciplinarity), how we organise society (institutional governance supported by legal positivism) and, importantly, how we produce food, as will be shown in Chapter two. We therefore include it here as a structural element of our method, as this thesis can be considered to be, in part, an extended engagement with the conditions and consequences of paradigmatically simple thinking.

Regarding b), Critical Complexity holds that complexity renders our attempts to model complex systems objectively, in the mode of generating master notions, key notions and principles, as always insufficient. This is due in part to the interplay between observed systems and the observers of systems (Morin, 2008; Woermann, 2016).

This is because one has a complex system being modelled by theorists, who are themselves complex systems, operating at the intersections of innumerable other multiple complex systems (societies, communities, *Ohanife*) from which the model, modeller, and the context of modelling emerge. This frames the exercise of conditioning unconditioned knowledge – attempting to understand complex systems by imposing models onto them, or, in the language of economy often preferred by Critical Complexity theorists (Human and Cilliers, 2013), attempting to impose a restricted set of relations onto a general economy of meaning (Bataille, 1991; Trahair, 2001) - as both technical and normative, in the sense that the modeller

cannot but enculturate themselves into their purportedly objective model (Woermann, 2016). This framing additionally extends to the consideration of the aforementioned exercise as paradoxical (Luhmann, 2000) and ethically consequential.[52]

In order to engage the ethics of complexity and the complexity of ethics (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012), as well as the (im)possibility of simplification in order to create ethical models (Morin, 1992b), a precondition for the possibility of ethical decision-making (Derrida, 1999), Woerman advances the 'ethics of living' as a framework for engaging complex systems.

As a position sensitive to complexity and (post)structural insights, the ethics of living argues that attempting to fix meaning by creating closed-models of ethical systems ahead of the moment of decision making amounts to a denial of complexity and a failure to engage in ethics. In much the same sense as the movement in Conversationalism between the complementary mode of analysis and the contextual mode of analysis as a way of arriving at Context-Dependant Truth, the ethics of complexity finds its expression in a provisional imperative (Cilliers and Presier, 2010) articulated as "when acting, always remain cognisant of other ways of acting" (Woermann, 2016, p. 174). Aware of the *aporia* presented by the term, this way of thinking about ethical actions is not thinking in accordance with rules for action, in the sense of the Kantian Categorical imperative, but with our "state of mind or attitude" (ibid.) when making ethical choices.

We therefore do not attempt to justify a *categorically binding* moral position in this work, something that is impossible when one accepts the *complexity of ethics* – the minefield of considerations in navigating between the subject and object of ethical consideration, and the irreducible contingency and provisionality of knowledge (Woermann, 2016, p. 174). We instead methodologically bind ourselves to articulating a *contextually meaningful* way of being-with, urging that we consider other ways of food production when confronted with the Situation and the elements of it as described in Chapter two and five. This also, as a corollary, implies that this thesis does not intend to present a closed model of either its case or any

of its elements, as this would be a denial of the complexity of this project and the complex systems with which it engages.

An example of a concept from this work that we engage as complex would be that of the ontology of Cosmos in relation to community. To provide this example, we will first consider its complexity in a technical sense, and then in a philosophical sense.

In technical terms, Cosmos as a complex astrophysical system is a network of richly interconnected elements, from planets to microbes, which by its natures, in terms of both richness and sheer number of elements, and the limitations of us as its modellers, cannot be fully known. Resistant to any compression, reduction, or disjunction to form a general theory,[53] the contingent aspects of each complex system comprising Cosmos, and their complex causal relationships to one another and the whole, allows for self-organisation or autopoiesis of the sort that gives way to the Cosmos assemblage as a function of emergence (Emmeche, Køppe and Stjernfelt, 1997; Cilliers, 1998).

Without meaningful end, at least from any perspective relevant to us as its modellers, Cosmos is a mutually coproducing system reliant on both openness, in terms of thermodynamic flows and currents of (re)organisation, and closedness, in operational terms, as there are sets of knowable constraints, in the sense of how, that govern the system's internal processes in its autopoietic structuring (Poli, 2009).

In philosophical terms, the contradictory term *unitas multiplex* used by Edgar Morin (1992a) explains the generativity of coproduction between parts and wholes and wholes and parts, each of which has a dual identity as both themselves and parts of the Cosmos. They are therefore relational products of organisational recursion within the system, resistant to any reduction of their identity to either part or whole. This perspective thus describes the tensions between parts and the whole as indicating ontological boundedness through relationships of emergence, autonomy, and dependence.

These same relations also gesture at the non-additive nature of Cosmos, meaning three things at once (Morin, 1992a): firstly, Cosmos is more than the sum of its parts, because "systemic attributes cannot be reduced to the parts alone, but are the result of interconnections between the parts". Secondly, Cosmos is also less than the sum of its parts, because it, in some cases, suppresses qualities of some of its parts "under the constraints that result from systemic organisation"; and, thirdly, Cosmos is also greater than Cosmos, or the whole is greater than the whole, because "the dynamic organisation that takes place in systems where local interactions between components give rise to emergent properties" (Woermann, 2016, p. 36).

Methodologically, this example shows how we can understand Cosmos as a complex system, and more broadly how we intend to use the insights of Critical Complexity to approach topics throughout this thesis as being complex. While the technical sense offers some grounds for a closed model of Cosmos, the philosophical sense opens said model by disrupting the terrain of possibility on which the absolute nature of said model may have sought to ground itself. This positions our model as non-closed, *aporetically* both open and closed in acknowledgement of the limits of said model in relation to the complex nature of the system.

Non-closure, as contended by several (post)structuralists and reaffirmed by Woerman (Woermann, 2016, p. 189), is the condition for generating and carving meaning as one attempts ethical praxis in a world constituted by complex relationality. Such a mode of opening, similar to that inaugurated in text by Derrida's (1982a, 2002) notion of *Différance* is a site of conscious action (Human and Cilliers, 2013), which shares with Conversationalism the claim to meaning-making as an engagement with the metaphysics of absence (Chimakonam, 2021c, p. 164).

Arising from the Critical Complexity position is the question of generating meaning in relation to the organisational character of a complex system, like we consider, for instance, the (human)society system to be. The (human)society system emerges

out of the relationship between variously richly interconnected parts, but it is agriculture that forms the largest[54] and "highest" manifestation of human relation with the environment" (Madavo, 2019). While co-created, the (human)society system is in a state of *Unitas Multiplex* with its environment, mediated through the food production system, upon which it is transtemporally dependent, but also historically determined.[55]

As will be argued in Chapter two and four, we suggest the food system is currently conceptualised in complicated terms. Thus, this part of our method provides us grounds for conceptualising and engaging with the food system as complex system. Shifting paradigms (Morin, 2008) will of course have implications, and these will also be discussed.

1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity

Having positioned Critical Complexity as the structural dimension of our method, this section will introduce the attitudinal dimension of our method, that is, an explanation for why we treat various subjects in certain ways and prioritise some outlooks over others. It will do so by first explaining the concept of decoloniality before considering Afrocentrism and introducing various methodologically relevant Afrocentric terms. The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a set of Afrocentric threads that will be woven across this work, binding it together in method and outlook.

However, before doing so we offer two brief reflections, the first being on the concept of attitude, and the second on what may appear to the reader to be a divergent set of aims, with doing epistemic justice and enacting political change engaged in an *aporetic* disciplinary tension.

Regarding attitude, and when we say that decoloniality and Afrocentrism form the attitudinal dimension of our method, let us speak directly. We have an attitude and engage the topic at hand with attitude, and this attitude is a valid emotional and rational response to the Situation, which is not abstract. No. The Situation is in our faces, everyday, everywhere and sometimes everywhen. It is not subtle. It

is obvious. It does not take much digging or knowing about the world, when we have the growing compendium of human intellect at our fingertips, to see what we see on social media and to recognise it there, lurking behind each moment of reprieve, lurking at the edges of an anxious consciousness (un)conformed in the ways of being conditioned by the spectacle (Debord, 1994). It is only right to meet the world with Rage, which over time simmers to an attitude towards the Situation that, a firm, rationally-panicked, reasonably measured, fuck that.

The Situation has an (un)yielding ~~presence~~[56] that confronts us with ourselves, with the vices of arrogance and indifference, and also at once the virtues of courage and confidence. To this psychopolitical paradox (Han, 2017), which (un)reasonably demands of us that we must play by its rules, obey its empire and lick its boots while it overworks us, preoccupies us with pointless tasks (Graeber, 2018), exhausts us, and denies us at each turn, we ask: why must we? Its answer, our answer, childish and simple: because I say so.

As young people today, this is our reality. The Situation is not abstract, and because of this, it is at best unfair and at worst malicious to require that we do things as they have been done, especially when that way of doing things has landed us where we find ourselves. And yet, Critical Complexity demands of us that we engage the paradox and work with it as a system factor. Hence, we are here, writing what you are reading, working within the Situation to undermine it and develop strategies for its subversion in the interest of survival.

As such, it is the reality of the Situation and its historical roots that finds us torn between the epistemic activity of 'doing epistemic justice' (the content of which this section will explore) and the political aim of promoting a change in the way we practice agriculture as a society towards a more eco-conscious (and what we claim to be more ethical) method, namely, Agroecology.

The factor linking these two seemingly disparate dialogues together is their causal origin in colonialism and coloniality, the physical and mental co-dependant legacies of the colonial system still operative today. We suggest that the reason why

industrial agriculture dominates food production systems globally and why indigenous conceptions of Cosmos, as well as the implications for food production which flow from them, have been epistemically marginalised, are one and the same: the colonial assumption that only the coloniser has intelligence and therefore the inherent authority to erase and replace all knowledges and knowledge contexts with those that carry a 'superior' Euro-genetic pedigree.[57] This consequently includes what we will describe in Chapter five as 'indigenous land relationalities' as modes of being cosmologically bound-up with the land that prefigured more ecologically conscious methods of food production like Agroecology.

As such, we see little divergence between the goal of seriously considering historically excluded African gnoses and of attempting to prompt eco-conscious action in the form of promoting Agroecology. Their goals, while different in category, are two sides of the same coin - decoloniality and decolonisation – and co-constructed nodes in the complex economy of knowledge and meaning. The end is the same, the emancipation from the mental and physical legacies of colonialism in the spirit of responding to the Climate Crisis and centring the Climate Justice imperative. To do epistemic justice is to engage in decoloniality. And to engage in decoloniality is to (dis)border the manufactured boundaries between the disciplines of metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and their practical manifestations in politics, and to consider them as a single mode of knowing.

Decoloniality suggests a strategy for confronting coloniality – the intellectual dimension of colonialism - by "rolling backward the hegemony of Western intellectual tradition [to] demonstrate the significance of other epistemic fronts and the viability of other manifestations of reason" (see also Chimakonam, 2021a, pp. 6–16, 28–32; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b, p. 4) or 'doing epistemic justice' to African thought from within the imperial academy (*Academic Imperialism - Seyyed Mohammad Marandi*, 2010).[58] [59]

As a response to the historical marginalisation of African knowledge,[60] Decoloniality, as we engage it, is an attitude towards research and praxis that seeks to 'do

justice' ontologically[61] and systematically[62] to excluded African gnoses by relying on 'homegrown' theories[63] to support an epistemically particular[64] mode of Afrocentric theorisation responding to Epistemic injustice[65] as an element of the Situation. [66]

Afrocentricity, emerges in the work of notable Black studies[67] Scholar Molefe Kete Asante (1988, 2014) as a liberating ideological paradigm encompassing both "a theory of agency, that is, the idea that African people must be viewed as agents rather than spectators to historical revolution and change" (Asante, 2014, p. 2), and a practice strategically oriented towards "reconstruct[ing] our lives on an Afrocentric base" (Asante, 1988, p. 85) constellated in the work, dreams, cosmological insights, and aspirations of Africans (Myers, 2023).[68] Through its critique of Eurocentrism,[69] Afrocentricity presents a mode of analysis for the "radical assessment of a given reality" (Asante, 1998, p. 2)[70] in pursuit of "pluralism without hierarchy" of the sort that arises when "the idea that Europe somehow has a right to hold a hegemonic banner over all other people" is maintained (Asante, 2014, p. 7). As such, Afrocentricity is not against the existence of European "motifs, ideas, and narratives, concepts that are derived from [European] history" but against the superioritisation of said concepts and ways of being through the inferioritisation of others (ibid.), such as those linked to food production.

This approach, while centring African ideas, being critical of Eurocentric ideas, and decolonising concepts contested between the two, would not have us throw out the baby with the bathwater. We do not intend our usage of the terms Afrocentric and Eurocentric to engage in an essentialism of either, as such would be disagreeable with the methodological pillars of Conversationalism and Critical Complexity theory which stand alongside Decoloniality and Afrocentricity (and Engaged Philosophy) as co-dependent and interrelated pillars of our method-constellation, foregrounding epistemic plurality and the ethical imperative of self-reflexivity.

Accordingly, the terms *Afrocentric* and *Eurocentric* are used not as immutable civilisational identities, but as relational and heuristic conceptual models -

orientations that help track contrasting logics and values across knowledge systems. As clarified in earlier notes, our use of "Eurocentric" refers not to a geographically bounded Europe, but to a historically situated cultural logic—rooted in the imperial, materialist, and power-seeking paradigms critiqued by Ani (1994)—and excludes more mystically or spiritually inclined strands within the Western tradition.[71] Likewise, “Africa” is not treated as a homogenous or isolated civilisational entity, but as one thread within the broader fabric of “majority peoples,” to use Ani’s framing - those historically marginalised by Eurocentricity’s global reach.[72]

As long as we maintain a stance of intellectual vigilance (Asante, 1988), mindful of the essentialising risks entailed in politically charged terminology, our allows for the selective adoption of ideas that are ethically and strategically generative.[73] In line with our Conversationalist pillar, we treat Afrocentricity and Eurocentricity not as oppositional absolutes, but as complementary binaries: distinct but discursively interwoven poles whose tensions and overlaps offer fertile ground for epistemic reconstruction at their conceptual borders.

Afrocentricity remains methodologically compatible with a strategy of decoloniality because it provides for the interrogation of Eurocentric ways of thinking that underscore various food production elements of the Situation. These include methodologies (Chapter two), ethics (Chapter three), aesthetics (Chapter four), modes of production and political economies (Chapter five), and terms of Order (Chapter six).[74] Simultaneously, Afrocentric terms allow us to (re)envision these elements—offering alternative arrangements of food production that also speak more broadly to the organisation of society

Among the work of the Afrocentrists, Marimba Ani, especially in her seminal work *Yurugu: An African-centered Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behaviour* (1994), offers a useful set of *epistemically reconstitutive* terms (Box 2) to this type of comparative framework that we will use to shift the “terms (assumptions and rules) of the conversation and not just its content” (Mignolo, 2018, p. 380). We

intend their usage to help the reader track the unfoldment and consistency of the Afrocentric dimension and strategy of decoloniality of our method.

We draw specifically on Marimba Ani's work because her project stands apart in its combination of civilisational scale, moral-ethical clarity, and her development of a conceptual apparatus rooted in African cosmological understandings. Unlike many Afrocentric or decolonial thinkers who critique Eurocentrism primarily through historical, psychological, or political lenses,[75] Ani provides a systemic cultural analysis that foregrounds ethical orientation, worldview formation, and affective energy as core to understanding civilisational difference. In particular, her *asili*, *utamawazo*, and *Utamaroho* framework (see Box 2) offers a rare, integrated schema combining spirit, thought and action for interrogating the ontological and ethical dimensions of food systems as expressions of deeper cultural logics. This makes her work particularly suited to this inquiry, which seeks to go beyond merely critiquing the Eurocentric arrangement of food systems to surface alternative Afrocentric terms of Order for (re)membering a socially and ecologically regenerative praxis.

We recognise that Marimba Ani's framework, particularly her civilisational constructs (*asili*, *utamawazo*, *utamaroho*), has been critiqued for promoting cultural essentialism. However, for our purposes, we adopt these as diagnostic metaphors to help illuminate the *ethical architecture and epistemic orientation* of systems of thought and not as ontological absolutes. As such, we aim to deploy them strategically to surface patterns in worldview construction, not to fix peoples or cultures in static identity categories.

Box 2: Afrocentric Terminology from Marimba Ani (1991)

Term	Definition	Substitutions
Asili	The logos of a culture, within which its various aspects cohere. It is the developmental germ/seed of a culture. It is the cultural essence, the ideological core, the matrix of a cultural entity which must be identified in order to make sense of the collective creations of its members.	**'way of being'**
Utamawazo	Culturally structured thought. It is the way in which cognition is determined by a cultural *Asili*. It is the way in which the thought of members of a culture must be pattered in the *Asili* is to be fulfilled.	**Worldview, 'way of knowing', ideology**
Utamaroho	The vital force of a culture, set in motion by the *Asili*. It is the thrust or energy source of a culture: that which gives it its emotional tone and motivates the collective behaviour of its members. Both the *Utamawazo* and the *Utamaroho* are born out of the *Asili*, and in turn, affirm it. They should not be thought of as distinct from the *Asili* but as its manifestations	**'way of doing'**
Scientism	The ideological use of "science" defined Eurocentrically, as an activity which sanctions all thought and behaviour, that is, science becomes sacred, the highest standard of morality.	**Fundamentalist reductionism (see. Ch. 1)**
Spirituality	The apprehension of cosmic interrelationship. The apperception of meaning in existence, and the degree to which one is motivated by such meaning. Spirituality is one's ability to relate to the metaphysical level of experience. It unites through thought and feeling and thereby allows for intuitive understanding. This cognitive/affective sense is transmitted through collective ancestral relationship. The absence of spirituality is an ancestral legacy.	**Vibe (See. Ch. 2), spiritedness, 'way of being-knowing-doing"**

1.5 Engaged Philosophy

With most of the theoretical constellation out of the way, this section will describe our praxis dimension, which is how we take an obtuse academic discipline and incorporate it into our daily civic engagement and mode of being. It will do so discussing engaged philosophy in relation to applied philosophy and situating the former as the method for unfolding this work beyond Academia. This section situates our method and this project within the author's personal work, insisting on a philosophy meaningfully engaged with the world and oriented toward its betterment.[76]

An apparent problem with the disciplines of political and moral philosophy, at least in students' experiences, is that more often than not the reality of the discipline is a great and disheartening departure from what attracted them to it in the first place, in so far as success in these disciplines has become a measure of one's willingness to "abandon passion and protest, and replace it with analytical precision and abstract thought" (Wolff, 2020, p. 13). Methodological responses to this problem have taken the form of Applied Philosophy, and only more recently Engaged Philosophy.

Applied Philosophy, according to Jonathan Wolff (ibid., p. 14) is mainly concerned with applying political or moral philosophical theories in the hope of "providing philosophical foundations for social or public policy" as exemplified in the work of thinkers like John Rawls (1999), Robert Nozick (1974), and Ronald Dworkin (1993), Applied Philosophy is however replete (Wolff, 2020, pp. 14–17) with issues such as dogmatism (theories amounting to a type of philosophical paternalism, without basis in the world); under-determination (theories allowing multiple, conflicting policy positions); an implausibility of recommendations (theories ignorant of the narrow set of policies that might feasibly get adopted); the harms of partial implementation (theories that require multiple steps to implement but cause early issues if second and third order consequences are overlooked); blind spots (theories ignorant of the needs of specific minorities, such as people living with

disabilities); and conceptual inadequacy (theories ignorant of the cutting edge research on the issues they seek to solve).

Alternatively, engaged philosophy is a) sensitive to its possible issues and tries to solve them while b) providing methodological justification for subscribers to "step outside the ivory walls and bring their skills to community groups, including political entities" through active civic engagement (Hawthorne et al., 2020, p. 112). It is for these two reasons that we include it in our method.

Regarding a), we are keenly aware of the policy field we are stepping into and take up many of Wolff's methodological suggestions in our work by taking the time to understand the facts relevant to industrial agriculture, how it is organised, and how it is regulated; identifying the arguments in favour of Industrial Agriculture (such as its increased productivity, cost-effectiveness, and the necessity of feeding large populations) and the values which underlie them (such as progress, consistency and control); considering the history of food production systems and how they compare to the modern system; creating a profile of possible alternatives (agroecology alongside regenerative agriculture and conservation agriculture,); and evaluating them and their consequences in order to make policy inputs.

This links us to b) where the insights and learning gained from this work will be advanced in political and policy spaces,[77] and reflexively, where insights and learnings gained from engagement in political and policy spaces will shape this work.

This mode of engagement is thus a kind of ongoing 'workshopping' of the ideas contained in this thesis in the "real world" where "pluralism, pragmatism, and compromise" shape discourse more strongly than well-reasoned positions (Wolff, 2020, p. 17). Wolff maintains that there is a distinction between the philosopher, the activist, and the policy-maker, arguing that they have distinct roles and are positions occupied by different people. However, it is our belief and conviction that there is no reason for maintaining such vocational divisions as they are based on a Eurocentric approach to identity where a person must be only, fully and

completely one thing, be it man, carpenter, or academic. While we hold nothing against those who maintain this separatism of identity, it simply is not how we want to engage in this life, as an either or an or, instead of as a both/and[78] in the style of multi-hyphenation[79].

In the vein of Omedi Ochieng's 18th Thesis on the Intellectual Imagination[80] our method therefore ties the work we do in Academia to the work we do outside of it. In this, we concur with Brister's reading of pragmatism within engaged philosophy as the viewpoint that "philosophers cannot and should not work apart from the rest of society [and] philosophical work becomes meaningful by working with groups of people to understand and address their problems" (Brister, 2023, p. 2). The Situation, by virtue of complexity, envelops us into our model and method, and so it is that the Situation is also our problem that we seek to understand and address through the peculiar additions a philosopher can make to the spaces of politics and policy building.[81]

While it is obvious, it does warrant acknowledgement that a thesis such as this cannot contain our Life work, and so we must frame all of what is to come as an exercise in deepening our understanding of the Situation, pathways in terms of food system transformation for navigating through it, and a resource upon which we can draw to do the work that matters to us – manifesting through community engagement "non-Eurocentric/nonmodern ways of conceiving what it means to be human and of collective possibilities for building violence-free communities" (Roshanravan, 2014, p. 51). This research is part of our life-activity and in fulfilment of the purposeful existence we have chosen for ourselves or otherwise feel called to.

1.6 Summary

This chapter established the five interdependent dimensions of our method, each attending to a different aspect of how we will go about the philosophical engagements to follow. Firstly, it placed this work in relation to the (post)structural aftermath of disciplinarity, position it to embrace a bricolage approach that

foregrounds epistemic multiplicity and writing as a political act. Secondly, it proffered Conversational Thinking as our grounding logic, affirming Ezumezu as a foundational rationale through which African rationality might be meaningfully articulated. Thirdly, it backgrounded Critical Complexity Theory as the view on ontology taken up by this work, enabling us to make sense of layered realities without collapsing as a result of the tensions between them. Fourth, it elaborated our attitudinal orientation through decolonial and Afrocentric commitments, offering the methodological grammar of Asili, Utamawazo, and Utamaroho. Fifthly and finally, it affirmed Engaged Philosophy as our mode of civic and scholarly being, making philosophy not only a method of analysis but a practice of world-making. Together, these pillars constellate what we term an Afrignostic method—at once postdisciplinary, ecologically attuned, politically grounded, and spiritually alive. From here, we move to establish the Situation to which this method is applied.

Notes

[1] 'Discursively' is a variant adjectival form of the noun 'discourse'. Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, concerns the rules and practices of language that produce meaning(s) within given historical conditions and representations of said meanings in practice; it is about the production and deployment of power/knowledge through language in a given epoch (Foucault, 1972, pp. 27–29). From this perspective, discourse constructs the objects of knowledge we engage; it governs the norms of knowledge creation and epistemic validity of meaning and meaningful practice, how we talk about something, and what we do about that which we talk. However, discourses are never singular, being inherently relational, clarifying, and distinguishing themselves against a background *episteme* (See n. 6). When discourses form a unity, stylistically and strategically, to consider a single topic from many disparate minds, we encounter what Foucault refers to as a 'Discursive Formation' with its own "*rules of formation*" (ibid., pp. 41-42). These are the presupposed forces that determine the validity of the methods for approaching and acting on a particular topic, often in support of particular political ideologies or institutional ways of thinking about particular topics and which themselves have become institutionalised, unquestioned, and normative. As Foucault writes (ibid., p. 24), "We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign." With this in mind, we use the term here and prefix it with the term (counter) to disambiguate the character of our method from that of the dominant *episteme*.

[2] Following Adrea Krauβ (2011), we consider a constellation as different from "the nineteenth-century concept of a 'system' in Philosophy and closer to the paradigm of complexity described by Edgar Morin (1992a) as its successor. A constellation is a related group of concepts that is "episto-critical" in nature and premised on the idea that "truth is not directly knowable but can become "legible" through a "specific constitutive, modus of its linguistic form" (Krauβ, 2011, p. 144). Note that 'truth' here can only be 'legible', and so remains unknowable as the concept of a constellation rejects the notion of 'systematic closure' (see Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory) and replaces it with the notion of 'discontinuity' between philosophical systems and truth, together making them a constellation from which truth can be hinted at but never known. The concept of constellation is specifically useful for engagements which "aim at problematic and/or problematized object-formations in literature, theory, philosophy" with the goal of "inquir[ing] after possible consequences for a theory of (scientific) representation" (ibid., p. 442). We like the concept because it coheres both with the sense of gnosis we utilise (see Ch. 1. n. 4) as well as the insight of provisionality (see Sect. 1.3) arising from Critical Complexity (Woermann, 2016).

[3] See Introduction. n. 14.

[4] Gnosis is by nature an elusive term to define, hence why even the inimitable Valentine Yves Mudimbe did not provide a precise definition for it in his seminal work *The Invention of Africa: Philosophy, Gnosis and the Order of Knowledge* (1988). Functionally, we use it in the sense(s) of those (un)articulatable insights peculiar to wisdom traditions of which we can consider African Philosophy to be one according to Angela Roothaan's (2019) reading of Mudimbe. We choose to not define gnosis for pedagogical reasons related to writing esoterically in the hope that the reader will "rediscover it by and for themselves" (Melzer, 2007). Such a mode of engagement with both philosophy and life is increasingly being drawn out of the work of thinkers such as Plato, who the literature is now revealing had a penchant for writing esoterically about wisdom (Burger, 1978; Burkert, 1987; Poster, 1993; Adluri, 2006; Porter, 2010; Coniglione, 2018) or that which we call gnosis. However, for the sake of *some* clarity, we will specify that we do not use the term in singular relation to the pre-Christian Gnostics or to the "biblical demiurgical" category of early Jewish and Christian theology as disambiguated by Michael Allen Williams (2001), though we are not opposed to psychological readings of it, such as those advanced by C.G. Jung (Ribi, 2013; Segal, 2019). Rather, we are inclined towards the second sense of Gnosis identified by Gregory Shaw (2019) as a forward-looking, optimistic, "non-dual gnosis that sees the material Cosmos as divine" and so look to the African philosophical work of Mogobe Ramose (2002a), the African spiritual theosophy of Laurenti Magesa (2013), and the African Deep Thought tradition of Marimba Ani (1994), Jacob Carruthers (1995), Maulana Karenga (2004), and Joshua Myers (2023) for the content thereof. In the style of Wehan Coombs' (2022, p. 182) 'dual esotericism', wherein "textual and mystical esotericism meet in a mutually entailing relationship which can take various forms, but that share the characteristic that the esoteric nature of the text points towards an esoteric 'reality' which is interpreted through the text and gives insight into the text itself and so on, recursively" we suggest a sense of gnosis out of Africa, *Afrignosis*, that provides through experiences a flexible and relational understanding of wisdom useful for living fulfilling and ecologically harmonious lives. The type of meaning-making (See Sect. 1.2) inhered by wisdom traditions such as Afrignosis (See. Chapter 3: Relationalism, Ethics, and the Question of Microcosmic Life) can be understood through the complex (See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory) metatheory of cognition developed by John Veraeke *et al.* (Vervaeke, Lillicrap and Richards, 2012; Vervaeke and Ferraro, 2013; Consilience Project, 2023), which conceptualises of alternative ways of understanding the world, ways of knowing, that are participatory, perspectival, and procedural, as opposed to ways of knowing that are only propositional. Herein, alternative modalities of knowing (Graneβ, 2022), such as orality, movement, gesture and art are positions as able to help one arrive at, or otherwise develop, gnosis.

[5] Before proceeding, we should acknowledge the non-homogenous nature of that which we call "the West", "Western" or "European" over the course of this work. To specify, these identifiers are used interchangeably and refer to a more specific part of the history of thought than European thought in its entirety, or even to the geographic area of Europe. Specifically in our usage, the 'West' connotes the dominant modes of thinking that align with and serve the imperial intent of European civilisation historically, as outlined by Mamba Ani in her Work *Yurugu: An Afrocentric Critique of European Cultural Thought and Behaviour* (1994). They emerge from Euro-dominated epistemic contexts such as Europe itself and the United States of America a European Settler Colony (Wolfe, 2006). For clarity, we do not intend that these identifiers include work of the Neo-Platonists, such as Plotinus, and the Christian Mystics, such as Meister Eckhart, or the psychological work of C. G. Jung, only now explained scientifically in the work of thinkers such Bernardo Kastrup (2019, 2021). What distinguishes these thinkers from the "West" of Francis Bacon, David Hume, Bertrand Russel, Jeremy Bentham, and Karl Popper, to name a few related thinkers, is their acknowledgement or non-denial of the validity of the existence of a 'spiritual reality' akin to that encompassed in the cosmologies of first-nation majority peoples, including early 'Europeans', that is to say, they do not put forth a world whose nature is merely material. The marginalisation of this non-physicalist 'other' West, so to say, can be accounted for by its inability to complement the "power-seeking" expansionist tendency of European cultures (Ani, 1994, p. 105). Peter Kingsley (2008), Richard Tarnas (1996), and Patrick Harpur (2014) each trace the movement of this 'other West' and show an ancient understanding of the gnostic insights that have been rationalised to the periphery of the Western Canon, given their mystical, idealist, or otherwise non-materialist bases.

[6] Episteme is used as follows, from Foucault (1966, pp. 378–379): "The domain of the modern *episteme* should be represented rather as a volume of space open in three dimensions. In one of these we would situate the mathematical and physical sciences, for which order is always a deductive and linear linking together of evident or verified propositions; in a second dimension there would be the sciences (such as those of language, life, and the production and distribution of wealth) that proceed by relating discontinuous but analogous elements in such a way that they are then able to establish causal relations and structural constants between them. These first two dimensions together define a common plane: that which can appear, according to the direction in which one traverses it, as a field of application of mathematics to these empirical sciences, or as the domain of the mathematizable in linguistics, biology, and economics. The third dimension would be that of philosophical reflection, which develops as a thought of the Same; it forms a common plane with the dimension of linguistics, biology, and economics: it is here that we may meet, and indeed have met, the various philosophies of life, of alienated man, of symbolical forms (when concepts and problems that first arose in different empirical domains are transposed into the philosophical dimension); but we have also encountered here, if we question the foundation of these empiricities from a radically philosophical point of view, those regional ontologies which attempt to define what life, labour, and language are in their own being; lastly, the

philosophical dimension and that of the mathematical disciplines combine to define another common plane: that of the formalization of thought."

[7] By including *being within* as also *being with-in* we stress the dialogical nature of being both in the world and with the world as something that we both make and are made by (Quin, 2022, p. 1).

[8] Postmodernism refers to the period in thought following the modern era when a general scepticism took hold in philosophy, contending mainly in the work of the (post)structuralists that the grounds of discourse were less stable than they appeared (Sim, 2011).

[9] Discourse, in the Foucauldian sense, concerns the rules and practices of language that produce meaningful statements within given historical conditions and representations of said meaning in practice – it is about the production and deployment of knowledge through language in a given epoch (Foucault, 1972, pp. 27–29). Discourse constructs the objects of knowledge we engage; it governs the norms of knowledge creation and epistemic validity, of meaning and meaningful practice, of how we talk about something and what we do about that which we talk. Discourses are never, however, singular. When discourses form a unity, stylistically and strategically, to consider a single topic from many disparate minds, we encounter what Foucault refers to as a 'Discursive Formation' with its own "*rules of formation*" (ibid., pp. 41-42). These are the presupposed forces that determine the validity of the methods for approaching and acting on a particular topic, often in support of particular political ideologies or institutional ways of thinking about particular topics, which themselves have become institutionalised, unquestioned, and normative. As Foucault writes, "We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognized from the outset; we must oust those forms and obscure forces by which we usually link the discourse of one man with that of another; they must be driven out from the darkness in which they reign" (Foucault, 1972, p. 24).

[10] Disciplinarity does not only function between disciplines, drawing lines between, say, philosophy and anthropology, it also operates intra-disciplinarily, delineating philosophy into its sub-disciplines, metaphysics, ethics, politics, epistemology, ontology, and aesthetics. Disciplinarity "presupposes a mechanism that coerces by means of observation; an apparatus in which the techniques that make it possible to see induce effects of power, and in which, conversely, the means of coercion make those on whom they are applied clearly visible." (Foucault, 1995, pp. 170–171)

[11] Publishing has become an unavoidable requirement of academic knowledge-work in (neo)liberalised institutions (Hofmeyr, 2022).

[12] Governmentality and governmentalities are frameworks introduced by Michel Foucault (2009) for analysing "a range of forms of action and fields of practice aimed in a complex way at steering individuals and collectives" (Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, 2012, p. 1). Governmentalities are means by which the relationships "between power and subjectivity" and "techniques of power and forms of knowledge" mediate "techniques of rule […] tied to "technologies of the self" [through] specific types of rationality, regimes of representation, and interpretive models" (ibid., p. 2). Governmentalities allow us to excavate "the systemic ties between forms of rationality […] and technologies of government" at the level of "micro-practice" ascending to that of "macro phenomena" (ibid., p. 12). These relationships form the biopolitical conditions in which "truth claims" are produced, such as those that the IAC uses to justify its proliferation (Kimbrell, 2002b) and from which "power effects" emerge to produce "selective" food production knowledges and technologies ("practical processes, instruments, programs, calculations, measures, and apparatuses making it possible to form and control forms of action, structures of preference, and premises for decisions by societal agents in view of certain goals") (Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, 2012, p. 12). The concern of governmentality analysis is primarily with the real of the political and "how it is produced in the first place" (ibid.).

[13] Technologies of the Self are "ways that people in Western Culture develop knowledge of themselves" and include "'(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform, or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols, or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Nilson, 1998, p. 97)

[14] Although it does not overcome disciplinarity, as it is nonetheless still a form of disciplinarity (Schmidt, 2022, p. 24) structured around a mainly written and Eurocentric rationality (Ani, 1994; Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b; Graneβ, 2022) - hence we have chosen to annotate it as '(inter)disciplinarity' and not 'interdisciplinarity' or 'inter-disciplinarity' in order to maintain the trace of (Shain, 2019), and relation to, its origin. (Inter)disciplinarity is a useful way to understand the relationship of this work, and others like it, to the structural precondition of disciplinarity as a feature of research within Academia.

[15] While appreciating the epistemic validity of disciplinarity, we also appreciate the (im)possible epistemic validity of the (un)speakable excess as argued for by the (post)structuralists (Bataille, 1991; Derrida, 1999). As such, we describe parts of this work as (un)disciplined, meaning that discipline is respected in as far as it is a necessary component of writing a doctoral thesis, but is also, within reason, disregarded, in as far as (dis)regard maintains a trace of that which it disregards. However, we also see no point in absolute (un)disciplinarity of the sort that gives way to indecipherable

(post)structural convolution, such as Nick Land's essay *A zIIgQthIc-==X=cQDA==-(CookIng-IQbsteRs-wIth-jAke-AnD-DmQs)* (Land, 2011).

[16] By this we mean that intermingled with bulk of the sections that will maintain a 'tradition' analytic writing style there will be brief sections which proffer a prosaic writing style.

[17] In light of the Situation, it seems that there is little to lose in stretching into the experimental terrain of possibilities which ruptures may inaugurate (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012). As such, we suggest there is value in pushing the limits of philosophy, but not without epistemic recourse to theory – even though said theory may at times be outside of the common philosophical canon.

[18] Citationality as problematised by Derrida in his essay 'Signature Event Context' (1982b) already inheres a very strong limit on what counts as knowledge, functionally gatekeeping alternative sources of potential knowledge from the realm of legitimate play (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b), and always already presupposes that which is exterior to it is as the condition of its possibility. Outside of these borders, until only recently, lay all of African knowledge and wisdom, whose oral nature alone was enough to bar it from entry (Ramose, 2002b; Graneβ, 2015, 2022). As such, and in the spirit of decoloniality (See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity) we will sparingly make use of knowledge sources that are non-traditional, such as well-researched YouTube videos as a form of play aimed at the disciplinary rigidity of citationality. Additionally, and in line with Critical Complexity's problematisation of the modeller/modelled relationship (See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory), he have taken a deconstructive approach to citationality in this work by proffering the collective pronouns "us", "our" and "we" instead of the personal pronouns "I", "me" and "mine" throughout the text. We have done so to enfold us, our readers, and our sources into a collective identity wherein no part exists without relation to the Situation.

[19] Disambiguation and bracketing are techniques for annotating words such as (post)structuralism, (Life)world, or (re)production, intended to highlight the textual interplay of terms when taken together or taken apart. (Re)production is both production and reproduction at once, indicating an interplay that invokes recursion and reflexivity between the two terms. It also allows us to invoke in writing the excesses of a term, such as hu(man)ity alluding to the phalogocentrism (Derrida, 2016) of the term by identifying the centrality of the male man to its grammatic formulation.

[20] Writing under erase is a technique used in deconstructive philosophy to indicate the dubious relationship between signifier and signified from within the economy of signification in which the signified gains its meaning, or to indicate the insufficiency of a term but the unavoidability of its usage by keeping it in place but striking it through. An example could be something like *other* used in the sentence "A cat is to human the embodiment of alterity, its ~~*other*~~". The sense of other commonly invoked in philosophical discourse on otherness, at least since Hegel, has been that of absolute otherness, complete and total difference. However, in the example, the cat is unlike the human but is not completely and absolutely other – it also breathes, yearns and must eat. Although it signals difference, the term 'other' also invokes a discursive history in philosophy of absolute alterity, making it useful but insufficient, especially in frameworks such as Chimakonam's Ezumezu logic (Chimakonam, 2019a) which rejects absolute alterity in favour of a conversational tension (see Sect. 1.2 Conversationalism).

[21] Taken from the work of Karl Sornig (1981), Lexical innovation refers to acts of writing which create new, or give new meanings to, lexemes (words). These include neologisms (completely new lexemes) formed by compounding (where existing lexemes or parts of lexemes are combined to form new lexemes with new meanings) or semantic augmentation using either native elements of a language (morphemes, prefixes, suffices) or loanwords (terms borrowed from a different lexicon). It also includes nonse-formations, which are lexemes used in a novel way different to their normal usage in a given lexicon, creating new meanings.

[22] Ezumezu is not the only system of logic emerging from Africa. It can be considered alongside other logical systems in Africa and their builders, such as Innocent Asouza's (2004, 2013) 'Complementary Logic' and Chris Ijiomah's (2006, 2014) 'Harmonious Monism', and even Ada Agada's (2015, 2022) 'Consolation philosophy'. We prefer Chimakonam's Ezumezu and the school of Conversationalism he builds on top of it, because of a) its complexity, resulting from its logical monism and the paradoxes it gives way to (Abakedi and Iwuagwu, 2022) and does not seek to negate, but rather conversationalise (Chimakonam, 2021a); b) its relationship of foundation to our preferred reading of Decoloniality (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b); and c), its alignment with what we have called a type a type of 'relational monism' elsewhere (Black and Oeschger, forthcoming) that together offers us some kind of meaningful overlap in terms of the shared complexity of each of our methodological pillars.

[23] Conversationalism, unlike much analytic philosophy, does not present 'truth' or 'justification' alone as the ultimate goals of philosophy. Rather, it aims to create presence (meaningfulness) from a metaphysics of absence (meaninglessness), a nomenclature that Bernard Matolino takes issue with (Matolino, 2022), that it posits as the source of meaningfulness (Chimakonam, 2021a, pp. 6–7). To clarify what this means, Chimakonam (Chimakonam, 2021c, p. 164) asks us to consider the spectrum between presence and absence/present-absence as analogous to carving a sculpture from a tree stump – all of the possible sculptures that can be made are already contained in the tree stump, they are present in their absence – an absent-presence - and can be made manifest via sculpting. In much the same way, all possible meanings already exist in the world and the job of the philosopher is to make-meaning manifest through Conversationalism. Meaning-making as such does not aim to fix the truth-value of some or other piece of knowledge – to claim an ultimate meaning - but to excavate in knowledge those parts that are meaningful in a given context

[24] At the base of any philosophical system, Chimakonam writes, lies a system of logic "that defines the laws (formal and informal) that guide thought or the relationship of variables in such a system" (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 23).

[25] Conversational thinking (a system of thought) or Conversationalism (a movement or school of thought) are both terms used to denote a method of reasoning with the intention of generating meaning or meaning-making. To avoid any initial ambiguity or uncertainty, it should be made clear that the authors of Conversationalism do not intend that we enter the realm of philosophical meaning-formation with the common understanding of the term 'conversation' obfuscating our discussion. The term 'conversational' is used by Conversationalists to denote the pure concept of an existential "processes of creative struggle or meaning-making both within an agent and between agents as such" (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 6 Fn. 9, 2021c, p. 162).

[26] In analysing propositions, analytic philosophy wants to break down the whole into parts to understand the whole in terms of its parts. Conversational philosophy does the same but only as a complement to another, which is to constitute parts into a whole to understand the parts in terms of the whole. Further than this, conversational philosophy analyses language not to obtain meaning but to understand how words and propositions play out in different contexts. As an alternative to the Wittegnsteinian contention that the highest goal of philosophy is the logical analysis of language, Conversational Philosophy holds this is only part of what Philosophy should be aimed at because does not and should not consist of language analysis alone because meaning is not embedded in words and propositions. The goal should be conversation.

[27] Chimakonam calls this the "bivalence-trivalence continuum thesis" and holds that it is possible for "bivalence to transition to trivalence and vice versa" (Chimakonam, 2019a, p. 110). Transitioning from bivalence to trivalence is called a *conjunctive movement* and initiates the complementary mode of inference, while a return from trivalency to bivalency is called a *disjunctive movement* and initiates the contextual mode of inference.

[28] The law of identity in classical logic holds that a thing is equal to itself.

[29] The law of contradiction in classical logic holds that a thing cannot be equal to that which it is not.

[30] The law of the excluded middle in classic logic holds that a thing either is or it is not, thereby positing the "mutually exclusive absolute difference" of things (Chimakonam, 2019a, p. 140).

[31] *Njikoka* is the law of conjunction in the Ezumezu system and it is intended to supplement the law of identity. Where the latter holds that a thing is equal to itself, *Njikoka* holds that a thing is also contingent on its relation to other things. The interplay of the law of identity and *Njikoka* is what Chimakonam refers to as 'Ohakaristics' (Chimakonam, 2019a).

[32] Nmekọka is the law of complementarity in the Ezumezu system and it is intended to supplement the law of contradiction. Where the latter holds that a thing cannot be that which it is not i.e. another thing, *Nmekọka* holds that that which it is not i.e. other things contributes to the identity of the thing, and so the identity of a thing is strengthened in relation to the community of things in which it exists. Chimakonam refers to the interplay of the Law of contradiction and *Nmekọka* as 'Arumaristics' (Chimakonam, 2019a).

[33] *Ọnọna-etiti* is the law of the included middle in the Ezumezu system and it is intended to supplement the law of the excluded middle. Where the latter holds that a thing either is or it is not, *Ọnọna-etiti* holds that a thing can both be and not be as a matter of "mutually inclusive relative difference" (Chimakonam, 2019a, p. 140).

[34] Critical Complexity, through the Morinian concept of *Unitas Multiplex* (Morin, 1992a) requires a type of logic to make sense of the paradoxes inhered in the nature of complex systems by the dual sense of identity carried by their elements. As both themselves and as elements in a complex system, contending with the issue of identity in complex systems means having to reason one's way through seeming (im)possibilities (Derrida, 1999; Woermann, 2016) which resist simplification and require that we balance the tension of opposites without resolving them through synthetic negation.

[35] "Meaning is never discovered. […] Meaning is made through creative struggle in its ever-changing and ongoing private, collective, and contextual folds. […] Meaning is not created from nothing; it always and only has to come from something – a bearer of ideas" that draws it out of a metaphysics of absence through conversational interaction (Chimakonam, 2021c, p. 155).

[36] "When *nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju* are in a conversation, each undertakes individual tasks of meaning-making. Their exchanges through speech, writing or gesticulation convey ideas. The signifier and the signified are ideas which the significists appreciate differently. Meaning is a subjective experience of a significist who must initiate the process of meaning-making to disclose that experience." (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 35).

[37] The respective identities of the significists in a given conversational process aimed at generating meaning are very open and unfixed – which makes them a wonderfully flexible tool for philosophising. *Nwa-nsa* and *nwa-nju* could be anything from a book and a reader to those we will use in our enquiry, like 'the holistic mindset' as *nwa-nsa* and 'the mechanistic mindset' as *nwa-nju* in Ch. 2.

[38] See Ch. 1. n. 27.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Hannah Arendt's analysis of political action reinforces the claim that meaningfulness is a precondition for collective action. In The Human Condition, she distinguishes between mere behaviour and political action, the latter requiring the presence of a shared world of meaning—a "web of human relationships" in which people speak and act together (Arendt, 2018, pp. 175–178 (1958)). For Arendt, action emerges not from shared beliefs per se, but from the creation of a space in which plurality, appearance, and speech are possible. This resonates with Chimakonam's emphasis on mutualising meaning through conversation. While their metaphysical commitments differ, both thinkers insist that

action capable of initiating or sustaining the political requires something beyond individual will or propositional alignment—it depends on the intersubjective creation of meaning. Without this, there may be reaction, obedience, or revolt—but not truly collective considered action. See also Arendt (2006, p. 108 (1961)) Between Past and Future, where she clarifies that "meaningfulness is the condition of being human".

[41] The aforementioned intersections have been explored and found viable in work on: the (socio)ecological effects of setting up Agroecology villages in Africa (Verharen et al., 2021); the ability of Agroecology to help build Climate-Resilient communities (Amoak, Luginaah and McBean, 2022); and the relationship between agroecology and food sovereignty (Martínez-Torres and Rosset, 2014).

[42] See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory.

[43] See Sect. 3.4.1 The Microcosmic Community of Life and the Order of Being.

[44] See Sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity.

[45] Critical Complexity theory draws a distinction between complicated systems and complex systems (Woermann, 2016, pp. 39–42). According to Roberto Poli (2013) this amounts to a difference between complicated systems which originate from distinct causes, can be addressed piecemeal, have proportional inputs and outputs, can be controlled, and have permanent solutions, and complex systems which "result from networks of multiple interacting causes that cannot be individually distinguished; must be addressed as entire systems, that is they cannot be addressed in a piecemeal way; they are such that small inputs may result in disproportionate effects; the problems they present cannot be solved once and for ever, but require to be systematically managed and any intervention merges into new problems as a result of the interventions dealing with them; and the relevant systems cannot be controlled…" This insight is confirmed by Paul Cilliers who notes that the hallmark of a complicated system is that it is in essence *solvable* in that it can be given a "complete description in terms of its individual constituents" (Cilliers, 1998, pp. viii–ix).

[46] *Ohanife* is a complex conceptual alternative to the term ecosystem which is designed to include the human in the natural *a priori* (Chimakonam, 2019b).

[47] See Ch. 1. n. 8. Both Woermann (2016) and Cilliers (1998) were heavily influence by (post)structural thinkers such as George Battaile, Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Michel Foucault, and Emmanuel Levinas.

[48] Complex systems theory includes Cybernetics (Van Foerster, 1984) and General System Theory (Von Bertalanffy, 1972) and their attempts to (re)create the organisational character and features of complex systems using mathematical and computer models.

[49] Woermann (2016) and Cilliers (1998) both make the arguments for the ontological, epistemic and ethical complexity of the world. The metaphysical, psychological, political or aesthetic complexity of the word remains underexplored.

[50] However, the reader should be prepared to encounter others, such as the interplay between autonomy and dependence (Woermann, 2016) and comparisons between the paradigm of simplicity and that of complexity (Morin, 2008) in due course as the current author is heavily influenced by the discourse.

[51] See n. 45.

[52] Take for instance the attempts of various psychiatric practitioners to model the brain and its relation to mind. How they model the complex system has consequences for how we treat mental illness, and thus carries ethical implications. Models can be many things, such as how one might consider the theory of Utilitarianism to be an attempt to model ethics. From this perspective, it is obvious that modelling carries ethical consequences and so should be the subject of interrogation of the sort offered by the Critical Complexity theorists.

[53] Different sets of physical laws have been developed under the guise of being a unified theory, but the advance of science has proven again and again that the Cosmos is resistant to any single Law to explain it. A such, we now have different sets of laws for different parts of the system. This coheres with the view of Cilliers that "there is no over-arching theory of complexity that allows us to ignore the contingent aspects of complex systems" (Cilliers, 1998, p. ix).

[54] Agriculture accounts for a third of global land use (Ramankutty *et al.*, 2018).

[55]Agriculture has largely shaped human history, with demographic changes within the human population notably being determined by the availability of food in its environment (Tainter, 1988; Montgomery, 2007; Isett and Miller, 2017).

[56] We use this term under erasure in this instance to show its insufficiency as we argue that the Situation manifests itself as both a presence and an absence in allusion to the power/knowledge relationships inhered by governmentalities and technologies of the self as discussed by Foucault (See Ch. 1. n. 12). Even when we are not in the spaces where it more overly structures aspects of our shared life-world, such as supermarkets, petrol stations, schools or universities – those places where its logic and intended way of relating are more visible to us – it is with us, such as when sitting at home and grappling with one's level of productivity (Burns, 2024). This is where Foucault's term 'Technologies of the Self' is useful (see Ch. 1 n. 13) as a way of describing manifestations of power/knowledge that become internal to the psyche once conditioned and which from that point are enacted upon the individual by themselves without the need for a disciplining agent or structure to be present.

[57] The same conclusion is reached with more nuance, by V.Y. Mudimbe (1988, p. 2) when he writes of the "colonizing structure" as something that achieved its aims through complementary hypotheses and actions, "the domination of physical space, the reformation of *natives'* minds, and the integration of local economic histories into the Western perspective". In his argument he subsumes under these three categories the complete embrace of the "physical, human and spiritual aspects of the colonising experience" to account for "the modulations and methods representative of colonial organisation: the procedures of acquiring, distributing, and exploiting lands in colonies; the policies of

domesticating natives; and the manner of managing ancient organisations and implementing new modes of production." Here we see the same link between economies and physical space – agriculture being the largest expression of this intersection – and the suppression of indigenous knowledge. As Vandana Shiva writes (2016a, p. 46): "Five hundred years ago, when land began to be colonized, the reconstitution of the earth from a living system into mere matter went hand in hand with the devaluation of the contributions of non-European cultures and nature."

[58] 'Significance' and 'viability', as they relate to this thesis, are measures of impact and usefulness consequentially construed as degrees of urgent practicality in (re)ordering our shared (life)world in light of the Situation.

[59] To be more specific, the type of decolonial interrogations we aim to engage in are of the kind related to food production and the (re)organisation of society in terms of ethics, aesthetics, political economy, and Law, and the way these arenas have been bordered off from one another and, importantly, from the realm of spirituality. This framing focuses us more closely on issues related to an ethical-spiritual-praxis and its complex and pragmatic manifestations. This is different from the types of decoloniality which are purely theoretical, dealing only with the colonial influence on concept formation and evolution.

[60] Knowledge as we will construe in this work is something complex (Woermann, 2016) and (inter)disciplinary (Schmidt, 2022), co-constituted as meaningful through experience of gnosis (see n. 4). Moreover, it is *rounded* in the sense of holistically considering knowledge not only as theory but as a tool for philo-praxis (Dladla, 2017b) and the furtherance of ecologically sensitive ways of being relevant to an African context. In this way, it engages decoloniality within knowledge-making towards the practical decolonisation of space, place, and people as far as such is possible through changes in agricultural praxis. However, in acknowledging the *bricolage* nature of the method under development, it should be noted that not all excluded African positions can or should be deployed towards the current theme. Some positions, such as those advanced in the work of Horsthemke (2015) propound a reading of traditional African ethical thought as definitionally anthropocentric and therefore incompatible with the more holist position we are to take up in our pursuit of meaning-making in relation to eco-conscious agroecological living as a form of communal ethical-spiritual-praxis. Even Bujo (1998) has been criticised for a similar position by Behrens (2010, p. 469). See Ch. 2 for a full engagement with the charge of Anthropocentrism.

[61] Much like the holist outlook on nature (See Sec. 2.1.2 Agroecology, and Nature as an Emergent System of Complex Interrelated Systems), our approach to knowledge of reality in the African place uses a "unitary ontology of knowledge" (Ramose, 2003b). This ontological viewpoint on knowledge does not divide knowledge into, for example, rational, empirical or mythical categories but rather maintains a "single mode of knowing" (Nasseem, 2003, p. 308) which could be described as complex (see Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory) or as a constellation (see Ch. 1. n. 2). From this perspective, African thought does not operate on the basis of a restricted economy of knowledge. Rather, its methodology for (re)considering knowledge and non-knowledge/ignorance fully acknowledges the *incompletable* nature of knowledge in that we cannot completely know the whole of reality and truth. It compels us therefore to practice epistemological humility or provisionality, by asking us to consider knowledge more as a general economy – one that is "beyond our [total] understanding and control" (Woermann, 2016, p. 48) – through decoloniality, an interrogation of borders and strategy for (dis)bordering (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b). From the preceding discussion of the limits of disciplinarity (See Sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity), we can see how this integrative paradigm of knowledge, closer to the philosophy of (inter)disciplinarity (Schmidt, 2022), presents as anathema to knowledge itself as construed by the Academy, making engaging disciplinarity a persistent colonial thorn in the side of African thinkers. From this perspective, disciplinarity is a denial of the co-constructed (Woermann, 2016) nature of complexity that rouses the call to "question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar. Can one accept, as such, the distinction between the major types of discourse, or that between such forms or genres as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc., and which tend to create certain great historical individualities?" (Foucault, 1972, p. 24).

[62] We take the method being constellated, emerging from foundational, structural, doctrinal and attitudinal elements, to be a complex system for attempting a decolonial philosophical study of food system relations from the perspective of African thought. Additionally, as will be seen, this thesis is an engagement with multiple elements of the system of Eurocentricity, such as: its analytic approach to ethics and the metaphysical and ontological implications thereof (Ch. 2); its conception of aesthetics and purposeful existence (see Chapter 3: Relationalism, Ethics, and the Question of Microcosmic Life); its mode of political-economy in relation to the organisation of food production (See Chapter 5: A Political Ontology of Food); and its terms for Ordering the Cosmos (See Chapter 6: Order, Life and Spiritual Taboo).

[63] By homegrown, we mean produced by theorists like Jonathan Chimakonam, Walter Mignolo, Angela Roothaan, Kwasi Wiredu, Mogobo Ramose, Kevin Behrens, Laurenti Magesa, Ndumiso Dldadla. In his Chapter entitled *The Formation of Enunciative Modalities,* Foucault (1972) outlines the importance of the question "who is speaking?" in the formation of discourses (See. Ch. 1. n. 9) in allusion to the relation between Power and Knowledge. As a relevant decolonial question, one can note that the authors we draw on are 'homegrown' in the sense of being from Africa, or at the least strongly related to Africa in their sense of identity.

[64] "The fact is that [Epistemic Particularism/EP] sees approaches to knowledge or studying reality as things that are relative to philosophical places. This is however not the type of relativism that makes knowledge culture-bound. Chimakonam (2019a) distinguishes relativism from relativity. The latter for him allows for knowledge generated from a particular philosophical place to be universalizable (in terms of being applicable outside where it is generated). EP

can be read in terms of relativity rather than relativism. It should be noted that relativism absolutizes and restricts knowledge in/to a particular place and this is not good for the epistemological enterprise, whereas relativity gives room for knowledge to be progressive and transcultural. On the basis of relativity, African epistemology is cultural in origin but transcultural in terms of application" (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b, p. 178 Fn. 2).

[65] Miranda Fricker in her book *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (2011) uses a conception of stereotypes – "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes" (ibid., p. 30) – to explain a range of epistemic injustices. The specific injustice we concern ourselves with and to which we take up an Afrocentric attitude in response is what Fricker calls "Testimonial injustice" (ibid., Ch. 2.3). It can be understood as the prejudicial moment of being *listened to* but not *heard*, or of attempting to impart a piece of knowledge to a 'listener' but having the politics of identity power at play in the interaction prevent it from being received as valid or worthwhile. Regarding the question of African contributions to philosophical knowledge, ideas spoken from the African place have been historically prejudiced to the degree that they have not been seriously considered or 'given a fair shake', as it were. In the language of Conversationalism, we could say that the political realities of the context in which the interaction between *nwa-nsa* (the speaker or, in our current discussion, African thought) and *nwa-nju (*the listener, or Eurocentric thought in the current conversation) have historically impeded an Approximate Linguistic Transference of Idea (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 12) from taking place. This breakdown that prevents the testimonial legitimacy of the *nwa-nsa* from making-meaning in conversation is a result of a colonial prejudice regarding questions of valid knowledge production. In the mindview of the *nwa-nju,* the *nwa-nsa* has been relegated to a space of unknowing and as a result, meaning-making has not occurred (Chimakonam, 2021a, pp. 10–12).

[66] At the pen-tip of coloniality in philosophy, in addition to colonialism more generally, Western authors engaged Africa as an object of study, functionally "exclude[ing] African concepts, schools, traditions and authors from the philosophical canon and kept Africa out of almost all of the main reference works on the history of philosophy" (Graneβ, 2015, pp. 84–85). Chimakonam (2017, p. 127) proposes that this is still ongoing, but now happens through the various 'presses' that govern the publication of academic knowledge using tools of "rejection and conformation" to "gate-keep manuscripts from the global South." This historical trend has created a Eurocentrically dominated 'economy of credibility', or a politics of epistemic validity, that has prejudiced the African place as a site of knowledge production (Janz, 2009, 2019). Said prejudice has not merely been epistemic, however, as the Epistemicidal (Santos, 2015) effects of coloniality have also essentially erased indigenous ways of being, which are usefully understood under the framework of Nompumelelo Z. Mazini's (2019) 'Southern Environmentalism' as being substantially more ecocentric (Leopold, 1970) and therefore less ecologically destructive. Ongoing epistemic injustice can therefore be characterised as an element of the Situation.

[67] See Joshua Myers' *Of Black Study* (2023) for a comprehensive account of this hard won field of study.

[68] Of course, Afrocentricity is not without its critiques. Notably, Tunde Adeleka critiques the concept for being a form of "Afrocentric essentialism" guilty of being a "counterhegemonic essentialist ethos meant to validate and reflect the claims, aspirations, and values of the subordinated and powerless group" as a result of an underacknowledged movement in double-consciousness of the DuBoisian variety (Adeleke, 2009, p. 18). The impact of this, as he identifies it, has been the making of Blackness and of Africa into a monolith, insensitive to the plurality and diversity of African histories, cultures, and experiences. This leads him to highlight "the central paradoxical and philosophical problematic of Afrocentric essentialism— the claim of cultural originality and exclusivity in a context of historical and cultural contacts, exchanges, and hegemony!" (ibid., p. 22). In response, we suggest that Adeleka maligns a much-needed elasticity in African historiography in relation to a history of Africa that has been, for all intents and purposes, written by the victor, except in rare cases like the African historiography of Chekh Anta Diop. In making his case, he uncritically relies on a Eurocentric and liberalist tendency, which demands that an order initiated at the expense of Africa be maintained, this time in the form of historical narrativization and the (re)enforcement of (dis)unity among Africans, when it is justice for past wrongdoings and a collective horizon that is being sought. What Afrocentrism intends is a rallying call to Africans everywhere to take up the 'main character' role in the unfolding narrative of tomorrow by critically refusing to be accessory or appendage to the continued writing of the history of a European 'progress' and 'development (1998). Along the road to such a goal, histories will be written anew as a necessary part of (re)forging identities and (re)building the political consciousness of Africans to resist the impacts of Eurocentrism. Regardless, and in sidestepping much of the cultural, racial, and ethnic focus of Adeleka's critique, the only shared unity between continental African and diasporic Africans which we posit, following Laurtenti Magesa (1997, 2013) and Benezet Bujo (1992, 1998), will be that unity related to the cosmological foundations of African thought and the base spiritualities which blossom from it as still present beneath any religious frameworks enculturated into Africans as part of either the Atlantic trans(dis)position or the period of Christianisation. As such, and following Asante (Asante, 1998, p. 13), while we may be charged with essentialism of some variety – those elements of Africanness that we posit as essential are not posited as immutable, in so far as they take on vast and varied expressions that change gradually over time, but do, ultimately point towards something shared, some understanding of the nature of the world. See Chapter 3: Relationalism, Ethics, and the Question of Microcosmic Life for a discussion of this shared base.

[69] According to Asante (2014, pp. 6–7) the general form of Eurocentrism regardless of its specific manifestation in theory asserts that "Europe is the standard, and nothing exists in the same category anywhere" in support of the racist "valorisation of Europe above all other cultures and societies". Regarding its theoretical manifestations, we find the

summary of Eurocentric methodological techniques offered by Kenneth B. Nunn (1997) to be a comprehensive account for the purposes of characterising Eurocentrism within the bounds of this thesis. Eurocentric theorists, variously, reason dichotomously; elevate dichotomies into hierarchies of superiority and inferiority; use analytic reasoning to maintain said hierarchies; objectify and abstract that about which they reason; insist on the inherent validity of an "extreme rationalism"; and deny in a manner "almost uniquely European" that there is any sacredness in Nature, or otherwise operate from a secularised and logocentric standpoint whereby Eurocentric rationalism takes on the mythology of God, sovereign, or highest justificatory source (Nunn, 1997, pp. 334–388). Alternatively, Ani (Ani, 1994, pp. 105–109) characterises Eurocentrism as a tendency towards dichotomization; oppositional relationships; hierarchical segmentation; analytic, nonsynthetic thought; objectification; absolutist-abstractification; rationalism and scientism; an authoritative literate mode; and the desacralisation of reality,

[70] Radical is here used in the sense that an Afrocentric approach proposes a reversal, an alternative viewpoint on phenomena, which, from the Eurocentric perspective – once outward gazing subject but now gazed upon object of study – can be experienced as injustice. Herein, what Mpho Tshivashe (2023) has termed the "white gaze" is rejected in the moment of reversal when Ubuntu as a "black gaze" is cast upon it in critique of its superioritisation tendency.

[71] See n. 5.

[72] Following Ani (1991, p. 22), we see many of the impacts of the cultural logic of Europeanness, its Asili, as having affected many other peoples, referred to by Ani as "first world Peoples", encapsulating "the descendants of the oldest civilisations known to us: African and its Diaspora," and "majority peoples" – instead of non-Europeans – "since Europeans and the culture they have created represent a small "minority" when viewed in a world context." This is to say that Africa is not entirely unique in how Eurocentricity has affected it, which would make it an outlier, but also not entirely enjoined with the "majority peoples" so as to make it so similar in how colonialism and coloniality have affected it that it is not worth considering as a case study.

[73] If we are consequently to be met with accusations of 'cherry picking' then so be it. Just as the firemen attempting to douse a burning building pay no attention to those pointing fingers at their mismatched boots, we are not side-tracked by immaterial critiques that do not engage our method's practical ends would be jeopardized: creating ethically meaningful and ecologically sustainable food security policies that precipitate a change in how we live.

[74] 'Order' here is used in the broad sense developed by Cedric Robinson (Robinson, 1980) to refer to the hierarchies and governmentalities (see. Ch. 1. n. 12) which prefigure, limit and determine the orientation and organisational character of modern society. While his work is not strictly about food systems, his analysis of Order in society in so far as it casts doubt on the general terms used to name such order, such as progress, economic, development, politics etc., will prove nonetheless useful for a discussion of how food production systems and our relations to them are determined. See Chapter 6: Order, Life and Spiritual Taboo for a discussion of the terms of Order.

[75] Historically, thinkers like Cheikh Anta Diop (1989) and Ifi Amadiume (2001) challenge the erasure of Africa's contributions to world civilisation and reassert the centrality of African agency and cultural unity. Psychologically, thinkers like Frantz Fanon (2004, 2008), Amos Wilson (1993), Nah Dove (1998) explore the mental, emotional, and cultural effects of white supremacy and colonial domination. Politically, Achille Mbembe (2001) and Sylvia Wynter (2015) critique the structures of power and the invention of modern colonial subjecthood. Linguistically, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (2011) and Léonora Miano (2016) examine the role of language and cultural expression in colonial alienation and resistance. From the Latin American decolonial tradition, Aníbal Quijano (2000)and Walter Mignolo (2005, 2011; Mignolo and Walsh, 2018) theorise coloniality as the ongoing epistemic and geopolitical foundation of modernity. While each offers critical insights, Marimba Ani's work is distinct in its provision of a spiritually grounded, civilisational framework that diagnoses cultural orientation through her triadic model of asili, utamawazo, and utamaroho.

[76] Betterment is a value different from progress, one that is aware of complexity and Cosmos and also sensitive to the Situation (Hagens, 2024).

[77] Specifically, the current author is engaged in the South African political party Rise Mzansi in the position of Head of Research and Policy in the Gauteng province for the 2024 election campaign and advisor on Political Education in Gauteng.

[78] See Sect. 3.4 A Conversation: Agricultural Ethics and the Microcosmic Community of Life from the Perspective of African Thought.

[79] Used in the sense developed by Emma Gannon (2018), a multi-hyphenate is a person who chooses multiple vocations as a form of intersecting identity in order to craft their own definition of success through work that is personal and emotional, usually in order to serve an artistic end. As Michael Gregory (Gregory, 2020) writes about a multi-hyphenate in the theatre world "Being a multi-hyphenate artist is my way of service in the world and what I believe to be the new social currency for actors in today's political climate. It is not enough to just exist in someone else's narrative, for your story is just as important. May you find the courage and boldness to tell it." We consider the labour (taken in the Marxist sense of the means by which we come to make ourselves in this world) we expend in this thesis to be a creative and artistic expression, comprising at once elements of philosophy, advocacy, prose, poetry and reason. Because of this, we do not see a hard line between the work of a politician, in the true sense, as different from the work of a philosopher, moreover in light of the Situation and the urgency of responding to it.

[80] "18. The intellectual engages an artifact, performance, or practice as a contextual and formal exploration of a four-dimensional asymptotic horizon of realization: participatory embodiment, knowledge, politics, and meaning. A practice

realizes participatory embodiment insofar as it deepens and expands sensory capacities: visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, proprioceptive, and kinesthetic senses. It realizes knowledge insofar as it explores to the very limits the problematics of imagination, rationality, technique, representation, and truth. It realizes the political insofar as, through an extended fossicking of form, it registers the trace of its conditions of possibility, inscribes its ontological status as practice and gift through relational enunciations, summons particular subjectivities into being through its mode of addresses, and proffers a palimpsestic intimation of alternative worlds. It realizes meaning insofar as its form instantiates the deepest and widest encounters with phenomena that have wrought the human condition, for example, how transhistorical existential experiences (joy and pain, love and hate, desire and revulsion) are expanded as well as confounded by irreducible particularity and irrepressible eccentricity; how the emergency, the crisis, and the tragedy is lived in and through the everyday, the mundane, and the banal; and, finally, the utter ineliminability of contingency, the inevitability of suffering, and the irreversibility of death" (Ochieng, 2018, p. 244).

[81] "This is the overlooked opportunity cost of settling on a strategy where the role of philosophers is merely to pronounce on the implications of normative argument for a policy problem. Why not do more? Why not also build the capacity of researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders to participate in reasoned normative deliberation? After all, part of what philosophers add to ethical debates is our facility with making certain sorts of moves: these include shifting from short-term to long-term thinking, moving between levels of analysis, distinguishing between symptoms of problems and their systemic causes, seeking logical consistency among sets of assumptions and goals, defining terms clearly, analyzing concepts, testing options against counterexamples, and considering whether important perspectives have been left out. Although we are specialists in these moves, we can teach them to others, too." (Brister, 2023, p. 6)

Chapter 2: Soil and Philosophy

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of that aspect of the Situation with which this thesis is directly concerned: the impact of the IAC on the microcosmic community among other Earth-Life ecologies and the consequences thereof. Its purpose is to build an understanding of the IAC's Utamawazic apprehension of Nature in general, and agroecosystems in particular, as an expression of the Eurocentric Asili in the realm of food production systems that merits ethical reflection.

Towards these ends, this Chapter will proceed as follows:

Section 2.1 will introduce the *Utamawazo* of the IAC. It will do this by way of comparison between the paradigmatically simple *Utamawazo* of the IAC and the paradigmatically complex *Utamawazo* of Agroecology.[1] The purpose of this section is to frame the IAC's apprehension of agroecosystems as a misunderstanding of the nature of agroecosystems which are more accurately comprehended as complex.[2]

Tracing this (mis)apprehension forward, Section 2.2 will consider its consequences. It will do so by considering theories of and evidence for various forms of 'collapse' from an ecological and a socio-historical perspective. The purpose of this section is to argue for the accuracy of describing the implications of the food system aspect of the Situation as indicative of an ongoing and intensifying civilisational collapse, justifying the urgency of moving away from a paradigmatically simple approach to food production.

Section 2.3 will then introduce philosophical considerations to frame the ethical aspects bearing on this aspect of the Situation. It will do so by considering literature on intergenerational ethics, evolutionary potential, and ecoaesthetic value in ecological systems. The purpose of this section is to establish an intuition of moral wrongness regarding the impacts of Industrial agriculture, alongside the scientific evidence provided in Section 2.2 and in preparation for Chapter three.

Finally, Section 2.4 will offer a summary of the Chapter and place it within the context of this work.

2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture

This section will position food production under the IAC as an example of the Eurocentric *Utamawazo* and its paradigmatically simple apprehension of reality that will be a golden thread throughout this thesis.

Towards this end, Section 2.1.1 will explain how the IAC is methodologically reliant on the paradigm of simplicity; Section 2.1.2 will contrast this reliance against agroecology's comprehension of complexity; and Section 2.1.3 will compare and contrast the two paradigms.

2.1.1 How the IAC (Mis)understands Ecology: The Dance of Fundamentalist Reductionism

This section will show how the IAC is established and advanced within the paradigm of simplicity, leading to a (mis)apprehension of complexity in natural systems. It will do so by describing the methodological approach of the IAC as one of 'fundamentalist reductionism' presupposing a 'mechanistic mindset' in relation to nature.

Fundamentalist reductionism, counterposed to empirical reductionism by Carl Woese, a pioneer in the field of microbiology and biophysics, can be described as a metaphysical outlook which represents knowledge gained via the dissection and analysis of a thing as the nature of that thing, positing that "living systems (like all else) can be completely understood in terms of the properties of their constituent parts" (Woese, 2004, p. 174). Such a shift seeks to "redefine living organisms, especially seeds, as machines" made up of independent connected parts that are wholly deconstructable and manipulable through the application of biotechnologies (Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 16). The impetus is the reduction of the living (complexity) into the mechanical (complicatedness).

The IAC's Method

To explore the IAC's conception of reality – which includes nature, crops, and agricultural systems – we will concentrate on how it treats the maize plant and conceives of its purpose. This example will help us understand how the IAC methodology stops short of recognising the complex whole, rather getting caught up in the fundamentalist reductionist tendency that arises from dissecting every whole into an increasing number of independent, manipulable parts and sub-parts, to the exclusion of its interdependent nature as an intelligent part of a living ecosystem characterised as a biodiverse plurality.

IAC agents, such as agri-bio-technicians, undertake a professional two-stage dance of fundamentalist reductionism when their energies are directed by IAC actors, such as (agri)biotechnology corporations, towards a site of potential profit, such as a maize plant. The first movement dissects the whole into nothing more than the sum of its parts before the second movement encloses it within the framework of commodification under a system of capitalist production.

To consider the first stage, the IAC must create a closed model of the maize plan in order to answer the question 'What is this plant?' It does so by subjecting it to two methodological phases: taxonomic classification and biological manipulation.

During the phase of taxonomic classification, the whole maize plant is removed from the agroecosystem and systematically abstracted into its objective taxonomic form as *Zea Mays L.,*[3] a designation which represents its totality and history summarised as a single genetic position in the biological taxonomy of life. This moves it from an interconnected socio-ecological entity under the stewardship of farmers within a specific locality where it serves local ends into a technoscientific context under the expert control of plant scientists within a universalising locality where it is made to serve globalised ends.[4] This subtle transposition of form allows plant scientists and botanists to make sense of *Zea Mays L.* within the scientific schema of biological life, thereby allowing them to draw on the hierarchical record of classification and research hitherto established (Stace, 1989, p. 6).

Here a multidisciplinary, in-depth exercise is undertaken to dissect and make specific each element of the plant. Plant Morphologists identify and draw out the its separate structural components; Plant physiologists model their interaction; Plant cytologists define pathologies which effect the cells that constitute its components; plant geneticists trace its evolutionary lineage; and so forth. Each discipline represents an attempt to more precisely model the plant until it is fully mapped, understood, codified and declared constitutively closed: the interplay of its apparently separate parts purported to be the essence of the whole and its *complexity* reduced to *complicatedness*. Awate *et al* (2019) provide an example of the first stage.[5]

We suggest that this paradigmatically simple process of disciplinary interrogation successfully abstracts from the specific plant under question a universal form under the gaze of fundamentalist reductionism. The metaphysical shift from complexity to simplicity is a subtle one, understandable by allusion to the work of Bernardo Kastrup (2019) who painstakingly outlines the psychological modality by which the abstract is reified into the real, or when an analytical mode (empirical reductionism/empirical observation) becomes conflated with a metaphysical standpoint (fundamentalist reductionism/abstraction), thereby constraining the comprehension of complexity.

The IAC's Intentions

What, though, is the purpose of empirically researching the maize plant in this fashion and deconstructing it so intensely? Is it to *know* the maize plant? To understand and appreciate its complexity?

By its own account, the IAC advances its merits on a host of claims ranging from its sole viability as the means to feed the world to its ability to produce food more affordably and even more ecologically. However, myriad accounts have proven these rationales to be mythological at best and purely fictitious at worst (Kimbrell, 2002a).

As such, we are somewhat doubtful of the truth of the IAC's stated intuitions and turn rather towards the ends of the IAC for which it deploys fundamental reductionism using a Marxist framework of enclosure and commodification (Marx, 1976) to explain why.

The marketing material around such products sells the purpose of the research that IAC firms undertake as "bringing plant potential to life" (*Syngenta*, 2016) or "advancing life" (*This is Bayer*, no date). However, as the work of famed agroecologist, scholar and activist Vanda Shiva (1991, 2000, 2008, 2016a, 2016b) attests, when IAC actors 'create'[6] new 'high yielding varieties'[7] used as 'crop-chemical combinations'[8] it is not in the interest of nature and humankind, or complexity, but rather in the interest of profit,[9] a 'narrow' and paradigmatically simple goal.

In the IAC, research funding is directed towards enhancing the yield and 'productivity' of commercial maize varieties, where 'productivity' refers to the total harvestable weight (yield) of corn heads, how quickly they can be grown, and how easily they can be harvested and processed. Research towards these ends has produced maize varieties with larger heads (increased yield), less leafy foliage, thinner husks and less robust stems (ease of harvest and processing efficiency). All of this has been achieved through genetic modification at the expense of the rest of the plant and the needs of the agroecosystem more generally.[10]

For the 'experts' working in the employ of the Agrochemical companies, the market and productive forces at play direct them to engage with the maize plant on the basis of simplicity: their task is to generate novel techniques and technologies for its control. These dynamics are required within the intellectual property framework of the industrial biotechnology industry as the consistent production of specificity in innovation is a prerequisite for getting and maintaining a competitive market advantage through patenting (Binenbaum and Pardey, 2004; Weaver, 2004).

It is towards these ends that the IAC has, under the auspices of the 'green revolution', functionally advanced the corporate colonisation of the food system in

particular (Shiva, 2016b), and the empirical sciences more generally (Shiva and Shiva, 2020). Their goal has not been the production of food or working with food from a complexity perspective, but the production of profit and increasing control over the food system, especially through the control of seed.[11] Were this not the case, then Indian agroecosystems described by Dr John Augustus Voelcker in his 1889 report to the Royal Agricultural Society of England as having "little or nothing that can be improved" would have been left in place and learned from and not destroyed and replaced (Shiva, 1991, pp. 25–26).

Transformed from a site of complexity, the IAC paradigm has reduced the living soil with which the maize plant is intimately connected into a 'fuel tank'. In this mode, fertilizers are deposited by the farmer to be drawn upon by the crops. And like in the complicated system of a combustion engine, the 'fuel tank' of the monocultured farm must be rendered sterile to prevent contaminants from mixing with and potentially disrupting the input-output calculus of energy conversion – a uniform variable for the perfect reproducibility of the method on any farm, anywhere. This is achieved with herbicides, pesticides, and fungicides which effectively cleanse the soil and the environment of non-controlled variables. Rich and biodiverse ecologies from pollinators down to fungi are rendered flat and uniform.

The maize plant is transformed in just this way, as is the soil. Complexity in agroecosystems (contending at once with plant, soil, microcosmos and the interlinkages beyond the farm) has been subjected to a closed model for the purpose of optimisation and commodification. The impacts of IAC interventions are only considered insofar as the model it creates to achieve its ends allows. This renders broader ecosystemic impacts as 'externalities', excesses in meaning (Woermann, 2016, chap. 3) for which the IACs models cannot, and were not intended to, account.

Herein we have showed, through the example of the maize plant, how the methodological procedures of the IAC apprehend and represent the nature of

biological entities. We will now describe how Agroecology comprehends the same organism, but in a meaningfully different way, as a counter position.

2.1.2 Agroecology, and Nature as an Emergent System of Complex Interrelated Systems

This section will show how the paradigmatically complex approach of agroecology, premised on the complex discipline of ecology, comprehends the intelligence of natural systems as interrelated, self-organising, and emergent systems, without transmuting analysis into metaphysics. Doing so will explain how ecologists (as precursors to agroecologists) understand an organism like maize through the framework of complexity.

The *Utamawazo* of Ecology & Agroecology

For ecologists, the internal ecology of the maize plant consists of several parts delineated at the level of empirical reductionism but related to each other to form a complex organism, which is then related to other complex organisms within a living ecology, each made sense of only in its relationality. This *complex* understanding derives from the *emergent* nature of organic life (Ricard, 2006, pp. v–viii).

This viewpoint helps us to understand that at the level of organisms as identifiable wholes the characteristic of being a whole organism cannot be inferred from the defined characteristics of any of its constituent parts. So, for instance, the *maizeness* of the maize plant is a relational property which emerges from the complex interrelationality, self-organisation and coevolution of its constituent parts. The level of the whole (the maize-plant-system) operates with more information than the sublevels (e.g. root-system, shoot-system) or sub-sublevels (e.g. tassel-system, husk-system, lateral-root-system, etc.). This constitutes an emergent phenomenon (Cilliers, 1998) understood as an 'ontology of levels' (Emmeche, Køppe and Stjernfelt, 1997) whereby the existence and relationships of parts explain the nature and existence of wholes, which themselves become whole parts as a function of recursivity in complex systems. It follows that maize would be

understood as part of an equally complex and emergent natural ecosystem wherein it evolved codependently with each other element, like other plants, animals and the microcosmic community (Taiz *et al.*, 2015, pp. 547–549).

The concept of nature as a complex thing which using emergence as a means of understanding the ontology of maize proffers is well defended by ecologists, making it the leading scientific explanation for the nature of nature. While the metaphysics to support such an insight will become clear in our second chapter, let it suffice for now to understand, crucially, that agroecologists take up this complex view of nature in their thinking about agriculture - hence (agro)ecologists. It shapes how they understand and interact with all natural things. Such an acknowledgement - that nature evolved in the way it works best and as a relation of its constituent parts – is a recognition of the unconscious intelligence of natural autopoiesis, which holds true for all forms of Life, from cell to civilisation (Shiva, 2008, p. 137).[12]

When we comprehend that nature has not only evolved every component of a particular plant, but also the hundreds or even thousands of processes and organisms that each plant is essential to throughout its lifecycle, we train our minds to view each plant as a whole ecosystem that depends on and is dependent upon other ecosystems to form a complex and interconnected ecosystemic whole. (Shiva, 2008, pp. 112, 124–125; Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 15).[13] For example, beetles and caterpillars feed on the above-ground foliage of the maize plant, and they release droppings that fall to the ground. These droppings, along with fallen foliage, are consumed by ants and earthworms, who also use them for food. Meanwhile, soil bacteria and mycelia which help the plant absorb and release nutrients depend on the nutrients provided by droppings and fallen foliage for their own survival. This is not to mention the other ecosystem services at work between plants, living soil, and the ecosystem at large (Wall *et al.*, 2004).[14] The ecosystemic value of the maize plant is much deeper than the head of corn, the commodity[15] it is capable of producing.

Complexity allows ecologists to understand the maize plants as a nested system that is thermodynamically and organisationally open, but operationally closed and bounded. This means that, in terms of openness, it both requires energy exchange with its environment and is organised as a result thereof, meaning that changes in the environment can impact its internal organisation. In terms of closedness, it internally uses said energy in functionally and evolutionarily determined ways in order to maintain its openness.[16]

This interplay of general openness and closedness is unlike the closedness of the IAC's closed-model, thereby surrendering a degree of unknowability. Although we inherently cannot account for the entirety of a complex system or its interlinkages, a closed input-output system-model that discounts the externalities it creates is used by the IAC claims to represent the linear food-commodity production system as the essence of agroecosystems and how we ought best to manage them.. Agroecology affords to the workings of nature those externalities for which it cannot account by feeding back into it, instead of only depriving it.

The Intention of Agroecology

With a better understanding of the complexity of Agroecology, we can now ask of it: to what ends is this knowledge used?

Unlike the IAC's ends of profit production as described earlier, Agroecologists conceive of their ends as farming with nature as an equal participant and recipient in the food production process and towards the wellbeing of all in a state of mutual reciprocity (Shiva, 2016b; Anderson *et al.*, 2021; DeClerck *et al.*, 2022).

By thinking in terms of complex ecosystem interactions, agroecology (de)centres 'the human' in thinking about food production by recognising interdependencies within ecosystems. This means recognising that it is not only humans who need to eat and therefore choosing to farm in a way that acknowledges that all life requires food/nutrition/energy. Life is bound to food and so what the IAC would regard as waste – the non-commodifiable parts of the maize plant such as its stalks and leaves – the agroecologist understands as food for the soil and the

creatures of the agroecosystem (e.g., fodder for cattle, biomass for consumption by soil fauna) in addition to other uses such as hay for roofing and plant fibres for creating rope. Ecosystemic and energy-flow based thinking of the sort set out above allows agroecologists to understand living and biodiverse soils and ecosystems as the foundation of Food Security beyond the anthropocentric lens (Shiva, 2016a, pp. 34–37).

Comparatively, under the IAC mindset, "multiple uses of plant biomass seem to have been consciously sacrificed for a single use…" being food-commodity production, an outcome favourable to humans and unfavourable to the agroecosystem in general (Shiva, 1991, pp. 74–75). The IAC mindset destroys the phenomena of complex food (re)production on an ecosystemic scale by reducing any agroecosystem to a mechanical input-output algorithm designed to maximise a profit generating variable.

Importantly, Agroecologists adhere to a 'principle of return' in that they practice bioremediation and aim for circularity in terms of farming inputs and outputs. This means that in each cropping cycle agroecological farms retain their seeds and compost their waste as biomatter for the next, returning to the soil part of what is produced so that it may produce again. Circularity is an end goal, so while an agroecological farm still requires inputs such as compost and seed during its establishment phase, these become internalised once natural cycles reach homeostasis, usually within 10 years or less (Anderson *et al.*, 2021).

Water harvested throughout the rainy season is either stored in tanks for domestic purification and use or directed via permeable bioswales into constructed wetland biomes or percolation dams to recharge groundwater and hold water for irrigation and animal watering.

In sum, agroecology presents as a set of ecologically informed farming practices that deploy the science of empirical reductionism in the production of food towards broad system ends in so far as it seeks to cultivate biodiversity and ecosystemic reciprocity within agroecosystems. This approach, aimed at enhancing and

amplifying nature's own techniques of (re)production and supporting nature to do what nature does – nurture life, create balance, and harmony[17] – also does not feign complete knowledge. Rather, it respects complexity as a characteristic of nature and treats it as the basis of an open model to be emulated and learned from.

This approach is aligned with a plethora of indigenous approaches to growing food.[18]

2.2 Collapsing Soils, Collapsing Civilisations

This section will argue that a framework of collapse is an apt descriptor for the current trajectory of the human-society system, characterised by (Meta-)Polycrisis. It will do so by linking the mechanistic paradigm in agriculture as discussed in the previous section to various ongoing processes of collapse within complex Earth-Life systems from climate science and ecology, as well as socio-historical perspectives. The purpose is to show that there is a non-negligible overlap between contemporary biodiversity loss, soil-loss and -degradation trends and those which rendered several historical civilisations vulnerable to collapse.

The argument will proceed as follows: Section 2.2.1 will establish industrial agriculture as a major cause of biodiversity and soil collapse from an ecological perspective; Section 2.2.2 will consider the phenomena of civilisation collapse from a socio-historical perspective and briefly discuss several competing theories thereon; Section 2.2.3 will draw the ecological and socio-historical perspectives together to conclude the argument by showing their overlap as an indication that modern civilisation is in a state of collapse.

However, before proceeding, let us clarify what is meant by the term 'collapse'. We will use the term in two different but equally complex senses, one relating to soil collapse – collapse(a) - and one relating to civilisational collapse – collapse(b).

In terms of soil collapse, by virtue of its nature as a complex system, we use a definition from Woermann (2016, pp. 60–61). By this definition, collapse(a) is the devolution of complex and specifically living systems, into complicated systems

defined by a drop in the number of richly interconnected elements, constituting the process of collapse.[19] In other words, collapse in ecosystems refers to the transition of the system from a state of high entropy with a large number of living elements to a state of low entropy with a significantly reduced number of living elements. This reduction in living elements limits the system's ability to self-organize and evolve (Jordan, 2022).

In terms of civilisational collapse, we use the definition from collapse theorist Joseph Tainter (1988, pp. 4–5, 193). In this sense, collapse(b) is defined as a political process by which “a sudden, pronounced loss of an established level of sociopolitical complexity” occurs (ibid.).[20]

2.2.1 Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Soil Degradation

This section will argue for a strong link between biodiversity loss, soil-loss, and soil-degradation collapse, and the techniques of the IAC, framed as an instance of collapse(a).

The available data and research confirming the rapid destabilisation of the Earth’s climate system at the hands of human activity are as vast and as multi-faceted as the climate system itself (IPCC, 2023). As such, a full discussion evidencing anthropogenic climate change is well beyond the scope of this thesis.

However, because we are focusing on Industrial agriculture in this section, we must note at the outset that our framing of collapse(a) in the ecological terms of the crisis of biodiversity loss, the topsoil crisis, and the climate crisis, presents only a snapshot of (Meta-)Polycrisis.

Our discussion of biodiversity loss in soils and agroecosystems begins somewhere seemingly unrelated – the Atlantic Ocean – in order to first understand the nature of ecosystemic ‘food webs’.

Briefly, ‘food webs’ describe how numerous organisms interact across ‘trophic levels’ in an ecosystem by converting energy through a chain of ever more complex and larger organisms. With more small organisms at their lower levels than large organisms at their higher levels, food webs describe energy dependencies between,

across and within ecosystems, making autotrophs and phototrophs – collectively known as 'primary producers' – essentially the 'base' of many food webs.

In the case of an ocean ecosystem, the lowest layer of the food web is made up of microorganisms such as Phytoplanktons, Zooplanktons, and Diatoms (Lalli and Parsons, 1999, pp. 112–120). These creatures also play other roles in various inter-ecosystemic processes such as carbon sequestration, a form of geochemical cycling (Boyce, Lewis and Worm, 2010, pp. 591–592; Benedetti *et al.*, 2021, p. 2). They are therefore vital to both the ocean ecosystem and the biosphere.

With this in mind, it is alarming that research indicates a pattern of biomass decline among marine autotroph populations – amounting to ~1% of the global median per year, since 1979 - as a result of atmospheric forcing and concomitant changes in ocean pH, also known as Ocean Acidification (ibid.).

This trend is linked to industrial agriculture through a) its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions, which contribute to atmospheric forcing;[21] and b) its chemical runoff,[22] which accelerates Ocean Acidification and destabilises primary producer populations. Destabilisation happens in the form of higher turnover rates of species migrating into and out of primary producer communities and habitats (Henson *et al.*, 2021). This results in their community structures becoming increasingly unstable and less ecologically resilient with potentially devastating effects on Earth's Ecology.[23]

We use the example of marine primary producer population destabilizations to illustrate the non-linear nature of complex systems and the human impact on them: in-land industrial agriculture affects distant ocean ecosystems.[24] This demonstrates how industrial agriculture leads to biodiversity declines in the ecosphere more generally, which indicates the ecologically fallacious and insufficient nature of the IAC's (closed) model of nature as incapable of accounting for inter-ecosystemic relationships.

Looking specifically at terrestrial biodiversity, as much as 70% of projected terrestrial biodiversity loss is driven by factors linked to agriculture (*Global*

Biodiversity Outlook 4, 2014, p. 10). Despite plans to address and change this fact, "[industrial] agriculture remains among the main drivers of global biodiversity loss (*Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*, 2020, p. 13).[25]

With this broader context in mind, it is no surprise then that Sanchez-Bayo and Wykhuys (2019) attribute an annual loss of 2.5% of worldwide insect and invertebrate biomass to agricultural intensification and the gratuitous global use of agrichemicals over the last half-century.[26]

Data is less precise when it comes to the biodiversity of the soil microbiome specifically. However, we can infer a likely pattern from two pieces of research on the link between soil carbon concentrations, soil microbial biomass, and biodiversity. The first from Bastida *et al* (2021) shows a strong positive correlation between soil carbon content and both microbial biomass and diversity, though the correlation of carbon content to biomass is much higher. The second from George *et al* (2021) studies the effect on soil structure and biodiversity under conditions of long-term carbon deprivation to "highlight concurrent collapse of soil structure and biodiversity" following such conditions. Let us consider these findings alongside the IAC's non-adherence to the principle of return as argued in the previous Section 2.1.

Beyond bioengineering varieties that produce less biomass, industrial farms purposefully do not return plant biomass to the soil, preferring to direct it towards other profit-generating activities, such as producing biofuel or cat litter. However, plant biomass is the major source of organic carbon that sustains the energy needs of primary producers in agroecosystems through a chain of food web linkages. It is therefore plausible to infer that industrial agriculture leads to long-term carbon-depriving conditions in agricultural soils, predisposing them to concurrent collapses in both microbial biodiversity and biomass.[27]

In this section, we have shown that there is a strong link between industrial agriculture and various processes of collapse(a). As a driving factor of atmospheric

forcing, biodiversity loss, and top-soil degradation, this analysis directly ties industrial agriculture into the broader frame of (Meta-)Polycrisis.

2.2.2 Civilisation Collapse Throughout History

Having now established the ecological perspective of collapse(a), this section will briefly introduce the socio-historical perspective of collapse(b) as it pertains to complex civilisations and their relation to agriculture. To do so, it will index the relevant major themes used to explain collapse(b) in the literature according to Joseph Tainter's taxonomy of collapse theories as set in his book *The Collapse of Complex Societies* (1988). The purpose of this section is merely to introduce the themes as a socio-historical framework to be discussed in Section 2.2.3 by integrating the ecological perspective just discussed to argue that our current iteration of complex civilisation is moving from a state of decline to one of collapse(both a and b).

Human societies have always collapsed, and if that were not the case then we would likely still be living under Harrapan or Egyptian rule. Tainter (Tainter, 1988, pp. 42–90) establishes eleven major themes used in the literature to explain examples of collapse(b), but for our purposes we will be focusing on four. These are 1) the depletion or cessation of a vital resource or resources on which the society depends; 2) the establishment of a new resource base; 3) an insufficient response to circumstances; and 4) which is Tainter's thesis and focuses on diminishing returns on investment in institutions that structure elements of complex societies. We focus on only four as a complete analysis of each theme and their overlap with our current concern is beyond the scope of this work. However, it should be noted none of the themes identified by Tainter are ever presented as a panacea for explaining civilisational collapse, and should therefore rather be considered as contributing factors which co-arise in a form of historical 'entourage effect'.[28]

Tainter subsumes two major collapse(b) theories under the first theme: 1) the progressive dilapidation or depletion of a societal resource base caused by human

maladministration; and 2) a rapid decline in the availability of a resource due to environmental fluctuations and climactic shifts. He offers evidence from the literature which concludes that the depletion of agricultural resources, including things like the erosion of fertile soils and the exhaustion of soils through intensive agriculture, is a factor in the collapse of several civilisations throughout history.[29] Building on this theme, David Montgomery (2007) details precisely how agricultural practices and processes throughout history have resulted in chronic soil mismanagement and almost always left societies vulnerable to collapse.

Under theme two, Tainter presents a reversal of theme one. This theme proposes that societies such as those along the Pecos River in New Mexico, the Mycenaean and Hittite civilisations and the Chou Dynasty collapsed due to the appearance of "new, bountiful resources" (Tainter, 1988, pp. 51–52). This happened in the form of, for instance, the rise in the use of iron which was easier and cheaper to produce than bronze and therefore allowed previously unarmed populations who adopted this technology to cause the collapse(b) of societies that did not.

Theme three, presented across the literature as an exhibited feature of all civilisations that have undergone collapse, posits that the "fundamental limitations of social, political and economic systems prevent an appropriate response to circumstances, and this makes collapse inevitable" (ibid., p. 54).

Lastly, as theme four, we include Tainter's collapse(b) hypothesis. He proposes that human societies, like all living systems, require a thermodynamic openness and that the amount of energy in flux within a human society must be sufficient for the complexity of that system. As societies grow so do their energy needs, and so too concurrently do their needs for increasingly large investments in institutions to maintain the order of said society on a per capita basis. According to Tainter (ibid., p. 91): "As societies increase in complexity, more networks are created among individuals, more hierarchical controls are created to regulate these networks, more information is processed, there is more centralization of information flow, there is increasing need to support specialists not directly involved in resource production, and the like." However, "...increased investments in complexity

[eventually] fail to yield proportionately increasing returns. Marginal returns decline and marginal costs rise. Complexity as a strategy becomes increasingly costly, and yields decreasing marginal benefits."

And so, there comes a point in socio-political complexity where the 'law of diminishing returns' (borrowed from economics) can explain collapse(b). Gradually at first and then with "accelerated force" (ibid., p. 92) the benefits derived from investments in managing increased complexity begin to diminish.

2.2.3 From Decline to Collapse

This section will consider the four thematic explanations for collapse(b) introduced above – resource depletion, resource emergence, institutional limitations and the law of diminishing returns – using the evidence of collapse(a). It will demonstrate a non-negligible overlap between patterns in modern society and these thematic explanations to frame said patterns of decline as indications of collapse more generally. Its purpose is to suggest that ecological and socio-historical assessments of contemporary civilization as undergoing collapse are correct and expository of (Meta-)Polycrisis, which requires urgent intervention in light of its likely predicted consequences.[30] While the inherent uncertainty involved in modelling complexity denies us the ability to exactly predict what may happen in the future, the already existing trendlines in the data on Climate Change and Biodiversity loss do provide a strong indication of future patterns.

The first theme is the most straightforward corollary if we understand the living soil as the resource base being depleted via human mismanagement. The available evidence is sufficient to demonstrate the global depletion and exhaustion of the top-soil by the practices of the IAC (Montgomery, 2007; de Lorenzo, Marlière and Solé, 2016; Rhodes, 2017; Cavicchioli *et al.*, 2019; Burrell, Evans and De Kauwe, 2020; Timmis and Ramos, 2021). Not unlike the soil resource trends predating the collapse of several historical civilisations (Tainter, 1988, pp. 44–51), the unprecedented scale of soil collapse(a) in our current context, though this time related to the IAC's production methodology, indicates a collapse(b) overlap. This

is all the more obvious when we consider the rate at which industrial agricultural practice is expanding and causing increased erosion, habitat destruction and decreasing the carbon sequestration capacity of top soils (Hu *et al.*, 2021), as well as biodiversity loss, the latter being a prerequisite factor for ecosystem functioning and natural food security (Scherer *et al.*, 2020, pp. 2–3; Talukder *et al.*, 2022, p. 7).

The second theme, the creation of a new and abundant resource, is conceptual rather than empirical, making it trickier to understand. For this comparison, we consider the emergence of 'carbon capitalism' (Di Muzio, 2015) and the global petrochemical order as the new resource base that formed an unprecedented situation of reliance on fossil fuels. From (agro)chemical production to their spread onto industrial farms, the availability and affordability of petrochemicals like gasoline and diesel is critical to the IAC value chain.

Inevitably, carbon capitalism and its ties to industrial agriculture functioned through colonialism to rapidly undermine the complex structure of traditional agricultural institutions that fed the world up until the petrochemical era. This trend continues neo-colonially.[31] We cannot sustain our civilization with (Agri)chemically intensive agriculture due to its collapse(a) consequences. The arrival and rise to dominance of petrochemicals over the past 150-200 years therefore predisposes collapse(b) because the global economy is now fundamentally tied to a set of 'new' resources that are finite and ecologically destructive.[32]

The third theme – institutional limitations and a lack of responsiveness – is evident from any contextual reading of current world events. Consider what Tainter calls the 'dinosaur' and the 'Runaway train' models of civilisation organising institutions and the inevitable way in which they contribute to collapse(b) (Tainter, 1988, p. 59):

The dinosaur model frames the institutions of a complex society as a "lumbering colossus, fixed in its morphology, and incapable of rapid change [as it is] locked into an evolutionary dead end [represented as] an investment in structure, size,

and complexity that is awesome and admirable, yet highly maladaptive" (ibid.). When faced with challenges, a society that is unable to adapt will inevitably decline and eventually cease to exist. These institutions of complex societies, however impressive their display of power, arouse both admiration and sympathy. However, they are ultimately feeble and vulnerable giants that have been surpassed by more dynamic and assertive societies throughout history. We suggest the democratic nation-state as example of a dinosaur model institution in the modern world.

Alternatively, the Runaway Train model describes complex societal institutions as the fundamental driving force behind the break-neck progress of societies towards greater complexity, much like a train picking up speed on a set of tracks destined for a cliff edge and without a way to slow down. Similar to the dinosaur model, these "runaway train" institutions are maladaptive and lack the ability to change direction, revert back to previous states or remain unchanged, displaying a lack of feedback capacity that would make them a complement as opposed to a detriment to a complex society.

We suggest that multilateral governance institutions, such as the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation, as well as transnational business institutions such as Microsoft Incorporated, Bayer & Bayer, or Unilever are examples of runaway train model institutions in the modern world.

These institutions share an operational logic that prioritises constant expansion, innovation, and profit maximisation - trajectories that are challenging, if not impossible, to reverse or slow down without undermining the very premises on which these institutions were created.

Take Monsanto/Bayer - their business model relies on increasing technological intensification in agriculture, including the ever-greater proliferation of proprietary GMOs and agrichemicals, and an increasingly corporatised seed system. Modern market logics require that they act to increase shareholder value and drive-up global market share, requiring them to expand the adoption of IAC methods, accelerated through channels like vertically integrated digital supply chain platforms

that increase 'productivity' and 'efficiency' but result in more fragile food systems. The more widespread IAC methods become as a result, the more the patterns they cause, as outlined in Section 2.2.1, become amplified. Attempting to slow or reverse these trends – by, for example, supporting open-pollinated seeds or agroecological diversity – would violate the economic logic of scale, control, and intellectual property rights that underpins their profit structure. Like Tainter's runaway train, the institution cannot turn back, cannot slow down, and must speed up – pushing the food system further toward ecological and social thresholds that resemble the cliff edge in the metaphor.

Similarly, Microsoft (and other major tech companies) can be framed as runaway trains in the digital sphere. Their business models are locked into perpetual software updates, cloud service expansion, and data monetisation and slowing down would mean sacrificing market share, technological supremacy, or jeopardizing shareholder value. Thus, like runaway trains, they are propelled by internal feedback loops that reward acceleration and expansion over structural reflexivity or restraint.

In collapse(b), regardless of their specific instantiations, no 'institution' is as obvious an example of these models in a mixed form than the modern system of global political economy[33] which continually fails to address anthropogenic climate change in any substantive and coordinated manner.[34] Due to the intergovernmental arrangement of nation-states competing for competitive advantage, no element of the global political economy effectively binds the fractured plurality of institutions together to create a liveable future (Gardiner, 2011). This is further exacerbated by the power of multinational businesses and Non-Governmental Organisations to undermine efforts at global consensus and cooperation wherever it is attempted (Almiron and Xifra, 2020; Chiroleu-Assouline and Lyon, 2020; Taylor-Neu, 2020). This paradox renders our modern system fundamentally unresponsive to distributed threats such as collapse(b) informed by the fact of collapse(a).

Finally, regarding theme four and the law of diminishing returns on investment in institutions which govern or organise complex societies, we draw attention to the

increasing investment in IAC methods as an example of diminishing returns relevant to how food production is organised.

The IAC measures the productivity of an agricultural method by the weight of commodifiable crop produced per land unit and so declares its methods to be highly productive when the ratio of IAC production inputs used correlates positively with an increase in the weight of a harvested crop. However, if we instead apply the ratio of energy-input to energy-output in terms of kilojoules, the relationship has a strong negative correlation (Shiva, 2016b, p. 69).[35] If we include the total energy footprint of research and development, its journey from factory to farm and its need for chemical inputs throughout its growth cycle, the marginal benefit accrued is decreasing relative to its cost, both ecologically in terms of the techniques needed to grow it and thermodynamically in terms of the energy required to produce it.

Where Tainter considered research on the ratio between Kilogram of wheat equivalent per labour-hour and labour-hour per hectare per year (Tainter, 1988, pp. 94–99), we argue that it is more apt to consider this ratio in terms of energy as the IAC has effectively substituted the energy of human labour for the "invisible" energy of fossil fuels and in so doing increased the "ecological footprint of farming" (Shiva, 2016b, p. 38).

While non-exhaustive, we can infer from the coalescence of collapse(a) and collapse(b) that, at a minimum, our current civilisation system is moving from a state of decline to exhibiting more factors predisposing it to collapse (b). To support this inference, we have shown sufficient overlap between evidence of collapse(a) and thematic expressions of collapse(b) in specific relation to industrial agriculture, in terms of 1) its exhaustion of an existing resource base in terms of soil degradation; 2) its over-reliance on a new resource base in the form of fossil fuels; 3) institutional unresponsiveness in dealing with its impacts; and 4) diminishing returns on its techniques of production. We have thereby provided enough evidence to conclude that the current and declining state of our biosphere at the hands of the IAC is a non-negligible factor in the trend of our civilisation

towards collapse. What this discussion has also indicated is the non-discrete nature of collapse as a process and not a moment.

2.3 Ethics, Climate Politics and The Value of Evolution

Moving from the factual context of the IAC's contribution to (Meta-)Polycrisis, this section will introduce some philosophical considerations to open said context to ethical interrogation along specified lines.

To this end, it will discuss two ethical dimensions or perspectives from which to assess the moral dilemma posed by the climate change and biodiversity loss elements of polycrisis. Section 2.3.1 will consider a moral perspective on atmospheric forcing through inter-generational and socio-economic justice *longue durée* lenses. Section 2.3.2 will consider various philosophical perspectives on biodiversity loss through discussions of entropy, beauty and evolution.

This section's purpose is to account for said intuitions and not to substantively develop a theory of moral responsibility and right action, which is reserved for Chapters three through five of this work. It will therefore relate the IAC to our collective ecological footprint and subject it to moral assessment to clarify what, if any, moral intuitions arise. Several recurrent themes will also be introduced, such as intergenerational responsibility and aesthetic peculiarity, that will remain relevant throughout this work.

2.3.1 The Ethics of Inter-Generational Justice

Introducing an anthropocentric viewpoint where intuitions arise in specific relation to humans and humanity, this section will discuss the first ethical dimension of the context at hand and show how the IAC's role in driving atmospheric forcing as a key element of climate change will bear severe consequences for our descendants to come. To this end, it will consider intergenerational justice in Section 2.3.1.1 – concerning both the youngest humans stepping into life today and the incalculably large contingent of future humans[36] whose very being is dependent on the actions of contemporary humanity – and two factors

compounding intergenerational justice which have a bearing on an intuition of moral wrongness in section 2.3.1.2.

2.3.1.1 Inter-Generational Buck Passing

This section will engage the work of Stephen Gardiner (2011) to present an intergenerational justice perspective relevant to the Situation.

In contemplating climate change, Gardiner refers us to the dispersion of what he calls 'temporally diffuse front-loaded goods' as a form of "inter-generational buck passing" (Gardiner, 2011, pp. 14–154). These are goods that accrue the benefits of their production to people alive today, but substantially defer their ecological costs to groups of people later on in time.[37]

We can once again use maize as our illustrative example to clarify the scenario. The group alive today derives the supposed benefits of GMO maize, such as affordability, availability, and caloric density. Meanwhile, its ecological costs build up in the atmosphere and the soil. Subsequent groups will carry these costs while not deriving the same benefits. By changing water availability and surface temperature, climate change is reducing the conditions under which the accrual of said benefits have been possible (IPCC, 2023).[38]

Gardiner holds that there is something *a priori* wrong with disregarding the needs and desires of the future groups, especially when the costs which accrue to them from group one's actions rise "to the level of catastrophic evil (such as mass starvation and death)" (Gardiner, 2011, p. 153).[39]

We concur with Gardiner that there is an intuitive moral problem posed by the Situation that evokes the moral intuition that 'inter-generational buck-passing' is wrong.[40] This is even more acute if we substitute the maize in our example with goods such as luxury sports cars, golf courses, tinkies, disposable nicotine vaporisers, cheap exotic vacations, or even cheap fossil fuel generated electricity.

2.3.1.2 Factors Compounding Inter-Generational Buck Passing

This section will introduce two interrelated factors that substantially compound the intuitive wrongness of front-loading temporally diffuse goods. These are the atmospheric lifespan of carbon and the asymmetric distribution of climate risk and vulnerability. We will address them both very briefly, as our exploration of either is meant only to reinforce the intuition of moral wrongness with which the bulk of this thesis will engage.

The first factor – the lifespan of atmospheric carbon, and the timespan needed by the biospheric carbon cycle to recapture it - is a prime example of the severe degree of temporal diffusion at work.

According to the work of the climatologist and oceanographer David Archer (2005, 2010), the impacts of anthropogenic carbon emissions will be felt for thousands of years to come. Fossil fuel CO_2 has a median atmospheric lifetime of 30-35 thousand years, with 25% remaining in the atmosphere forever (Archer, 2005). As it currently stands, the levels of atmospheric CO_2 are higher than they have been in over half a million years (Archer, 2010). Thus, there is a degree of climate change "lock-in" — atmospheric forcing that cannot be avoided based on carbon already emitted and predicted emissions resulting from path dependencies (Jin, 2021). Anthropogenic climate change and its effects on food security and biodiversity will last for generations, worsening as time goes by. This underscores the necessity for cutting any emission of GHGs.

Regarding the second factor – the asymmetric distribution of the causes and effects of climate change – it is important to emphasize the relevance of historical injustice and responsibility for emissions (Godard, 2017).

The global North has been responsible for the bulk of GHG emissions and atmospheric forcing, accounting for over three times the amount of emissions as the Global South during the period of their industrial development between 1850 and 2002 (Baumert, Herzog and Pershing, 2005). Rising emission from global South countries today can be framed as their attempts to “catch-up” in terms of

industrialisation and claim their "right to development" (Khan, 2017). We suggest that their 'more advanced' stage of development also allows global North countries greater manoeuvrability when it comes to adapting to changing climactic conditions than 'less developed' nations.[41] This makes the global North less likely to suffer the worst effects of climate change (Gardiner, 2011) and the global South more vulnerable, especially in arid regions like large parts of South Africa (Samuels *et al.*, 2022).

Conversely, global South nations, many of whom have only undergone industrialisation in the recent past, bear less responsibility for historical emissions and yet are more likely to bear the bulk of the consequences (Meyer and Sanklecha, 2017; Hedlund *et al.*, 2018; Madhanagopal *et al.*, 2022). Critically, the North/South asymmetry means that those who will pay the price for emissions and those who caused them are split by the same lines of race, class, and gender that delineated the enslaving from the enslaved, the colonised from the coloniser, and the periphery from the centre (Parks and Roberts, 2006).

Historical tensions between the North and the South are the root cause of the current unfairness. We contend that this is manifestly unfair because the so-called "advancement" of global North nations has been achieved through the systematic annihilation of native populations, the enslavement of others, and the colonisation of foreign lands. Global South countries have already borne the 'price' of their 'development' in this way, and now must bear the additional costs across subsequent generations while being told that they cannot pursue development paths of the same character that colonisation had first denied them, now denied again on the basis of 'historical emissions'. This is because the bulk of the 'carbon budget' available to humanity, part of which the global South needs to industrialise, has been expended by the global North in the course of their development, making the demand of the global South for a comparable standard of industrialisation *aporetic* in relation to the Situation (Moss and Kath, 2019).[42]

There is an intuitive sense of wrongdoing when considering the intergenerational ethics of climate change, the prolonged duration of the potential consequences

and the fact that these consequences will disproportionately affect the more populous nations of the global South, which are less equipped to adapt to them. We argue that these factors strengthen the argument that the Situation presents as a significant injustice meriting philosophical investigation in light of its complexity and consequence.

2.3.2 Nature, Value and Peculiarity

Now that we have established a strong moral intuition that inter-generational buck-passing is wrong, this section will now consider some philosophical perspectives on the IAC as a driver of biodiversity loss (a key element of (Meta-)Polycrisis), fundamental ecological measures, and a philosophical basis for the moral value of nature. To this end, it will discuss uniqueness, evolution and entropy in Section 2.3.2.1, and Ecoaesthetics, Ecosophy, and anthropocentrism in Section 2.3.2.2. The purpose of this section is to establish a parallel line of argumentation for the intuitive moral wrongness of the IAC's impacts and introduce the theme of peculiarity into this work.

We reason that without proof of the contrary, each plant, each insect, each microbe, animal, and fungus, and each person too, is the only instance of itself having ever existed anywhere in the Cosmos across all of space-time and therefore a kind of cosmic miracle. Despite all of humanity's technological and scientific efforts, we have not found any evidence to prove otherwise. Though thought experiments like the *Fermi Paradox*[43] and astrophysical inferences about the atmospheric compositions of far-off planets do point towards the existence of other biological life, no concrete proof has yet been found and so it appears that, at least for the time being, Mother Earth may be as *peculiar* as the plurality of biological life that has unfolded upon her.

As such, it appears to us that the destruction of such improbable cosmic uniqueness seems at least to be intuitively wrong. This section aims to explore this intuition from an evolutionary as well as an eco-aesthetic perspective as aspects of peculiarity.

2.3.2.1 Peculiarity, Evolution, and Entropy

This section will discuss uniqueness in relation to the evolution of natural systems and entropic decline. It will do so by considering the role of uniqueness as the manifest emergence of novel genetic adaptations within evolutionary biology. The purpose of this section is to describe the destruction of uniqueness, or singular instances of peculiarity, as a decrease in biodiversity and thus systemic entropy. This will be shown to constitute a decrease in adaptive potential, and thus a weakening of the capacity of a system to evolve. Biodiversity as a measure of the complexity of a natural system is essentially a measure of the plurality of peculiarity (Farnsworth, Lyashevska and Fung, 2012; Jagers op Akkerhuis, 2012).

Humans are like the rest of nature in as much as we each emerge as a product of an incalculably large number of distributed evolutionary cycles of adaptation and selection. Our individual peculiarities, many unique, are as much a part of the fabric of emergent life as the plurality of orchid bees and their 200 known colour varieties. We suggest the same can be said of the uniqueness of our complex socio-organisational phenomena having arisen at all.

Uniqueness, in the sense of unique-as-distinct and unique-as-better, is something on which we place definite value (Davidson, 2015). Though each sense is employed to different degrees in various comparisons, the use of "unique" to denote a characteristic or property of some-thing is value-laden. From 'great man theories of history' to how we speak to a child struggling with the challenge of identity formation, humanity places emphasis on uniqueness, on being peculiar, and its importance as a virtue worth cultivating. Uniqueness could be said be an integral part of the value-mosaic from which the asymmetric moral considerability of humans in relation to the rest of the environment grounds itself.[44] The uniqueness of our species' distinct capacity for rationality is often advanced as the basis for the *prima facie* differentiation between us and other animals, though this claim is becoming increasingly framed as a speciesist argument (Singer, 1989, 2016)

More generally, uniqueness is a characteristic of Life well beyond the human discourse thereon as a valuable characteristic of life from an evolutionary biology perspective representing the emergence of peculiar adaptations or biomarkers as a correlate to phylogenetic diversity, an incredibly important feature of collapse-resistant ecosystems (Brooks and McLennan, 2012; Kaiser and Trappes, 2021; Pavoine and Ricotta, 2021). To understand why, let us consider three examples which explain the functional role of uniqueness in living systems.

First, we can consider the example of the unassisted ability to capture and store entropy as a unique characteristic broadly shared by all Life that enables activity and evolutionary change (Jordan, 2022). Living systems – from, for example, a horse or a tree through to something as large as the Serengeti or the entire ecosystem of the Earth - are uniquely classifiable as thermodynamically open non-equilibrium systems. This means "there is an exchange of energy between the system and its environment, and there are energy transformations within the system" that act to balance it against entropic decline (ibid., p. 27-28). Living systems can take in energy (sunlight for autotrophs or "embedded in the biomass of prey species at higher trophic levels") and store it by maintaining an almost constant degree of entropy through metabolic processes until they need it (ibid.). This uniquely allows living systems to maintain a state of homeostasis, burning neither themselves nor their environments out.

Second, let us contemplate the epimorphosis of the *Salamandridae* family of amphibians. This evolutionary biomarker grants creatures like salamanders the advantageous ability to regrow their limbs or even their entire bodies. This results in a higher chance of not succumbing to infection and death following a battle, and therefore a higher chance of successfully producing offspring and bolstering the chances of the species to survive and evolve (Alibardi, 2018, pp. 399–401). This characteristic is not wholly unique to the *Salamandridae* family but is also exhibited in different ways by members of the family *Planarians*, the genus *Hydra*, certain reptiles, and the species grouped under the name *Echinoderms* (Romero,

2022). Regardless, its peculiarity among species is rare and makes it somewhat unique.

We can consider a hyper-specific uniqueness more closely related to soil and terrestrial fauna as our final example. Peculiarly, the mushroom species *Hericium Erinaceus* exhibits neurotrophic and neuro-regenerative properties. More commonly known as Lion's Mane, this beautiful mushroom native to Japan has been found to effectively bolster a brain's ability to replenish its supply of healthy neurons when ingested. This characteristic is unique to this species of mushroom (as far as the current mycological research can tell) and allows the mushroom to potentially function as a treatment for neurodegenerative diseases that affect memory (Ryu *et al.*, 2021). Medical science is only beginning to understand the mechanism by which this fungus functions and has yet to even contemplate the evolutionary journey this species has taken to develop such properties. However, for our purposes, we include this example to illustrate the value – medicinal in this instance – of uniqueness.

As can be seen from these examples, biodiversity, or phylogenetic diversity, is a characteristic of natural systems and a fundamental prerequisite and product of evolution in complex natural systems. Concomitantly, Biodiversity loss should be avoided as it reduces systemic resilience and evolutionary potential (Eldredge, 2000; Wall *et al.*, 2004; Burger, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Jaureguiberry *et al.*, 2022). We therefore intuitively consider the elimination of uniqueness and biodiversity a moral wrong.

The central value-claim of anthropocentric ethics is that humans are inherently valuable and the process that created them must therefore have intrinsic value at least equal to its output. Denying this would be like valuing the lighting but not power generation. Much like 'temporally front-loaded goods', we enjoy our role as beneficiaries of evolution but by the mode of said enjoyment we are systemically undermining the sort of future prospects thriving biodiversity may yield. Each creature we drive extinct is one less potential branch in evolution and, relationally, one less opportunity for a host of other species to develop unique biomarkers of

their own. Despite this, our evolutionary legacy is quickly becoming one of biodiversity destruction (*Global Biodiversity Outlook 5*, 2020), ecocide (Broswimmer, 2002), and ecological injustice (Wienhues, 2020), each an aspect of (Meta-)Polycrisis and entropic decline.

This thesis unfolds as a work in African cosmic complexity, and the value of the unique as that which is singularly peculiar, and more so the peculiar in general, is a theme to which we shall return in Chapters four, five and six. The particular purpose of discussing uniqueness as a relevant aspect of biodiversity in relation to trends of collapse as evidenced in Section 2.2.1 is to provide an evolutionary perspective on it, and thereby relate it to the *long durée* perspective on (Meta-)Polycrisis introduced in the previous section. Briefly stated, it is important to recognise that (Meta-)Polycrisis has implications that reverberate well beyond humanity because, as will be shown in Chapter three, the Afrignosis position asks that we de-centre the human in relation to Cosmos in order to comprehend the value of the complex whole and its relation to all of its parts.

2.3.2.2 Environmental Aesthetics, Value and Our Destruction of Nature

Having established a functional perspective on the evolutionary role of peculiarity, this section will introduce an aesthetic perspective on the destruction of natural systems to conclude this chapter, and further contextualise the Situation, and its ethical considerations. It will do so by exploring Ecoaesthetics in the work of Xiangzham Cheng as a way of understanding the aesthetic value of natural peculiarity. Its purpose is to frame the elimination of the eco-aesthetic in nature as an additional ethical concern in relation to the Situation.

What is it about the experience of unique natural life forms, be they insects, plants, microbes, or even living assemblages such as coral reefs, rivers or mountains that makes their destruction feel intuitively wrong? Ecoaesthetics is an answer to this question and provides us with a framework for aesthetic experiences of nature and how our ability to “appreciate aesthetically and ecologically” leads

us to value nature more, and to desire that natural systems and the peculiarities they are and contain should not be destroyed (Cheng, 2013, p. 213, 2016, p. 487).

Taking up the suggestion by Arne Naess (1989, p. 38) in his explanation of Ecosophy T for his audience to generate their own iterations of eco-philosophical systems, Cheng proposes his personal system as 'Ecosophy C', where 'C' "denotes eight expressions with a capital 'C' " (Cheng, 2016, pp. 482–483) of which we will only be considering the Continuity of being, Compassion, and Community for our discussion.[45] We chose Ecosophy C as we agree with Rachel Carson (Carlson, 2018, pp. 406–408) that it improves on Ecosophy T in both robustness and depth, allowing it to better rebut common critiques levelled at both cognitive and non-cognitive positions.[46]

The ecoaesthetic thrust of Ecosophy C attempts to integrate ecological awareness into aesthetic experience in order to form an "ecological aesthetic way (or manner)" or a "theory of ecological appreciation" (Cheng, 2016, p. 487).

Ecoaesthetics emphasizes the unity between humans and the world as opposed to their division (Cheng, 2013, p. 222). This encourages us to move beyond anthropocentric conceptions of value and embrace a larger and more metaphysical cosmological sense of community by recognising the "interconnectedness or connectivity among community members" (Cheng, 2016, p. 484). Such a sense of community is integral to both his work and our project wherein we term it 'cosmic community': the cooperative co-existence of all things in their cosmic interconnectedness.

Community in regard to ecoaesthetic appreciation is closely tied to Cheng's conception of the continuity of being, which relies on an understanding of the seamless, ceaseless, and unconscious flow of energy that is the "most basic stuff that makes up the Cosmos" (ibid.). This flow of energy, for our purposes and as discussed earlier, is the flow of energy through food systems and is involved in the ceaseless unfoldment (Ramose, 2009) of the peculiar biodiverse actors making up said systems.

From Cheng's (2013, p. 228) perspective, ecoaesthetic appreciation necessitates the utilization of ecological knowledge to enhance one's comprehension of the concealed beauty of the ordinary that its history reveals.[47] This *informed engagement* evokes a sense of identification with the beings of the living world's complexity, compassion for their intrinsic value, and respect for their right to live in healthy environments (Cheng, 2016, p. 484).

We experience ecoaesthetic appreciation when we consciously engage a natural artifact. To contemplatively gaze upon the maize plant as a situated instance of wonderous, timeless, emergent self-organization, interconnected with its surroundings and the cosmic community is a qualitatively different phenomenological experience from seeing a head of corn in a supermarket.

Wrongness arises from this intuition when our ecoaesthetic sensibility turns to the impact of human activity. Comparing experiences Scuba diving nowadays to those even 50 years ago is a visceral experience of this intuition. [48]

2.4 Summary

This Chapter established three things:

First, it described the IAC's way of knowing by examining its methodology for apprehending agroecosystems and comparing it to Agroecology's holistic comprehension of it.

Second, it mapped the ramifications of said way of knowing. It accomplished this by evaluating ecological evidence of the IAC's impact on various ecosystems before tracing them onto a socio-historical framework of elements that have historically caused complex civilizations to collapse. Finding non-negligible overlap, it concluded that a description of the socio-economic hegemon as undergoing a state of collapse along with its environment is accurate.

Thirdly, it highlighted that the Situation driving collapse has ethical aspects meriting further consideration in the coming chapters. It did this by introducing some philosophical perspectives from the literature on inter-generational ethics regarding

the IAC's role in driving climate change, and peculiarity in relation to evolution and Ecoaesthetics regarding the IAC as a driver of biodiversity loss.

Overall, the purpose of the Chapter was to specify the analytic, ecological, and ethical dimensions of the Situation upon which we will focus. From here, we turn to the substantive philosophical work of this thesis as we attempt to engage the Situation as established by this Chapter from an African thought perspective.

Notes

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[1] We proffer the terms 'complicated' and 'complex' because of their relation to the Critical Complexity dimension of our method (See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory). However, when considering the literature that examines this comparison, some authors have alternatively preferred pairings such as 'mechanical/mechanistic'/'holistic' worldviews (Shiva and Shiva, 2020); 'industrial'/'agrarian' mindsets (Berry, 2002), or 'productionist' versus 'stewardship' paradigms (Thompson, 1995).

[2] Edgar Morin (2008, p. 39) defines disjunction as a principle of simplicity, reduction and disjunction, as paradigmatic of a worldview that "separates that which is linked" and "unifies that which is diverse," respectively. Whenever we use the terms disjunction/disjunctive/disjoin, or reduction/reductive/reduce, we are using them in the sense Morin does.

[3] Taxonomy is the practice of categorisation and classification in science. From this perspective, maize is understood as an annual grass (Genus *Zea Mays L.*) in the family *Poaceae* belonging to the order *Cyperales* within the class of *Liliopsida* (subclass *Commelenidae*) in the phylum *Tracheophyta* (superdivision *Spermatophyta*) of the Kingdom *Viridiplantae (*subkingdom *Tracheobionta,* superkingdom *Eukaryota)* (Bailey, 2022).

[4] Notice how this already creates the category of 'expert' occupied by plant scientists and botanists through exclusionary language and prior institutional knowledge requirements (Shiva, 2016a). By doing so, it implicitly distances the experience and wisdom of indigenous farmers from being recognised as valid in the process of knowledge creation (Cleveland and Soleri, 2007, pp. 214–217). This is seen as a necessary step in the process, as all scientists, through publication and the standardisation of scientific methods and training need to operate from the same epistemic base in order to work in a globalised world where multinational (agri)biotechnology firms largely set the bar of innovation against which all plant scientists must compete. This tendency is exaggerated by the global institutional order of standards exemplified by the World Trade Organisation, United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, and the International Standards Organisation (Gonzalez, 2015).

[5] While their work provides as astonishing level of detail, it is notable that this team of authors omits any substantive engagement with the maize plant's complexity - its interdependency on surrounding ecosystems and microecosystems - save for a passing acknowledgement that the failure to practice inter-cropping in maize agroecosystems has led to increased deforestation, soil degradation and poor crop yields (Awata *et al.*, 2019, p. 64). The focus of the study by Awata *et al.* is on maize as a major monocot in Sub-Saharan Africa specifically, and not maize as a crop in general. The interplay between the Zea Mays L. and the wider agroecosystem is paid greater attention in the work of Loretta Barnes (2016), and between Zea Mays L. and human health by Jose C. Jimenez-Lopez (2012).

[6] The corporate use of the term 'created' is an obfuscation, as what we are seeing is an increased tendency by biotechnology firms to take what nature or farmer breeding programs have cultivated over millennia and sequencing the genome of said creations before taking out Intellectual Property protections on said gene sequences, thereby claiming it as their own 'creation' and engaging in 'Biopiracy' (Shiva, 2016a; Shiva and Shiva, 2020, pp. 85–88).

[7] As with the term 'created' (see Ch. 2. fn. 6), the term 'high yielding varieties' or any allusion to 'increased yield' as a benefit of IAC methods in farming is a misnomer (Shiva, 1991, pp. 72–78). As attested to in research done by Navdaya (Shiva and Pandey, 2006; Navdanya, 2022), 'high yielding varieties' produce a larger mass of a specific part of a plant rendered responsive to key inputs, such as artificial fertilizers, but do not produce, in general, either higher biomass per acre or, importantly, nutrition. 'Yield per acre' is the determining metric for IAC genetic engineering, however it "measures the weight of nutritionally empty commodities leaving the farm, [and] not the state of the farm, the soil, the water, the farmer, not the true cost of production, nor the nutrition and quality of food" (Shiva, 2019). Presented as an objective factor in defence of IAC methods, 'high yielding varieties' are actually a highly parochial expression of 'success' in farming that subversively frames what is good for the IAC as what is good for the food system in particular and for the human-society system more generally.

[8] By 'crop-chemical combination' we refer to the corporate methodology employed by biotechnology companies of creating 'High Yielding Varieties' of crops ('High Response Varieties' is a more accurate term) which flourish best when used in combination with the fertilisers, pesticides, etc. produced by the same company (Shiva, 1991, pp. 104–

105). A good example is Monsanto's (now Bayer CropScience) RoundUp Ready Bt Cotton among their other varieties of 'Roundup Ready' crops genetically engineered to be resistant to their RoundUp herbicide, allowing farmers to spray their field with RoundUp without killing their crops (Shiva, 2008, p. 150; Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 68).

[9] Profit production is more accurately termed the production of surplus-value under capitalist food-commodity production and exchange if we allude to Karl Marx's (Marx, 1976) conception of commodification. See Sect. 5.1 On the Nature of Food.

[10] Feeding traditional varieties of plants, or farmer-bred varieties, with fertilisers has the effect of aggregate biomass increase – more and bigger leaves, a more robust stem, and larger heads. This was seen as unacceptable by the IAC and the plants were genetically engineered in such a way as to link their fertiliser responsiveness to their commodifiable part at the expense of the whole – meaning more weight was produced to increase agricultural revenue, but less food was produced for the rest of the agroecosystem (Shiva, 1991, pp. 72–77).

[11] As Vandana Shiva (1991, pp. 61–68) explains it, The Green Revolution marked a rupture in agricultural history by transforming seeds from a communal, regenerative resource into a tool of corporate control. This changed not only who controls seeds, but also what seeds are for by erasing a millennia old farmer-led seed breeding system with a profit oriented corporation-led plant genetics system. Herein, food systems shifted from being local networks where farmers and peasants acted as custodians of seed diversity, selecting, saving, and replanting seeds in ways that supported genetic diversity, self-renewability, and the commons-based inheritance of agricultural knowledge, to system where corporations act to privatise seeds through Intellectual property rights, to multinational networks where companies and research institutions control seed genetics, functionally replacing diversity and farmer-owned renewability with uniformity and corporate-enforced non-renewability (making farmers dependent on external seed sources each season). This shift has reoriented seed production away from local ecological resilience or food sovereignty and towards transnational profit and Global North control.

[12] "Every cell, every microbe, every being is autonomous and autopoietic, self-organised and free, dynamic and evolving, interconnected and non-separable" (Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 16).

[13] Such relatedness to its surroundings is also the evolutionary precedent for its biodiversity, or (bio)uniqueness, and productivity (van der Heijden, Bardgett and van Straalen, 2008).

[14] See Sect. 5.1.2 Beyond the Food-Commodity: Food and Food Production also-as Cosmic Value.

[15] See Sect. 5.1.1 The Value of Food as Food-Commodity.

[16] The paradox in this formation - that a complex system is closed in order to be open and open in order to close - is part of what makes complex systems so difficult to study. But it is also what makes a reduction of their nature into a closed system a misrepresentation. The tension between openness and closedness is what ultimately gives way to a more ethical approach to modelling them, as the modeller must admit the (im)possibility of modelling (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012).

[17] Harmony does not imply the complete absence of its corollaries, being disharmony, disorder, collapse, disorganisation, and death in the maintenance of self-organising stability (Morin, 2008, pp. 40–44). Moreover, when used in the ecological sense, it does not imply non-violence or benevolence in the fairy-tale sense of 'they all lived together in harmony'. On the contrary, many instances of ecological harmony, such as predation or parasitism, appear to human intuitions as brutal or even cruel. However, the function of harmonious interrelation in nature is not the maintenance of an idyllic conception of peace, free from suffering or death, but the regulation of balance and an emergent ecosystemic stability. In fact, much of the reading of those forces in nature which we would term violence, domination, or cruelty, result from an anthropocentric projection of terms related to human social hierarchies onto our understanding of systems such as food webs (Bookchin, 1982).

[18] See Sillitoe (2007, pp. 13–19), Martinez-Torres and Rosset (2014, pp. 980–981, 994), Nimbalkar (2015, p. 60), Williams *et al.* (2018), Szerszynski (2019, pp. 48–51), Shiva (1991, p. 256), and Shiva & Shiva (2020, pp. 19–20) See Ch. 3 for a more in-depth discussion of how African indigenous worldviews comprehend complexity and the approach of Agroecology.

[19] See Ch. 1 n. 45.

[20] Sociopolitical complexity for Tainter refers to the scale of stratification and social differentiation; economic activity in terms of specialisation; centralised control through the regulation and integration of diverse economic and political groups by elites; investment in 'epiphenomena' such as artistic and literary activity; behavioural control and regimentation; information flow; and the coordination between individuals, groups and institutions (Tainter, 1988, pp. 4–5).

[21] Industrial agriculture accounts for roughly a third of all Green House Gas (GHG) emissions (Crippa *et al.*, 2021) through its fossil fuel use for trucks, tractors, and shipping, together with the Haber-Bosch artificial fertilizer production process (Shiva, 2008, p. 111);

[22] Chemical runoff refers to processes by which agricultural chemicals which build up in soil over time are washed through water systems by rain into the oceans causing Algal blooms and 'dead zones' (Landrigan *et al.*, 2020, pp. 19–21).

[23] Turnover rates of up to 40% within observed Phototrophic assemblages in the median latitudes of the Atlantic Ocean and migratory shifts in species distribution to the poles as the oceans warm and acidify imply that "climate change threatens the contribution of plankton communities to plankton mediated ecosystem services such as biological carbon sequestration" (Benedetti *et al.*, 2021, pp. 2–5). Further, historical data indicates that during the period of increased

latitudinal turnover linked to a changing climate 71% of species could not effectively track optimal temperatures on a global scale and instead went extinct (Trubovitz *et al.*, 2020, pp. 2–4). These population declines indicate significant shifts in energy availability in ocean food webs and threatens their stability more generally.

[24] Complex systems exhibit a complex notion of causality in which a) various causes can result in diverse and/or divergent effects; b) various factors can result in similar outcomes; c) minor factors can result in significant consequences; d) significant causes can result in minimal impacts; e) certain causes precede contrasting outcomes; and f) the consequences of conflicting causes are unpredictable (Morin, 1992b, p. 270).

[25] (Agri)chemicals impact a wide variety of creatures, including microbes, soil flora and fauna, insects, and birds (Ingram, Buchmann and Nabhan, 2002; Moore, 2002; Moreau *et al.*, 2022), while also causing multiple negative human health effects (Brevik *et al.*, 2020; Rani *et al.*, 2021; Van Bruggen *et al.*, 2021);

[26] Similar findings have been presented about flying insects and pollinators (Ingram, Buchmann and Nabhan, 2002; Dirzo, Galetti and Collen, 2014).

[27] Several metanalyses from researchers working on terrestrial soils and microbiology would also support such a claim. For instance, the work of Kenneth Timmis and Juan Luis Ramos (2021) provides extensive evidence for their claim that "Planet Earth is currently experiencing an unprecedented crisis of soil deterioration, desertification and erosive loss that increasingly prejudices the services it provides" (ibid., pp. 769). Other authors who concurrently support the claim of large-scale soil degradation and erosion due to a loss of biomass, biodiversity declines and changing climatic conditions, and as a result of industrial agricultural practices include Christopher J. Rhodes (2017, pp. 86–92); Burrell *et al* (2020, p. 2) and Cavivvhioli *et al* (2019, p. 577). Some, such as de Lorenzo *et al* (2016, pp. 618–619) go even further to conclude that "sudden shifts leading to catastrophic biodiversity decays" can be predicted from our knowledge of the current state of ecological fragility and collapse(a) in various ecosystems.

[28] It is due to the complex nature of civilisations that explanations of their collapse cannot yield to panacea-like explanations as they are insufficient in as far as they fail to comprehend the complex notion of causality (Woermann, 2016, pp. 30–31) through which complex systems unfold. See Ch. 2. n. 24.

[29] These include the Mayan civilisation of Mesoamerica; the societies of the Hohokam region in the American Southwest; the Northern Hopewell and Cahokia civilisations of the Mississippi River basin; the civilisations of Mesopotamia; and the Roman Empire (Tainter, 1988, pp. 45–50).

[30] Given that human civilisations have historically collapsed regardless of their level of social complexity (Tainter, 1988, pp. 1–2), any assertion that our current iteration of civilisation is somehow immune to this hitherto unbroken rule is nothing but exceptionalism and denial in light of the evidence.

[31] Neo-colonial (Nkrumah, 2004) is the apt descriptor for the rise of petrochemicals, as they essentially function as a means of economic and social control along the same colonial lines between developing and developed nations. The vast majority of both petrochemical and agrichemical companies whose reach first enabled the establishment of the global petrochemical order and the dominance of the IAC are either European or North American.

[32] Montgomery (2007, chap. 8) additionally provides a detailed analysis of the origin and growth of our agrichemical dependency and the inevitable risk its unsustainability predisposes us to.

[33] As a complicated arrangement of complex systems, it is difficult, given the amount of competing definitions, to define the nature of the global political economy precisely for our purposes. However, we suggest that it can be described as a system exhibiting attributes of late capitalism (Mandel, 2024), carbon capitalism (Di Muzio, 2015), surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019), and techno-feudalism (Varoufakis, 2023) with neo-imperial (Yu, 2020), neo-liberal (Harvey, 2011), and neo-colonial (Nkrumah, 2004) tendencies. Importantly, whatever its precise form, it expresses itself along gendered (Crenshaw, 1991) and racialised (Robinson, 2019) lines.

[34] Despite decades of efforts to address carbon emissions through, for example, the transition to renewable energy sources such as solar power, and the consequences of failing to do so, carbon emissions still increase year on year (IPCC, 2023). Stephen Gardiner (2011), Frank Incropera (2016), Martin Bunzl (2015), Daniel Schmachtenberger (Hagens, 2024) all attest to this fact and its absurdity.

[35] See Shiva (2016b) and Ch. 2. n. 8. Paul B. Thompson (1995, chap. 5), who provide an alternative economic framing for understanding the fictitious nature of the IAC's account model when approached ecologically.

[36] On the assumption we will be able to survive the climate crisis, it logically follows that the number of humans that may exist in the future is infinitely larger than those that have existed since the emergence of Homo Sapiens as an evolutionary branch.

[37] For the sake of argument, these 'groups' in Gardiner's conception are temporally distinct and only capable of forward-looking causal influence. While the concept of generations can be difficult to define (Gardiner, 2011, chap. 5), it will suffice for our current discussion.

[38] In actuality, the group after us and each subsequent group after them would likely pay an increasingly substantial socioeconomic cost (such as food insecurity and the related social unrest which food insecurity ensures) for the same benefit accrued to us as the first group. At the same time, these subsequent groups are likely to also gradually lose the ability to derive the same benefit-to-cost ratio in terms of agricultural-input versus agricultural-output as we do, especially if the historical trend towards diminishing returns on investment in socio-political complexity (as it relates to advancing and implementing IAC methods) continues. The enjoyment of the good by the first group results in the

deprivation of the good from the second group and more so for the third group and the fourth etc., hence its description as "temporally front-loaded" by Gardiner.

[39] Gardiner calls this element of the Situation the "tyranny of the contemporary over its successors" (Gardiner, 2011, p. 153) and we find this description apt.

[40] The intuition of wrongness could arise in relation to several considerations, including the asymmetric partiality between the first group and the rest of the groups, the former favouring its own interests over those of the subsequent groups; the first group's apparent thoughtlessness, recklessness, cruelty or selfishness; or first groups failure to both help others and ignore the implied negative responsibility not to hurt them (Gardiner, 2011, pp. 148–160).

[41] We place the terms 'more advanced' and 'less developed' between inverted commas to signal them as carrying a history of pejorative use, measuring 'development' and 'advancement' as narrow measures of 'progress' in terms of techno-industrial growth (Ani, 1994, pp. 489–495). The issue with the pejorative framing, beyond its coloniality, as will be explored in Chapter four is summed up well by the Consilience Project when they write "Progress, as we define it now, ignores or downplays the scale of its side effects. Our typical approach to technological innovation today harms much that is not only beautiful and inspiring, but also fundamentally necessary for the health and well-being of all life on Earth" (Consilience Project, 2024). The idea of development is intimately tied to the idea of progress, and so also tied to technological development ignorant of its externalities. As such, to purport a 'more developed' nation as a more technologically advanced nation is to equate development with a greater externality burden.

[42] An *aporia* arises in the tension between two counterposed yet irreconcilable truths. On the one hand, it is true that humanity has very little of its carbon budget left to use and so must curb its emissions drastically to mitigate the worst consequences of climate Change. On the other hand, it is also true that in light of historical injustices linked to colonialism and imperialism, global South nations do have a valid claim to industrialisation and its accompanying rise in living standards (See Sect. 2.3.1.2 Factors Compounding Inter-Generational Buck Passing). However, these two claims stand at odds with one another, as industrialisation in the global South requires an increase in their emissions, at least in as far as it is of a Eurocentric industrial character.

[43] The fermi paradox describes the conflict between the lack of evidence for exobiological life and the statistical improbability of it not existing. While it is not without its issues, such as it neither being truly attributable to Enrico Fermi nor actually being a paradox (Gray, 2015), the point it attempts to make remains: the likelihood of Earth being the only site of Life in all of existence is statistically improbable and humanity has as yet has not developed the tools to prove otherwise. Possible solutions to the Fermi Paradox include: the Great Filter hypothesis (Hanson, 1998); the Catastrophic Risk hypothesis, later replaced by the Gaian Bottleneck hypothesis (Chopra and Lineweaver, 2016); the Rare Earth Hypothesis (Ward, 2000); the "self-termination" hypothesis (Von Hoerner, 1961), and the Dark Forest hypothesis (Stanway, 2023). One recent hypothesis relevant to the Situation is that of "asymptotic burnout and homeostatic awakening" (Wong and Bartlett, 2022) which alleges that civilisations have "a window of time to affect a fundamental change [and] prioritize long-term homeostasis and well-being over unyielding growth" or fall victim to a burnout resulting from an inability to innovate quickly enough to solve a given crisis. See Sect. 5.3.5 Expression Three//Solving for Enduring Harmony.

[44] This attitude persists despite the gradual denigration of the human-uniqueness claim by various investigations into the existence of distinguishing factors such as tool use, social organisation, and the use of language by animals. Peter Singer (2016) discusses this claim at length in his work on Speciesism.

[45] The full list is Chinese Culture, Confucianism, Continuity of being, Creating life, Compassion, Cheng Hao, Community, and Cultural evils (Cheng, 2016).

[46] Cognitive positions in aesthetics take "cognitive resources, such as knowledge and information to be essential to aesthetic appreciation…" of things, while non-cognitive positions "…take some alternative feature, such as engagement, emotional arousal, or imagination" as their foundation (Carlson, 2018, p. 403). Regarding the former, cognitivists are usually accused of failing to overcome the 'fact/value' dichotomy (alternatively, the 'is/ought gap') which alleges that normative positions cannot flow directly from descriptive statements. See Ch. 3. for a complete rebuttal of this dichotomy. Alternatively, non-cognitivists are often accused of having a 'subjectivity problem' in that they propose that a theory based in highly subjective experiences as the experience of art or of nature tends to be cannot effectively motivate a more universalizable ethical response. The tenability of this position relies on the existence of an objective position against which to counterpose subjectivity. However, as we have explained (see Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory), the Critical Complexity perspective with which we approach this work holds that subject and object cannot be meaningfully separated. As such, a universalizable ethical position, being an attempt to create a closed model of ethical consideration, is (im)possible as there is no ethical model which is not also at once a projection or instantiation of the modeller. This is why, were we to be accused of taking up a non-cognitivist position, we argue that we do not seek to establish a categorical imperative of the Kantian sort, but rather a provisional imperative (Woermann, 2016) moderated by the limited worldview of the modeller and the context in which it is applied.

[47] Cheng (2013) reasons that with a fundamental understanding of at least the basics of ecology it may be exceedingly difficult to appreciate some aesthetic aspects of the natural world such as those found in swamps or marshlands.

[48] As at the time of writing (2024), global temperature predictions estimate that 2°C of global heating is essentially unavoidable. This means that coral reefs will likely collapse globally and the children born today will never experience

a vibrant, thriving shallow-water reef. Seeing the state of coral reefs circa 2024 is truly emotional. Where once teemed colourful, vibrant micro-ecosystems overflowing with biodiverse life forms, we now see dull, bleached and increasingly inhospitable ruins. This comparison evokes a powerful intuitive sense of wrongness regarding humankind's collective impact on the oceans. When considered more holistically in the light of Ecosophy C's full weight, the sense of wrongness becomes intermingled with strong feelings of sadness, anger, regret, and hopelessness. As it becomes clear that while today's reefs are smaller than fifty years ago, they will be unrecognizable in fifty years. On our current track, future generations are unlikely to witness or engage in the ecoaesthetic appreciation made possible by rich and biodiverse settings like coral reefs.

Chapter 3: Relationalism, Ethics, and the Question of Microcosmic Life

Introduction

Having established the element of the Situation that is our focus in Chapter two, this Chapter will establish an ethical framework grounded in African relational ethics to respond to it and frame the nature of our proposed response as obligatory. Its purpose is to flesh out the character of relationality from an African *Utamawazo*, beginning with how various thinkers have approached it and then turning to the question of our relation to the microcosmic community as the first victims of the Situation as it relates to the IAC.

To do so, this Chapter will distinguish three apparent approaches to the concept of relationality in African thought on ethics and defend the approaches we find most promising when engaging the Situation. These three approaches are 'Complex Interconnectionism' (abbr. CI), 'Hard Interconnectionism' (abbr. HI), and 'Soft Interconnectionism' (abbr. SI).[1] Each will be introduced and discussed in sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 respectively, before being put into Conversation with one another in Section 3.4 to compare and contrast how each would conceive of microcosmic life in relation to the Situation and motivate action in consideration thereof.

Importantly, the differentiators 'soft' and 'hard' refer to the extremes of an ethical-spiritual-praxis spectrum and any pejorative readings of it should be avoided.[2] The 'soft' position is more secular[3] and less dependent on metaphysical arguments for its justification, while the 'hard' position is heavily reliant on religious and metaphysical arguments for its meaning.

3.1 Complex Interconnectionism

This section will introduce the CI approach to relationality in African thought. It will proceed as follows: Section 3.1.1 will develop the language of Critical Complexity from Section 1.3 for our usage in conceptualising the complexity of an African *Utamawazo*; Section 3.1.2 will consider two examples of the CI approach to get a sense of its character; and Section 3.1.3 will articulate the CI approach. The purpose of this section is to develop an understanding of African thought as sensitive to complexity.

3.1.1 Complexity, The General Economy of Interbeing and the Ethics of Living

The section will develop the language of Critical Complexity for its use throughout the rest of this work. It will do so by describing the two views on complexity apparent in the literature, the restricted and the general view, and appending a third, the cosmic view. The purpose of this section is to detail the cosmic view on complexity in relation to the work of Cilliers and Human (2013) on Morin, Bataille, and Derrida.

As established in Section 1.3, the language of economy is considered useful for the discussion of complexity. For this, two senses were presented.

The first, called a restricted view of complexity, or alternatively the paradigm of simplicity, can be described as a view on complexity that narrowly accounts for difference, or "discriminations which can be made from the perspective of the model under consideration" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, p. 30). Herein, that which is alterity, paradox, or simply not useful to the purpose of a model, is rendered as excess, an outside created by the model for which it cannot and does not seek to account. Recognising this, Bataille through his engagement with Nietzsche (Weiss, 1986; Bataille, 1992) developed a general sense of complexity, which can be described as a view on complexity that more broadly attempted to account for heterogeny, "that which, again from the perspective of the model, makes no sense or appears to bear no influence on the outcomes [the modellers] want to achieve, despite the fact that it has an influence nonetheless" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, pp. 29–30). There is however "a contextual dimension to difference and heterogeneity" arising from our inability to "categorically state that something will remain heterogenous to a system because, in a different context, it may make sense to that economy" (ibid.).

In light of this, we argue that the usefulness of the term economy, in either its restricted or its general senses, becomes limited in the context in which we are to use it – that of African thought – primarily because the heterogeneity with which we are to engage concerns certain concepts in African thought, such as Ancestors

(Podolecka and Nthoi, 2021), the order of being (Magesa, 1997; Bujo, 1998), and various other cosmological perspectives (Agada, 2017; Roothaan, 2017, 2019; Madavo, 2019), which rely on an *Utamawazo* foreign to the academic context in which Critical Complexity was developed,[4] and also to the author to whom the term 'general economy' is attributed.[5]

As such, and taking up Human and Cilliers injunction that we "acknowledge that the economy we postulate of a complex system is always the product of the particular viewpoint we adopt" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, p. 33), we propose an alternative heuristic in the form of a *cosmic view* on complexity. We suggest that this view should be understood as combining multiple notions. The first is Bataille's (1991) notion of general economy, mediated by the temporality of Derrida's *Différance* (1982a), which implies of today's heterogeneity that it "may be central to our understanding of the system tomorrow, as we gain new means of interpretation or new understanding of the system" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, p. 37). This is combined with the contemplative notion of Interbeing[6] taken from the work of Thich Nhat Hanh (2012, 2017, 2020), to include humanity, all life,[7] and the Cosmos both visible and invisible, into the economy to be postulated by the CI approach as the system of Being-Becoming in what remains of this Section. Thus, we seek to posit a sense of *cosmic ecology* alongside the sense of restricted and general economy. We choose the term ecology over economy to indicate the relation of the human and the natural within the system of Being-Becoming and to avoid the meanings of the word economy that associate it primarily with the work of economists.

Cosmic ecology, in our usage, aims to maintain the insights of Critical Complexity as a "view of ontology" (Woermann, 2016, p. 2) regarding the organisational character and emergence of complex systems, but compliment them with a view of cosmology, that other dipole which grounds a metaphysics (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021a). Of course, and in line with our Afrocentric attitudinal method-dimension, we locate the source of said complex cosmology in African thought, as will be discussed across this chapter.

An example may clarify how this may work. Say one is confronted with the system 'family':

A restricted economy view may model such as system as consisting very narrowly of the close family in the style of a nuclear-foursome mother, father, son, and daughter, with perhaps the inclusion of grandparents in the context of multi-generational households. Herein, the cousins, aunts, uncles, etc. present as the excess, the heterogeneity to the restricted economy. Recognising this, a general economy of the family system may extend the model to render heterogeneity as difference by acknowledging the excess of the restricted view.

While this presents as a sufficient economy of the family system in a Eurocentric academic context, the context of African thought "reminds us of both the ubiquity and the necessity of alternatives [that is] as much an acknowledgement of the inherent normativity of complexity as it is a demand [for] imagining alternative means of engaging with the problems the world faces" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, p. 41) This is because, in the view of African thought, the model is incomplete as it excludes the 'living-dead' or Ancestors, who are as real as the living family and as important to any model of the family (Mbiti, 1970; Magesa, 1997).

We suggest that a non-materialist excess arises for which the general economy of the family system cannot account and for which a cosmological account is required for it to make sense. As this example shows, a different view on complexity other than the restricted or the general is required to deal with the excesses that arise in an African-thought context.

Science has functionally dominated how we conceive of the economy of complexity by "closing open systems in order to scrutinise them" (Poli, 2013, p. 146). However, we argue that taking a cosmic view on complexity, that neither imposes a set of materialist relations upon the system of Being-Becoming (restricted economy), nor renders it a more approachable but no less materialist economy by maintaining the non-materialist aspect of reality as the excesses of Cosmos (general economy), is a necessary exercise in "conceptualising ways of realising these novelties in the

present without them being consumed, or incorporated as difference, within the economies of the present" (Human and Cilliers, 2013, p. 40).

We suggest that the concept of cosmic ecology does just this by going beyond the general view to (re)configure a terrain of possibilities more welcome to an African *Utamawazo* in a way that is "at the same time richer while *less certain*" (Morin, 2008, p. 26 our emphasis). As will be shown, this doubling-down on uncertainty, by including those metaphysical excesses for which science cannot account, results from (re)orienting questions of ethical-spiritual-praxis towards the relationality of entities within a cosmic ecology of complexity that is, by the definition of a complex system, (un)knowable.

This view on complexity, as with the general view, does not strive to ultimately account for complexity, but only undertake an exercise of African-contextual meta-ethics, the Ethics of Living (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012), in contemplation of society, agriculture, and the question of moral value, which arises in consideration of microcosmic life and the cosmic community.

3.1.2 Two Examples of Complex Interconnectionism

This section will consider two authors who we identify as examples of thinkers who use the CI approach to ethics in African thought. Section 3.1.2.1 will first consider the work of Mogobe B. Ramose, and then Section 3.1.2.2 will consider the work of Kevin G. Behrens. Its purpose is to give the reader a sense of what the CI approach looks like in the literature before we articulate the approach ourselves in Section 3.1.3.

3.1.2.1 Ramose's Cosmic Interconnectionism

Mogobe Ramose is a renowned South African philosopher best known for his conceptualisation of *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2003b), rationality, and the impact of coloniality on African philosophy (Ramose, 2002b, 2015, 2018a) as well as his contributions to jurisprudence (Ramose, 2003a, 2012, 2018b, 2020). We will consider his article '*Ecology Through* Ubuntu' as an explicit contemplation of living

systems – ecologies – through the lens of African philosophy and a clear example of the CI approach.

As a work that insists on its own complexity,[8] we will try to consider this piece as a totality while highlighting some of the moves Ramose makes which indicate his sensitivity to Critical Complexity.

In summary, Ramose builds on his lifelong engagement with African thought to put forward the idea of using *Ubu-ntu*[9] – "the philosophical foundation of African philosophy" and an "understanding of cosmic harmony" (Ramose, 2003b, pp. 273–279) – to understand ecology in relation to humanness[10] and the richness of Life as a wholeness.[11] Using this conception, he then draws out the environmental ethical linkages between the cosmological and ontological insights of African thought.

Ubu-ntu, he writes, "regards being, or the universe, as a complex wholeness involving the multi-layered and incessant interaction of all entities" which is also "multi-directional" (ibid.). This "primary observation [...] underlying all reality" (ibid.), attributed both to philosophy and the natural sciences[12] suggests the *principle of motion:* "the universal indivisible principle on account of which a multiplicity and pluriformity of organisms come into being and pass away" (Ramose, 2009, p. 311).

We suggest that this insight about the mechanical functioning of reality is also (meta)physical, accounting for matter, consciousness, self-organization, life, and death in the universe as a correlative of the complex relatedness of the parts thereof. The passage of time, the movement, emergence, decay and dispersal of cosmic bodies (suns, planets, galaxies, etc.), the advent of life and the awakening of consciousness – all of these are understood as a "processual" (Ramose, 2009, p. 309) never-ending and recursive emergence of an autopoietic and interactive complex system - an "unceasing unfoldment" (Ramose, 2009, p. 312).[13]

Ramose takes the insight of wholeness further when he evaluatively states that - regarding the relationship of humans to physical or objective nature - "to care for another, therefore, implies caring for physical nature as well. Without such care

the interdependence between human beings and physical nature would be undermined" (Ramose, 2009, p. 309). Caring here is framed as a "natural duty" to "maintain a comprehensive but specific relational condition among organisms and entities [...], a balance between human beings and physical nature" (ibid.). We suggest this could be termed a 'cosmic ecological balance'.

From conceptualising of ecology through Ubuntu, Ramose draws out three cosmic ecological insights – usually "couched in religious terms although [...] not necessarily and exclusively a religious position" (ibid., p. 310). We will outline these insights now and consider his comment regarding religious readings when we discuss the HI approach in Section 3.2.2.2.

The first insight concerns motion as the principle of being, something akin to emergence and self-organisation in relation to feature 7 (Box 1) of complex systems, regarding the thermodynamic openness and functional closedness of such systems. This principle alludes to the nature of complex systems as dynamic and not static; they change over time as they exist in time. For this, Ramose holds that "there is never a final immutable whole but only enduring and transient wholes always governed by the principle of motion responsible for change" (ibid., p. 311).

The second insight is that dignity - characterised by mutual care and actions towards the preservation of life, and the importance of the individual - can be understood only relationally. Herein we understand Ramose to be implying that the identity of elements in a complex system relate to the system and each other as *unitas multiplex* (Morin, 1992a) as discussed in Section 1.3. This forms the basis of dignity, which can arise only from the recognition of the relatedness of the other and the obligation to care for them that follows.

The third insight is that of "mutual care and sharing", understood and underwritten from "the decentred self's point of view [as] the most realistic orientation to life in its wholeness" (Ramose, 1994, pp. 67–74, 2009, p. 312). Herein, the observer-system dichotomy is dissolved, admitting the role of the modeller in the model

and reflecting on the self-importance thereof, revealing a sensitivity to the ethics of complexity and the complexity of ethics (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012).

Ramose's cosmic ecological balance requires a rejection of the paradigm of simplicity and fundamentalist reductionism as one of its techniques. He confirms as much when he writes (Ramose, 2009, p. 312):

> *"Reductionist, fragmentive and empiricistic rationality continues to make great advances in the sphere of technology. In the process, advances have resulted in serious disturbances to the ecology, thereby disrupting the precarious balance between the human being and its environment. This loss of balance constitutes a violation of* Ubuntu. *It is also an indication of the need to restore* motho *in the sphere of the relations between human beings and physical nature This is the ecosophical dimension of the proverb* motho ke motho ka batho."

Without invoking Critical Complexity, it is evident that Ramose approaches environmental ethics in African thought with a sensitivity to complexity. We suggest that it is this sensitivity that warrants our engagement with him as a thinker who takes the CI approach.

3.1.2.2 Behrens 'Web of Life' Approach

Kevin Behrens is philosopher born, raised, and educated in the South African context. We will consider Behrens approach to African thought through three of his works: 'Exploring African Holism with Respect to the Environment' (2010), 'An African Relational Environmentalism and Moral Considerability' (2014) and his doctoral thesis *African Philosophy, Thought and Practice, and Their Contributions to Environmental Ethics* (2011) where a need for more detail arises.

Across this body of work, Behrens explores African environmental ethics in the development of his theory of African Relational Environmentalism, or 'web-of-life' approach to environmental ethics. As a departure from the universalism of applied ethics and ethical philosophy more generally, Behrens specifically seeks to engage "African thought regarding the environment" to "[establish] a plausible account of how an African environmentalism might determine what is morally considerable" (Behrens, 2014, p. 64).

Behrens is noted for challenging the argument that African thought is either inherently anthropocentric or problematically holistic, in the sense of holism inhered by Aldo Leopold's (1970) Land Ethic. He does so by articulating a cautious middle path between them.

Regarding the charge of inherent anthropocentrism, Behrens does not deny a "strong anthropocentric strand" in African philosophy, but argues that it does not represent African moral worldviews, which often acknowledge "essential interconnectedness or interrelationship between humans and the rest of nature" (Behrens, 2010, p. 469). Grounded in a consistent emphasis[14] on the interdependence between people, society, their immediate environment, and everything else in existence, he shows how "a non-anthropocentric basis for a requirement to treat nature with respect" exists (Behrens, 2010, p. 471, 2011, pp. 53–56). While existent, such emphasis may not go far enough to justify nature's inherent value (Behrens, 2010, p. 471), and so Behrens proposes using human moral value to (de)centre an awareness of nature's moral value implied by interdependence. Following this logic, Behrens claims that "harmony cannot be obtained unless the welfare of others is ensured, materially and emotionally" (Behrens, 2010, p. 475).

Regarding the charge of homogenous holism, Behrens addresses the possibility that he may be shifting moral worth to the whole (as holists do) by explaining how the African emphasis on relationality differs from Western forms of holist environmental ethics. In African environmental ethics, he identifies identity as counter-balanced and co-constitutive between individual identity and community identity – each individual is at once themselves and the products of their embeddedness in their community and environment (Behrens, 2010, pp. 477–478). We suggest that this indicates a flattening of hierarchy in identity formation by placing the individual and community in complex tension, without elevating one above the other. Such a middle path, Behrens argues, is absent in the Western conception of holism.

Conceiving of identity co-constructively (Woermann, 2016), Behrens' African Relational Environmentalism neither accords final value to wholes or to individuals. Rather, it is a cosmic economic form of 'anthropoholism' that accords final value, and thus non-hierarchical moral considerability, to the relationships between members of the cosmic community and humans (Behrens, 2010, p. 479, 2014, pp. 74–75). Thus, his ethic argues that one cannot reasonably encourage harmonious relationships while ignoring the interests of the parties concerned.

In his subsequent work, Behrens applies his Anthropoholism to moral considerability — the matching of an entity's pretension of moral significance and moral actors', such as humans, awareness of ethical obligations in respect of it (Behrens, 2014, p. 67).[15] From an African perspective, everything - from inanimate objects to spiritual forces like Ancestors[16] and also future generations[17] - is morally significant due to their interconnectedness within the web-of-life, whether due to intrinsic or relational qualities like shared life force[18] or interdependence (Behrens, 2014, pp. 71–47).[19]

The descriptive claim of co-existence in the "complex web of life" is thus the complementary criterion for moral considerability to accompany Behrens' African Relational Environmentalism and the basis of the normative claim that all life must be respected and engaged with harmoniously (Behrens, 2011, p. 117).[20]

The combination of the idea of African Relational Environmentalism and its complementary principle in the 'web of life' are where we find evidence that indicates to us that Behrens takes a CI approach. We suggest that his exercise of caution regarding bivalency, in specific relation to identity, and his sympathetic appreciation of the unitary ontology upon which much African gnosis establishes itself, are evidence of this.

3.1.3 Articulating Complex Interconnectionism

Now that we have provided two examples of the types of thinking that we refer to as the CI approach, this section will articulate said approach by building these movements into modes of response. It will do so by first characterising the

paradigmatically simple approach against which the CI approach is counterposed and then proceeding to make some claims about African thought to be justified in the forthcoming sections.

It can be reasonably argued that analytic ethical philosophy has been an exercise in closed modelling to the exclusion of the Critical Complexity of cosmic ecology.[21] The search for a law, a principle that is universal, required the rational assumption that a state of objectivity in which moral dictums can be predicated is possible, and objectivity inheres closure. Thus, analytic attempts are paradoxically only attempts to model *an* economy of moral consideration.

We argue that, from the Critical Complexity perspective, these exclusionary[22] projects have necessitated a paradigmatically simple worldview resulting from the techniques of reduction and disjunction that universalism unavoidably requires. In order to arrive at a law or principle, moral universalism imposes a set of restricted relations onto the cosmic ecology such that it is able to name and clearly delineate absolutely separate categories, good from bad, right from wrong, humankind from nature, the conscious from the unconscious, the feeling from the unfeeling, the rational from the irrational and the known from the unknown.

The CI approach suggests otherwise that this tendency towards simplification is paradoxical to the nature of our life world, and instead takes up a position sensitive to cosmic ecology: the incessant interplay of systems *with their environment*, including its material and immaterial dimensions, and not to the exclusion of the latter. Thus, the world is approached as a cosmic whole and we, humankind, are conceptualised as beings co-constituted with and within it (Behrens, 2010), making us of the very same matter and elements as the living soil, the trees, the air, and the water, but organised differently.

It follows then that our being, our humanness *as becoming,* is co-constituted through the ebb and flow of the world - breathing, eating, drinking, producing heat and 'waste' with and within us. Humanness (Ramose, 2003b, 2009) is a perpetual moment of movement, both internal and external, signalling an emergent *Unitas*

Multiplex (Morin, 1992a, 1992b) in concert with the living world. Thus, taking an African CI approach, we are cosmic interbeings, the same as the living soil, the trees, the air, and the water, all of which are also us.

Rather than to reduce us to dogmatically proclaim our relatedness to be the limit of our identities, the CI approach tentatively enriches us via the notion of a "web of life" (Behrens, 2014) "ceaselessly unfolding" (Ramose, 2009) used to trace, detail, explain and (dis)border aspects of our individual identities and relation to the whole. We suggest that this allows for new investigations of the potentials and the boundaries of the subject and subject-world relations by challenging the limits by which we have separated the human from the living world who together are enveloped in a co-constitutive mutually-evolving cosmic ecology.[23]

The irreducibility of cosmic ecology, we suggest, is a common feature interweaving Critical Complexity and the CI approach as they grapple with the complexity of ethics and the ethics of complexity (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012). Where the former requests that we develop a sensitivity to the tenuous subject/object relationship involved in modelling, the latter requests that we deconstruct this binary by (de)centring the idea of being human from one of Africa's gnoses - *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2002a).

Ubu-ntu is a rich insight, the proper comprehension of which cannot be properly understood through the narrow lens of analytic ethics which consistently has reduced it from complex to complicated. As our discussion of the SI approach will show, dismissing the notion of the 'spirit' of *Ubu-ntu* ruptures the unitary ontology from which its relational essence and co-creative value is derived.

Famously translated from the Zulu phrase '*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*' or the Sotho phrase '*motho ke motho ka batho'* into English by Archbishop Desmond Tutu as 'a person in a person through other people' or 'I am because you are, and because you are, therefore I am,' *Ubu-ntu* is less an ethical maxim, as it has often portrayed through disciplinary discourse thereon, than it is a unitary ontology.

In taking a CI approach, we suggest that *Ubu-ntu* is better read as an Afrignostic constellation that expresses something that is all at once ethical, epistemological, ontological, metaphysical, and political. Taking Ramose's advice to (de)centre the human from the notion of *Ubu-ntu,* we could express the insight in purely relational terms as 'a being is a being through its interrelatedness and interdependence with other beings', or more generally as 'things are because they are related and, because they are related, their being is becoming'. Alternatively, we can state the insight as Achille Mbembe does: relation precedes both existence and essence (Mbembe, 2024)

The implications of this reading of *Ubu-ntu*, first suggested by Ramose but advanced herein with the addition of a Critical Complexity perspective, are of course very broad.

3.2 Hard Interconnectionism

Having now considered the first of the three approaches to ethics in African thought – the SI approach – this section will introduce the second, the Hard Interconnectionist or 'HI' approach. It will do so by first introducing two examples of thinkers who seem to be using an HI approach in Section 3.3.1. Thereafter, it will distil from their work some features of the HI approach. The purpose of this section is to characterize the HI position as an approach that is heavily reliant on religious and metaphysical arguments for its meaning.

3.2.1 Two Examples of Hard Interconnectionism

This section presents two examples of the HI approach. Section 3.2.1.1 will consider the work of Bénézet Bujo and Section 3.2.1.2 will consider the work of Laurenti Magesa. Its purpose is to provide a foundation from which to conceptualize common markers of the HI approach in Section 3.2.2.

3.2.1.1 Bénézet Bujo

Bénézet Bujo is a Congolese theologian and over the course of his life set about to establish the religious foundations for ethical attitudes and praxis in African traditional life. In his work, he argues that Africa has always recognized a central

religious concept: God, a "supreme being" or "founder-Ancestor" that is the "source of all life" (Bujo, 1992, pp. 17, 23, 2001, p. 102, 2009, p. 282).[24] However, unlike in Christian theology, Bujo, among others, argues that the nature of God in the African theological and cosmological context is that of a non-anthropomorphized entity "incarnated into the Cosmos" (Bujo, 2009, p. 284) that represents the "spatio-temporal 'totality' of existence" (Teffo and Roux, 2003, p. 198).[25]

This conception of God, according to Bujo, informs the cosmology advanced by African metaphysics. Herein, the universe is a hierarchically organized order of being, arranged by the flow of vital force in the order, supreme being, Ancestors, spirits, humans, animals, plants and inanimate objects (Bujo, 1998, p. 209). It is important to note that in this order no entity is either without vital force[26] or considered discrete from any other – everything is fundamentally connected by vital force (Bujo, 1998, pp. 22–23).[27]

The concept of 'vital force' has been a persistent artefact in African thought since its introduction by Belgian missionary to the Congo, Placid Tempels (1959).[28] Bujo defines it as the "life force" that flows from the great Ancestors into and through all members of the community of Life, which can be increased or decreased (Bujo, 1992, pp. 22–23).

Bujo argues that this cosmology, between God and vital force - conceptualized as a fundamental, flowing substance organizing and uniting all entities in the order of being - constitutes Life as a unity.[29] Although there is a conception of greater and less forms of being within this unity, environmentally speaking Bujo explicitly states that this "does not mean that persons are permitted to treat lesser forms of being arbitrarily", to disregard, disrespect, or destroy them as such "only leads to the destruction of the higher, since all life is relational." (Bujo, 2009, p. 290).

Through this sense of cosmic relationality, Bujo conceives of community as "the starting point for African Ethics" (Bujo, 2001, p. 1). Community represents "cosmic interwovenness" based on "cosmic rationality" that conceives humans as only part

of the cosmic ecology, including all elements in the order of being, visible and invisible (Bujo, 2009, p. 295).

The mode of acting in relation to the Cosmos is determined through the palaver process and the practice of anamnestic solidarity.

A palaver process is an "always necessary" engagement between members of the cosmic community (including the invisible community and the yet-to-be-born) for establishing or modifying ethical norms (Bujo, 2001, pp. 45–49). It addresses how the community's actions or choices will increase or decrease vital force (ibid., p. 50). It was a crucial African traditional cultural artefact rooted in the power of the Word: the purposeful, sacred act of speaking within the palaver process, different from everyday talking, and always done in community, as the Word is “not a private possession but belongs to all humankind” (ibid., p. 152).

During the palaver process, Anamnestic Solidarity[30] involves bringing the ethical experiences of Ancestors to life by (re)membering their gnoses as contained within tradition and folklore (Bujo, 2001, p. 34). It is the embracing of fellowship with the invisible community by consciously recalling, reinterpreting, and reinscribing our fundamental relatedness to them (Murove, 2007, p. 184). As such, it is a fortifying of wholeness and a venerating of connectedness through a participatory dialogue with *everyone,* taken in the most inclusive sense.[31]

Bujo's approach engages the physical (visible) world and the metaphysical (invisible) world as an ontological unity, related in a process of “continuous exchange” (Bujo, 1992, p. 20) that concentrates in the palaver process.

3.2.1.2 Laurenti Magesa

Laurenti Magesa is a decorated theologian from Tanzania working around the same time as Bujo, and so we shall occasionally contrast Bujo to highlight how their conceptions differ.

Magesa’s work involved “describing the system of moral theology and ethics in African Religion” (Magesa, 1997, p. 1) on the basis that religion and morality are so intertwined that a study of morality should include a study of religion.[32] [33]

Like Bujo, Magesa confirms the role of invisible entities in the Cosmology of African Religion. For Magesa, the “people’s way of life” flows from the God – “the power behind everything that is” – to the Ancestors (the custodians of its powers) in the form of traditions, folklore, myths, rites and rituals (Magesa, 1997, pp. 35–36).[34] Here we see a similar order of being in the universe as in Bujo, organized around a concept of vital force.[35] [36] Magesa's idea of order within a unitary ontology includes a flow of vital force and a continuity of tradition, which embodies African moral norms.[37]

Magesa leans on Vincent Mulago (1969), a Congolese theologian like Bujo, to define vital force in light of the environment and the invisible reality on which humanity depends for its survival. Importantly, Mulago includes “the geniuses of the soil, the forces of vegetation and the spirits of the dead” in his conception of the invisible members of the cosmic community (Mulago, 1969, p. 144). While Magesa points to humankind's interdependence on nature as the basis for its instrumental value, Mulago goes further to subvert instrumentality on the basis of an equi-relational understanding of community that recognises the dual “identity of Life and of the means of life” (ibid.).[38] To evidence this, we note how Mulago in quoting Levy-Bruhl (1949, pp. 250–251) brings complexity to bear on the question of identity when he states that “the individual cannot distinguish, within himself, between what is his very own and that in which he participates in order to exist” (Mulago, 1969, pp. 44–45).[39]

Magesa’s understanding of the nature of vital force and its relation to the order of being goes on to explain that in African religions, moral qualities such as love, kindness, and justice, as well as the positive attributes of the masculine and feminine, are attributed to God and become the moral standard: “As God is and does, so human beings must be and do” (Magesa, 1997, pp. 40–46). To Embody these qualities, by adherence to traditions, is to live in a way that “sustains and nourishes the people” (ibid., p. 40). According to Magesa, these qualities are anthropomorphized onto God, making this another point of differentiation from the ‘incarnate” conception of God offered by Bujo.[40]

By Magesa's conception, God is ultimately good and most present when the traditions of the Ancestors are closely embodied in day-to-day life. Where traditions are lost, God is absent and this can cause profound disasters, such as drought, starvation, and death, which are "supremely moral situations because they have to do with life and life's force" (Magesa, 1997, p. 44).[41] (Re)membering Ancestral traditions are thus ways to (re)call God's mercy and care for humanity (ibid., pp. 44-45). When God chooses to withhold his gifts or mercies – say, rain, fruitful harvests or health – it "indicates that it is time for humanity to examine itself to see what it has done wrong, and then to correct its behavior and repair the damage" (ibid., p. 45).

To avoid this situation, in the moral outlook of African Religion, humanity must sustain the vital force of "all creation, the universe and everything in it" through Ancestral traditions as that "by which humanity itself is, in turn, sustained" (ibid., p. 46).[42] For Magesa (2013), this involves elements of the aesthetic, the performative, and the political, each of which we will explore in the coming chapters.

While Magesa's work provides us with an expertly detailed understanding of African religion, we have offered only a snapshot for the purposes of the current discussion. A final quotation in consideration of its breadth is useful to conclude our articulation of his position and the hints of complexity it presupposes. He writes (Magesa, 1997, p. 58):

> *"African Religion [is not] easily amenable to analysis. Yet we must attempt an analysis for the sake of clarity and understanding, even if by doing so we risk distinguishing what, in African Religion, should not be separated from the whole. We must always keep in mind, though, that, just as with regard to its view of the universe, African Religion forms the African people's ethical consciousness as a whole united system wherein each factor influences the other. In this system, "being" is the same as "doing," and vice versa. Thus, "Not until one has understood that for the African 'the ontologically good is the ethically good' can one appreciate and understand the moral sense of the African and the direction of ethical pursuit."*

3.2.2 Features of Hard Interconnectionism

With two examples of the HI approach established, this section will draw out their shared features as the character of the HI approach. Section 3.2.2.1 will discuss the first, a complex cosmology as the ground for conceptualising African ethics, and Section 3.2.2.2 will discuss the second, a predominant Christianisation of African traditional religions and the implications thereof.

3.2.2.1 Complex Cosmology at the Forefront

This section will discuss the first feature of the HI approach: the complex cosmology that informs and grounds it.

We suggest that each thinker articulates the nature of being as a fundamentally interconnected and reflexive whole. To evidence this claim, we will consider the cosmology presented by the two examples of the HI approach in direct relation to some of the features of complex systems (Woermann, 2016, pp. 27-37; Summarised in Box 1).

The first feature of complex systems regards their composition by interconnected and organised elements. The cosmology of African Religion, about which both authors write, depicts the nature of the universe as consisting of components (the Supreme Being, Ancestors, etc.) that are richly interconnected by the flow of vital force and organised according to an order of being. The nature of the richness here parallels that of Complex systems in that "any element in the system influences and is influenced by quite a few others" (Woermann, 2016, p. 27). Both writers explain how human activity is influenced by and influences the Ancestors in proportion to a community's (re)memberance of their traditions, which can raise or reduce vital force in the system (Bujo, 1992, pp. 23–26; Magesa, 1997, pp. 46, 77–78).

We suggest that for either author, the system of being is ostensibly self-organising in a way that we can align with the third feature of complex systems: that they are structured and self-organising (Woermann, 2016, p. 30). Bujo's conception of Anamnestic Solidarity, the Palaver process, and their relation to the laws and

customs of the Ancestors which "embodied their own experiences" (Bujo, 1992, p. 21) is a specific instance that parallels how complex systems "have to 'learn' from experience, they have to 'remember' previously encountered situations and compare them with new ones" (Cilliers, 1998, p. 92). Magesa also confirms this when he writes "Ancestorship is an act of communion in remembrance that is also actualisation and resurrection" (Magesa, 1997, p. 78). As such we suggest that these concepts, as offered by Bujo and Magesa, can be socio-historically correlated to a mode of historical and predictive reflexivity in African traditional societies.[43]

Between the eighth, ninth and tenth features of complex systems – concerning the concept of *Unitas Multiplex*, double-identities and the non-additive irreducibility of parts to wholes and vice versa –[44] we find a final point of complexity in the cosmology underwriting the HI approach. To draw it out, we will consider the reflexive relationality of elements in the order of being.

According to the HI approach, and shared by the CI approach, a human, while being an individual, is also a cosmic community member.[45] These approaches suggest that the human is plural and irreducible to any one identity. However, as with the CI approach, the individual is not negated but can only be considered by virtue of their relatedness to the Cosmos. If one were tempted to understand the human as atomistic, one would need to ignore their interconnected place in the order of being. We suggest that while individuality is not absent by this reading, it is understood only through the relatedness of individuality within the order of being-becoming.[46] [47]

We argue that the same non-additive analysis could be done of Bujo and Magesa's conception of the great Ancestor. Firstly, while the great Ancestor is every-thing - the Ancestors, spirits, humans, plants, animals, mountains, rivers, and everything in between (vital force) – it is also more than the sum of those parts and irreducible to them as no part of it carries the quality of supreme being. Secondly, it is also less than the sum of its parts, in that the characteristics attributed to the Ancestors, for instance, are contained in the great Ancestor but are suppressed by its order, which binds them together, so the Supreme Being is not the keeper

of traditions but their source. Finally, the Supreme Beingness of the Supreme Being cannot be explained by the concept of Supreme Being since it is an emergent attribute of all being and boundedness through vital force, which is unknowable and resistant to closure.

What is clear in both the work of Bujo and Magesa is a sensitivity to complexity. However, this is not to say that their appreciation of complexity reaches the level of sophistication offered by the CI approach.[48] The way these two authors express themselves is steeped in theological proclamations, often stating something in absolute terms, and thereby omitting some complexity from their position. Here are two examples of the Limits of the HI position in terms of its complexity:

When we consider their position in relation to feature five of Complex system – that they are incompressible due to the working of a complex notion of causality – we see that both authors have conceived of causality in linear terms. Following the traditions of the Ancestors, or remembering their presence and teachings, will always increase vital force, improve the community, or alleviate ills. Ignoring traditions, or forgetting the Ancestors, will always decrease vital force, damage the community, or cause ills. (Magesa, 1997, p. 73; Bujo, 2001, pp. 46–47). Any understanding of Complexity would caution against such direct correlatives between cause and effect within complex systems.

In response to feature two of complex systems, that complex systems cannot be fully known, Bujo and Magesa write in a way that indicates that we can know the nature of reality if we pay enough attention to African Religion, discussed as a closed system. The Supreme Being, Ancestors, Community, and Humans are defined in this model. As this propensity is directly related to the next characteristic we will cover, we will continue this analysis there.

3.2.2.2 Religious Frameworks and Their Conceptual Baggage

This section will discuss the second feature of the HI approach, which is its two unstated premises. Section 3.2.2.2.1 will discuss the assumption that religion is *the* framework for understanding African ways of being and knowing. Section 3.2.2.2.2

will discuss the assumption that humanity is *the* centre of the cosmic order. The purpose of these sections is to provide an alternative explanation for the strong anthropocentrism apparent in African thought by arguing that thinkers who are Christians themselves, or emerge from Christian theological academic background, are likely to read anthropocentrism into any cosmology.

3.2.2.2.1 European Conceptual Religiosity

Regarding the use of the term ‘religion’, Samuel Imbo, in his appraisal of Okot p’Bitek’s work, informs us that there is an apparent absence of an equivalent word in any African language for the English term ‘religion’, which “means that there is no special compartment that the African calls “religious” that is separate from the day-to-day participation in the life-process” (Imbo, 2004, p. 365). While difficult to define in and of itself (Talioferro, 2009; Oppy, 2018), the term ‘religion’ carries with it the connotative baggage of today's monotheistic giants, all of which have in common that they are grand, systematised, and codified. Given this, we suggest that the application of the term to African discourses on spirituality and cosmology, without first conceptually decolonising it, would likely have required that said discourses be disciplined in order to fit a preexisting “classificatory blueprint” (Imbo, 2004, p. 368).

‘Conceptual decolonisation’ is an approach to confronting the epistemic marginalisation of African ways of knowing and being that was introduced by Kwasi Wiredu (2002). According to him, the remedy to problems that arise from an “involuntary intermixing of Western and African intellectual categories in the thinking of contemporary Africans” is “the elimination from our thought of modes of conceptualisation that came to us through colonisation and remain in our thinking owing to inertia rather than to our own reflective choices” (Wiredu, 2002, pp. 54–56).

We suggest that the application of religious conceptual frameworks to explain African modes of engaging the metaphysical is one such mode of conceptualisation that must be eliminated. As the inimitable V.Y. Mudimbe (1988) showed, the arrival

of religion in Africa through missionaries predated the period of colonisation, marking the first attempt to fit an African spiritual peg into a European religious hole. The result of which has seen "the right to knowledge in relation to Africa measured and determined by passive as well as uncritical assimilation, coupled with faithful implementation of knowledge defined and produced from outside Africa" (Ramose, 2002b, p. 2).[49]

The argument for the elimination of religious conceptual frameworks from our engagement with African spiritual realities is not one of preference or terminological semantics, but one of contextual applicability at the risk of conceptual distortion. 'Religion' as a concept, and as the signifier of a particular conceptual schema, arrives in Africa discursively laden with European baggage, presupposing a form of relating to the Sacred that is codified, centralised, and compartmentalised. These qualities, while accurate descriptions for Eurocentric instantiations of religiosity and religious life are often incommensurate with African spiritual modalities more diffuse, relational, and woven into the everyday than their European counterparts. To describe African spiritual practices using the language of religion is thus not neutral; it brings with it a classificatory schema rooted in the colonial encounter, one that disciplines difference in order to render it legible to external norms. In this sense, our call for their elimination is not a rhetorical overstatement, but a methodological necessity aligned with Wiredu's project of conceptual decolonisation — to purge from our thought categories inherited not through reflective choice, but through epistemic inertia.

An example of where Christianised religious terminology distorts African realities is the use of the concept of 'God' by Bujo and Magesa. From a Eurocentric perspective, for 'religion' to be identified in African thought it would need a concept of a 'God', or Gods. Although the concept of some kind of supreme being exists in various forms in African thinking, few are congruent with the dominant monotheistic interpretation of a 'God' who is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent. And while Bujo and Magesa do acknowledge these other forms, they quickly abandon them and resort to back to the concept of 'God' with

which they are familiar. The same can be said for the more colloquial attribution of the practice of 'worship' in relation to Ancestors, the actual practice of which is more akin to a veneration, reverence, or consistent awareness of the Ancestors than the type of deistic worship present in other forms of Religion.

This suggests to us that the presupposition of 'religion' as *the* framework for understanding the metaphysical aspect of day-to-day African life is at best limiting and at worst an active mischaracterisation. As such, from here on out we use the term 'spiritual' to denote African engagements with the metaphysical elements of existence, as defined in Box 2.

3.2.2.2.2 Christian Anthropocentrism

In this section, we contend that the Anthropocentric bias in African thought, discussed and refuted by Behrens, is not simply present as an unavoidable and presupposed part of African ethical reality. Rather, we will argue that the European conceptual religiosity is a result of thinkers who enculturated themselves and their intellectual and religious backgrounds into their models and thus failed to develop a sensitivity to the ethics of complexity and the complexity of ethics (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012).

If we take a look at the authors that Behrens uses as references for his conclusion that "a strong anthropocentric strand in African ethics can hardly be denied" (Behrens, 2011, p. 53), we see a list that includes Bujo alongside thinkers like John Mbiti, Godfrey Onah, Michael Eze, Ifeanyi Menkiti, and Kai Horsthemke.

Taken one by one: Bujo is in fact *father* Bénézet Bujo – a diocesan priest of the Catholic Church and Catholic moral theologian whose work and worldview are obviously informed by Christianity. John Mbiti was an ordained priest of the Anglican Church whose Ph.D. thesis in the discipline of Theology was awarded for a dissertation entitled *Christian Eschatology in Relation to the Evangelization of Tribal Africa* (1963). Godfrey Onah is in fact Reverend Professor Godfrey Onah, Catholic Bishop of the *Nsukka* Diocese in Enugu State, Nigeria. These three scholars have the closest ties to the church of those referenced, and at least Bujo and

Mbiti are specifically notable as some of the first thinkers to attempt to map the terrain of African Religion and therefore are amongst the most referenced in relation to it.

While less obvious than Bujo, Mbiti and Ona, the relationship of Eze and Menkiti to the Christian faith is no less integral to their worldviews and intellectual histories, both of which included engagement with scholars like Mbiti as primary resources on African spirituality.[50] [51]

Lastly, Kai Horsthemke draws on Mbiti, Menkiti, and Ramose to formulate his charge of anthropocentrism levelled at African thought. We have addressed the first two above and considered Ramose's position at length in Section 3.1.

As can be seen from the above, each theorist that Behrens references is either informed by a Christian worldview or at least heavily influenced by someone who was. We suggest that this can in some way account for the anthropocentric thrust in African thought as, according to Matthew Steenberg who has dedicated a book to the operation of Theology as Anthropology, "the human person stands at the center of the Christian reality" (Steenberg, 2009, p. 1). It is therefore reasonable to draw a link between modeler and the modelled, moreover in light of the Critical Complexity perspective we adopt.

This is not to say that anthropocentrism does not exist in African thought, but rather that the texts that are drawn on to claim anthropocentrism's omnipresence represent attempts to model African thought and are thereby also susceptible to the complexity of the modeler-modelled relation, also known as the observer problem (Woermann, 2016, pp. 28–29).

For the argument to stand, we must stave off the accusation of *ad hominem* argumentation. It is important to clarify that we are not being aggressive or offensive in this particular segment. We have no intention of refuting anyone's beliefs or suggesting that any aspect of their identity or ideas renders them ineligible or unworthy. Nevertheless, if we adhere to the relational concept of identity that has influenced our work, it is reasonable to inquire about the influence

of a thinker's upbringing, worldviews, and intellectual histories on their work and their approach to the subject matter. The argument we are presenting in this section is one that concerns the "nature of models and the status of models [… in that…] transforming unconditioned knowledge into conditioned knowledge is not only a technical exercise (involving skill and knowledge) but also a normative exercise (to the extent that the observer is implicated in her observations)," which can cause "distortions of the system under study" (Woermann, 2016, pp. 27–28).

And so, even in light of its partial complexity, the HI approach submits to a necessary and unavoidable degree of simplification. It can be most readily identified in the application of readymade 'classificatory blueprints' (Imbo, 2004), language, and assumptions that accompany 'religion' as a conceptual tool. As we have demonstrated, this may be especially true for observers who approach their models from Christian theology and view African metaphysics by means of 'African Religion'.

Of the thinkers discussed in the preceding paragraphs, it is worth offering a clarification to avoid potential confusion later in the text. While Magesa was trained as a Catholic theologian and did draw heavily on Christianised language in his earlier efforts to articulate African relations with the sacred, it would be a misreading to assume that Magesa's work remains confined to that paradigm. While this early part of his work has drawn our critique - particularly with respect to the risks of translating African spirituality through inherited Christian frameworks - his later writing, most notably *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (2013), shows a move away from Christian theological categories and toward a more explicitly African-centred spiritual framework and a focus on African Initiated Churches. As such, although we challenge the use of Christianised conceptual schemas when interpreting African spiritualities, the reappearance of Magesa in later chapters reflects our recognition of the significant evolution in his thinking and the value of his more recent contributions to African Spiritual Philosophy.

3.3 Soft-Interconnectionism

This Section will introduce and discuss the SI approach to ethics in African thought. It will do so by discussing an example of the SI approach in the literature in Section 3.3.1 before drawing from it some characteristic features of this approach in Section 3.3.2. The purpose of this section is to characterise the SI approach as more secular[52] and less dependent on metaphysical arguments for its justification than the CI and HI approaches.

3.3.1 Metz's Modal Relationalism as an Example of Soft Interconnectionism

This section will examine the work of Thaddeus Metz. Given his association with the analytic method in philosophy and his impressive number of citations, we identify him as the most influential thinker taking the SI approach. It will proceed do so by establishing four relevant aspects of Metz's approach as follows: Section 3.3.1.1 will identify his stated goals for engaging African ethics; Section 3.3.1.2 will explain his analytic method, secularism, and approach to metaphysics in African thought; Section 3.3.1.3 will set out his definition of relationality and his preferred theory of right action - Rightness as Friendliness); and Section 3.3.1.4 will describe his relational moral theory as a combination of Relationality and Rightness as Friendliness.

3.3.1.1 Metz's Reasons for Engaging African Thought

Metz styles his 2021 book *A Relational Moral Theory: African Ethics In and Beyond the Continent* as an attempt to 'distil' what African ethics has to offer the world in terms of moral theory. His stated aim is to extract certain reasonable and philosophically defensible ideas from the African philosophical canon that are both useful for an applied ethics perspective and appealing to a global and multicultural audience of professional philosophers (Metz, 2021, pp. 9–10).[53] The ideas that Metz distils and uses to build his preferred moral principle are those of relationality and rightness as friendliness.

By extracting these ideas, he hopes to establish his preferred principle of right action – that "an act is right if and only if it respects individuals in virtue of their

capacity to be party to harmonious ways of relating" (ibid., p. 172) – and defend it as "the strongest (secular) moral theory from the African tradition" (ibid., p. 165) against its competitors.

3.3.1.2 Metz's Analytic Method and Approach to Metaphysics in African Thought

Part I of Metz's book is dedicated to establishing and justifying his analytic and ametaphysical method for achieving his aims against what he calls the "default position" among African philosophers – "that ethics is to be grounded on metaphysics" (Metz, 2021, p. 49). Let us discuss his method first, and then secularism briefly, before considering his approach to Metaphysics in African thought.

Metz takes up a method which determines the normative value of African ethical positions by testing various interpretations against an array of ethical intuitions, some global and some specifically African.[54] This method, similar to but not precisely the same as a scientific one, entails a) the use of careful definitions; b) the search for fundamental laws; c) an objective means of testing, and d) a means of evaluating the results of said tests using a 'probabilistic inference' model (Metz, 2021, p. 79). This technique yields certain important commitments, which we shall examine in Sections 3.3.2 and 3.4. We state them now and encourage the reader to keep them in mind.

Regarding a), the need for careful definitions commits Metz to avoid analytically imprecise definitions, such as those which usually accompany the 'spirit of Ubuntu' even in the modern context of constitutional jurisprudence (Mokgoro, 2012; Tagwirei, 2020).

Regarding b) and c), the search for normative principles in the vein of Kantian imperatives and objective reasoning commits Metz to the paradigm of simplicity (Morin, 2008). Objectivity implies an (im)possible closure, which, while popular in the analytic tradition, creates excesses in meaning, such as those related to African metaphysics for which the supposedly universal and objective cannot account, as has and will be shown. These excesses indicate a failure to engage

with the ethics of complexity and the complexity of ethics (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012).

Importantly, his method is styled as secular on the grounds that his global audience would only be attracted to or likely to engage with theories that ground themselves in the perceptible and the physical.[55] Relegating "highly contested metaphysical matters" (Metz, 2021, p. 88) such as Ancestors, to the outside of his model ("bracketing") creates the excess just mentioned.

We will argue that this excess conceals the rationale for why it is common to see descriptive claims immediately give rise to normative claims in the default position. With their rationales outside the bounds of consideration, Metz then proceeds to frame these movements as a violation of a law within the model: attempting to cross what is known in the Western tradition as the "is/ought gap" (ibid., pp. 51-74).

Also called *Humes Law,* considering its origin in the work of David Hume (1896, pp. 455–470), the is/ought gap is a long-standing problem in Western Philosophy that challenges the logical validity of any inferential leap from descriptive statements to normative statements not bolstered by a reasonable explanation of why one follows from the other.

Taking up this position, Metz goes on to argue that "nothing moral *straightforwardly* follows from any *purely* ontological view, that is, a view about the nature of reality that includes no evaluative (about what is good/bad) or normative elements (about what an agent should/not do)" (Metz, 2021, p. 50 emphasis in the original). Relying on this position, Metz determines the work of Kwame Nkrumah's (1970) materialist egalitarianism and Kwame Gyekye's (1997) moderate communitarianism to be flawed. This move circumvents metaphysics, allowing him to establish his theory as the best moral theory from Africa on secular and analytic grounds.

3.3.1.3 Metz's Definition of Relationality and Theory of Right Action

With his aims and methodology in hand, this section defines the sense of 'Relationality' used by Metz and his preferred theory of right action, 'Rightness as Friendliness'.

Metz defines Relationalism as a way to determine direct moral duties between entities on the basis of an abstract property between two or more material entities (ibid., pp. 227-229). He contrasts this view with individualism, which bases morality on an entity's intrinsic property, and holism, which assigns moral status to groups like species or ecosystems, by locating his conception of relationality at the interstice between them.

Metz presents 'Rightness as friendliness' as his principle of right action, equating friendliness to harmonious communal relationships and familial friendliness with one another (ibid., p. 143). Thus, fostering harmonious relations and extending a familial goodwill to others is to be friendly, which is the right thing to do.

Metz actively distances his 'rightness as friendliness' from 'rival' principles in the African tradition that ground themselves on well-being;[56] the concept of vital force;[57] or a conception of communal relationships based in either shared identity or solidarity as opposed to their combination.

3.3.1.4 Metz Modal Relationalism

Metz argues for an account of moral status which is gradated so that one can weigh competing moral status claims without resorting to individualism or holism and so uses relationality and rightness as friendliness to form a sliding-scale deontological moral theory called a "modal" relational view (Horsthemke, 2015, pp. 85–92).[58]

Metz's modal relationalism bases its ascription of superlative non-instrumental value on a being's 'capacity to commune', that is, an individual's ability to form or be party to friendly relationships. Thus "it is not a communal relationship itself towards which we fundamentally have duties; instead, we have them towards individuals capable of it" (Metz, 2021, p. 172).

From this perspective, the ability to be both subjects and objects of friendly or communal relationships grants adult humans with full physical and mental capacities full moral status. This creates both the right of the individual to be treated with the greatest friendliness and duty of the other to afford them such treatment. It follows then that animals have only partial moral status, due to their limited capacity to commune as objects and not subjects, and consequently that mountains, rivers, plants, species and ecosystems have no moral standing, as they lack, according to Metz, both the capacity to commune and the potential to develop such capacity (Metz, 2021, pp. 252–256).

By taking this approach, Metz conceptualises relationality as something which is incidental or tangential to the nature of things. In his view, relationality is not an *a priori* quality of existence, as the CI and HI approaches hold it to be, but rather the capacity to relate. By this, relationality is, at best, a second order characteristic of being implying that relation bears no ontological consequence.

3.3.2 Features of Soft Interconnectionism

Where the last section provided an overview of Metz Modal Relationalism, this section will distil from it two prominent features as characteristic of an SI approach (contra)delineated from the CI and HI approach. Section 3.3.2.1 will first discuss the paradigm of simplicity as part of how Metz approaches ethics in African thought, and thereafter Section 2.3.2.2 will consider the implications of engaging African thought *sans* metaphysics (Section 2.3.2.2).

3.3.2.1 Considering African Thought from the Paradigm of Simplicity

As mentioned in Section 1.3, the paradigm of simplicity strives to order reality rather than engage its Complexity, characterised by disorder, contradictions, and paradoxes (Morin, 2008).[59] This section will explain how Metz operates within this paradigm when engaging African thought.

As discussed, Metz styles his approach as analytic, in a vein similar to the scientific method, and so admittedly “less African” (Metz, 2021, p. 81) than methods which, for instance, do not prioritize definitional preciseness.

In science, one must 'close' the meaning of concepts by thoroughly clarifying their content to generate a definite hypothesis or an argument that can only be rebutted on its own terms. So, for instance, if we look at the concept of "the spirit of ubuntu", Metz offers us the definition of "a collection of various ethical connotations typically associated with the term by (especially Southern) African indigenous peoples" (ibid.).

However, ubuntu as *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2003b), as argued in Section 3.1.3, could be thought of as a complex constellation with the capacity to reflect on the spiritual richness of ecology, the identity of persons, or even the complexity of knowledge. Unlike the definition offered by Metz, this formulation admits of the unknowable, dynamic, and complexity-sensitive nature of the concept and its semantic compatriots across the continent, thereby maintaining its 'spirit' and character as Afrignosis, African ways of knowing in relation to living complexity.[60] We suggest that complexity retains the existentially open meaning and praxis potential of *ubu-ntu*, allowing it to function more like a fable than a principle.

To clarify, by likening *ubu-ntu* to a fable rather than a principle, we are pointing to its function as a living, meaning-generative symbol within a relational metaphysical landscape. A principle is often taken to be stable, universal, and closed—it operates like a rule. A fable, by contrast, is context-sensitive, interpretive, and alive to contradiction. It invites reflection rather than definition. In African thought, and particularly in Afrignosis, terms like *ubu-ntu* gain their power not from codification but from their capacity to animate meaning through spoken word, story, community, and lived interaction. As we explore more fully in Chapter Six, mythocentric terms of Order rely on constellational meanings that lose their epistemic and affective vitality when reduced to fixed propositions. And so, to proffer *ubu-ntu* as a fable is to preserve its complexity, fluidity, and relational moral force by inhering it with a sense of reflexivity and subjective interpretability that is psychologically important.[61]

Counter this, what Metz does with Ubuntu is both a disjunction and a reduction. It is a disjunction because *Ubu-ntu* is portrayed as Ubuntu: a concept within the

disciplinary boundaries of ethical philosophy disjoining it from the living context-constellation that nourishes its Afrignosis-character. It is a reduction because ubuntu presents the complex and interconnected set of elements of *ubu-ntu* as a unity, a single concept.

We suggest that it is (im)possible to understand the spirit of ubuntu in any disjunctive or reductive sense as without its relationality to people, places, and other concepts, the complexity of *ubu-ntu*, its spirit, is rendered complicated.[62]

When Metz conceives of relationality, he does so as an abstract conception that we argue requires both a disjunction and a reduction. Abstraction isolates an idea for analysis in applied ethics, making it a disjunction of a unity, and also presents disparate connotations as singular, making it a reduction of a plurality.[63]

The difference between disjunction and reduction are subtle in this instance, but we could say that the former concerns the disciplining of African thought, by making African ideas conform to "European grids of intelligibility" (Praeg, 2014), and the latter is an example of ongoing epistemic injustice by considering the complex concept of relationality in African thought using "an ontology which is alien" (Etim, 2019, p. 12), as discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.4. In either case, we conclude that this treatment of African concepts is done within the paradigm of simplicity.

3.3.2.2 African Philosophy sans Metaphysics

This section will focus on African metaphysics and Metz's 'bracketing' (avoiding/putting to one side) of African metaphysical concerns as an example of where analytical thinking ignores, disregards, and enacts a subversive form of epistemic coloniality. Herein, we argue that approaching Afrignosis without African metaphysics limits its capacity to fundamentally explain and shape African ways of being (both with and within) and knowing via exclusion, rendering it as excess, and so undermining the alternate rationality through which meaning can be made through it.

Another way that we can understand the SI approach and its relationship to the analytic method, is as a means by which thinkers attempt to unwind the messy complexity of reality and order it into frameworks that render it more understandable and accessible to their audience – something that Metz aims to do. However, it need not be this way and as discussed in Chapter two, this mode of analysis is counter to the nature of complexity.

However, we should not be taken as making the claim that there is no value in trying to understand reality using analytic methods as SI thinkers such as Metz do. What we are saying instead is this: attempts to partition reality into more understandable frameworks, and then proposing those frameworks *as the nature of reality*, fundamentally (mis)apprehends complexity and marginalises rationalities other than those which sustain said frameworks. The difference between empirical reductionism and fundamentalist reductionism (Woese, 2004) mentioned in Section 2.1 explains the difference we are alluding to.[64]

In the view of Lebisa J. Teffo and Abraham P.J. Roux, African metaphysics offers "holistic" explanations of the nature of reality that are more "fundamental than scientific explanations" and "realize[] the enormous complexity of the universe" while maintaining a "strong empirical flavour" without invoking the dualisms (mind/body, is/ought, natural/supernatural) that are the "stock-in-trade of Western metaphysics" (Teffo and Roux, 2003, p. 196). As primarily concerned with the "complex relationship between the human person and his/her total environment" African metaphysics makes it difficult, if at all possible, to "distinguish metaphysics, social theory, and morality in African thinking" (ibid., p. 198).

The prevalence of holistic philosophizing described by Teffo and Roux in the African tradition (Metz calls this the 'default position') forces Metz to decide whether to include African metaphysics in his theorization. He chooses to exclude African metaphysical considerations. By choosing to "bracket" issues that relate to African metaphysics, Metz defaults to the now default position in Western ethics and meta-ethics, namely one that affirms the intellectual superiority of

philosophising using an analytic methodology under the auspices of secular scientism (Hacker, 2014).[65]

As it pertains to philosophy, scientism represents "attempts to extend the natural sciences beyond their proper sphere of explanatory competence, and the use of the methods of the natural sciences to explain phenomena that require other forms of explanation" (ibid., 97).[66] From this standpoint, metaphysical explanations are inherently less rational due to the mysticism that surrounds them. In short, if a piece of knowledge does not conform to the rules of formal logic, does not meet scientific verifiability criteria, or relies on metaphysical justifications, it is irrational.

Looking back, the trend of "radical rationalist" (Etim, 2019, p. 19) engagement with Afrignosis has typified coloniality, which reserves the "right to knowledge" as the domain of the European and those who passively assimilate and faithfully implement "knowledge defined and produced from outside Africa" (Ramose, 2002b, p. 2). This pervasive association of epistemic validity with Eurocentric rationalities stretches its roots from Aristotle to Kant and beyond, continuing to play a subversive structural role in the governing of knowledge and knowing through the universalisation of the European *Utamawazo* (Ani, 1994).

Coloniality and African Thought

Let us describe coloniality in reference to Acts of Enclosure – a structural feature of colonialism (Greer, 2012, pp. 365–368) - before turning to an example of its application in the territory of African thought.[67] Colonial authorities forcefully removed indigenous peoples from their land and created new communal zones for settlers wherein benefits from land and resources accrued to colonial settlers to the exclusion of indigenous peoples. We suggest that hereunder, through the occupation and the restructuring of people's connection to land and resources, colonial authorities transformed a complex system of emergent resource management by numerous self-organised indigenous tribes into a complicated

structure of individual ownership and control, which gave way to the modern nation-state.

If read epistemically, and translated from a mechanism of colonisation to one of coloniality (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b), what we see in substituting in the above paragraph colonial authorities for Universities, land for gnoses, and the use or threat of violent force for epistemic marginalisation and academic ostracization, is an analogue of the process by which the rational schema native to an African Asili (Ani, 1994) are rendered external to knowledge proper.

An example of coloniality of this sort can be found in Metz when he brackets African metaphysical claims in order to give his work a secular character more palatable to a 'global audience of professional philosophers' (Metz, 2021, sec. 3.3).

In making his case, Metz considers Kwame Nkrumah's 'materialist egalitarianism' (1970) and Kwame Gyekye's 'moderate communitarianism' (1997). While each thinker developed an ethical theory to support their political position in regard to post-colonial African societies, Metz argues that both of their positions cannot be the best moral theory from Africa as they both violate Hume's Law.

Metz's use of the is/ought gap to cast doubt on Nkrumah and Gyekye's moral theories, returning to epistemic coloniality, indirectly dispossesses the African theorists of any epistemic validity because of the metaphysical foundations upon which their positions are based in order to make the leap they do. Yet, the rules of logic upon which the is/ought gap issue relies, and in which the accusation of fallacious argumentation in Gyekye and Nkrumah are based, are ontologically unfamiliar to the type of causal mechanisms at play in African thought.

The apparent logical issue at the base of his suspicion is one of causality in the question of how the ontological nature of a thing can *directly* give rise to an ethical norm about how it should be treated. Metz discusses this in abstraction, the playing field where Eurocentrism performs best, by putting forward the following example in consideration of the argumentation at work in Nkrumah: "from the claim that all humans are composed of matter (A'), one logically cannot

immediately conclude that all humans have an equal moral worth (C'). In order to infer the latter, one requires a bridge premise linking the metaphysical and the ethical" (Metz, 2021, p. 57).

Nkrumah, Gyekye, and others would provide similar gnostic claims to 'matter forms part of a unity' as such a bridging premise, however the choice of words that Metz uses when he conveys their claim is telling – "The claim that matter is a unity, recall, is *just* the idea that there is a 'continuity of nature' … a purely descriptive statement about the nature of reality that lacks mention of anything evaluative or prescriptive, and hence cannot do the logical work of providing reason in favour of the latter sort of statement [C'] " (ibid., our emphasis). We suggest that Metz's reference to the 'continuity of nature' as '*just* an idea' implies both a fundamental misunderstanding of the ontology at work in African thought and a disregard for ideas which do not conform to the epistemological framework upon which secular scientism is based.

Far from being 'just an idea', we argue that the cosmic ecology of African metaphysics operative in the concept of a 'continuity of being' engages reality as a complex relational whole wherein the relation of one being to another speaks to something normative about the relationship between the two. To use Nkrumah's own example, if one can accept that all humans "have the same basis and arise from the same evolution according to materialism", then one must accept the egalitarian position that all people are to be treated equally and should treat each other equally (Nkrumah, 1970, p. 96). For him, egalitarianism is the 'social reflection of the monistic thesis of materialism' (ibid).[68]

Similarly, to state that there is a 'continuity of nature' is not a purely metaphysical claim for African thinkers. Rather, in line with several African thinkers - Francis Etim (2019), Teffo & Roux (2003), Lesiba Baloyi and Molebogeng Makobe-Rabothata (2014), Crispinous Iteyo (2009), Ramose (1994, 2003b, 2009) and Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya (2021b) - who concur with a holistic reading of African metaphysics, any statement similar in spirit to a 'continuity in nature' is not *just an idea* but a kind of gnosis capable of reflecting at once on issues of metaphysics,

epistemology, ontology, politics, aesthetics and ethics, and the relationships of each with each other. An Afrignostic insight of this sort, like *Ubu-ntu*, reflects across the web of life and so cannot be meaningfully discussed from an African perspective to the exclusion of others like it.

It is African intellectuals' own thoughts of being, based in Africa's living cultures, myths, rituals, religions, and customs, that inspire African metaphysics and its implications for the nature of knowing. African thinking favours a holism and "primary" explanation of causality that is teleological, even though it may not seem logical by Western intellectual norms of formal logic, rationality, and mechanistic causality (Sogolo, 2003, pp. 228–229).[69]

When confronting the question of the relationships between metaphysics and ethics, and the direct sequence moving from metaphysical claims about *what is* to ethical to claims about *how we ought* to behave, African thinkers do not first ask "*How* does (C') follow directly from (A')?" – a rationale seeking question privileged by the analytic method - but rather "*Why* does (C') follow directly from (A')?" – a meaning seeking question of primary import.

When viewed from the paradigm of simplicity and the framework of secular scientism, some of the claims made from the African philosophical perspective "are likely to sound meaningless, irrational, or false" (ibid., p. 237). However, we argue these claims ought to be considered on the terms of their own rationality, considering the entirety of being, becoming, and belonging in relation to meaning before mechanical or logical causality. As such, these paradigms can exist in complementarity for a fuller explanation (ibid.) but ought not be considered hierarchically in relation to one another – especially where the more Western approaches thereto are uncritically elevated. Luckily, through the work of Chimakonam and others,[70] African logic has now begun to catch up and explain the 'jumps' of people like Nkrumah and Gyekye from the 'is' to the 'ought'.

What is clear here, in making-sense of the nature of analytic methodologies that have been spelled out over the course of this work, is that the SI approach

apprehends reality from a different perspective to African thinkers. As Ani points out, the SI approach is akin to applying a European *Utamawazo* to the question of ethics in African thought (Ani, 1994, pp. 105–109).[71]

As such, we find it philosophically dubious to disregard the peculiarities of the African perspective by justifying the superiority of Western methods, using Western conceptual frameworks, without attempting to try and understand the metaphysical concerns that explain reasons why African thinkers think the way they do. In order to engage in African thought, we must be willing to meet African thought on its own terms and to try and understand the richness that its own ontological perspectives bring to philosophical engagement. This would include grappling with African metaphysics.

The SI approach does not. It elevates its ontological presuppositions to a privileged status beyond reproach and constructs an ethical epistemic value model that precludes African gnosis by acting within the paradigm of simplicity. African notions on relationality, community, and the common good are transplanted onto a secular, analytic intellectual commons alien to their onto-epistemic setting. This implies that analytic theorization, without metaphysical peculiarities, meets intellectualism requirements that would allow it to be accepted seriously outside of Africa, or in colonial power's academic halls and presses – the so-called 'global audience'. These are among the precise limits of coloniality that decoloniality would have us (dis)border (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b).

3.4 A Conversation: Agricultural Ethics and the Microcosmic Community of Life from the Perspective of African Thought

Sections 3.1 to 3.3 provided an overview of the three approaches to ethics in African thought apparent in the literature. This section will enter them into Conversation with one another about that aspect of the Situation that concerns this thesis: Agricultural ethics and the plight of the microcosmos.

It will proceed as follows: Section 3.4.1 will compare and contrast how each approach construes the nature of micro-cosmic life; Section 3.4.2 will contrast how

each approach makes sense of the harm that industrial agriculture enacts upon the microcosmos; Section 3.4.3 will interrogate each position in relation to Hume's Law as preventing what may be an apparent normative claim to change how we farm arising from a descriptive claim of the harm done to the microcosmos; Section 3.4.4 will engage the complimentary capacities of each approach; and finally Section 3.4.5 will consider the Context-Dependent (Situational) truth-value of the conversational outcomes that precede it.

Our focus in this section is decolonial and Afrocentric,[72] using a conversational and meaning-making approach as indicated in Chapter one. Sections 3.4.1–3.4.4 will thus be in the complementary mode, avoiding synthesis and attempting to elevate our African thought significists. [73] However, in the Ezumezu fashion, [74] the CI approach[75] will take up the ezumezu truth-glut position, balancing the tension between significists throughout this conversation. We call it a middle-path position because it balances openness and closure, allowing us to engage with Afrignosis[76] without colonial religious language to provide explanations free from scientism's "causal closure" (Robinson, 2014).

3.4.1 The Microcosmic Community of Life and the Order of Being

This section will consider microcosmic life and the way in which the three approaches to ethics in African thought may define its moral status. To do so, it will first provide a more detailed (re)articulation of what we mean by microcosmic life, before considering any of the approaches we have developed throughout this chapter.

Summarily 'microcosmic life' refers to the ecologies of 'small life' that sit at the base of the earth-life system's ecosystemic structure and can be understood, at least, biologically and ecologically. Biologically these creatures are products of evolution that display biomarkers of life.[77] Ecologically speaking, each emerges from and is intimately enmeshed in self-organising self-reflexive ecologies. Playing roles in their local communities[78] and in the greater ecologies in which they dwell, microcosmic life is tightly networked. Due to its place at the primary level of the

food chain, microcosmic life is unique in that the flow of nutrition through the earth-life system essentially begins with them.[79]

With these descriptions in mind, we can consider how each approach construes microcosmic life. We begin with their conceptions of order, relationality, and being, before seeing how they relate microcosmic life to an order of being and conceive of their moral status.

The SI approach is likely to reject any concept of an 'order of being' that is derived from, connected to, or has assumed onto-cosmological inferences, due to the limitations of the model of African thought it creates. Due to its simplicity (in approaching ethics in African thought) and preclusion of metaphysics (in considering African philosophical insights through its secular scientific bent), the SI approach may prefer a taxonomic perspective from the biological sciences to explain order and relation. By extension, then, ecological readings of order may also be appealing, as they scientifically explain the relatedness of life through the language of ecology and natural systems.

However, we argue that such an explanation would be a 'matter of fact' understanding of the nature of relatedness. While the biological and ecological characteristics of microcosmic life are apparent, these are considered *purely* descriptive facts, completely encompassing the nature of microcosmic life on a materialist reading.

With the development of moral principles as its goal, the SI apprehension of the nature of microcosmic life would likely not regard them as morally considerable. According to Metz's Modal Relationalism, microcosmic life would not even have the partial moral status afforded to animals on the basis that they may be communed with. As such, the microcosmos is likely to fall into the group of entities without moral status, alongside rivers and mountains. Although, given its recognition of the ecological aspect of their nature, it is not unreasonable to think that the SI approach may make a concession in the case of rare or near-to-extinction species.

Contra this, the HI approach begins from a metaphysical base to consider relationality and the order of being. Organised according to the flow of vital force and bound within God, African cosmology posits an order of being that sees all of being from a unitary ontological perspective. Proceeding along an unbroken chain arranged as God -> Ancestors -> Spirits -> humans -> animals -> plants -> 'all other life -> mountains and rivers, this conception of being does not require biological or ecological explanations for its conception of relation, though it is complemented by them. Rather, it is the flow of vital force that accounts for relationality, and this, we argue, includes microcosmic life within the designation 'all other life'. The human, however, remains at the centre of this conception, and the microcosmos earns no special mention outside of Mulago's allusion to "the genius of the soil" (Mulago, 1969, p. 144). We suggest that this notion would give the microcosmos some instrumental value and moral standing as God's creation, which contributes to the increase of human life and vital force.

Despite this apparent instrumentality, the HI approach would not allow for the callous disregard of the microcosmic community. Magesa and Bujo both constellate African religion with a strong sense that all life, no matter how small, should not be treated arbitrarily or subjected to disregard, disrespect, or destruction. Even the centrality of the human is tempered when Magesa writes "even though the first and most important participation of the human person is in and through one's community, the community cannot be sustained without another kind of participation, namely, "the link which binds one to the earth, the economic 'substratum' or heritage," as Vincent Mulago has shown" (Magesa, 1997, p. 60). Bujo would support a similar sentiment (Bujo, 2009).

Given its complexity, the CI approach is unlikely to advance as strict an order to being as the HI approach or as closed a model of order as the SI approach. As shown in Section 3.1.2, Ramose and Behrens demonstrate this in their sensitivity to complexity of ethics and the ethics of complexity (Woermann, 2016). We propose that both assume a non-religious cosmology based on a sophisticated ontology that views nature as relational, reflexive, emergent, and self-organizing without

invoking a supreme being. African cosmology does not require such to grasp relationality, although Ramose's complex cosmology includes the Ancestors.

From either a de-centred *ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2009) or an anthropoholist standpoint (Behrens, 2014) the CI approach affords the microcosmic community moral status equivalent to any other living creature. Like the SI approach, the CI approach is also informed by biology and ecology but would likely carry their insights forward to reconceptualise mountains and rivers as living ecologies worthy of moral consideration.

We argue that microcosmic life is conceived of by the CI approach as a vitally important part of the web of life, reflexively unfolding ceaselessly alongside the rest of Being as Being-Becoming. Herein, relation is not a secondary quality but a constitutive characteristic making the cosmic ecology, the totality of existence, what it is: Complexity is the nature of the cosmic ecology. Relation, understood in this way, and in light of the dual identity of elements in a complex system, allows for the CI approach to conceptualise the value of the microcosmos as both intrinsic, a whole, and instrumental, a part.

In summary, the SI approach to ethics in African thought would not afford moral considerability to microcosmic life despite its ability to factually recognise its biological and ecological facticity. While the HI approach does provide a framework for the moral considerability of microcosmic life, it is not significantly premised on ecology and so its anthropocentrism tempers said considerability to a point beneath humans. The CI approach, which manages to overcome said anthropocentrism and recognise the depth of said facticity, not only frames microcosmic life as morally considerable but also affords it moral status akin to able bodied humans.

3.4.2 The Relationality of Harm

With the moral considerabilities (or not) of microcosmic life now established, this section begins the turn towards praxis and meaning-making. It will do so by

examining harm in relation to microcosmic life comparatively according to each approach.

Again, we should define 'harm' more clearly. In our usage, the term refers to morally consequential acts of damage or injury done to an entity or assemblage resulting from at least one cause referent to culpability of some kind. Harms are either active or passive, where the former is more difficult to justify than the latter (Woollard, 2015, pp. 4–5, 97). This permits us to analyse numerous sorts of harm, including financial, physical, psychological, spiritual, or systemic harm, as well as the provocation of just and unjust harm.

We suggest that just harms might include a physical harm to an intruder in one's home when no other course of action is available or stealing a loaf of bread from a shopkeeper to feed one's family to avoid starvation. Unjust harm includes psychological harm from manipulating someone into sexual relations under false pretences (feigning deeper intentions than sex) and spiritual harm from taking unprovoked issue with a person's religious stance for no reason other than thrill-seeking one-up-Manship.

Harms are also comparative in the sense that intuitively some harms are worse than others.

Given that all three approaches consider relationality to be at least of some consequences, we tentatively suggest that the concept of harm we will engage can be framed as 'relational harm'. This implies that when harm is done, it is not only the harmed entity that suffers injury: the injury bears on other entities related to it, such as the vibration caused when one strand of a spider's web is plucked causing a reverberation beyond it. As we will argue, what differentiates the three approaches is how consequential they deem the harm-reverberation to be.

The SI approach, locating value in the apparent and accessible, would admit only a degree of harm-reverberation. However, the moral standing of the victim would determine the reverberation-strength. This reasonably implies that a murderous death would have apparent consequences within the victim's immediate family and

community. However, its ametaphysical foundation would make it difficult if not impossible to recognize that, for instance, a spiritual harm may be done to those in Nairobi when a murder takes place in Cape Town (Roothaan, 2019).

The SI approach apprehends a harm such as murder in physicalist sense, while admitting of a limited degree of psychological and perhaps financial harm being done as a result of the facticity of relation. The causal closure of this approach denies it the flexibility to consider harm in terms and scales beyond those that are empirically verifiable. This approach cannot then support the argument that, for instance, all black Americans are subjected to spiritual and psychological harm whenever police brutality is committed against an African American as such plays in the excess of its model of relationality.

Equally, we suggest that the SI approach would be unlikely to consider the perspective arguing that the harm done to microcosmic life via IAC methods on a farm in the Ceres valley in inland Western Cape reverberated beyond the farms where such methods are used, though it may be ecologically explainable via wind-drift.[80] Assuming that it would even consider this a harm worth thinking about in the first place, given that the primary victims are microcosmic and thus not morally considerable, the harm considered would be strictly limited. As such, we suggest that the SI approach would at best recommend that steps be taken where feasible to limit the usage of poison cocktails and ensure that minimal wind drift occurs. The resulting harm-prevention that arises from these types of harms would be acute, advisory, and permissive of the use of poison cocktails where measures have been taken to limit their impact.

The HI approach, on the other hand, would support the claim that the above example of harm in relation to the microcosmic community also constitutes a type of spiritual harm necessitating a stronger response. Considering that all life is imbued with vital force, any harm that would decrease the total amount of vital force flowing through existence would be condemnable and taboo, making the mass use of harmful (agri)chemicals at once both a spiritual and physical harm.

However, it is difficult to say whether the HI approach would consider it to be an unjust or a just harm. If the rhetoric of the IAC is to be believed, their farming methodologies are the only way to feed the human population.[81] Since all lower forces in the HI approach are thought to serve higher forces (Magesa, 1997), (agri)chemicals may be seen as a just physical harm but an unjust spiritual harm.

What is apparent though is that the HI approach could comprehend harms on a cosmic scale much larger than anything the SI approach could apprehend. And so, we reason that the HI approach could lend itself to a framing of murder, whether of a person or a field of earthworms, as a harm done to all of being given its unitary ontological foundations. Herein, a mechanistic concept of linear causality is not a closure of causal inference and so a murder in one part of the world may carry spiritual affects across the Cosmos.

It follows then that the HI approach could plausibly understand the mass use of poison cocktails as a mass harm to Being, obligating its adherents to the abandonment of farming practices that presuppose such techniques. Such a position would be supported by a lack of any ancestral teachings that indicate the usage of life-destroying inputs. Agroecology, with its basis in indigenous farming methods, reminds us that there are myriad traditional means by which to achieve the ends of pest-management or weed-control that would more closely align with tradition (Altieri and Nicholls, 2000; Mushtaq *et al.*, 2020; Petit *et al.*, 2020).[82]

The CI perspective understands reality as a complex system, and therefore it can accommodate a complex conception of harm whereby harm could refer to Collapse (a) as discussed in Section 2.2. Using the language of Ramose (2009), we argue that harm in this context could be understood as the ending of motion, an abatement or interruption of the ceaseless unfoldment that is the nature of the universe. As such, to harm is to introduce disharmony, a failure to recognise the relatedness of everything, and to elevate oneself as the perpetrator of harm to an unjustifiable position of power over that which is harmed, thereby also reflexively harming oneself.[83]

As such, the CI approach is able to account for the relationality of harm and how it can reverberate across the network of being without resorting to religious dialogue and rather embraces a complex notion of reflexive non-linear causality.

The strength of this position is that it is relatively uncontroversial among South Africans, as our engaged philosophy work has shown us. Without a heavy reliance on a dogmatic religious justification, the reasoning this position provides for conceptualising harm in a complex and systemic way comes across as pragmatic – harming the microcosmos harms the Earth-Life system, which in turn harms all life and also humanity. Based on the complexity of agroecosystems, such a conclusion would likely support their management with a sensitivity to complexity, such as could be achieved through agroecology.

3.4.3 From 'Is/Ought' to 'Also-Is/Ought'

With the perspective of the three approaches on moral considerability and on the relationality of harm in hand, this section will explicitly consider the is/ought gap that the SI approach posits as a shortfall in the CI and HI approaches. It will do so by providing an HI and a CI perspective on the gap after restating why it is that the SI approach sees it as a problem.

Taking an SI approach, there appears to be a logical misstep that takes place when trying to move directly from descriptive claims ('is' statements) to normative claims ('ought' statements). The gap in logic is the problem, as only when something is logical can it be true from this perspective. To reconsider this problem, we will focus only on microcosmic life and the effects of industrial agricultural methods on them. The descriptive claim will be about the nature of microcosmic life, and the normative claim will be about why we should not use industrial agricultural methods.

For proponents of the is/ought problem, the issue is that we appear to be making an ethical claim based on an ontological claim, without the necessary bridging premise being in place - something like the evaluative claim 'harming microcosmic life is bad'. However, this is to misconstrue our argumentative route: we are not

making the strong claim that relational ontology presupposes that harming entities is wrong.

When approached from the SI perspective, the descriptive claim of the 'is' statement about the nature of microcosmic life remains at the descriptive level – a claim about the fact of microcosmic life implying only a limited sense of relationality as discussed in Section 3.4.1. The essence of the 'is' in this instance has no spirit, no fundamental tie that binds it into the broader network of being beyond a limited spatial-temporal horizon. By this understanding, the is/ought problem persists, as the nature of the 'is' does not presuppose an 'ought', let alone one that may accompany a strong normative claim such as that entailed by a moral obligation.

Both the HI and CI approaches have means of overcoming this, though from different foundations. The core of either of their claims lies in the nature of the 'is' claim.

For the HI approach, there can be no descriptive claim that is not also at once a normative claim about an entity only necessarily described in relation to the order of being as envisioned by African cosmology. Similarly, for the CI approach a descriptive claim is also at once a normative claim, given the complex nature of the identity of the entity so described as an element of complexity related to the whole of Being as a complex system. For either approach, a thing *is* not only a thing, it *is* also an *and*. What follows from this is a strong and evaluative relationality, providing the sought-after bridging premise.

We argue that African cosmology appreciates that while a person *is* a person in themselves, that person is and *also-is* a link in the chain of vital force, the order of being. The visible world of humans, plants and animals *is* at once the fact of what it materially *is* and *also-is* the gnosis of an indivisible invisible world of Ancestors, spirits and the supreme being. Treating another member of the community of Life with dignity, respect and solidarity *is* a fact of how to live harmoniously with all of existence *and also-is* the spiritual embodiment of the

values and teachings of the Ancestors passed down through tradition. The fact of a person's existence *is* at once a fact about them *and also-is* a fact about their Ancestors, of which they are the living manifestation, *and also-is* a fact about the community that formed them, and which they formed, and which *also-is* a fact about the community of Ancestors of which that living community is the living manifestation.

The CI approach allows us to appreciate the pairing of *also-is* as an alternative language set for the concept of the dual-identity of elements of a complex system, as discussed in Section 1.3 and 3.1.3. A such, the river that flows through a forest ecosystem is a whole to those creatures that live within it and *also-is* a part to those creatures who live on its shores, and *also-is* the source of the excess which enables the functioning of ecosystems populated by creatures far beyond it – ecologically a river system provides innumerable ecosystem services[84] from its origin in mountain streams to its outlet at an ocean river mouth.[85]

At this point, one may be tempted to charge the CI approach with stepping into the SI approach's dogmatism whereby the '*also-is'* becomes a more forceful 'is' statement. We argue that this is not the case, because when the CI approach acknowledges the *also-is* nature of descriptive statements, it also acknowledges that the descriptive sentiment of such a statement is organised as such within a cosmic ecology of knowledge, presenting knowledge itself as a complex system therefore characterised by the *also-is* identity structure in both its constitutive elements and organisational character. By this reading of African thought, the complex organisation of knowledge from Africa that this work has been preoccupied with, a descriptive 'is' *also-is* an ontological statement 'and' a political one 'and' a metaphysical one, 'and' an epistemic one' (and, and, and). From a holist metaphysical perspective, further, knowing is thus an epistemic activity and an existential one and therefore an ontological one, knowing *also-is* knowing-being.

There may be a number of logical counter-arguments raised to undermine this gnosis. One may argue that our reasoning is circular, that we derive an also-is from an is and then use said also-is to determine an is once more. One may

accuse us of a new reification, by treating relationality as a metaphysical base as opposed to an abstract concept (like the SI approach would). To the former charge, we remind our readers that complexity gives way to paradoxes of this sort, and in dealing in complexity we are wont to reason them away instead of building a model that accounts for them. To the latter, we have raised the insights of quantum mechanics as evidence for our reification and also positioned our conclusions as provisional from the outset, and so deny that any charge of objectivity may stick – we are simply engaging complexity and admitting our limits while doing so, instead of presenting our model as a closed one.

Rather, our model commits us to two claims, one complementary and one contextual:

In the complementary mode, we argue that an *also/is* framework may be more congruent with the nature of reality and being than the narrow 'is' identity framework that both reduces and disjoins the nature of an entity from the rest of the Cosmos, without negating the material value of such claims. After all, an *also-is* still implies an *is*, but appends simultaneously an *also,* making it a complement to an is.

In the contextual mode, explored in Section 3.4.5, we will argue for the strong claim that, when applied to the Situation, the *also-is* of microcosmic life presents a moral obligation that we must respond to if we are to orient ourselves away from collapse, as discussed in Section 2.2.

3.4.4 Recognising Spirituality and 'Vibes' as Frameworks for Making the Nature of Relatedness Meaningful

With much of our argumentation now in place, this section will consider the *also-is* gnosis in relation to meaning-making before we turn to the contextual mode in Section 3.4.5. It will do so by considering the key causal question of African thought: not 'how' does our ought flow from our *also-is*, but 'why' does the also-is of cosmic community obligate us to change how we farm and end the harming

of microcosmic life. The purpose of this section is to introduce the notion of spirit and spirituality through a conceptual decolonisation of it.

What is spirit? As indicated in Section 1.4,[86] we will be advancing the concept of spirituality defined by Ani (1994, p. XXVIII) as:

> *"The apprehension of cosmic interrelationship. The apperception of meaning in existence, and the degree to which one is motivated by such meaning. Spirituality is one's ability to relate to the metaphysical level of experience. It unites though thought and feeling and thereby allows for intuitive understanding. This cognitive/affective sense is transmitted through collective ancestral relationship. The absence of spirituality is an ancestral legacy."*

One element we want to emphasize is the 'apprehension of cosmic interrelationship' that Ani invokes, as we suggest it aptly captures the relational and non-necessarily theistic sense of spirit, spiritedness, and spirituality that we would like to consider.

We suggest that spirituality seems to connotate a mode of reflexive being, where the reflexivity involves a refraction of being through cosmic gnosis, imparting onto being a sense of belonging and purpose that translates into a mediative praxis that may make life meaningful. Such derives from the gnosis of connection to Cosmos whereby a sense of the right way to live is tied to something larger than oneself. This, by our conception, makes spirituality a type of innately relational ethical-spiritual-praxis, a way of being-with that with which one is related.

The SI approach makes it extremely difficult to make any meaningful statements regarding the concept of spirit in this sense. This is because spirit is consistently used[87] to refer to a metaphysical relationality that exists beyond the limits created by the notion of linear causality that it acknowledges.

Given that the SI approach externalises the metaphysical, we argue that it is justified to refer to it as a 'desacralising' or 'de-spiriting' approach to African thought. Historically, this approach has stripped away the spiritual and rejected the existence of a cosmic reality, which indigenous peoples relied upon to understand their existence and knowledge. This was done by objectifying their

beliefs and devaluing the sacredness of the universe in favour of rational abstractions (Ani, 1994, pp. xxvii, 51–97, 511–520).

We suggest this has resulted in a twofold consequence: Firstly, it has enclosed a cosmic aspect of being within a paradigmatically simple discourse on ethics, and secondly, following the first, it has primitivized the African meaning-making framework on the basis of irrationality, all for the sin of readily engaging the Cosmos. The effect of this disjunctive and reductive coloniality, alongside colonialism, has been the alienation of Africans from the spiritual grounds upon which they understood their relation to the cosmic community and acted in light thereof.

In contrast, while the HI approach may be less appealing to an international audience of professional philosophers, and despite its criticisms as covered in section 3.2.2.2, we argue that it maintains a sacredness in the world and so may better motivate ethical-spiritual-praxis in the face of the Situation. Moreover, this is the case when systemic instability can push people further towards discourses of the sacred during times of religious resurgence (Hurd, 2007). As such, when contending with a collective responsibility for African futures, its sacral character makes it attractive to Africans who are already Christian by a majority thanks to colonialism.

Given that it is already a religious approach, HI can account for spirit quite easily. We suggest that from this perspective, spirituality can be seen as both the ethical-force behind the teachings of the Ancestors[88] and as one's relationship to vital force. Why do we connect ourselves with nature in order to exist harmoniously? Harmonious soil interactions regenerate soil, extending nutrition and reproductive lifespan. This maximizes vital force. The goal of existence is to maximize vital force and harmony, which explains the teleological shift from also-is to ought.

The CI approach can consider spirit in terms of vibrations and reverberations. If movement is the principle of being (Ramose, 2009), it stands to reason that where movement is abundant, being is well, and where movement is scarce, being is

lessened. To use the examples of 'spirit' of Evental Historiography (Wright, 2008), we can consider the changes involved in a Rupture to be a heightening of movement, a threatening of new possibilities and a prefiguration for evolution and emergence (Jordan, 2022). The larger or more significant the Event, the larger the reverberation that emanates from it across space-time, also supported by a complex notion of causality. Hence the CI approach could account for the saying 'the spirit of revolution is in the air'.

By the CI approach, then, an agroecosystem that is teeming with a biodiverse plurality of abundant microcosmic and other life would be considered a healthy, high-vibration ecosystem. Conversely. an agroecosystem subjected to season upon season of IAC methods, as discussed in Chapter two, becomes increasingly still, its once living soil turned to dirt, a low- or no-vibration system, incapable of sustaining crops, and also incapable of auto-poietic self-organisation, of maintaining its own entropy as living systems *should*.

Given our proximity to the term, and Wiredu's (2002, pp. 63–64) provocation to philosophise in our vernacular languages – South African English in this case – we will be using the term 'vibe' from this point onwards as an element related to spirit, spiritedness, and spirituality.

In this vein of thinking, and to better align it with the concept of spirit discussed earlier, let us do a more direct transposition. We suggest that if it can be understood as "a mode of reflexive being, where the reflexivity involves a refraction of being through cosmic gnosis, imparting onto being a sense of belonging and purpose that translate into a mediative praxis that may make life meaningful" then the manifestation of good vibes is a refractive characteristic of the gnosis itself: a reason for how the nature of the processual interaction of being, knowing, and doing come into concert as gnosis in how we intend to relate to the world and each element of it "creating a sense of the world as our home [which] can alter our conception and interaction with the physical environment and our relationship with all other living things" (Mokuku, 2012, p. 170).

We argue that cultivating good vibes requires an intentional alignment between beings, places, and Cosmos, such as that which a cosmic gnosis impels humanity towards: a conscious path of harmonisation, meaningfulness and symbiosis on the basis of ontological egalitarianism. Counter this, disjuncture between beings, place and Cosmos, such as that which a paradigmatically simplistic worldview enforced onto a complex world suggests, cultivates murky vibes: the path of noise, meaninglessness, and dysbiosis. Good vibes increase harmony and prefigure a state of stable equilibrium, whereas bad vibes decrease harmony and prefigure disequilibrium, such as that which characterises the Situation as tending towards collapse.

Spirituality may here be taken as the means by which we mediate how we go about our lives, the result of that mediation through cosmic Afrignosis is the intention of creating good vibes, and so harmonising our existence with that of the world.

We suggest considering the nature of being to be one of *is* and *also-is*, we recognise that we, our actions, our purpose, and our longevity, are inextricably related to others in our sphere of influence by the very nature of being. When we de-centre ourselves (Ramose, 2009) within the web of life (Behrens, 2014) we recognise the equal claim that each entity has to its existence by virtue of the same relationality from which we identify the *is* and *also-is* of our own nature.

We cannot but recognise, however, that we are peculiar in relation to the rest of existence. Yet, peculiarity does not imply superiority in the sense our actions against it may be taken for. Our peculiarity is that we have evolved a uniquely consequential consciousness, allowing us to choose the nature of our social organisation and how it bears on the world. We then also have the ability to choose to organise in a way that vibes better with the world, that is to cultivate a way of being premised in Afrignosis, an *Utamawazic* constellation, informing doing, and to try and harmonise these three facets of conscious existence in a way congruent with the world.[89] That is, to dance with a world that exists with us, and not to lord over a world that exists for us.

Spirituality by the CI reading then becomes a foundation for understanding and becoming sensitive to complexity from an *African Utamawazo*. As mentioned, the CI approach considers microcosmic life morally equal to humanity and at least as ethically significant as a person. Thus, treating microcosmic life with the same regard as ourselves allows us to cohabit with them without the threat of genocidal chemical use, promoting increased vibrations. Not recognizing their relationship to us, how detrimental our IAC food production system is to them, or their equal claim to exist, would be disrespectful to them, ourselves, and the Cosmos. Luckily, evolution has given us the power to speak on their behalf, as this thesis aims to do in Anamnestic solidarity with them. This is their cry, echoing through the network of being, to you.

This reading of spirituality in relation to Afrignosis obliges us to take up agroecology as a de-centring of the human and a (re)centring of Cosmos, moreover informed *ad nauseam* by the ecological perspective. A shift thus informed is an innately smart move should we want to sustain ourselves in the long run. As has been shown, the CI approach is not only congruent with reality but also with the agroecological approach given their shared sensitivity to complexity.

3.4.5 Placing the Obligation to Abandon Industrial Agriculture in its Material and Ethical-Spiritual Context

Having engaged complementarily the purported obligation as true, from the HI and CI approaches, and as false, from the SI approach, this section will enter the contextual mode of analysis to fix its provisional, Situational, or Context-Dependant Truth Value. To do this, it will consider the obligation against the factual context of the Situation to answer the question: is the way in which industrial agriculture engages agroecosystems ethically permissible, at least in our current context, or are we obligated to abandon it?

As outlined in Chapter one, the IAC harms the microcosmic community, which supports the viability and fertility of both soil ecosystems and the far-removed ecosystems such as ocean ecosystems, through its use of artificial (agri)chemicals, among other techniques. These techniques, as the CI and HI approaches show,

devalue these forms of life both intrinsically as valueless in and of themselves, and instrumentally as valueless in disregard of the dual-role they play in supporting food webs.[90] Resultantly, the cosmic ecology is put at risk of collapse, from an ecological as well as a socio-historical perspective.

From this point of view, the techniques of the IAC are morally impermissible.

This viewpoint is compounded by five Situational factors adjacent to collapse as contextual justifications for the Truth-value of our purported obligation:

Firstly, it has been argued in Section 1.2 that the IAC is not only harmful to microcosmic life in a morally impermissible way but that it also represents a harm being done to marginalised communities of indigenous farmers (Shiva, 2016a, 2016b).

Secondly, The IAC also represents a harm being done to the rest of the Earthly community (Mbembe, 2022). As discussed in Section 2.2, the impacts of the IAC are not limited to farms but spill over to affect living beings across geographies and timescales.

Thirdly, the IAC relies heavily on fossil fuels for the production of chemical inputs, and so its contribution to both broader climatic destabilisations and harm to communities, both now living and in future generations, must be considered. This perspective was discussed in section 2.3.1.

Fourthly, as discussed in Section 2.3.2, the IAC is responsible for the destruction of biodiversity and the concomitant loss of biodiversity and beauty when considered from the perspective of ecoaesthetic appreciation (Cheng, 2016).

Finally, building from this, we argue that it is important to recognise the IAC is not an inevitability – it is a choice, a wilful construction. Violence enacted for no other reason than profit where alternative actions exist is not only deeply wrong by the framework we have established over the course of this chapter, but wrong by any ethical framework thus far in the history of philosophy. Even Metz would agree with the uncontroversial intuition that choosing to do harm when it is unnecessary is *pro tanto* immoral.

There is no law or systemic factor that says we *have* to farm using industrial methods – our society is making the choice to ignore, to our own peril, the moral status of microcosmic life as evidenced from the CI and HI perspectives. In this instance, agroecology is one such alternative, capable of producing food to feed the world but without destroying the microcosmos in the process.

Thus, we conclude that the IAC's dominance as the major mode of food production is unnecessary and unjustified, being also an obvious and pervasive legacy of imperialism and colonialism, and a clear example of neo-colonialism and epistemic colonialism in terms of the plunder of nature and knowledge (Shiva, 2016a). All of these harms are fundamentally and undeniably avoidable, and it is this fact that takes what may be a moral implication and transforms it into a moral obligation.

A full reading of the Situation, taking into account the insights of everyone from scientists to economists and social justice advocates renders the statement 'we have a moral obligation to abandon industrial agriculture' contextually true. The meaning of this truth arises in the Afrignostically informed choice to do things differently, to choose to include Cosmos in our thinking in recognition that the history of coloniality has placed it beyond the borders of rationality and forced us to accept those borders at the risk of exclusion.

This in turn raises an *aporetic* ethical decision, an interruption to the modern order of things that "constitutes an engagement with alterity, or the other of knowledge" with which we must remain in order to find "ways of going on" (Woermann, 2016, p. 163).

The rest of this work shall turn to discussing an (im)possible way forward towards an unlikely but necessary change in the organisational character of the human system in its relatedness to the world. If we accept that we have an obligation to abandon the system of food production upon which society is built and currently operates, then where to from here? What would a society in Africa premised on Agroecology as its food production system even look like? This is the focus of Chapter four.

3.5 Summary

This chapter established four things:

Firstly, it set out and developed a typology of African relational thought by distinguishing the soft- hard- and complex- modes of interconnectionism as distinct, though interrelated in subject, approaches to grounding ethical life in a shared relational reality. It did so by undertaking a close reading of select African thinkers - Ramose, Behrens, Bujo, Magesa and Metz - to map their ontological, spiritual, and methodological commitments. This allowed us to develop a comparative framework that foregrounded the metaphysical depth and epistemic positioning taken up by each thinker.

Second, it introduced the concept of Afrignosis to characterise the complex interconnectionist approach as a living, African form of gnosis—one that navigates a middle path between Hard interconnectionism's metaphysical saturation and Soft interconnectionism's analytical restraint. Afrignosis becomes central to the chapter's broader argument: that African relational ethics must account for ways of knowing and being that include the affective, spiritual, and ancestral, without collapsing into dogma or abstraction.

Thirdly, using the comparative framework established, it evaluated the strengths and limits of each approach to relationality, showing how Soft interconnectionism risks flattening African thought into conceptual fragments, while Hard interconnectionism risks essentialism through inherited theological forms. This positioned Afrignosis, by contrast, as a grounded-yet-expansive approach to relationality that is capable of engaging both cosmic and contextual registers of obligation.

Fourthly, the Chapter took this conceptual toolkit and used it to assess the moral state of industrial agriculture and its impact on the comis community. Through ecological, socio-historical, and ethical-spiritual reasoning, we concluded that the obligation to abandon the IAC is both contextually true, and grounded in the

avoidable harms it perpetuates and the Afrignostically informed alternatives, which already exist.

Overall, the chapter served to develop an Afrignostic ethical framework for evaluating large-scale systems like the IAC. This framework recognises the centrality of relationality, spirituality, and ecological interdependence to our ability to live harmoniously with and within the world. By doing so, it has laid the conceptual groundwork for what follows, allowing us to turn to the generative work of envisioning a future society built on agroecology as both ethical necessity and aesthetic possibility.

Notes

[1] While this chapter will use the identifiers SI, HI and CI, we will use a few terms interchangeably with them through the rest of this work. For the SI approach we will also use the alternate terms '(analytic)interconnectionism', '(soft)Relationalism', or '(analytic)Relationalism'. For the CI approach we will also use the alternate term '(complex)Relationism'. Lastly, for the HI approach we will also use the alternate terms '(hard)Relationalism', '(theological)Relationalism' or (theological)interconnectionism. We may also use some variations of these, ending with '-ist'.

[2] We reject any readings that would characterise the spectrum of 'soft' to 'hard' in normative bivalent terms (See. Sect. 1.2 Conversationalism), as scaling from bad to good, invalid to valid, useless to useful, even though these are considerations in the conversation to take place. Rather, let us consider this as an exercising in de-bordering the concept of the sacred in relation to ethics and praxis in Africa.

[3] Secularism, or at least secularism as it is construed broadly, has been muddied by the weight of Judaeo-Christianism to such a degree that it is no longer a term for 'distancing' the religious and the political (Menon, 2023). When something is generally construed of as secular, it is positively connotated as free of content relating to God, or the Gods, or Deities and the metaphysical considerations such dialogues invoke. However, non-secularism is then considered to be the presence of those things in the sense they are present in Judeo-Christian theology. This epistemic colonisation makes it difficult to construe of non-religious spiritualities in any sense, without defaulting to the language and representations of the predominant non-secular dialogues on the west against which secularism was established. A good example of this is the concept of Ancestors or Ancestorhood from the African tradition. Western scholars historically approaching such dialogues read into them ideas of worship and piety as experientially characteristic of the experience of Ancestors and other communities of the living dead. However, Ancestorhood as a spiritual and ethical dialogue is, in our view, more accurately characterised by practices of gratitude and reflection as reflexive practices which inform the way one acts towards others and the environment in which one co-exists, as the living body of the living undead. See Section 3.2 Hard Interconnectionism for more detail on the nature of the living dead or Ancestors.

[4] Complexity studies, upon which Critical Complexity is a reflection, is a scientific discipline and thus bound by the disciplinarity of the sciences, including the base supposition of an implicit materialist metaphysics. See Ch. 1. n. 14.

[5] Allen S. Weiss described Battaile's metaphysics as "anti-idealist, nonteleological materialism" at base, which he equates to a "quasimystical atheology" (1986, pp. 128, 141 fn. 24).

[6] The term 'Interbeing' means "to be mutual" according to Alexander Sieber (2015). It speaks to the concept of *Pratītyasamutpāda*, a key doctrine in Buddhism more commonly known as 'dependent arsing', premised on the principle of non-duality. Life is understood as interdependent from this point of view, and it is akin to the concept of emergence as we have discussed it as a feature of complex systems (see Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory). We concur with Seiber that the best way to appreciate or understand interbeing is through the poem *Call Me By My True Names* composed by Thích Nhất Hạnh. The full poem appears in *Call Me by My True Names : The Collected Poems of Thích Nhất Hạnh* (Nhất Hạnh, 2022). Its thematic resonance with the relational metaphysics discussed here invites further reflection, though copyright restrictions prevent its full reproduction.

[7] When we say all life, we invoke the sense totality inhered by African metaphysical accounts of the invisible elements of reality.

[8] "wholeness is the regulative principle here, since what is asserted is that the single individual is incomplete without the other" (Ramose, 2009, p. 308) See also his article 'The concept of Life as a Wholeness' (Ramose, 1994).

[9] While Ramose does not use the term 'ubu-ntu' in this piece, his consistent usage of the term in this form across his oeuvre gives us an indication that he intends this reading to be used. Importantly, *Ubu-ntu* (with a dash) is a term from Ramose (2003b) and different from *Ubuntu* (without a dash), the latter referring to a concatenated version of the former in use in South African Jurisprudence (See. Chapter 6: Order, Life and Spiritual Taboo and the former referring to "the foundation of African philosophy.". He writes (Ramose, 2002a, p. 36): "Ubuntu is actually two words in one. It consists of the prefix ubu- and the stem ntu-. Ubu- evokes the idea of be-ing in general. It is enfolded be-ing before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of ex-istence of a particular entity. Ubu- as enfolded bei-ing is always oriented towards unfoldment, that is, incessant continual concrete manifestation through particular forms and modes of being. In this sense ubu- is always oriented towards - ntu. At the ontological level, there is no strict and literal separation and division between ubu- and -ntu. Ubu- and -ntu are not two radically separate and irreconcilably opposed realities. On the contrary, they are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of bei-ing as a one-ness and an indivisible whole-ness. Accordingly, ubu-ntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. It is the indivisible one-ness and whole-ness of ontology and epistemology. Ubu- as the generalized understanding of be-ing may be said to be distinctly ontological." To maintain the differentiation, we use the term Ubu-ntu throughout this work.

[10] For Ramose, humanness is "both a condition of being and the state of becoming, of openness or ceaseless unfolding [opposed to humanism] a condition of finality, a closedness or a kind of absolute either incapable of, or resistant to, any further movement" (Ramose, 2009, pp. 308–309).

[11] Ramose prefers the term 'wholeness' to that of 'a whole', as he claims it "underline[s] and preserves the ontological primacy of the principle of motion and also stresses its ubiquity" (Ramose, 2009, p. 310). In this sense, wholeness, characterised by motion, "cannot be divided into anything other than motion" (ibid.). Wholeness as experience, Ramose warns us, is however fallible in so far as the observer who declares it may yield to dogmatism and authoritarianism by modelling experience as the total economy of being. Doing so would be equivalent to "standing at the centre of the universe" and thereby elevating the self or the ego to an underserved and unjustifiable position (ibid., pp. 309-310). Here Ramose acknowledges the ethics of complexity and the complexity of ethics (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012), by problematising the relationship between subject and object and the impossibility of maintaining the subject-object dichotomy between general and restricted economies of meaning. See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory, and See Ch. 3. n. 9.

[12] Primarily referring to the quantum physics work of David Bohm (1980).

[13] See also Alfred North Whiteheads 'Process Philosophy' set out in his work *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (1978) for a thorough fleshing out of the processual nature of reality that Ramose calls 'ceaseless unfoldment'.

[14] Behrens notes this emphasis across the works of notable African authors including Benezet Bujo (1998, pp. 22–23), Muyaradzi Felix Murove (2007, pp. 195–196), and Godfrey Tangwa (2004, p. 389).

[15] Behrens uses the term 'moral considerability' but admits that it, as well as related terms such as 'moral standing', 'moral agent', and 'direct moral duties', "are not part of the vocabular of moral discourse in traditional African thought" (Behrens, 2011, p. 89). They are however more common in professional philosophical discourse today and so he uses them. We suggest that these terms or African language corollaries did not exist because there was no need for such when the basis of ethical thought was a form of relational moral minimum afforded to all entities by recourse to their interdependence.

[16] While not a major point of Behrens theory of Anthropoholism, the authors which he draws on to make his claim for a consistent emphasis on interdependence (see Ch. 3. n. 14) work from a worldview that takes the existence of Ancestors to be fact that implies "recognition and acceptance of interdependence and people coexistence between earth, plants, animals and humans" (Tangwa, 2004, p. 389). As such, Behrens does not go out of his way to deny their existence as such. Rather, he engages the metaphysical perspectives in African thought as an epistemically valuable source from which "lessens can be learnt", such as those that relate to the "continuity and interdependence between generations" and relevance of "spiritual or religious and even cultural ideas" in ethical decision making (Behrens, 2011, p. 115).

[17] After much argument, Behrens concludes that "African relational environmentalism does not limit moral considerability to only the current generation. It conceives of the web of life as transcending generations, and of the environment as a resource shared by different generations. It recognises moral obligations to future generations, not just of persons, but of other morally considerably entities too. It regards it as our duty to try and ensure that our descendants inherent an environmental able to sustain their lives" (Behrens, 2011, p. 149).

[18] The Life force or Vital force perspective will be engaged more directly as part of the HI approach. See Sect. 3.2.2.1 Complex Cosmology at the Forefront.

[19] As differentiated from "biocentric or life-centred approaches", in a web-of-life centred approach "What grants moral considerability to an entity is not that it has an individual life or telos of its own but that it forms part of the web or fabric of life. And then on this view, all things can be part of this web of life, that themselves share or enable this life, can be morally considerable" (Behrens, 2014, p. 76).

[20] Herein, Humes Law raises its head. In response, Behrens challenges that "on many Africa accounts, it is clear that the fact of interrelatedness is understood as almost obviously providing grounds for an obligation to maintain harmonious

relationships" (Behrens, 2014, pp. 76–77). He roots his challenge, quoting Holmes Rolston III (1998, pp. 19–20) and highlighting the proximity of African metaphysical claims, by propounding the view that "an 'ought' is not so much derived from an 'is' as is discovered simultaneously" in African thought – the 'ought' and the 'is' "seem to originate together" in as much that descriptive statements function not only to confirm values, but also inform them (Behrens, 2014, p. 77). In this way Behrens avoids the disjunctive tendency that would have us consider morality without metaphysics, or the reductive tendency that would take the idea of a rich African ontology, such that his African Relational environmentalism to be, and express it only as an ethic. This position finds concordance with Hilary Putnam's (2004) analytic critique of the fact–value dichotomy. For Putnam, values (what ought to be) cannot be meaningfully separated from our understanding of facts (what is), and that the apparent 'neutrality' of empirical and scientific descriptions often rests on implicit normative presuppositions. He maintains that our knowledge of the world is entangled with what we care about, and thus facts and values are co-constitutive. This alignment strengthens Behrens' claim that in African metaphysical systems, moral obligations are not externally imposed on a neutral world but emerge from the very structure of interrelated reality.

[21] While true of the current era and the thinkers who apply analytic methods to African thought (see Sect. Of the thinkers discussed in the preceding paragraphs, it is worth offering a clarification to avoid potential confusion later in the text. While Magesa was trained as a Catholic theologian and did draw heavily on Christianised language in his earlier efforts to articulate African relations with the sacred, it would be a misreading to assume that Magesa's work remains confined to that paradigm. While this early part of his work has drawn our critique - particularly with respect to the risks of translating African spirituality through inherited Christian frameworks - his later writing, most notably *What Is Not Sacred? African Spirituality* (2013), shows a move away from Christian theological categories and toward a more explicitly African-centred spiritual framework and a focus on African Initiated Churches. As such, although we challenge the use of Christianised conceptual schemas when interpreting African spiritualities, the reappearance of Magesa in later chapters reflects our recognition of the significant evolution in his thinking and the value of his more recent contributions to African Spiritual Philosophy.

3.3 Soft-Interconnectionism), this charge also applies to much of how Western ethics (see. Ch. 1. n. 5) in the era since the enlightenment sought to do away with cosmic metaphysics in favour of logical absolutism (Adorno and Domingo, 2013).

[22] We suggest that the Western interactions with these projects perpetuated the trend of epistemic injustice (see sect. 3.3.2 Features of Soft Interconnectionism and Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity) due in part to what Ramose (2002b) explained as a pejorative conception of rationality and the denial of said rationality on racial grounds by intellectual giants of the tradition, such as Immanual Kant (Eze, 2003). The result of this has been the exclusion by gate-keeping of non-Western epistemic agents and concepts (Chimakonam, 2017, p. 127) from partaking in knowledge creation outside of a "European grid of intelligibility" (Praeg, 2019, p. 3).

[23] An example of an insufficient limit erupts when a person is asked "what are you, physically?" and answers "I am this" while gesturing to their corporeal body. This apparent intuition establishes the skin as the boundary of self, the limit at which the self ends, and the world begins. However, this reductive framing is ignorant of complexity as, for instance, Microbiology reveals to us the *human as habitat*, a vibrant and biodiverse ecology of systems comprising its own mountains, valleys, rivers, geysers, and grasslands (Hudson and Sherwood, 1997, chap. 31). Our simple limit is not a closed frontier; myriad microcosmic beings live on or within humans, some of which have evolved special co-mutualities with the human habitat. As Francois Durand (2022) has shown, some of these relationships are more parasitic than others, but many provide us with integral services such as bacterial defence or sebum regulation.

[24] Given the Southern African context in which we are working, we will be using either the term 'great Ancestor' or the Zulu term '*uNkulunkulu*' meaning 'the biggest of biggest' or 'the oldest of oldest'.

[25] According to Justin Ukpong (1983) in his reading of such a theory on the nature of God – theories that God is by nature not present as a conscious entity in the world but rather is the world though retreated from it are variously known as "*Deus otiosus*, *Deus remotus, Deus incognitus*, *Deus incertus* and *Deus absconditus*" theories, and have been advanced by thinkers like James O'connel (1962), Mircea Eliade (1958), and Emmanuel Idowu (1962). Ukpong argues that these accounts differ from animism, largely thanks to the relocation of spiritual force from the objects in the world to its attribution to vital force at the hands of Tempels. We disagree, as there is enough evidence in work since Ukpong wrote – such as all the work of Bujo and Magesa – to perhaps revisit to the concept of animism on decolonial terms as Agbonkhianmege E. Orabator (2018) persuasively does.

[26] Augustine Schutte in his work on Bujo notes that "even stones are alive" (Schutte, 1993, p. 22).

[27] In light of these caveats, we find it useful to visualise the order of Being not in the traditional pyramid structure, but rather as a series of concentric and porous circles, with the Supreme Being at the outer rim of existence and each subsequent rung contained within it. This does not violate Bujo's conception of the flow of vital force, because ontological unity is maintained.

[28] The term vital force is now commonplace in the literature on African religion, though used differently by different authors (Mulago, 1969; Gbadegesin, 1991; Magesa, 1997; Bewaji, 2004; Murove, 2007; Roothaan, 2017).

[29] "All beings – organic and inorganic, living and inanimate, personal and impersonal, visible and invisible – act together to manifest the universal solidarity of creation" (Bujo, 1998, p. 210, 2009, p. 282).

[30] Anamnestic solidarity implies a relation to the concept of Anamnesis – a (re)calling to memory or "an escape from the temporal and reunification with the divine" (Ustinova, 2013, p. 112) such as that which the Greek mysteries were intended to cultivate among initiates.

[31] Bujo explicitly states that, for instance, disabled people who cannot speak or spirit beings who communicate non-verbally are to be made present in the Palaver through the advocacy of the able-bodied and the living (Bujo, 2001, p. 55). We could consider this a type of effective (cosmic) allyship (Collier-Spruel and Ryan, 2024), conceptualised as the type of advocacy by able persons within the palaver to a) defend the interests of the marginalized (herein the invisible, including those-yet-to-be and the disabled); b) challenge the biases of living towards themselves; c) identify and advocate against power imbalances between the visible and the invisible; and d), empowers the voice of the presence of the invisible within the palaver.

[32] Peter Kasenene concurs with Magesa on this point when he writes "The religious and the secular interpenetrate, to a greater or lesser degree, at all points of existence. In whatever an African does or experiences, there is a simultaneous working of spiritual and worldly forces" (Kasenene, 1998, p. 18).

[33] Magesa suggests that religious apprehension and connection with the Sacred support individuals in developing meaning and forming their worldview and ethos (Magesa, 1997, pp. 1–3).

[34] Sometimes the Ancestors act through spirits - "active beings who are either disincarnate human persons or powers residing in natural phenomena such as trees, rocks, rivers, or lakes" (Magesa, 1997, pp. 35–36).

[35] The unitary ontology that characterizes these "vital forces" or "forces of life" is also reiterated by Magesa when he writes (Magesa, 1997, pp. 39, 46, 285 respectively):

> *…the universe is a composite of divine, spirit, human, animate and inanimate elements, hierarchically perceived, but directly related, and always interacting with one another. Some of these elements are visible, others are invisible. They correspond to the visible and invisible spheres of the universe: the visible world being composed of creation, including humanity, plants, animals and inanimate beings, and the invisible world being the sphere of God, the Ancestors, and the spirits.*
>
> *Because of the common divine origin of this power, however, all creatures are connected with each other in the sense that each one influences the other for good or for bad […] This relationship between and among created vital force – just as between God and creation – is therefore essential as well. It is also causal. Causation flows all directions to maintain life in the universe, but the seriousness and depth of its effects normally depend on the quality of having life and primogeniture.*
>
> *What the African religious world view emphasizes, therefore, is relationships. Through the act of creation, God is related in an unbreakable way to the entire universe. At the center of the universe is humanity, but it too is intrinsically and inseparably connected to all living and non-living creation by means of each creature's life force. Although God, spiritual beings, Ancestors' humanity, living things and non-living things enjoy life-forces with greater and lesser powers, all the forces are intertwined. Their purpose is ultimately humanity; they can act either to increase or suppress the vital force of an individual person or of a community.*

[36] In Magesa's conception of Vital force, he holds that "having life and primogeniture" are a measure of the causal potency of an entity (Magesa, 1997, p. 46). In our reading, we suggest that what he implies is that the potential of an entity to impact another entity is directly proportional to its age and the density of its vital force. This framework is challenging to Magesa's own conceptualization if one considers the Earth as an entity, or say a large river, because by Magesa's reading, either would be of profoundly more importance than the human due to its contribution to the abundance of vital force. The potential causal potency of these counter examples substantially problematizes Magesa's consistent centering of the human and present a gap in his conception of African religion.

[37] Bujo's conception of Palaver and Anamnestic Solidarity, seems to us to be a form of this continuity of tradition though they allow for a revision by the living of moral norms of the Ancestors in each contextual moment the Palaver process is called upon.

[38] In reading the language anthropocentric language Magesa uses on page 60-62 and 285 of his 1997 book, it is easy to see the basis of the claim of undeniable anthropocentrism that Behrens set out to rebut. It is difficult to reconcile the place of humans as "central in the universal order" with a cosmology that concedes both a unidirectional flow of causation between all beings as possessors of vital force and a unidirectional flow of vital force emanating from God to all other being (Magesa, 1997, p. 46).

[39] While the complexity of the interplay between human and nature is more obvious in Mulago – there is a consistent theme in his work of co-construction and interbeing between the individual, the community and the broader community of Life – but, we argue, anthropocentrism is not absent in Magesa. A sense of the complexity of identity is present when he writes that "in a way, the group, like the individual, is the microcosm of the universe. The whole universe subsists, so to speak, in it", although it still ultimately yields back to an uncritical anthropocentrism in his broader theology (Magesa, 1997, p. 60).

[40] However, this is not to say that Magesa describes God as separate from the world. Rather, God is "in relationship, or even better, in communion, with humanity and the entire universe" but at a "respectful distance" allowing him to not be "immediately and directly involved with human ethical life" (Magesa, 1997, pp. 41, 43).

[41] As Godwin Sogolo (2003) argues, the concept of cause in African thought allows for multiple theories of causation to coexist without negating one another as they do in Western causal thinking. As such, there is no need for African religious explanations to be framed as trying to replace or invalidate scientific or ecological explanations for disasters

such as droughts – they are better considered as different perspectives on cause. Some traditions in African thought, especially those contained in environmental taboos, actually contain insights which, if followed, may help to prevent a disaster, such as the poisoning of a water source (Chemhuru and Masaka, 2010) or the depletion of the soil (Madavo, 2019). For a full discussion of Taboo, see Sect. 6.2.2 Spiritual Taboo and Ancestral Wisdom.

[42] "To live peacefully, therefore, created reality must organize itself according to that will which God established for it from the very beginning […] preserved in the traditions of the people and is transmitted from generation to generation through the instructions of the elders and the mythical actions of the Ancestors" (Magesa, 1997, p. 285).

[43] Worth noting at this point is the differing centrality of Ancestoral dialogues in the SI and HI approaches to African thought. Where SI externalises the Ancestors due to their metaphysical nature, opting rather to focus on the rational faculties of humans to perform ethical calculi in consideration of relationality and 'rightness as friendliness' (see Sect. 3.3.2.2 African Philosophy sans Metaphysics); the HI approach conceptualises the Ancestors as indivisibly interconnected to human thought and human action, playing a necessary and unavoidable role in guiding and structuring ways of being, knowing and acting.

[44] See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory.

[45] This is a reflexive notion of community which is nested and thus refers also to membership in a family, membership in a village, membership in a nation, etc.

[46] We hyphenate the words 'being-becoming' because the relational depth of complexity in African thought, as was shown in consideration of the CI approach (See Sect. 3.1 Complex Interconnectionism), forces us to consider an element of time, or unfolding, that necessitates a conception of being in a state of becoming, relationally bound to the cosmic community into which it is inextricably enmeshed.

[47] The complexity arises here in recognition of the non-additive nature of the interrelations between these elements of identity in a complex system (Morin, 1992a), meaning that at once, the whole is a) more than the sum of its parts, b) less than the sum of its parts, and c) more than the whole. The attribute of 'community' to a group of humans indicates something which no one of those humans is themselves. The community of humans is also less than the attributes of its individual constituents, some of which are suppressed "under the constraints that result from systemic organisation" (Woermann, 2016, p. 36). Finally, the spirit of the attribute 'community' emerges from the fact of interbeing and co-construction, but is not reducible to it, for it is in some sense metaphysical. As such, the wholeness of the whole cannot be accounted for on the material basis of the whole itself; it emerges from its interrelatedness with the broader community of Life, including the Ancestors and Supreme Being.

[48] We suggest that the CI approach has the analytic bent in Complexity theory to thank for the tempering effect it has had on Critical Complexity's relationship with (post)modernism. As Complexity theory is the study of complex systems, largely those of cybernetics, it is based in mathematics and computer modelling, both being rigidly rational and logical disciplines that are unconcerned with metaphysics *pro tanto*. This allowed Critical Complexity Theory to develop a language set that is secular, in the sense of not being religiously based. However, when it turns to study the interrelation of elements in a system, it does not preclude any metaphysics from informing the relationships under study.

[49] Even Magesa describes an aggressive Christian predominance in conversations about African religion, which has resulted in an "intellectual suppression" where African morality and ethics have "almost always come to be seen exclusively in the light of [Christian notions]" (Magesa, 1997, p. 5).

[50] Eze, for instance, received his undergraduate education from the Jesuit School of Philosophy, in association with the University of Zimbabwe, graduating with an honours level B.A. degree in 'Philosophy and Religion' before embarking on the rest of his academic career (*Michael Eze*, no date). Additionally, Mbiti is referenced often by Eze in positive terms, indicating that Eze took him to be an authoritative source in African thought (Eze, 2008, pp. 3887–388, 2017, p. 99; M. O. Eze, 2018, p. 4).

[51] Menkiti received both his primary and secondary education in Catholic schools in Nigeria (St. Mary's Primary School and Christ the Kind College) (Mudimbe, 2021) and was profoundly interested in John Mbiti, who became one of his largest intellectual adversaries on the question of personhood in African philosophy. For Mbiti personhood is an attribute of all humans, but for Menkiti it carries a sense of gradation, something at which one could fail or succeed, be confident or ineffective (Menkiti, 1984, p. 173).

[52] See Ch 3. n. 3.

[53] We chose *A Relational Moral Theory: African Ethics In and Beyond the Continent* (2021) as it is Metz most comprehensive articulation of his position on the topic of African ethics to date. All page references will be made to the electronic page references of its eBook edition.

[54] These intuitions consists of eight global moral intuitions, that it is "typically *pro tanto* immoral: to kill innocent people without their consent for money; to have sex with someone against her will so as to feel pleasure or a sense of power; to deceive a person, at least when not done in self- or other-defence; to discriminate on a racial or gendered basis when allocating opportunities, at least when not redressing a previous comparable discrimination; to express ethnic, sexual, or similar epithets towards others; never to fight hunger, poverty, displacement, or the like suffered by those outside one's in-group, when one could do so at little cost to oneself; never to prevent serious crimes done to others, when one could do so at little cost to oneself; and, to torture an animal for the fun of it" (Metz, 2021, p. 91). And eight African moral intuitions, that it is "typically pro tanto immoral to resolve political conflicts in the face of continued

dissent, rather than seeking consensus; to fail to do what is likely to make people's lives go better, if one is politically in charge; to make retribution the fundamental aim of criminal justice, in contrast to seeking reconciliation; to create wealth largely on a competitive basis, instead of a cooperative one; to distribute wealth in a greatly unequal way and to fail to meet everyone's needs; to avoid greeting people, especially elders, upon encountering them; to remain isolated or to flout long-standing norms central to a people's self-conception, as opposed to partaking in customs; and to fail to marry and rear children, as opposed to creating a family" (ibid., p. 94).

[55] While it is discussed in sect. 3.3.2 Features of Soft Interconnectionism), it is important to mention the epistemic coloniality of this characterisation of a 'global' audience immediately. When the term 'global' is used in reference to a group of people who would not be interested in philosophy that involved non-visible, non-physical, or imperceptive agents, who is Metz referring to? As Marimba Ani (1994) attests, the 'secular' perspective, as far as it reasons away the metaphysical part of being in the world, is unique to the European *Utamawazo*. The global majority, that is those non-Europeans descended from First Nations peoples, all share an affinity for deeply metaphysically grounded worldviews which have only become prejudiced at the hands of Europeans. As such, we suggest that what Metz does not in fact address his work to a global audience, but rather a highly parochial audience of abstract thinkers who maintain a desacralized worldview as the most appropriate and reasonable territory for professional philosophy.

[56] Accounts of rightness grounded in wellbeing prioritise "the welfarist satisfaction of material, psychological and social needs" (Metz, 2021, pp. 111, 125). Metz most strongly associates this welfarist approach with the work of Kwasi Wiredu (1996) and Kwame Gyekye (1997, 2004a) and rejects it because it fails, in a universalizable form, to account for several intuitions which he presents as the standard that must be met for a globally palpable ethic (Metz, 2021, pp. 114–120).

[57] Ethical accounts grounded in this approach contend that "an act is right just insofar as it produces, protects, and develops vitality, and wrong to the degree that it ends life, fails to protect it, and causes degeneration" (Metz, 2021, p. 125). Like the welfarist approach, Metz rejects the vitalist approach for reasons related to his rubric of intuitions. However, he also rejects this approach at the level of Metaphysics. See Section 3.3.1.3 Metz's Definition of Relationality and Theory of Right Action and Section 3.3.2.2 African Philosophy sans Metaphysics.

[58] Metz's view emphasizes an individual's capacity to relate, and the correlation between this capacity and the duties owed to beings for their own sake, as opposed to "actually relating" (Metz, 2021, pp. 168–171, 231).

[59] As such, we used the term simplicity in a technical and philosophical sense to denote techniques of disjunction and reduction that tend towards fundamentalist reductionism (Woese, 2004) and their consequences (Morin, 1992a).

[60] See Ch. 1 n. 4.

[61] See Sect. 6.2.3 Transgression and Mending: The Other Side of Ubu-ntu for a discussion of the socio-psychological aspects of ubu-ntu.

[62] To compound on a metaphor whose force Metz admits appreciating - " 'killing the spirit' of ubuntu, is akin to an etymologist pinning down a butterfly for observation" (Metz, 2021, p. 81) – when a butterfly is pinned down for observation, it is not only made still but its place in the ecology where it was found is left empty, its relationality to all that has made it what it is and allowed it to evolve, grow, live, flourish and inform organisation on various levels is discarded so that a scientist may lay his claim to an accurate description and analysis. The butterfly, as a metaphor for the spirit of ubuntu, reminds us of the destruction of Life and the lack of appreciation for interconnection that must be exhibited in the pursuit of analytic rigor.

[63] The CI and HI approaches (See sect. 3.1 Complex Interconnectionism and sect. 3.2 Hard Interconnectionism) explain how relationality can have metaphysical, ontological, political, and spiritual consequences. As such, treating it as a second-order quality for determining direct moral duties and moral standing alone is a simplification of its complex character.

[64] Attempting to explain reality using analytical methods is part and parcel of effective thinking, a mode of empirical reductionism. However, representing the said reductions as the nature of reality is empirical reductionism, a form of simple thinking. See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory X2 and Sect. 2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture.

[65] See Ch. 3. n. 3 and sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity

[66] Daniel Robinson (2014) differentiates scientism from science on the grounds that adherents to the former insist on causal closure, and so construct explanations that confirm its possibility, whereas scientists, by default, adhere to a sense of scientific provisionality.

[67] Our articulation of acts of enclosure in reference to colonialism is informed by Andrew Sages' (Andrewism, 2023b) reading of the work of Allan Greer (2012) and Cole Harris (2004)

[68] A consideration of materialism and its relationship to African thought is well beyond the scope of this work. However, for clarification purposes, we see little reason to read a materialism in the physicalist sense into African thought, given the acknowledgement of the invisible elements of reality by the vast majority of African theorists, including Nkrumah. This is apparent when he writes about how "the placid appearance of matter disguises the tension of forces underlying that appearance" wherein "matter is not just dead weight, but alive with forces in tension [for] everything that exists , exists as a complex of forces in tension" (Nkrumah, 1970, pp. 97–99). While it is true, as Metz holds, that Nkrumah was a materialist, his materialism when read through an emic lens does not lend itself to physicalism, in as far as physicalism can be taken to be a denial of the sacred content of matter or the existence of beings such as Ancestors or

metaphysical ideas such as the Soul, an important aspect of Nkrumah's cultural context, evidenced in the early chapters of his autobiography (Nkrumah, 1971) that he at no point choose to abandon if his Autobiography is to be believed.

[69] However, as Sogolo (Sogolo, 2003, p. 237) alerts us, it would be equally fallacious for us to frame primary (teleological) and secondary (mechanistic) causality in opposition to one another, as this would ignore the rejection of dualisms as another feature of African Metaphysics. What is of concern for Sogolo is the politics that underlie an enquiry into causation, namely "what stands as an acceptable explanation depends on our interests in the matter" (ibid.).

[70] See Sect. 1.2 Conversationalism.

[71] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity.

[72] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity. Our attitude is one that commits us to "[rolling] back the hegemony of western intellectual traditions" (Chimakonam, 2021a, p. 4).

[73] In parts, the HI approach will be *nwa-nja,* and its parts it will be *nwa-nsu*, and the same goes for the SI approach.

[74] See Sect. 1.2 Conversationalism.

[75] The Complexity, provisionality and *aporetic* (im)possibility (Woermann, 2016) of the CI approach makes it perfectly suited to take up the truth-glut position – a variable that is simultaneously true and false and both.

[76] This neologism combines the term African with the term gnosis to refer more specifically to forms of gnosis from Africa, such as ubu-ntu (Ramose, 2002a) or Maat (Karenga, 2004).

[77] Microcosmic beings all respirate, either aerobically or anaerobically via fermentation; reproduce, sexually or asexually, via reproduction, replication, or fission; and require nutrition for energy, even though the variety of mechanisms by which nutrition is generated are vast and varied. These biomarkers are shared by all living organisms, even microcosmic ones.

[78] 'Communities' is used here simply as a descriptor for co-existent life forms in identifiable assemblages.

[79] See Sect. 2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture.

[80] When pesticides are sprayed and caught in wind currents, they drift off-target. This releases pesticides into the atmosphere and nearby and distant ecosystems (Bish, Oseland and Bradley, 2021). This has also been linked to adverse health effects in nearby human settlements (Damalas, 2015; Kasner et al., 2021).

[81] This is not true, see the essay The Seven Myths of Industrial Agriculture (Kimbrell, 2002b).

[82] Similarly, the CI reading (see sect. 3.1.3 Articulating Complex Interconnectionism) could equally conceive of the reverberation of harm across the 'web of life' on similar scales. Although, where HI sees the flow of vital force as the medium through which the reverberation may travel (see sect. 3.2.2.1 Complex Cosmology at the Forefront), CI may substitute in its place something like quantum mechanics. Quantum mechanics, through quasiparticles like phonons, presents a complex causality and reverberation notion that can account for non-linear causality across space-time while binding everything together.

[83] For an example of how pervasive this type of gnosis about the relationality of harm is in African thought, we can consider the post-apartheid discourse on reconciliation for the gross and full harm that was Apartheid. There are black South Africans, such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who embodied this sense of relational-harm to the degree that they showed empathy for the white South Africans who perpetrated the harms of Apartheid on Black South Africans (C. Eze, 2018, pp. 47–49). Recognizing that oppressors' injury to black people was also an untold and significant harm to themselves, while more spiritual and psychological than financial, physical, or systematic, fostered empathy. The harm perpetrated by apartheid, and colonialism that preceded it, is broadly considered to be much more than a physical and economic harm – it also included deep and relational concepts of spiritual, emotional and psychological harm with the relationship of Africans to the land being the central point of pain (weNkosi, 2023).

[84] See Sect. 5.1 On the Nature of Food

[85] The *also-is* framework can be applied between persons, communities and ecosystems; workers, businesses and the economy; molecules, cells and organisms; and even planets, solar systems, and galaxies.

[86] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity

[87] For instance, Spirit in Christianity refers to God, a metaphysical being. Spirituality in Buddhism could refer to the mindful practice of the Noble Eightfold Path in acceptance of the Four Noble Truths, purported as fundamental metaphysical truths. Spirit in the sense of 'spirit of the event' is a metaphysical aspect of space that emerges between participant, place, and intention. Briefly, the term 'intention' as it will be used in this work, refers to acting with intention or acting intentionally as in to be aware of, and sensitive to, the impact of one's actions. Intention is what can differentiate between just and unjust, permitted and unpermitted harms, especially as it relates to Law (Heuer, 2015, pp. 12–14). In the spiritual sense, of 'setting' or 'having' a spiritual intention, this could be understood as a process of identifying, creating, and acting on an idea of purpose or meaning. Intention is also an active state, and not a passive one; meaning that intention is motivated and motivating.

[88] African thought holds that we act in certain ways taught to us by the Ancestors in relation to each other and to the world, because acting in these ways is embodying the spirit of the Ancestors, and doing so is one way to guarantee their favour and to honour them in remembrance. Failing to do so will lead to strife of the sort that colours the Situation. See 3.2.1 Two Examples of Hard Interconnectionism for a discussion in the work of Bujo and Magesa about African views on why Ancestral teachings are important and remembered.

[89] Such is akin to the existentialist choice, one we are condemned to make if we are to affirm life (Sartre, 1989).

[90] The IAC implicitly relegates the microcosmic community beyond any epistemological frame through which it could be apprehended as being injured or lost, as evidenced by its impact thereon. Industrial agricultural techniques do not in the first place consider the microcosmos as alive, lose-able, or injure-able, and so it raises no moral concern as to what happens to it or the implications for that which relies on it – it devalues not only the microcosmic community, but also the network of being into which it is fundamentally embedded. The concept of how different beings are apprehended as living, precarious or grievable depending on the epistemic frame by which they are recognised emerges from the work of Judith Butler (2006, 2016a).

Chapter 4: An Afroaesthetic Vision for the Future

Introduction

Chapter three provided an African framework for understanding the nature of reality, including that which is good, in terms of ecological relations, and how it can be inferred from relationality. This led to the conclusion that humanity has an obligation to abandon industrial agriculture in favour of Agroecology.[1] In light of our current reliance on the IAC, this presents a major challenge to the future,[2] prompting the question 'where to from here?'

This chapter proposes a vision of a future agroecologically based African society, by nature an image of mind containing aesthetic elements, gesturing at it with the words 'we could go here' by way of reply. We suggest that approaching a vision of a future African society begins with a notion of Afroaesthetics,[3] the analysis of which may reveal the organisational rationale of said vision, allowing us to work backwards therefrom.

Building on the Afrignostic insights generated in the previous Chapter, this Chapter will proceed as follows:

Section 4.1 will approach aesthetics from an African *Utamawazo* (Ani, 1994) to conceptualise Afroaesthetics. Section 4.2 will then apply this framework to analyse two future-oriented inspirations that inform our vision of a solarpunk (Gillam, 2023) Afrofuturism (Zamalin, 2019). Finally, section 4.3 will unpack a complex conception of purpose as it relates to elements of the Afroaesthetic vision so described.[4]

Within this thesis, this Chapter provides us with something to *solve for* in Chapters five and six, which will consider what type of political economy may prefigure the food production element of this vision as a condition for its possibility, and how Order could be (re)conceptualised and oriented toward Ethical-Spiritual-praxis in an African society with agroecology as its productive substrate.

4.1 Aesthetics from an African Perspective

This section will outline our conception of Afroaesthetics. It will proceed as follows: Section 4.1.1 will counterpose Afroaesthetics to a European sense of aesthetics;

Section 4.1.2 will consider Afroaesthetics' relationship to natural beauty and Ecoaesthetics and consider it from a societal perspective to conceptualise a mode of social aesthetic production that is Life enhancing in line with the Afrignostic insights from Chapter three. The purpose of this section is to create an Afroaesthetic framework that can be used to interrogate and justify aspects of our future imaginary vision – a response to the (im)possible obligation from Chapter three - to be discussed in Section 4.2.

For our purposes, we will focus on the Afrocentric literature on Aesthetic conceptualisation,[5] hence (Afro)aesthetics, and contrast it with a Eurocentric aesthetic conception to distinguish the character of Afroaesthetics and the political potential it may hold for conceptualising future African societies.

A final note before we delve more directly into this section is a point of relativism. We suggest that counter-posing the Euroaesthetic and Afroaesthetic conceptions is not an attempt at reordering a hierarchy of aesthetic value, justifying why one is superior to the other. Following Kariamu Welsh-Asante (1993, p. 5) and Mudimbe (1988, pp. 6–12), we agree that the Euroaesthetic conception to be described is beautiful and viable in a Eurocentric context, but want to draw back the lines by which it has pushed into other contexts, invented the other, and defined 'the beautiful' as itself while rendering the various aesthetic conceptions of majority first-nation people as obscene, primitive, vulgar, childlike, backward, immature, unrefined, uncivilised, distasteful and lacking in culture.

Given the historical domination of the European over African ways of being, it is also important to understand that this discussion is aimed at collective healing through a reclamation and affirmation of the beauty, validity, and worth of that which is black and that which is African attested to by Linda E. Thomas (2009). This trend towards the positive affirmation of Africanness builds on the foundations of Bantu Biko's Black Consciousness (2004), Molefe Kete Asante's *Afrocentricity* (1988), and the Black Love movement exemplified in Bell Hook's *Salvation: Black People and Love* (2001).

4.1.1 What Aesthetics is not: A View Beyond Eurocentric Aesthetic Abstraction

Part of countering the dominance of the European sense of the aesthetic, taking the CI or HI approach, includes engaging the world from the presupposition that it is a complex, irreducible, and ontologically related wholeness (Ramose, 2009).[6] As we have explored in Chapter 2, this wholeness can be conceptualised as a cosmic ecology.

This section will carry this Afrignostic presupposition over to aesthetic discourse, so that we may understand sense implied when Magesa writes (2013, pp. 24, 69) that "all reality is situated in the sacred realm, which is a spiritual sphere" and that

> *"[to] become human is to participate in the dance of life, one's own dance within that of the community [...] by personal involvement, and one is assessed on the basis of performance. The dance of life includes everything that is connected with nurturing life in the world, that is, social institutions, economics and politics, cookery, painting, sculpture, architecture, the art of speech, music, gestures, and sense of beauty among others. All of these dynamic activities, and depending on the extent to which they affect human life and signify the presence of spiritual energies in the world, they are communication systems between human beings and spiritual powers."*

According to Ani, the European *Utamawazo* "reduced [aesthetics] to the concept of beauty [... and...] taste", dealing only with "theories of the essential character" of these concepts (Ani, 1993, pp. xxv, 64). For her, the "European discussion of 'aesthetics' becomes analytic; the *pathos* is intellectualised; the mystery denied. The focus becomes that of judgement and critique" (ibid.). This in turn manifests a pejorative cultural imperialism and aesthetic chauvinism in service of the European *Asili* (Ani, 1994, pp. 227–234).

For the European, to apprehend the essence of the Aesthetic, the nature of the 'Beautiful' is to be distant from it, to adopt as Kant's cognitive gymnastics would have us do a posture of disinterest in the "existence of the thing" of beauty in

order to “play the judge in things of taste” and ‘know’ in “pure judgement” whether it is, or is not, ‘Beautiful’ (Kant, 1790, secs 1–2).

Herein, the aesthetic *as art* and the work of *artists* becomes a matter of a culturally conditioned taste for the beautiful, a judgement of approximate aesthetic value in relation to a rationally abstracted universal form ‘Beauty’ (Ani, 1993). This alludes to the idea that art is a specifically beautiful thing and is different from every-thing else which is not art and therefore not beautiful to people who understand what true ‘art’ *really* is. Art and the beautiful become rationalised, even elevated, categories of human endeavour so long as the ‘art’ and the ‘artist’, and the mode of ‘aesthetic engagement’ are in themselves embodiments of the aesthetic of art *itself*.

The confusion of the previous paragraph is intentional, as the high-brow nature of European Aesthetic discourse introduces into aesthetics so many needless boundaries around the concepts of ‘art’, ‘artists’, ’beauty’, ‘the beautiful’, and ‘taste’, among others, that laying them bare can be quite confusing. While European traditions have indeed generated critiques of aesthetic arbitrariness – from Dada to Derrida – the institutional and epistemological dominance of Euroaesthetics continues to centre abstraction and disinterestedness. Our critique targets this hegemonic centring, not the absence of dissent within Europe.

We will now attempt to unpack the Euroaesthetic preference, and in so doing, (dis)border where and how African thought comprehends aesthetics differently.[7] The purpose of such (dis)bordering is to explain the benefit of understanding the aesthetic in a broader sense as a way of bringing meaning to the mundane.

Contrary to the Euroaesthetics, for the Afroaesthetic everything is aesthetic, a spiritual performance of cosmic interwovenness that ought to shape how and why we move the way we do, at all levels of nested communal reality (Ani, 1993; Myer, 1993; Welsch-Asante, 1993). In this sense, art serves an alternate Afrocentric *Asili*, and we comprehend it through the spirit of an African *Utamaroho*[8] that frames aesthetics as an embodied and incarnate element of the developing cosmic Self

in which all beings are bound. By this, Afroaesthetics is a way of expanding African Consciousness (Asante, 1988, pp. 83–84) through *Kugusa Mtima*, rhythm and symbol manifested through the creative abilities and expressions of African people in the process of "increasing the density of the intangible world" (Asante, 1988, pp. 83–84; Ani, 1993, p. 69). The Afroaesthetic is not something removed from us, apperceptable via disinterest. Rather, we are Afroaesthetic co-creativity in the process of unfoldment and multiplication.

When everything is aesthetic, everyone becomes an artist, themselves their magnum opus, carved and curated over the course of a lifetime as peculiar from the rest of existence into which they are embedded.[9] Herein, we suggest, the barriers constructed around cerebral and academicized aesthetics lose their force. Art is no longer the cold mode of European *Utamawazic* analytic engagement represented in the ritual of disinterestedness that results from the *Utamarohic* enclosure of the aesthetic in museums, galleries, or private collections. Instead, the aesthetic becomes something more that is appreciable by the empirical senses, it becomes 'metasensate' in as far as the African is able to succeed where the European fails, to "grasp cosmic reality" (Ani, 1994, p. 58).

When everything becomes art, each moment, building, social structure and movement an opportunity for deepening the "endless pilgrimage into the possibility or horizon of life's meaning [...] into the flow of the whole" (Magesa, 2013, p. 71), the cosmic relationship between past and present becomes manifest in how we organise society, its Aesthetic character.

This suggests that Afroaesthetics is much less structured, much less rigid, in how it understands and appreciates the aesthetic and its purpose in human society. So-called 'art for art's sake', outside of the day-to-day life of people does not carry the prestige it does in European society – of the sort that sees it socio-culturally cloistered away. However, this is not to jump to the opposite pole and claim that it has no place: any person who chooses to develop excellence in a mode of aesthetic performance would still be recognised for such. What is done away with is the 'gatekeeping' inhered by 'taste' and enclosure.

The examples of aesthetics as contained in dance, art and cultural objects will make this clearer.

Regarding dance, we can compare ballet (of the European high society) and traditional African dances, such as the *Sabaar* (of the Wolof people of Senegal) and the *Gure* (of the Chopi people of Mozambique) as Kariamu Welsh-Asante does (1993). In the former, it is the precision and control of line, profile and posture that matter and inform ballet as the standard of Aesthetic performance in dance. In the latter, each dance is understood as a 'consciousness-enjoining' force where the movements of the dancer combine with music and oral expression to become a performance of cosmic unification, of making lived the communication between complex overlapping and metaphysically dense inter-realities, "of Infinite Spirit manifest in one's presence and as one's presence" (Myer, 1993, p. 24). By the measure of the former, the latter's inaccurate, passionate, gyrating, and fast-tempo movements seem nonsensical, irrational.

Regarding music, we can compare classical music (of the sort composed by the likes of Mozart, Chopin or Hans Zimmer) to Jazz (of the sort performed by Sun Ra and his Arkestra or Fela Aníkúlápó Kútì and his ensemble) as Linda-James Myers does (1993). The former is rigid and orderly, characterised by the written form and its reliance on measure, count, replicability, and technical preciseness. The latter is comparatively (dis)organised, characterised by its affinity for improvisation ("the 'premier vehicle' of the Jazz music form") and a surrendering of "ego and separateness" to cosmic ecology emergent in the interplay of parts, prompting a different mode of phenomenological experience (ibid., pp. 24-45).[10]

Finally, regarding cultural artefacts, let us consider Masks, their intra-cultural understanding and treatment at the hands of Europeans, as Moses Biney does (2018). From the Afroaesthetic perspective, masks are 'reality-conjoining' artefacts and vital-force condensers that play an active role in the spiritual life of African communities representing cosmic beings in material form, transmuting the wearer into a form more than their physical self: the "embodiment and concretization of the will of the Ancestors, a metaphysical reality" (Bongmba, 2009, p. 192).[11] [12]

However, when Europeans have laid hands on them, it has been to extract them from their onto-epistemic reality and enclose them in museums.

As these three examples illustrate, Afroaesthetics represents the interweaving of the artistic, spiritual, and cultural in a way that shatters the narrow bounds of European elitist discourses on abstractions like the concept of beauty in favour of a living beauty in service of Life's nurturement. African aesthetics thus becomes, according to Magesa (2013, p. 70):

> *"[…] the ongoing attempt by people to structure the ordinariness of [their] experiential reality by calling forth into the present moment all that is good and noble (or, as sometimes necessarily happens, the dreadful and unwanted) and making it conspicuous and tangible so that humans can relate to it appropriately. In other words, aesthetics in its deepest sense in Africa is the result of perceiving and constructing meaning-towards-life, the activity of recognising and confirming the necessities of desirable human existence."*

And so, it is this cosmically encompassing and existentially embedded[13] conception of Afroaesthetics that we will carry forward. We suggest that it is best understood as a kind of philo-praxis[14] of expression and alchemical curation[15] whereby the artistic vibe of the universe is made manifest through individuals and communities in their performance (from envisioning and preparation to execution and upkeep) of personal and communal "spiritual systems that see the sacred in the immanent and the immanent in the sacred" (Magesa, 2013, p. 70).

We argue that this cosmic aesthetic holds all life to be art and so inspires/requires that the conscious aesthetic performance of the living human provision existence by making visible and tangible the constellation from which being-knowing-doing emerges. This in turn provides us with a way of approaching life that unites the "social, religious, and aesthetic levels" in pursuit of the "construction of meaning and [the] perception of values" (ibid.).

It is important to highlight that when Magesa invokes the social as part of this constellation, this bears consequences for the communal aspect of Afroaesthetics. We suggest that it implies a strong socio-(re)productive element that inheres into

Afroaesthetics an element of both design and performance in relation to the aesthetic of a community, or a societal aesthetic understood as cosmic communal performance.

This move shifts our focus from the "relationship between creative objects and social life in a given society" (Nzegwu, 2004, p. 415) to the *design* of humans systems sensitive to cosmic ecology.

According to Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò (2000, p. 179), design is a form of artistic expression that closely links "tacit or silent knowledge [such as] the wisdom of our Ancestors" with "[embodied] design processes within culture" and the task of [reinterpreting] these tendencies in the world of the living." This conceptualisation of design gives Afroaesthetics a strong utilitarian quality - designing in order to reinterpret the wisdom of the Ancestors - such as the mask's role in bridging the visible and invisible in light of the gnostic wisdom of interconnectedness (Sieber, 1977). Afroaesthetics, by this sense, becomes a means for conceptualising, organising and performing a cosmic dance, designed with the "perceptible performance" in the physical world and its rhythmic foundation in the "invisible universe" in mind, like a material cloth contoured by the symbols of the immaterial landscape over which it is laid (Magesa, 2013, p. 80).

We suggest that this expansionary framing transforms aesthetics from discussions of artists' ability to create art to a process of design, organisation and performance in relation to a society's productive and generative capacities – from making something beautiful to organising a society that is beautiful. Herein, the locus of aesthetic inquiry is transposed from the individual artists ability to access 'the beautiful' into an affirmation of the potential for collective Afrignostic performances that "open experience onto a transcendent realm of genesis, onto the realm of invention, so as to finally take up its political role of creating a new future" (Zepke, 2017, p. 3).[16]

Herein onlookers become participants, co-creators who together perform in a way that can overcome the milieu of Situational life through cosmic harmonisation,

rendering “all the men and women” of Shakespear’s *As You Like It* into a collective “we”: “All the world’s a stage, and [we] are merely players” (Shakespeare, 2015, p. 227 Act II, Scene VII, Line 140-141).

Of this stage, Afroaesthetics raises the question of its background scenery: that landscape against which the play of life takes place. What is it about the background of a dystopian cityscape or, say, a healthy grassland ecosystem, that has the potential to induce emotional affects and mental states? For the former, darkness, waste, and neon advertising induce anxiety and a hustler mindset while indicating a state of eco-precarity. The absence of ecological harmony throws into jeopardy the human as a lone piece of nature among the urban, the as-yet unexterminated but always threatened, and so driven to outcompete by the conditioned want to accumulate in order to survive. For the latter, light, movement, and natural colours induce a sense of calm and contented wonder at co-creation, which points to eco-consciousness encircled by eco-stability, characterized in part by cooperation, or cooperative relationality, rather than competition. The choir sings together, not against each other.[17] Cooperative cosmic communal performance sits at the heart of Afroaesthetics, and it throws into question the design of systems with dystopic realities for working majorities as their (un)articulated excesses.

In sum – while acknowledging that African aesthetic traditions have long participated in and influenced global artistic exchanges, including European art — our conception of Afroaesthetics departs from the objective purports of Western discourse on several fronts, as part of an effort to foreground African epistemologies on their own terms rather than through the lens of hybridisation. Firstly, it is an aesthetic of living performance, as opposed to an aesthetic of stultified Art, where the former is a matter of everyday-life and every-moment-spirituality, while the latter is a matter of museums and galleries. Secondly, it is an aesthetic of places, things, and people, all in relation to Cosmos, as opposed to an aesthetics of pure abstraction. Thirdly, it is both an aesthetic of individual peculiarity in artistic endeavour and performance and *also-is* an aesthetic of

communality, of harmonisation by a community in relation to the cosmic ecology, a plurality of performing peculiarity, where the relation between the two is mediated by an intentionally cosmic design process. Lastly, and as the next section will show, it is an aesthetic that draws on Nature to inform what it is that appears as health and well-being therein.

4.1.2 Healthy Nature as a Source of Aesthetic Inspiration

The previous section presented a general framework for Afroaesthetics that enjoins aesthetic performance and Afrignosis, this section will engage nature as a source of aesthetic inspiration relevant to it. It will do so by presenting a comparison of agricultural aesthetics as identifiable in the visual character of IAC and agroecological farms to consider the implications thereof. The purpose of this section is to link together the ideas of beauty, health, and nature to understand why, from an Afroaesthetic perspective, health is beauty, and why healthy people and healthy ecosystems carry equal value as sources of aesthetic inspiration.

Towards this end, and given that we are working in Aesthetics, we will employ pictures and still images, or as done above, invoke specific artists to illustrate in visual or other artistic terms what we are describing. The reason for this is interdisciplinary, as this part of our study is in essence an analysis of visual

Figure 1: Pages 82-83 (Kimbrell, 2002)

(agri)culture that we suggest is most effectively done through pictures as is done in critical media studies and visual culture studies.[18]

If one were to glance across the pages of Part Three of Andrew Kimbrell's edited volume *Fatal Harvest: The Tragedy of Industrial Agriculture* (2002a, pp. 67–189),

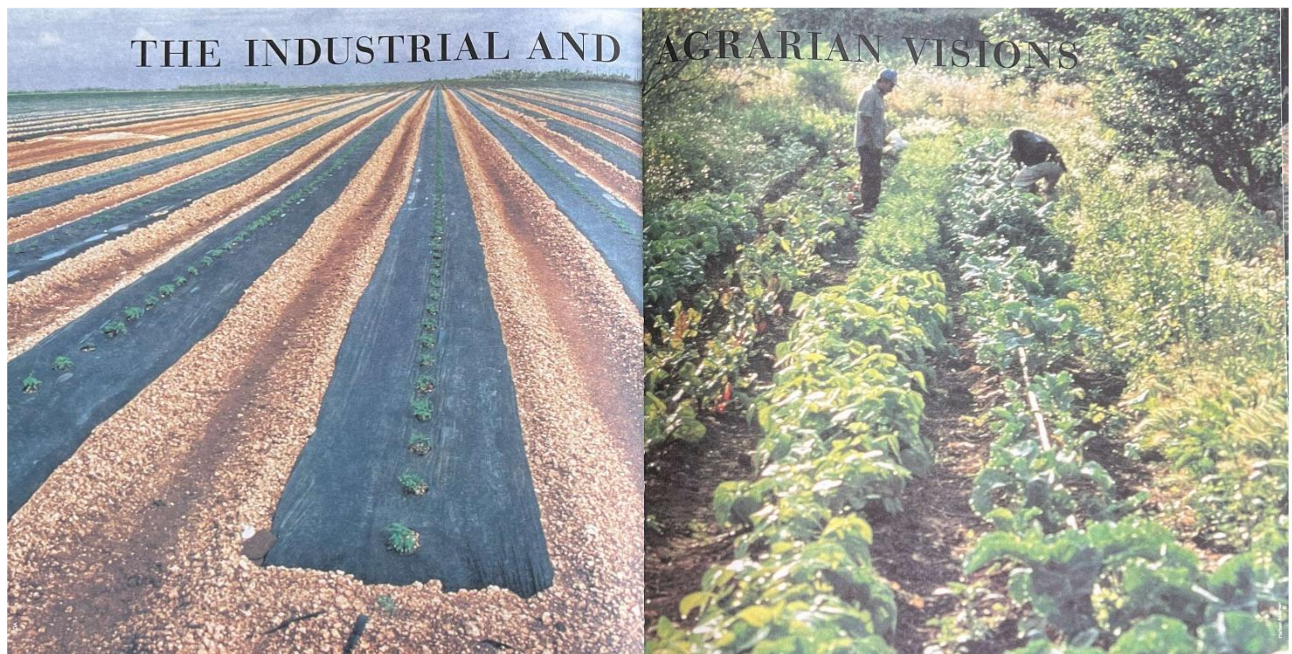


Figure 2: Pages 86-87 (Kimbrell, 2002)

one would be greeted with comparative centre-fold images that juxtapose the

aesthetic of the agrarian and the mechanistic approaches to Agriculture as represented in figures 1 and 2.[19] What we want to draw the eyes of the reader to are the two competing senses of the aesthetic at play, where one is presented by the IAC as ideal agriculture.

The first, pictured on the left of both figures is that which closely aligns with the European sense of the aesthetic as described and characterised by uniformity, control, precision, refinement and mechanizability. From an ecological perspective, as outlined in Chapter two, what these aesthetics signal is the presence of an ecology in poor health, subjected to the ravages of industrial techniques.[20] Straight lines, single crops, and massive scale are elements of this aesthetic which evoke a sense of aesthetic pleasure to be found in order.[21]

Contrary to this sense of aesthetic pleasure, we ask that one looks deeper at what one is seeing to lay-bare the life-arrangement and space curation under operation in these fields. Just below the wonder of scale, precision, and uniformity we see a lack of difference, a suppression of diversity, and the aggressive rendering of Earth from breathing biodiverse pasture and forest to laboratory condition factory floor, the making of *Terra Nullius* anew.[22] The output of these fields is anthropocentric, seeking a maximisation not even of food for human consumption, but of commodity crops for human profit production.[23]

This negative encycling within the complicated corporate food system sees the rich moving soils, once teeming with life and humus and scattered and filled with boundless varieties of ever-changing and dynamic likes of flora and fauna, made into empty sands, uncovered and bare, leeching water to the skies and home only to the single-use clones whose life-cycle is loneliness and whose destiny is defunct. Life here is linear, concatenated, poisonous.

The second, pictured on the right of both figures, is the aesthetic of an agroecological farm, and it, we argue, more closely coheres with the Afrocentric sense of aesthetics developed In the previous section.

On an agroecological farm, the performance of the act of agriculture is done in step with the rhythm of life, the intention of the arrangement of space and productivity being the maximisation of life in abundance - understood anthropoholistically (Behrens, 2010) as a cosmic vision of food production spaces – through biodiversity enhancement (Jeanneret *et al.*, 2021). Dark soils, agrobiodiversity, curving lines that match the contours of the landscape characterise this as a "farming that fits the farm" (Berry, 2002, p. 9).

Looking beneath this aesthetic we see an appreciation and preservation of the natural webs of life by which ecosystems inter-sustain themselves and the expanding networks of being that comprise them. Dark soil indicates good water retention, aided by the welcome decay of fallen leaves and inter-cropped varieties of peculiar non-commodity food-plants. Diverse planted crops attract, support, and welcome biodiverse micro-fauna. Diverse plants made home in dark soils gives way to rich mycelial life connecting the living plant and the living soil in a communicative soil microecosystem that at once sustains itself and its biodiverse inhabitants while also yielding multiple nutrition dense food-forms for human and farm animal consumption.

This contrast between this self-organising aesthetic where nature has room to flourish and the industrial aesthetic where nature is bent to the will of corporate profit production is nowhere clearer than a comparison between the place of animals in agriculture when viewed from the aesthetic perspective.[24]

A second dimension of aesthetics, that of auditory soundscape,[25] is worth briefly comparing beyond the visual and structural to better understand and differentiate the agricultural manifestation of these two aesthetics to bring more phenomenological depth to the point being made.[26]

Chemical herbicides and insecticides have reduced wildlife and micro-fauna, making mid-season industrial agriculture sound unnaturally calm. While radiating dense heat waves off the dirt, the hammering sun is punctuated only by crow calls and cane-rat dashes. This alters greatly during harvest, when engines roar loudly,

booming through the air as combine harvesters and trucks move across the field collecting the farm owner's bounty.

Contra this, agroecological farms sound very different. Mid-season, a densely populated biodiversity drives the air to vibrate and swirl. Buzzing and whirring insects, whistling and cackling birds, bleating and chewing animals, and humans in a state of busied movement blend into a life-filled soundscape. There is no order to this soundscape, its fullness is an indication of its health. Harvest time is scarcely different, only the increased presence of community harvesting efforts gives any indication of it.

While the link between natural landscapes and human well-being is well explored from the neuroscientific and psychological viewpoint,[27] we argue that the sense of being-with and with-in the world experienced when slowly witnessing a wild Savannah lies in the comprehension, consciously or unconsciously, of the absence of planning and structure, but yet of the presence of co-operative, co-created-stability and flourishing which by its so being structures itself without governance. This indicates the aesthetic character of Life's abundance and enhancement, its beauty in and through its biodiversity and propensity to create uniqueness or multiply peculiarity.[28] Once made conscious, this apprehension can elicit feelings of what Edward Wilson (1994) has termed "*Biophilia*" or the love of Life, provided the person bearing witness is open to them.

Now that we have a sense of how the different agricultural approaches beget different aesthetics, we can return to the purpose of this sub-section, and that is understanding the link between healthy natural ecosystems, artistic expression, and our sense of Afroaesthetics. As this study seeks praxis, we suggest that biomimicry provides a compelling case for how nature can provide aesthetic inspiration for ecologically just, sustainable, and beautiful human endeavours.

Biomimicry is a field of study that aims to "learn from and imitate the various techniques and strategies for [inhabiting the Earth sustainably] that already exist in nature" (Dicks, 2017, p. 191). The field aims to design systems that function

like nature or embrace natural functional strategies, such as resource allocation inspired by mycelial networks or bacterial management inspired by shark skin (Bernett, 2015).

Part of its poetic process[29] is an extension of the Aristotelian argument that "*technè* (art, skill) is *mimesis* (imitation) of *physis* (Nature)" as part of embracing "Nature as model" (Dicks, 2017, p. 193).[30] The agricultural philosophy of Agroecology is also based on this logic, while industrial agriculture proceeds from the assumption that nature lacks what civilisation has attained via mechanisation and technology, or that what civilisation brings to nature is superior.

Herein, between biomimicry and our differentiation of IAC and agroecological visual (agri)cultures, lies a subversion of the falsity that 'nature imitates art' brought about by the European abstraction of the beautiful, evident in Kant. Rather, we return to the complex non-distinction between the two as deconstructed by Derrida to reveal that "nature, assigning its rules to genius, folds itself, returns to itself, reflects itself through art" and in so doing reveals the aesthetic intelligence of its self-organisational character as a source, rather than an object, of aesthetics (Derrida and Klein, 1981, p. 4).[31]

J. Baird Calicott (1983) lays this subversion and the consequence of the mistaken 'art before nature' conception bare in simple terms.[32]

Following this revision of the nature-aesthetics relationship, we can begin to see the richness that is brought into the aesthetics of nature through dialogues of ecology and ecosystem health aided by the Ecoaesthetic lens (Cheng, 2016) introduced in Section 2.3.2.2.

When we point to rich, dark, soils, either in nature or in depictions inspired by natural landscapes, what we are directing attention toward is more than a visual cue, but an ecological cue as well, signalling autopoietic recursivity at work in the renewing of the soil cycle and the increased retention of water. This signals a rich soil microclimate, one that is an attractor of increasing agri-bio-diversity. Here, healthy agroecosystems are beautiful agroecosystems and thereby also *good*

agroecosystems as they reflect a way of being that enhances life and harmony.[33] The ecological perspective makes the aesthetic perspective richer.

The ecoaesthetic perspective concretises the idea that aesthetics "among African peoples [...] is based on the idea of health, which to the African is the most beautiful thing imaginable" and "ultimately, a question of life-building dispositions" (Magesa, 2013, p. 70).

We argue that this implies a way of performing that compliments and enhances one's life while managing the tension between oneself and the cosmic community. Equally, for communities, it means a social performance that allows both the complementation of its environment and the communal life while managing the tensions that arise from its co-creative constitution by a network of individuals. The same can be said for multiple or larger communities as they interact within, between and across ecosystems and cultures.

In any instance, the primary aesthetic character is one that can be understood as healthy, meaning in balance and in a state of Life-enhancing flourishment such as the scenes of natural beauty that have served as sources of artistic inspiration. Life in this usage carries the sense of Spiritual force, energy, and vibration advanced in Section 3.4.4. Including this sense also deepens the framework under development by further (dis)bordering the notions of art and nature constructed by the European imposition of abstract aesthetic sensibility and moves us towards knowing what constitutes a sustainable African aesthetic in the sense of knowing-being-doing and shared *imaginaires* for political action.

4.2 Afrofuturist and Solarpunk Aesthetics

The previous section established an Afroaesthetic constellation. This section will use said constellation to analyse the two examples of contemporary aesthetic movements that have inspired the vision and future imaginary presented in this Chapter. It will proceed as follows:

Section 4.2.1 will present the concept of Afrofuturism: science fiction through an African lens. Section 4.2.1.1 will provide a brief explication of Afrofuturism in the

work of Ytsha Womack (2013) to prime a discussion of some examples of Afrofuturism and three notable features identifiable of it. Section 4.2.1.2 will discuss how and why Afrofuturism concerns itself with the future and the idea of Black utopia (Zamalin, 2019). Section 4.2.1.3 will discuss Afrofuturism's techniques (Neyrat and Ross, 2020) and relationship to feminism, mysticism, and the divine feminine. Section 4.2.1.4 will discuss the Afrofuturist approach to cosmic design (Cadle, 2020).

Section 4.2.2 will concern itself with the solarpunk movement: a DIY vision of a technologically sustainable future society. Working backwards from one of its first examples in Hayao Miyazaki's film *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), Section 4.2.2.1 will introduce the movement to prime a discussion of its two noticeable features in the sections to follow. Section 4.2.2.2 will discuss the relationship between solarpunk, sustainable design, renewable energy, and decentralisation. Section 4.2.2.3 will present-reality of maker-culture, or the central Solarpunk theme that its manifestation is currently possible.

Given that both Afrofuturism and Solarpunk present a future with electricity and technology, Section 4.2.3 will explicitly discuss the place of technology through the question of extractivism: a linear mode of producing goods with extractive industries at its beginning and a structural element of the Situation alongside the IAC.

The purpose of this section is to generate and detail what we understand to be some *aesthetic markers* of cosmic ecology and regenerativity[34] both visible and invisible in how, symbolically, space and place can be designed, produced, and consumed in the vision we are establishing through Afroaesthetic analysis. These markers will serve to inform aspects of the underlying political economy and order to be (re)conceptualised in Chapters five and six.

4.2.1 Afrofuturism

This section will introduce the concept of Afrofuturism.

4.1.1.1 What is Afrofuturism?

When considering visions of the future in aesthetic terms, we suggest that science fiction (SF) is a compelling place to begin, given that since its inception the SF genre has become the *de facto* determinant of society's future imaginary.

However, when discussing SF in relation to Africa and all things African, synonymised as black for the purposes of this section, we are faced with "the structured absence of blackness in the genre" or the pejorative ways in which race is represented and visually coded through, for example, tokenism, stereotypes, narrative subtext or implicit allegorical subject (Nama, 2008, p. 2,7). The result of this is the creation of what Daniel Bernardi has called a "white future" by tapping into "the longstanding myth of the natural and humane right of white rule and occupation into and beyond the final frontier" and future (Bernardi, 1998, p. 23).

It is against this context of envisioning[35] alternative futures that we turn to Afrofuturism.

In a 2011 TEDx presentation at the Fort Greene Salon, founder of the Afrofuture Strategies Institute Ingrid LaFleur described Afrofuturism as a transtemporal[36] and liberatory[37] strategy for "imagining possible futures through a black cultural lens" which asks political questions about the aesthetic character of imagined futures and seeks to "alter the here-and-now to provide direction towards a brighter future" (*TEDxFortGreeneSalon - Ingrid LaFleur - Visual Aesthetics of Afrofuturism*, 2011). Along the same lines, Afrofuturist multi-hyphenate Ytasha Womack (2013, p. 24) describes Afrofuturism as a genre that "prioritizes the reenvisioning of people of colour in a shared harmonious future free of race-based power issues" using "the imagination as a tool of resistance" to the perpetual systemic exclusion or underdevelopment of black people and communities in science-fiction."[38]

In our envisioning, Afrofuturism is the first of two aesthetics that inspire us to imagine a different future. Drawing on examples familiar to us, we will now describe some features of Afrofuturism apparent to us and supported in the literature thereon.

4.2.1.2 History, Resistance, and Black Utopia

When considering the 20th-century history of technological progress, and the larger historical narrative of progress as discussed by Ani (1994, pp. 489–507), Afrofuturism seeks to overcome the status quo whereby "blackness gets constructed as always oppositional to technologically driven chronicles of progress" to "represent new directions in the study of African diaspora culture that are grounded in the histories of black communities, rather than seeking to sever all connections to them" (Nelson, 2002, p. 1,9).[39] These histories – of being enslaved, dominated, divided, colonised, abused, forgotten, marginalised, violated and 'put to work' – and the systems that wrote them – imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, patriarchy, apartheid – form a collective past of the future, which is to be reenvisioned, a past to be overcome.

We suggest that this historical background, in the same spirit as Biko's Black Consciousness (Biko, 2004), orients Afrofuturism towards an unapologetically African peculiarity: the empowerment of blackness and the liberation of black people through an unashamed embracement of diversity and aesthetic non-conformity tied to its Afrocentric positioning (Asante, 1988). Where slaves were made to wear muslin sacks or plain coloured, simple cotton clothing that aculturised[40] its wearers, Afrofuturists loudly project diversity – in colour, design, purpose, insignia, and pattern – into the culturally based fashion sense of Afrofutures, as depicted in Trevor Stuurman's *Mama Panther*; or the costumes for the River Tribe Elder Statesmen, and the Doro Milaje Warriors from Ryan Coogler's 2018 film *Black Panther*, designed by Ruth Carter.[41] These conflicts bely a politics of resistance, mirrored in the conflict throughout the film and the directorial choice to depict an imagined future intersectionally populated by diverse, capable and non-stereotypical characters (Rwafa, 2024).[42]

Much like the current work, with our own basis in Afrocentrism, post-disciplinarity and the politics of resistance, Afrofuturism "combines metaphysics; aesthetics; theoretical and applied science; social science; and programmatic spaces" (Anderson, Jones and Jones, 2016, p. x) to "establish the value of (trans-)local

approaches and the implications of indigenous African traditional and spiritual practices" (Pirker and Rahn, 2020, p. 288).

All of this reveals Afrofuturism as a paradigmatically diasporic exercise to reinvigorate the *Black Utopia* from the 1960s onward after its decline in popular thought following the failure of the early Marxist and liberal projects in Europe and North America (Zamalin, 2019 Introduction).

This was clear in how one of its architects, Sun Ra, rejected foundations in thought that reified universality and sought human dignity – such as liberalism or even Christianity – but maintained their links to extractivism, ecocide, globalised forms of capitalism or various logics of exploitation (Lock, 1999, pp. 18–19). Instead, Ra and much of Afrofuturism after him, in as far as it maintains the generation of Black utopian ideas, pursued the philosophical objective "to sanctify the ephemeral and subjective conditions of creativity while severing collective life from the foal of ruthless industrialization, automated efficiency maximisation, lifeless bureaucracy and mindless competition" (Zamalin, 2019, p. 108).

Afrofuturism, then, can be characterised by its anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-oppressive stance, which emerges from its firm foundation in the history of black communities, their solidarity with other historically marginalised communities, and their collective resistance against systems of power-over.

4.2.1.3 Cosmology, Mysticism, and the Divine Feminine

Beyond its cosmic aesthetic,[43] Afrofuturism embraces cosmology in the sense discussed in Section 3.2.2.1 to interlink humanity in the chain of being on Earth and beyond. Astrology and imagery relating to space were central to Sun Ra's aesthetic, for example, but he also made an effort to embody the Afrignosis of Kemet, ancient Egypt, in recalling the connections between humanity and the Cosmos in his name and likeliness.

This cosmology, prevalent in the HI and CI approaches, lends itself to mysticism in as far as mysticism is the maintenance of mystery in the universe through myth-making and the sense of reflexive (un)knowing that accompanies complexity.

This causes the Cosmos, particularly outer space, to change from the new territory of coloniality it has become under the European gaze of domination and control into a space of "mediation, a stellar detour thanks to which our terrestrial condition can be rethought" (Neyrat and Ross, 2020, p. 121). This develops the Afrofuturist exploration of a new 'Space Age' into the "promise of other possible worlds" here on Earth (ibid., p. 124).

Afrofuturism suggests that transcending this world, both in the sense of spiritual consciousness-raising and in the sense of overcoming its real oppressions, is possible without leaving this world; transcendence is the realm of art for Afrofuturists. Through vibrations and space, creativity allows humans to use musical instruments as tuning forks to pick up on the latent vibes in the universe and channel them into a language of its own, music where "everybody is supposed to be playing their part in this vast arkestra of the Cosmos" (*Space is the Place* [Movie], 1974).[44]

In the light of patriarchal oppression as a defining feature of black lives, both male and female, Afrofuturism becomes "a home for the divine feminine principle, a Mother Earth ideal that values nature, creativity, receptivity, mysticism, intuition, and healing as partners to technology, science and achievement" to envision masculine-feminine balance as intrinsic to the future (Womack, 2013, pp. 103–104). Afrofuturism strikes this balance from its early history with the work of Octavia E. Butler, who would go on to influence the work of authors like N.K. Jemisin, Tananarive Due and Nalo Hopkinson, and be part of the reason why sociologist Alondra Nelson would describe Afrofuturism as a "feminist movement" that has always had "Black feminists at the centre of the project" (ibid., p. 108).

The rebalancing of the world through the mainlining of the divine feminine in Afrofuturism picks up on a theme from Ani's *Yurugu* that is worth mentioning here as it complements Afrofuturism.[45] She writes in her characterisation of European Culture as Yurugu:

"Yurugu, originally named Ogo, is described in Dogon mythology as action with "anxiety and impatience." He is "incessantly restless," in search of the secrets of Amma (the creative principle), of which he wants to "gain possession." He is known for his aggressiveness and incompleteness. He is in a state of solitude, having been deprived of his female principle; he is also impotent [...] He was "marked" from birth for failure, to remain ever incomplete; to search perpetually for his female principle."

Dialogues of the divine feminine in Afrocentrism echo this attitude in relation to both the Situation it manifests in technologically rich but culturally hollow futures such as those of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odessey* (1968) or Denis Villeneuve's *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). Like intellect unrestrained by wisdom, progress for the sake of progress, or the reckless pursuit of profit, modern culture displays a significant psychological imbalance as an underlying driver of the metacrisis facing humanity (Consilience Project, 2023).

The cosmic, spiritual, and divine feminine features of Afrofuturism offer to the Situation a speculative curative in the form of alternative places free from oppressions and collectively oriented towards equality of being. This is another feature that we find inspirational.

4.2.1.4 Space, Time, and Cosmic Design

Fusing together myriad elements of spatiality, temporality and cosmology into the process of aesthetic design, Afrofuturism is predisposed towards social design;[46] "design that addresses, and solves social problems [through] the confluence of the designed object and its social effect" (Cadle, 2020, p. 73). Moving beyond the material to more overtly consider the immaterial and its potentiality for "improving the conditions of life for groups", Afrofuturism as a form of social design is a meditation on our "perception and experience of society" that engages the "ideas and philosophies around social constructs and transformations" (ibid.).

Following in the temporal footstep of African cosmology in moving beyond linear time, Cadle argues that (ibid., p. 74):

> *"Afrofuturism's ontological basis resides in a space that is not driven by future imaginings only, but by pasts and futures that merge in the present! This Afrofuturism is located more in a state of mind than it is in design, creative or cultural outpourings, even as these artefacts are physical embodiments of the 'attitude' of Afrofuturism and are evidence in support of the mindset. I call this "Afro-now-ism", future imaginings that are 'brought to life' in the present."*

We contend that Cadle could be read as offering 'Afro-now-ism' as a curative to the 'cloudy' vision of the future that F.D. Signifier (2022) witnesses in his experience of Ryan Coogler's Wakanda. The cure comes in the form of more concrete pathways (figure 3) grounding Afrofuturist cosmic aesthetics in continental cultural signifiers, or a more overt influence of culturally significant elements from specific cultural groups in the design process. Following this cultural signification, it is the movement of social design that Cadle posits as transforming Afrofuturism into Afro-now-ism in a way that makes-real the contemporary potential of cosmic temporality.

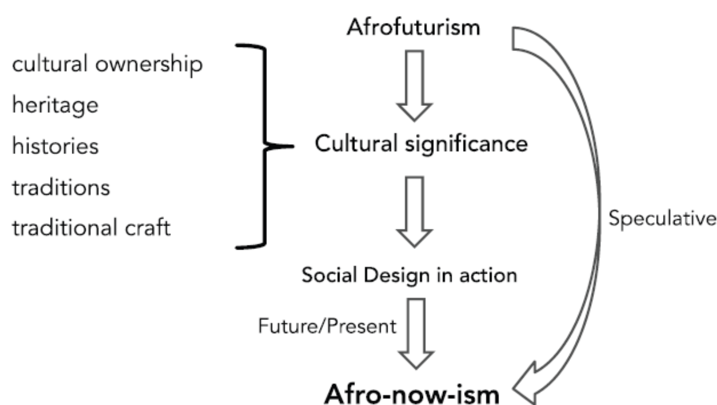


Figure 3: Graphic visualisation of the pathway to Afro-now-ism (Cadle, 2020, p. 81)

Afrofuturism pushes us to explore alternate language to describe and envision our performance of cosmic unity into the present-future. No longer are we humans living on planet Earth and facing environmental collapse, we are now (and always have been) cosmic beings riding on the P-Funk Mothership (a reference to Parliament Funkadelic's 1975 *Mothership connection* and the mythologised concept of the mothership across Afrofuturist works) whose life support systems we have thrown out of whack. Correctives in policy and politics become pathways to reignite

the harmony of being, to lay a stake on the future-present by amplifying good vibrations to shake off the ones who've missed their road (observe the reference to Fela Aníkúlápó Kútì's 1975 track *He Miss Road*, arguably an Afro-now-ist moment echoing the big band performances of Sun Ra's Afrofuturist Arkestra from the decade prior).

Above all, what we take from Afrofuturism is its insistence on defying and broadening the concept of Aesthetics, and so its embodiment of Afroaesthetics as we have conceptualised, to claw back from Eurocentricity the work and wonder, the mystery, of envisioning possible futures.

4.2.2 Solarpunk

This section will introduce the Solarpunk movement.

4.2.2.1 What is Solarpunk?

Part futurist literary and aesthetic movement, part political praxis, part social and future imaginary,[47] Solarpunks engage Solarpunk as an antidote to the fatalism inspired by the dystopic future imaginaries inhered by worsening conditions of anthropogenic climate change, paired with the persistent delays in addressing it as elements of the Situation (Andrewism, 2020; Lamb *et al.*, 2020; Reina-Rozo, 2021, p. 50; Gillam, 2023, p. 2). With a mainstream history that only began in 2008 with a blogpost reacting to an ingenuitive reintroduction of sails back into shipping, Solarpunk provides an answer to the question "What does a sustainable future look like, and how can we get there?"" (Springett, 2018). This question reframes the direction of society away from climate catastrophe reactionism and towards a specific future imaginary that can be built under current Situational conditions (Gillam, 2023, p. 2).

Solarpunk, like Afrofuturism, emphasizes resistance and overcoming. Only, in the case of Solarpunk, what must be resisted and overcome is the (not unrelated) relationship between human society's energy production-consumption patterns, established during colonialism, and their effect on nature. This positions Solarpunk

as part of a larger movement towards "decolonizing energy" (Reina-Rozo, 2021, p. 49) using solar, geothermal, and wave energy.

Spread across 22 principles, the Solarpunk Community in 2021 set out their manifesto[48] to describe a Solarpunk society from which Gilliam extracts the following themes (ibid., pp. 3-9): post-capitalism, post-scarcity and post-hierarchy Anarchism;[49] ecological mindedness, or "an opposition to the broad systems of continual, heedless production that define habits of consumption in the Global North [and] enable industrial, environmental, and human exploitation in the Global South" (Wieland, 2022, p. 18); non-anthropocentric justice; eco-community-centredness; local over national or global prioritisation (Williams, 2019, p. 6); ecocentric governance; agroecology; eco-urbanism (Sharifi, 2016) or green urbanism (Newman, 2010); choosing hope and optimism over nihilism and doomerism; and an insistence that the choices to create a Solarpunk future exist now and should be taken.

This final point – possible immediacy – makes Solarpunk appealing, because the future imaginary it advocates for is neither unrealistic nor unachievable; policymakers and individuals can make the decisions today that will create the Solarpunk imaginary of tomorrow. This essence, of the generativity of a Solarpunk worldview, "emphasizes practicality and doability [and] traces a path towards the future that is relatable, adaptable, attainable, and accessible" (Wieland, 2022, p. 17).

Speaking in terms of the visual aesthetic of a Solarpunk tomorrow, Solarpunk draws on the traditions of steampunk[50] and cyberpunk[51] but opts for renewable technology, light, glass, and greenery, over copper, corporations, darkness, and neon lights as its visual elements (Więckowska, 2022).

Spread across multiple mediums, the bulk of modern Solarpunk literature can be found in compendiums of short stories,[52] on various blog websites,[53] on Youtube in the work of video essayists like Andrewism,[54] and in film by directors like Hayao Miyazaki[55]. Additionally, with the advent of machine learning technologies like

Midjourney, an image generating weak-AI, accessing and creating Solarpunk aesthetics fit for context and suitable for analysis is now possible to anyone with a computer, provided that they provide the algorithm with an optimized prompt. Drawing on some of these sources, we will discuss and showcase some features of Solarpunk as an aesthetic movement compatible with our current goal.

4.2.2.2 Sustainable Design, Renewable Energy and Decentralisation

This feature of Solarpunk has two iterations that share certain commonalities. The first is rural self-sufficiency and the second is eco-urbanism. What both of them share is the presence of renewable energy generation technology.

In *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984), Hayao Miyazaki's post-apocalyptic world, the rural self-sufficiency aesthetic of Solarpunk depicts the possibility of self-governed enclaves of interbeing limited by nature, restraint, and the ground where a community is planted, where the Cosmos establishes life. Drawing mainly from wind power, generated from infrastructure built across the entrance to the valley (Figure 3-4) and from the windmills constructed between homes (Figure 3-5), the community of the valley of the wind uses their environment and their own skills to provide for their energy generation needs.

*Figure 3: Wind power devices at the entrance to the Valley of the Wind (timestamp: 15:32) (*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 1984)*

Unlike the fossil-fuelled power production systems of today, a Solarpunk future imaginary considers the production of energy to be a necessary feature of landscape architecture. Solarpunk futures prefer a landscape aesthetic with consistent and interwoven energy production systems, such as those envisioned by policies like embedded socially owned renewable energy systems and advancements in agrivoltaics resulting in visual aesthetics such as those in Figures 5 and 6 respectively.[56]

*Figure 4; Windmills dispersed between the homes of the residents of the Valley of the Wind (Timestamp: 16:22) (*Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 1984)*

Solarpunk rural-self-sufficiency's decentralized power-production approach promotes diversity in peoples, knowledges, professions, specialisations, and cultures, encouraging communities to adopt the best renewable power production technologies for their location and actively engage in the "cultivation of heterogeneity" (Więckowska, 2022, p. 351). Moreover, Solarpunk, in its commitment to altering patterns of production and consumption requires that individuals and communities rethink their relationship with energy itself, overcoming, or at least becoming cognisant of the 'energy blindness' of the fossil fuel era.[57]

Figure 5: An AI generated image (Midjourney V5.2) of a rural Solarpunk village layout incorporating community-owned renewable energy infrastructure and agroecology*. (Prompt: photo, solarpunk,* agroecology*, landscape, africa, community, infrastructure --ar 16:9 --no scifi --s 200)*

*Figure 6: Still from the Advertisement Dear Alice showcasing agrivoltaics in operation on a farm in a Solarpunk world(Timestamp: 0:08) (*Dear Alice *[Animated Video Advertisement], 2021).*

Turning to eco-urbanism, Gillam describes how green cities "would have a decentralized water and renewable power system, host strong local enterprises, be designed to promote walking and low-impact transport (i.e., bicycles and buses as opposed to cars), have a circular or close-looped system to reduce waste and,

importantly, have ecological (i.e., urban wetlands) and agroecological systems be directly integrated into community design" (Gillam, 2023, p. 8). This all combines to showcase the the ecological-mindedness, or ecoconsciousness, of Solarpunk cities as waste-free and ecologically integrated landscapes and cityscapes as depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: AI generated image (Midjourney V5.2) depicting a Solarpunk urbanscape. Note the presence of all of Gillams urban Solarpunk elements except renewable power which we can imagine to be on the out of view rooftops. (Prompt: street scene, agroecology*, city, solarpunk, afrofuturism, African cosmology, mixed-use, farming, community, cooking, near future --ar 16:9 --s 200 --no scifi)*

All Solarpunk futures have transparent, integrated, and abundant nature through 'green spaces'. Solarpunk aesthetics includes flora and fauna in previously anthropocentric metropolitan sprawls, some for aesthetic purposes but largely for food production. This is another reason why we find solarpunk inspiring within the current enquiry.

4.2.2.3 Nature-Society, Agroecology and Maker-Culture

Solarpunk portrays a society that has overcome the strict divide between the natural world and the human world by blurring the boundaries by which urban and natural, built and living worlds, agricultural and cultural spaces are differentiated from one another.

Taking a closer look at Figure 8, we see in Luc Schuiten's artwork a transformed cityscape that multiplies the functionality of all structures. Where rooftops were once slated targets for the baking sun, they have been overhauled into gardens, sanctuaries for pollinators and birdlife. In the artist's own words, translated from French, he describes how existing buildings can be adapted to suit the basic needs of people "[by] optimizing all the roof spaces, balconies, terraces, public and private spaces, new urban uses emerge through the development of chicken houses, vegetable gardens, orchards, greenhouses, hives, and dovecotes. Using the facades of the best oriented buildings, the efficiency of food production methods is also increased" (Schuiten, N.D.).

Given that Solarpunk is in some sense a reaction to the climate crisis, it is sensible to understand its two biggest features as addressing the two biggest drivers of greenhouse gas production, energy production and industrial agriculture. To the former it offers the aesthetic of embedded renewable energy, to the latter it offers agroecology in urban and peri-urban farming. In a Solarpunk future, everywhere has the potential to be a site of food production, a community garden.

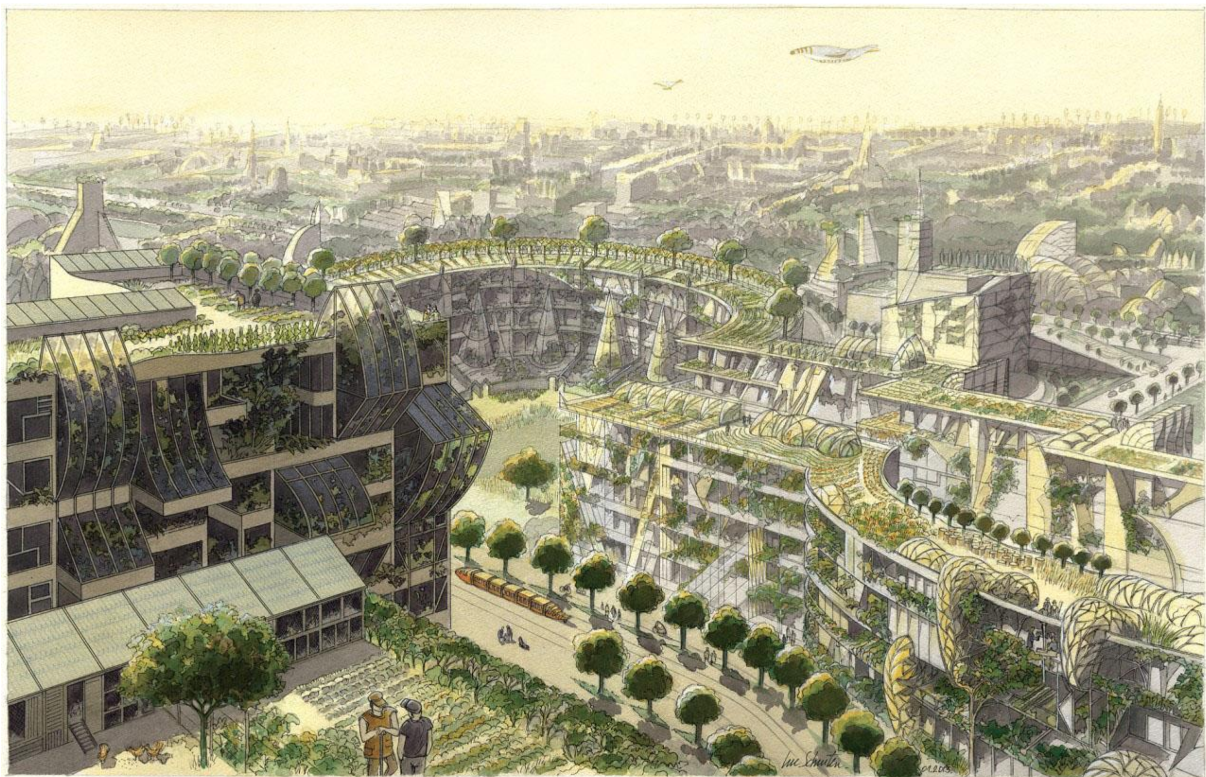


Figure 8: La Ville Potagére (Schuiten, N.D.)

Importantly, each aspect of Solarpunk is underwritten by a Do-It-Yourself attitude – "if you can make/grow/find/forage/borrow something, and have the means, then there is no need to buy it" (Wieland, 2022, p. 17). This speaks to both the circularity of the economy envisioned by Solarpunks, as well as to the ways in which it hopes to reshape relationships of consumption by altering the linear flow of materials through an economy into a cyclical flow where no item, by design, ever ends up as 'waste'.

It is for these reasons that many Solarpunks champion the so-called 'Right to Repair' – a challenge to the rise in planned obsolescence and proprietary repair and service technologies that insists on the repairability and ease of repairability of technology to extend product life-cycles (Hatta, 2020). This also recalls the attitude of 'caring for things' and 'making things that last' that permeates Solarpunk literature and combines with the DIY attitudes behind the Right to Repair to identify a 'maker-culture' as an aspect of Solarpunk futures.

In a Solarpunk future, humankind does not dominate nature as its superior, but partners with nature as its equal in the quest for cooperative harmony. Away from exploiting Mother Earths bounty, communities led by Solarpunks would act to restore her honour, dignity and abundance, valuing and respecting her intelligence and inherent worth as opposed to controlling her processes and reducing her to market prices in the pursuit of material gain. Anchoring this vision is the hope that humanity can come to define itself by a culture of connection, between each other, our communities, and the world around us against the current culture of consumerism and the commodity satisfaction that the market can never deliver (Berry, 2002, p. 7).

Solarpunk's idealism implies a creative reining in of human hubris to within natural boundaries and envisioning a viable future. It also provides a map, compass, directions, and backup GPS to help us get there.

4.2.3 The Place of Technology, or the Question of Extractivism

Now that we have a detailed grasp of the sources which inspire our vision, this section will confront an inherent aspect of both which poses a problem in light of the Ethical framework developed in Chapter three: they rely on the continued production and social integration of technology, which presupposes *extractivism*.[58]

Broadly speaking, extractivism is a term used to describe "socio-ecologically destructive processes of subjugation, depletion, and non-reciprocal relations, occurring at all levels of practices" and is "diametrically opposed to the concept and practices of sustainability (including ecological, social, and economic) if that concept is defined through criteria of stewardship, reciprocity, regeneration, and ensuring life for future generations" (Chagnon *et al.*, 2022, p. 762).[59] It is inherently anthropocentric by its nature.

Our question here is not like the one posed by Williams (2019) through his interrogation of the infrastructural fantasy of Solarpunk,[60] but rather we are asking a moral question about the permissibility of extractivism: to what degree, if at all, would something like mining be permitted when considered from the CI, SI and HI approaches to ethics in African thought?

Mining is an obvious source of environmental harm, primarily through habitat destruction, but also through pollution, displacement, and key resource depletion (water). The scars that mining leaves upon the landscape and those who work under its yoke reveal both the ugliness and brutality that are the "aesthetic of the mine" (Paquette and Lacassagne, 2013, pp. 251–252) and that mining itself is a "callous disregard" of pollution and its neighbouring environments (Mumford, 1970, p. 174).

What then are we to make of this extractivism that remains the beating pulse of history's imperial metabolism, circulating raw materials from the periphery – specifically Africa and South America - across the world's shipping arteries and toward the civilisational elite that are its guarded centre?

Questioning the ethics of mining, such as whether we should divert critical water supplies from dependent communities and ecosystems to mining operations, is to "pose a paradigmatic question, so obvious yet so subversive" that rebels against the unquestionable assumption of inevitable expansion of mining operations and their links to growth-based economics (Siegel, 2013, p. 5). Mining has been central to human socio-economic structures since time immemorial, so asking if it is good or bad, permissible or impermissible, is to step outside the anthropocentric worldview that assumes man can shape and take from the world as he pleases. The "missing ethics of mining" is so pervasive that it remains a striking gap in humanity's highest-level resource conservation and sustainable development recommendations, which even at their finest fail to reconcile extraction with natural constraints (ibid., p. 8-9, 11).

This gap poses a significant issue, and one that cannot be easily resolved, not least in research work of this sort.[61] However, we can take up the *aporia* presented by the material reality of technologies' downstream production processes through the question "Why is it that the future is inextricably and already interwoven with increasing technological proliferation?"

Ani (1994, pp. 495–496) presents the narrative of progress as a means of understanding why it is that developing and deploying new technologies is always already seen as a good thing that humanity should always pursue. As a "philosophy of change", the progress-goal is "neither concrete nor reachable" (ibid., p. 490) and "tends to support any innovation, anything new" and so wherever progress leads is always "good" and thereby "transforms what is merely change into directed movement" towards the future. The European mindview, a mechanical one, imputes onto society in general, as well as industries like mining in particular, the same logic of optimisation through technology, by assuming the superiority of the human intellect and its ability to "complete what nature cannot bring to a finish" (Dranssen, Lokhorst and van de Poel, 2023, p. 3).

In the modern world, technological innovation, regardless of its impact, is by definition progress, and so always something that should be pursued and

proliferated (Consilience Project, 2024). From nuclear weapons that keep civilisation on the brink of annihilation, to personal computing technologies and their role in the deepening mental health crisis (Lattie, Lipson and Eisenberg, 2019; Twenge, 2020), and distributed manufacturing compounding the threat of synthetic-biological weapons that it enables (Bassey, 2019, pp. 117–118), technology and the value chain that supports it is necessarily coupled with Eurocentric future imaginaries and recklessly pursued. "As an implicit statement of value, explicitly stated as 'neutral fact', technological innovation relies on the positivistically determined 'objective' *valuelessness* of science, the highest good, to justify its universal status as 'the human goal'" (Ani, 1994, p. 469).

This narrative, and its techno-saturated vision of where the future ought to head, is taken up by today's 'changemakers', those silicon valley innovators who ideologically push the world in a certain direction, led by a mix of capitalist profit incentives, ideological self-righteousness, 'white' future imaginaries, and naïve-techno-optimism.[62] What we see as a result is a form of what public transit consultant Jarrett Walker calls "elite projection" – "the belief, among relatively fortunate and influential people, that what those people find convenient or attractive is good for the society as a whole" (Walker, 2017).

To use a very concrete example, Tesla CEO Elon Musk is unbothered by the impact (ecological, social or political) of the lithium mines needed to fuel his gigafactories and their production of highly convenient self-driving electric vehicles as part of his vision of the future (Rushkoff, 2023). This is despite research indicating the necessity for reducing individual vehicle ownership and usage as integral to meeting emission reduction targets (IPCC, 2014, pp. 642–645; Milovanoff, Posen and MacLean, 2020).

In terms of the aesthetic we have developed, it is necessary that we resist this tendency to roll-forward the technological progress aesthetic into the future imaginary we have described. Chapter five will look more closely at how we may approach questions of development and production in political-economy differently to avoid repeating or deepening the effects of techno-industrialism specifically in

food production, but also across socio-productive activity more generally. A different approach may, as will be shown, embrace a philosophy of restraint, as opposed to a philosophy of growth, and in the hopes of protecting Africa's "right to define her path to the future and what she deems as progress" while exercising the precautionary principle and maintaining a realist attitude about the complete cost and sustainability of technological advancements and the impact of their place in everyday life (Bassey, 2019).

4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens

What has preceded this section is the establishment of an Afroaesthetic framework in Section 4.1 and the exploration of Afrofuturism and solarpunk as two sources of aesthetic inspiration informing the vision under development in Section 4.2. This section will take these positions and use them to explore the praxis-character of our envisioned future society by considering how it may constellate ideas of purpose.

The jump to purpose, while it may seem strange, is already presupposed by the complex relation of *is* and *also-is*, for what we will show is an *also-is* relationship between the performance of an aesthetic and purpose when approached from the Afroaesthetic perspective.

Towards this end, this section will proceed as follows:

Section 4.3.1 will consider generally the question of purpose as it relates to our vision of a future African society that is, at once, as sustainable as it is beautiful, combining elements of Afroaesthetics with Solarpunk and Afrofuturist aesthetics. Thereafter, we shall discuss three senses of purpose, or purposes, that emerge from said consideration.[63] Section 4.3.2 will discuss a sense of cosmic purpose we term 'trans-systemic purpose' as it relates to multiple levels of Being-Becoming. Section 4.3.3 will discuss a sense of ecological purpose we term 'inter-systemic purpose' as it the relationship between the human-society system and the Earth system. Furthermore, Section 4.3.4 will discuss a sense of individual and community purpose we term 'intra-systemic purpose', as it concerns matters internal to the

human society system, such as the relationships between community members and between people and themselves (Section 3.3.4)

While a consideration of purpose may appear more normative than the provisional framework established in Chapter three may allow, it is worth reminding the reader that we do not intend to imply categorical normativity, but rather contextual normativity, also called a provisional imperative (Woermann, 2016) or Context-Dependant Truth Value (Chimakonam, 2021a). As how to be-with one another may obviously shift over time, we suggest herein a provisional set of relational models for how to be-with one another now, in the grips of the Situation and, in light of the single systemic obligation argued for in Chapter three, that we abandon the IAC in favour of agroecology. It is on this aspect of the Situation that we remain focussed.

As such, the purposes formulated in this section are not intended as general prescriptions of the kind that would over-reduce the complexity of the Situation. Rather, as akin to spirituality as discussed in Section 2.4.4, we approach questions of purpose as a mediative dialogue with cosmic ecology, allowing us to consider the excesses in meaning that overflow conceptions of purpose linked only to individuals. This approach keeps us cognisant of the structural conditions in which questions of ethical action are asked (Woermann, 2016, p. 175) and grounds us in the CI approach as developed in Section 3.1.3.

Three concerns ought be pre-empted before embarking on our purposes-envisionment.

The first concern is the question of why our purposes-constellation ought to be considered at all? To this we would provide some contextualisation's and clarifications in response:

Firstly, in our model of purposes is presented as a relational model, where purposes are derived from complexity in a biomimetic bottom-up fashion that considers a natural teleology of purpose as emergent from complex self-organisation. Thus, we

If anything, we can consider this a naturalist approach, but one that takes a novel Afrignostic orientation as its base.

Secondly, our conception of purposes builds on the Afroaesthetic foundation set out in Section 4.1, linking it both to a cosmic framework, as well as a historically marginalised source of insight into purpose. A such, the proposed constellation is novel in as far as the possibility of such a constellation in the literature is only now upon us with the advance of decoloniality.

Thirdly, given that the CI approach that most overtly appeals to us is not necessarily theistic, our conception of purpose rests on non-religious conceptions, while still maintaining an Afrignostic (de)centre. Such a balance may find relevance with both atheists who reject theistic foundations and theists who may reject theistic foundations other than their own.

A second concern is that the Afrignostic purposes-constellation to follow is undisciplined, in as far as it is citationally poor outside of reference to specific concepts already alluded to. We have chosen to present this section in such a fashion and argue that its low citationality is yet another reason to consider it. We suggest that citationality is, in its very disciplinarity, an anti-gnostic tendency *de jure*. Afrignosis, as has become evident, contains some aspect of cosmic mystery, of non-closure inherent to both its functionality and meaningfulness. Thus, when citing sources, slowly and citation by citation, mystery is diminished, and with it, the type of curious engagements that make meaning of the Afrignostic sort possible.[64] While much of this work is very heavily cited, we have opted to exercise an experimental mode of low-citational purposes-constellation, in line with the (post)(inter)disciplinary and decolonial dimensions of our method as set out in sections 1.1 and 1.4, respectively. We suggest such an approach is also supported by the evidential lack of citationality in African oral traditions when considering the epistemic relevance of authorship in Africa (Graneβ, 2022).

The third and final concern we pre-empt is that which questions our characterisation of African people in the sections to come, where cynics may

accuse us of an essentialist and idealist version where uncritical harmony supersedes the reality of cruelty and violence that has colorised parts of African life everywhere, even between Africans. Provisional as it is, our model is one that chooses to see the best in Africans but is not ignorant of the worst. For starters, from its first usage in Chapter two, we have noted that the sense of harmony that we use to be an ecological one, and not an idealistic one, meaning that we do not preclude violence from our model as such would create an excess.[65] Additionally, the work of accounting for the conditions of violence and considering alternative conceptions of Order that may yet address it remains to be done – interested readers ought to jump ahead to Section 6.2 Cosmic Jurisprudence.

With these clarifications in place, we can now consider the question of purposes.

4.3.1 What is the Purpose of Society?

Purpose, as with all concepts touched on throughout this work, is inextricable from the tapestry of concepts from which it is drawn and into which it is injected. Dialogues of purpose are interwoven with questions of being-knowing-doing and its aesthetic character, and so, from the perspective of African thought, to do is to do so beautifully, and to do so beautifully is to fulfil the purpose for which one does in the first place, and moreover, to do beautifully – to perform spiritedly Afroaesthetics – coheres with manifesting Goodness as harmony with and within Being-Becoming, as discussed in Section 2.4.

For instance, if we look at a variety of exceptional African performers, such as sportspeople, musicians, artists, and others, we see people who have found a purpose and chosen to pursue it, resulting in a peculiarity that speaks to a life lived in fulfilment of a cosmic calling or purpose.[66] Their performances are tailored to them, curated by them, and unmistakably theirs through their style choices, mannerisms, and deepening of their talents.

By 'stepping into their aesthetic' - their purpose – they have created vibrations through their work that have gone on to inspire, uplift, and provoke others. Their existences have contributed to the aesthetic character of existence itself, as they,

products of nature-society, have created art, through freedom, and freely given beauty back to the world, thereby enhancing it.

This linkage is seemingly the unique character of artists and sportspeople, though we suggest it ought not be considered their exclusive territory... arguably the point of this whole Chapter is about a popularisation - a (dis)bordering and democratising, an unshackling - of aesthetics. And so we could say that from the perspective of African thought, to perform a purpose is an aesthetic, and that aesthetics are not merely the realm of the individual but can be conceptualised at the level of societies as nodes of reflexive complexity that themselves display an aesthetic.[67]

Thus, this section serves to underpin the aesthetic direction taken from nature, Afrofuturism, and Solarpunk, as aligned with an Afrocentric, as opposed to Eurocentric, cultural *Asili.* This is to show that the seed, or the purpose, of a culture, cosmically conceived, results in different cultural aesthetics, manifested in and through the *Utamoroho and Utamawazo* of the cultural *Asili.*

As Yurugu (Ani, 1994), the Eurocentric Asili manifests itself in the ecocidal 'modern' human socio-systemic matrix, underscored by an imbalance in the Cosmos, where order is superioritised over complexity. We suggest that the process of rebalancing order and complexity – harmonising with the vibe of being-becoming – requires a compatible societal purpose or cultural Asili which is oriented towards a vision of the future built on the Afroaesthetic framework.

4.3.2 Trans-Systemic Purpose: From Self to System Through Art and the Pursuit of Harmony

The first level of purpose lies in no-space, cosmic space, and the gaps and distances between and across all systems, even those that themselves have no relation with each other beyond relation itself. Into this category of purpose falls equally the relationship between a human and the sun, between a forest and the Ancestral Spirits that inhabit it, and between the communities of life both great and microcosmic, visible, and invisible that together form a cosmic ecology.

We call this the level 'trans-systemic' purpose as it transforms, transposes, transmogrifies and transmutes, as well as translates, connects, correlates, and interweaves, the vibe of being-becoming with and within the Cosmos. In some sense, though the question of category rears its head, we could say that this level represents purpose of a cosmic kind and so will be stated in the most general terms.

Trans-systemic purpose is the level of orchestration, of meta-organisational character – *Asili* – where *Unitas multiplex* as the interrelatedness of parts comes to face reflection: to reconcile and reconfile[68] with the aesthetic experience of cosmic ecology produced by it's-selves for them-selves which together is a Self of selves coming to terms with the shared Selfness of communal selfhood. Stated otherwise, it is where individuals, either units or systems, come to terms with their dual identities and learn in recognising themselves as part of a larger whole, that they must act in a way that both cherishes and uplifts their individuality and that allows them to cohere harmonise with the rest the Cosmos, as a self in relation to Self, a many in relation to the One, a being in relation to the Cosmos.

This, says the Afrofuturists and the African aesthetes, is the purpose of Being-Becoming, to perform aesthetically as a way of communicating between self and system, to see oneself in the Cosmos and the Cosmos in yourself, and to conduct yourself in such a way that maximises, or at the very least harmonises, with the Rhythm of Life, the cosmic dance.[69] Art and the performance of aesthetics are in a way the Afrignostic and Kemetic insight of microcosm and macrocosm, of as above so it is also below, mirroring the dual-identity structure of elements in a complex system.

Afroaesthetic performance is performance that enhances the harmonisation of the beautiful, the good and the just, maximising vibe, the vital force, Life. This is why artistic feats are aimed towards the "discovery of beauty, which involves the process of both learning and producing meaning and constructing cultural norms and social identities" (Magesa, 2013, p. 69). For the individual, this process is one of becoming "someone who embodies command, coolness, and character [...]

someone extremely beautiful and like unto a god" (Hallen, 2006, p. 242). But this is not only so for the individual - it is no coincidence that awe and wonder, leading to growth and transformation, are equally inspired by ecoaesthetic appreciation (Cheng, 2016) as by the performance of musicians and artists at the forefront of creativity as either is in a state of Being-Becoming, of enhancing the richness of the cosmic community, amplifying its waveform through harmonising with, as opposed to against, cosmic ecology.[70]

Considered as the African *Asili*, a culture that understands the harmonisation of human life with the Cosmos, co-creation, 'vibing-out', as its purpose conducts itself (*Utamoroho)* and thinks (*Utamawazo*) differently from one that pursues the ends of a European *Asili*, domination, division, and control (Ani, 1994). Choosing to orient oneself, as individuals or collectively as a society, towards the African Asili, and beginning to organise and co-construct in that direction towards an Africentric future imaginary is *Kugusa Mtima*, force, "the exercise of the African will" (Ani, 1993, p. 68).

On harmony,[71] Ani reminds us of the following as a way of understanding the African *Asili* and its perspective on the order of being (Ani, 1994, p. 652):

> *"The apprehension of harmony requires the ability to "feel" for and intuit a pre-existing order, pre-existing not in the temporal sense; but in the sense that its existence is more comprehensive than that which we can rationally consume or generate. Greater than we are, its discovery takes us beyond ourselves, and yet is ourselves (but not as persons are taught to think of themselves in the west). Its perception requires, at least for the moment, transcendence beyond the cognitively rational self. The experience of harmony is lodged in the recognition of spirit, to which human intuitive response and interaction are guideposts. It is predicated on interdependence. It is the sense of this cosmic harmony that typically has lent majority cultures their human and moral order; herein lies the philosophical profundity of African thought."*

The avoidable destruction of Life represents an unacceptable interruption of cosmic harmony that undermines existence itself and so must be avoided in the path of

purpose, of enhancing and partaking in the cosmic dance. The pursuit of relative harmony as systemic character and cosmic purpose is different from the purpose that pursues power and ever-expanding domains of control; it is this that most clearly differentiates the African and the European *Asili*, the centres of each culture. The former, as conceived from the perspective of African thought, is the trans-systemic purpose of society and being more generally.[72]

4.3.3 Inter-Systemic Purpose: The Society-Nature Relationship

The second level of purpose, related to the first, is that which applies to the relationship between the human-society system, the micro-systems from which it emerges and the macro-systems into which it is at all times enmeshed as cosmic neighbours. We call this level 'inter-systemic' because of its visible and identifiable between-ness in terms of ecological metabolic interaction (Foster, 2000). It is within this realm of purpose that the majority of the discussion in Chapter three ought to fall and, as such, it is also the realm of how the harmonising relationships of things can be understood, a worldview and way of thinking about healthy relationality – the *Utamawazo* of an Africentric *Asili*.

We differentiate inter-systemic purpose from trans-systemic purpose and intra-systemic purpose in terms of its interstitial focus. Inter-systemic purpose is a question of mediating the organisational character between systems – and how we build policy to mediate that relationship - as opposed to the character of the meta-system itself (trans-systemic purpose) or the behavioural manifestation of the culture that underpins it (intra-systemic purpose).

To understand this level of purpose, we suggest three insights into interbeing must be derived from nature, understood and reinforced in Afroaesthetic terms.

The first to be understood is relationality, and no time will be spent on it here as Chapter three in its entirety is a meditation on the nature of relationality and the different ways in which it has been understood in its operation in African thought.

The second insight to be understood is diversity. It concerns a fact of co-existent difference and not absolute irreconcilable otherness that we frame as an attribute and driver of emergence in complex systems, enabling their robustness and resiliency.[73] The intentional design (Táíwò, 2000) of society towards the maintenance and multiplication of otherness, of peculiarity, orients the societal character of Afroaesthetic purpose at the inter-systemic level. Otherness, so framed, should be considered a net positive, unavoidable and inherent, to be recognized as other, to be welcomed, and not a net negative, an unacceptably other other, to be avoided, judged, discouraged, and eliminated. This perspective echoes the unity of being as a total concept to which there is no other to being itself, a non-divisible whole and non-uniform unity (Ramose, 2002a; Chimakonam, 2021b).

From the perspective of nature, diversity presents as biodiversity.[74] But from the perspective of society, diversity presents as the plurality of human peculiarity, a contextualising force of creativity that embraces difference as strength and rejects monoculturation, or the 'flattening of the texture of human difference' in pursuit of "the kind of social order implicated in arguments of sameness" (Dubbeld, 2010, p. 83). Plurality is socially arranging many people - no two alike - to create an aesthetic of multiplicity consisting of varied sensual experiences of being.

A key insight of diversity is that it begets richer diversity (Burger, 2016). The relation of a diverse being to other diverse beings enables, reinforces, and supports the emergent individuality and uniqueness of any individual being in relation to the world. Sameness, and attempts at manifesting sameness, always and without fail, undermine the resiliency, robustness and value of any process, being, system, or commodity.[75] Ecological wholeness, defined as a "dynamic unity of diversity", "is not a function of simplicity and homogeneity, but of complexity and variety" (Bookchin, 1982, p. 24).

The third and last point of inter-systemic purpose to be understood is reciprocity. We define reciprocity analogously to what Shiva calls the 'law of return' as a way of realising (Vervaeke, Lillicrap and Richards, 2012) that we must "give back to

nature and society what we receive from them" (Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 18). An example of this would be the giving back of biomass to the soil through composting and mulching, or the giving back of education through mentoring and inter-generational spaces.

Different from anthropocentric conceptions of reciprocity, which import an intention to receive in return for giving, non-anthropocentric conceptions of reciprocity both scientifically comply with the idea of biologically evolved reciprocal altruism,[76] and ideologically align with interbeing as cooperation and the concept of "unconditional love and unconditional giving" taught to us by trees (Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 22). Seen through this lens, trees who shed their leaves are not only partaking in aesthetic performance but also providing for the cycle of life and protecting the soil, bolstering its ability to retain water, recycle nutrients and support life.

Using these three insights we come to learn that "uniformity and diversity are not just patterns of land use, they are ways of thinking and ways of living" (Shiva, 1993, p. 238).

Thus, to mediate the relationship between human society and the Earth system would require a conscious choice to embrace the "culture of the forest" (Shiva and Shiva, 2020, p. 23) understood through the insights of relationality, diversity and reciprocity as elements of purpose at the inter-systemic level in relation to trans- and inter-systemic purpose.

These three characteristics of living systems serve as a return to and enhancement of one another, each different and yet interconnected, themselves constellated as and by their own insights, and thus interstitial to all existent things in the network of interbeing.

4.3.4 Intra-Systemic Purpose: The Human-Human Relationship

The third level of purpose concerns the relationship between people within the human community and between them and themselves, making it both the most intimate and the most confronting for reasons we will explore. This political level will structure how ways of being-knowing-doing become prefigured and go on to

mediate the level of purpose into which all human communities – together the human-society system - are encompassed and through which their collective system-presence will come to impact the Life-world.

We call this level the intra-systemic level – or within the system - because it concerns the behaviour and relational mode between the parts of the identifiable system that is 'ours', that humanity has made and can most consciously remake and choose to evolve: the human system. In short, this is purpose performed between friends, strangers, family members, lovers, communities, nations, and peoples and thus a question of the *Utamoroho* of the human-human interaction.

At this level of purpose, we find abundance-hospitality-generosity as an interlinked concept tied into knowing-being-doing that describes together a way of framing intra- and inter-personal and inter-community interactions, or a way of dealing with the other, whether they be shadow, neighbour, or foreigner, visible or invisible. The motivating force binding this way of doing and the reason for acting is gratitude, grounded in love, for cosmic community as it sustains us and so is sustained by us.

Regarding abundance-hospitality-generosity and our usage of each term, we suggest the following: abundance is a mindset for being-together that lives in the African *Utamawazo* and understands the purpose of being as plentiful by way of relationality, diversity and reciprocity when respected;[77] hospitality is a disposition that one has towards guests, or more philosophically 'the other' - a concept that we will nuance at the intersection of African thought and Critical Complexity theory in a moment; and Generosity is the exercise of liberality in sharing. We use them together to provision a loving way of living together that is based in resource sharing, gifting and the pursuit of reasonable sufficiency.

Abundance-hospitality-generosity translates into a way of Being-with aimed at experiences of welcomeness, friendliness, familiarity, neighbourliness, compassion, empathy, and solidarity. It is the willingness to open oneself and one's home, one's self, to the shadow, the other, the foreigner, at great risk and in-spite of great

risk, but in recognition of the other, not as absolute other, but as co-constitutive other, the other that makes more of one's self and of the life world, and to whom one may offer the experience of oneself in mutual creation.

In the same moment, it is the responsibility of the other and the foreigner to receive hospitable treatment graciously and moderately, to give of oneself to be afforded belonging and respond to the unspoken responsibility to share and co-create, to understand oneself as both host and guest.[78] It is the recognition that "we are the other [and] are all other to each other" in our shared vulnerability and fragility (Kearney and Fitzpatrick, 2021, p. 107).

However, the very concept of 'the other at the door' is rendered suspicious from the holist perspective of African thought, for which there can be no other, as relationally there is only difference and no hard-dualism of the sort by which the Self/other dichotomy has historically been maintained. Contextually, 'the other' is only an extension, by default and by potential, of oneself. The perceived threat of the other is, in a sense, over-hyped and made out to be greater than its reality. And even in the unlikely case the other does seek annihilation and not merely recognition as different but equally valid to the Self. From an African *Utamawazo.* Death is not a full-stop but a change of spiritual state.

While strangers and foreigners are no doubt '*the other'* in some sense, being different from ourselves, they are not the strong philosophically confrontational and threatening *other*.

From the African spiritual perspective "a visitor is *always* a gift" and so invokes a cosmic ecology of gifting[79] by which both sharing in and contributing to the communal pool of resources – acting generously towards *the other* in light of cosmic reciprocity - becomes a "spiritual requirement" of belonging, of *Ubu-ntu* as a "quality of groups and communities, in whom reputations of kindness, hospitality and sharing are perceived" (Magesa, 2013, pp. 96–97 our emphasis). Hospitality-generosity-abundance in this sense and taken in the larger cosmic framework constellated thus far opens the meaning of gift up to also include the gift of food,

as much as the gift of a smile, a lesson, an offering left at a tree for the Ancestors and a warm welcome, a bed on which to rest one's head, or a patient ear willing to hear the story of the other.

The concept of 'leaving an offering from one's table for the Ancestors or Spirits' is worth double-clicking on for a moment. Is it not fascinating that the tradition, common across African communities, of taking some of the food prepared for the living community and offering it to the Ancestors, by physically taking it and placing it by a shrine, a sacred grove, or a tree of great importance, symbolically reminds us that we must give back? That food left out for the Ancestors would no doubt be consumed by animals, who as integral parts of nature's compost cycle (their digestive tracts specifically, as well as our own), would then go on to spread that form of nutrients back into the Earth-life system. Food, in a sense, and understood as a symbolic and practical placeholder in African ritual, becomes the embodied flow of vital-force, ecologically interpreted as nutrition cycling.

Returning to the Gift, but encircling its ecological dimension, we can understand the products of nature – for example, food, air, wood-material, and rain - are all gifts given conditionally by nature or the cosmic community and result in abundance and the alleviation of scarcity. However, this is only when they are properly shared and managed in reverence of the cosmic community. Another Afrignostic theme in African folklore - that disrespecting sacred land could incur the wrath of the Ancestors and result in famine - symbolically teaches us this (Madavo, 2019). It is nature, who to us, is host (Kearney and Fitzpatrick, 2021, p. 108), and for whom we are guests who ought to be - but are currently not, at least in any systemically meaningful way – partaking in gift exchange economies with ourselves, each other and the cosmic community.

Such an exchange becomes a flow of "reciprocal hospitality" that "values abundance over affluence, gratuity over greed, compassion over unfettered consumption, goods over commodities" and moves social formations away from mindsets of scarcity ("competition and calculation") and towards mindsets of

sufficiency ("collaboration and contribution") (Kearney and Fitzpatrick, 2021, pp. 7–8).[80]

When recognising that we can and in some senses already do exist enmeshed in a network of reciprocal hospitality, it is the gratitude of this recognition that reminds and motivates us to act abundantly-hospitably-generously towards the other.

Learning from nature and its creative principle, the creation, maintenance, and reinforcement of relationships characterised by abundance-hospitality-generosity leads to the elimination of states of scarcity in any form including a scarcity of meaning and any monoculturation of the Life-world that would reduce plentiful sufficiency. This *Utamaroho* manifests as a way of being with and being within of prefiguring harmonious relations integrated with the *Utamawazo* and nurturing the *Asili* of an African culture. What must be made through abundance-hospitality-generosity is plentiful life, a celebration of being between, within, and among humans that act communally towards the enhancement of Life in and as a part of the cosmic community.

4.4 Summary

This chapter established four things:

Firstly, it proffered Afroaesthetics as a framework for approaching aesthetics from an African Utamawazo by challenging dominant Eurocentric traditions of aesthetic abstraction and proposing instead that aesthetic value arises from the relational, spiritual, and ecological interweaving of Life. This reorientation us from considering nature merely as a backdrop for beauty to foreground nature as a spirited source of meaning, moral intuition, and design at individual, communal and societal levels.

Second, it explored Afrofuturism and Solarpunk as future-oriented aesthetic inspiration constellations for envisioning what post-industrial, decolonial African futures might look like and how they may be rendered thinkable, doable, and feelable. Herein, Afrofuturism was framed as a pathway to reclaiming space, time, cosmological centrality, and ancestral mysticism in service of liberation and the

resurgence of the divine feminine, while Solarpunk offered resources for foregrounded prefigurative socio-ecological design, decentralised energy systems, and a maker culture of DIY as technocultural expressions of planetary care.

Third, the Chapter applied these aesthetic logics to elaborate a three-tiered vision of purpose for a future African society rooted in agroecology: trans-systemic purpose, concerning the spiritual-artistic alignment of individual and cosmos; inter-systemic purpose, concerning the ethical orientation of society toward nature; and intra-systemic purpose, concerning the relational ethos between people, articulated through a praxis of abundance-hospitality-generosity.

Fourthly, it argued that aesthetic experience is not merely reflective but deeply generative - that is, that Afroaesthetic vision performs purpose into being, transforming 'what is' through the cultivation and nourishment of 'what could be'. Drawing on Afrignosis, we advanced a framing whereby the future society we aim to realise emerges as one where beauty and ethics are co-constitutive, and where material sufficiency and spiritual reciprocity are not opposed but mutually reinforcing.

Overall, the Chapter served to adumbrate an Afrignostic aesthetic vision to reclaim the future imaginary from dystopia and make a beautiful future feel possible again. It did so by offering a compass and destination for the chapters that follow, where the political-economic and ethical-spiritual conditions for this vision's realisation are taken up as matters of radical reorganisation and planetary becoming.

Notes

[1] See Sect. 3.4.5 Placing the Obligation to Abandon Industrial Agriculture in its Material and Ethical-Spiritual Context for a discussion of why this obligation is contextually true, at least from two of the three approaches to ethics in African thought that we consider.

[2] Future is taken here, and throughout this chapter, in the sense employed by Ghanaian novelist Ayi Kwei Armah to denote not an event, but a process that "cannot be captured in a single transient moment but is rather a flux or continuity that should unceasingly infiltrate into the present" (Jlel, 2022, p. 20).

[3] We introduce this neologism as a combination of Afrocentrism and aesthetics.

[4] While the title of this chapter may suggest that it is solely about aesthetics, a term we will unpack as conceptually colonized, its purpose is also to reclaim and reorganize aesthetics as a relevant political concept that affects society's organizational potential in relation to the Earth-life system and defines, at its core, the integral collective imagination around which people organize themselves and form a shared-vision for a future society and future culture. The therapeutic potential of art to heal the psyche and soul from trauma is well documented (Hogan, 2001; Luethje, 2009), however its potential as a mode of collective healing at a societal scale, say from the trauma of colonialism in Africa,

remains underexplored. This chapter thus takes up the opportunity this gap presents to consider Art, society, decoloniality and the future at once, bridging divergent aspects of reality from the spiritual to the material in pursuit of meaningful Afrignostic-praxis that "[transforms] what is ordinarily perceived to be a politically irrelevant, academic and narrowly theoretical discussions [of aesthetics] into what may be the most compelling issue facing the contemporary African world: How can we create, affirm and intensify an African national consciousness?" (Ani, 1993, p. 63).

[5] For this, we will be using the work of Magesa (2013), Welsch-Asante (1993), Myer (1993), Biney (2018), Ochieng (2018), Bongmba (2009), Thomas (2009), and Ani (1993, 1994)

[6] Presupposing conclusions from the outset is done here in Rancierian sense by which he utilises the declassifying power of equality when treated as a starting point and not a goal (May, 2007, p. 25; Rancière and Heron, 2021, p. 32).

[7] The irony of our naming the European conception of aesthetics a 'mess' will not be lost on the reader as we move through this section.

[8] Ani (1994, p. 29) describes the African and other non-European Utamaroho as a way of being in which "[t]he universe to which they relate is sacred in origin, is organic, and is a true "Cosmos". Human beings are part of the Cosmos and as such relate intimately with other cosmic beings. Knowledge of the universe comes through relationship with it and through perception of spirit in matter. The universe is one; spheres are joined because of a single unifying force that pervades all being. Meaningful reality ensues from this force. These worldviews are reasonable but not rationalistic: complex yet lived. They tend to be expressed through logic of metaphor and complex symbolism."

[9] This is not, however, to say that there is no differentiated person we could call an 'artist' or no entity that we could call 'art' from the African perspective, these identifiers persist though represent something much more than themselves in choosing to purposefully act and embody points of concentrated Kugusa Mtima (Ani, 1993). What changes when we depart from the European perspective is less a dissolution of 'art' and the 'artist' than a widening of the epistemic aperture by which we can understand these terms beyond the strict confines of the European *Utamawazo*.

[10] While it will not be the lens through which we will articulate Afroaesthetics, phenomenology is a tool that can be used to explain the fullness of experience with which this chapter dances. We use the term here to denote the nature of the experience of consciousness in realities structured from and towards different aesthetic starting points with different ontological and metaphysical basis. From this perspective, a society oriented towards an Afrocentric aesthetic and a society oriented towards a Eurocentric aesthetic will manifest themselves in wholly different conscious experiences of aesthetic character, shaped by differed sensual stimuli including the five senses triggered by smells, sights, tastes, sounds, textures and feelings, but not precluding those sensuous experiences beyond them such as feelings and foresights emanating from the spiritual sense attuned to the vibe of places, spaces, and peoples.

[11] In traditional African societies, Masks are used *functionally* to generate feelings and make the invisible visible (Ani, 1993; Biney, 2018), and so are spiritual beings manifest as 'objects' with an aesthetic character that bring together many elements of thought, symbol, icon, animal motifs, natural materials, paints, and colours and "prompt social responses" (Gaskins, 2019, p. 151). They combine the "emotional-spiritual and the rational-material" in line with "sacralized patterns and [the] existence of the total lifeways of the group" (Ani, 1994, p. 203,209). As such, masks are representative of a slew of cultural-spiritual "artifacts and performances [embedded] in thick social ontologies", that when considered in such a context, allow us to better understand "actually existing as well as utopian iterations of artistry and craft than those that begin with normative principles of aesthetic analysis and criticism" (Ochieng, 2018, p. 147).

[12] This function is bound with the character of society and becomes an aspect of what some call "everyday aesthetics" in as far as the functionality of African aesthetics speaks to not merely art, but also "everyday events, settings, activities and their related human interactions and experience" (Biney, 2018, pp. 124–127).

[13] Where every action has a supernatural significance, it is impossible to have any force in existence without its tending to give colour to all the institutions existing among men" (Macdonald, 1883, p. 199).

[14] We use the term 'Philo-praxis' here as it is used in the emerging Azanian philosophical literature, which takes the unjust *reality* of Africans as its primary object of philosophising as opposed to merely engaging philosophical text, though its success in doing so has yet to be seen and will only be seen as time unfolds itself. Nonetheless, the philo-praxis stance indicates that from the perspective of African thought, the practice of philosophy has an undoubtably "constructive aspect" oriented towards the living liberation of African peoples and the land of Africa from colonialism and its legacy as Eurocentric administration (Dladla, 2017b). This a large topic we will return to in greater detail in Ch. 6.

[15] Alchemy, in the sense it is used here, relates to the symbolic transitioning of conscious states and the attainment of higher states of consciousness in line with the journey of self-knowing and Self-becoming adequately captured in the sense of *Ubu-ntu* as a process of "incessant continual concrete manifestation" and "unfoldment" (Ramose, 2003b, p. 271). Traced back into its prehistoric lineage, Alchemy finds its earliest expressions in the Kemetic religions of old-kingdom Egypt before being taken up by the Gnostics of pre-Christian Europe, as well as by some pre-Socratic thinkers and Neo-Platonists before becoming canonised by the various Hermetic orders that followed the teachings of the Hermes Trismegistus. This lineage, at least in Europe and the "West", closely aligns with the history of Western Mysticism. See Ch. 1 n. 5.

[16] While Zepke (2017) is undertaking a reification of Kant's aesthetic impulse and in keeping with the Eurocentric conception of the Aesthetic - he later reigns back this argumentative direction after considering the position of

'speculative anti-aesthetics', a position friendly to our Afroaesthetic framework - we find his phrasing apt in describing the potential of art to open new horizons appealing.

[17] The claim being made by authors like Martin Nowak and Roger Highfield (2011), William Burger (2016), Christin Ohlson (2022), and Elisabet Sahtouris (2000, 2014), is not that all relations in nature are cooperative, but that cooperation is a general principle that enabled the evolution of complexity understood as biodiversity, ecosystems, and the organisation of the Life-world, and concomitantly, that building economic and social systems that foster competition is in our collective disinterest. Moreover, their work supports the thesis that through altruism as an evolutionary drive, we can account for our evolution as a species through cooperation as opposed to competition in the Malthusian reading of Darwin. Of specific interest here is the Martin Nowak and Sarah Coakley edited volume entitled *Evolution, Games, and God: The Principle of Cooperation* (2013), which explores cooperation in evolutionary systems from angles as diverse as biology, ecology, mathematics, philosophy and theology.

[18] Although, such is mere approximation. We recommend that if one wants to fully grasp the aesthetic differentiation being described, between the ecoaesthetic of natural systems and the factory aesthetic of industrial systems, it requires a degree of immersion to bathe in the complete aesthetic experience. This can mean going to visit a space of each type for a number of hours, or alternatively, moving through media such as Godfrey Reggio's non-narrative film trilogy *Qatsi*. Comprising of *Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance* (1982), *Powaqqatsi: Life in Transformation* (1988), and *Naqoyqatsi: Life as War* (2002). Reggio's work, which derive their names from Hopi prophecies about the disintegration of Life at the hands of self-destructive parasitism, is designed to showcase the impact of industrialism both on nature and on people. Through jarring juxtapositions, breathtaking landscape cinematography, and an emotive score, Reggio lays viscerally bare the aesthetic texture felt through confronting either world when aesthetically framed. In one framing natural life is presented as art and example, abundance and harmony, in the other, techno-industrialism is presented as model, progress, optimisation.

[19] This pagination refers to the 2002 hardcover edition of the text published by the Deep Ecology Foundation in partnership with Island press and printed in China by Palace Press International. This is different from the edition of the same year and same published but printed in the United States. The hardcover edition includes many pictures which the soft-cover does not.

[20] We see this as the effect of what Vandana Shiva has termed a 'monoculture of the mind' where "organic diversity gives way to fragmented atomism and uniformity" (Shiva, 2014, p. 79) and is "blind to the ecological functions arising from the relationships and cooperation between diverse living components of an agroecosystem" (Shiva, 2016b, p. 57). See Sect. 6.1.2 Monocultures of the Mind and the Role of Law in Modern Society for a discussion of this tendency in relation to Eurocentric Order.

[21] What would be futile for us to deny is that there is a kind of beauty in agricultural operations that exhibit the Eurocentric aesthetic, so we do not. When simply considering them from an 'aesthetics as a question of beauty' angle, few would be able to deny the sense of aesthetic enjoyment derived when 'taking in' a well-arranged corn field whose bright golden haze on a summer morning tickles the human compulsion towards ordering an otherwise chaotic universe. This tendency reveals itself in the *minuté* of daily human impulses like that initial morning act of "arranging the wilderness of hair into some semblance of order […] the original meaning of Cosmos or cosmetics" (Tuan, 2013, p. 5).

[22] The use of the term *Terra Nullius* here is appropriate and takes from Vanada Shiva's usage (Shiva, 2016b, p. 82, 2016a, pp. 7–17, 20; Hilberg, 2022, p. 126). Jurisprudentially speaking, *Terra Nullius* was the legal doctrine by which the early imperial and colonial ventures classified the 'lands of discovery' as 'nobody's land', and thereby invalidated or wrote out of existence the rights of indigenous and first nations majority peoples to their land upon the arrival of the Conqueror (Pheko, 1991, p. 1). In this same sense, land that was already inhabited by beings in their own right, indegnous communities in the jurisprudential use and biodiverse communities of other-than-human nature in our current usage, is rendered empty and open for domination by the same logic, the enunciative reduction from *Terra Madre* to *Terra Nullius*. See Sect. 2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture.

[23] See Sect. 5.1 On the Nature of Food.

[24] In agroecology, rearing animals does not form part of a separate and distinct type of farming as small amounts of animals form an integral part of the farming system. Industrial meat production sees animal husbandry and the production of meat for market as an exclusive activity that takes up the entirety of an agroecosystem. The aesthetically obvious consequences, in-line with that already described, is revealed in beautiful clarity by photographer Mishka Henner's in her work entitled *Feedlots* (Henner, 2012).

[25] A soundscape could be described as the sonic composition of any particular environment comprising the noises that could be heard there.

[26] Soundscapes naturally oscillate and undulate across temporal dimensions, in addition to the physical, so we would need to be more specific in considering two moments across the industrial and agroecological agricultural soundscapes: mid-cropping season, when fields are planted and left to grow in-between the spraying of chemical inputs, and at harvest time when either system reaches its 'productive' highpoint. Productive here is placed in inverted commas to remind us that productivity is conceptualised differently from the agroecological and the industrial mindview, as discussed briefly in Ch. 2. (see n. 7.) We should also note that the sonic landscapes discussed are those belonging to a region that enjoys

fertile soils and water availability, such as South-East India or the East coast of Southern Africa. While not descriptively dissimilar, agricultural soundscapes in Arid and Semi-arid regions would naturally differ.

[27] Specifically, the case where nature prompts a biophysical response in the human central nervous system is explored by authors like Roger Ulrich(1983), Rachel and Stephen Kaplan (1989), Florence Williams (2017), Oliver Sacks (1996, 2019), and in essay collections such as those assembled by Irwin Altman and Joachim Wohlwill (1983). Kaplan and Kaplan, as well as Ulrich and much of the work in Altman and Wohlwill's collection, take a very analytic neuroscientific approach, while Williams and Sacks prefer prose (notwithstanding that the latter was a renowned Neurologist).

[28] To be sure, nature is not kind, just, or fair – any baby bushbuck feeling the crushing weight of a lions jaw upon its back can attest to the non-reality of these anthoposocially constructed concepts of first-nature (Bookchin, 1982) – but this does not detract from the ecosystems effective, sustainable functioning and its aesthetic character. Being, as a beautiful harmonisation of myriad doings, does not preclude the dark, the brutal, the ugly.

[29] Poetic is used in the sense of the Greek concept *poeisis* as bringing forth or creating

[30] Augusto Boal (1979, pp. 1–8) argues that "re-creation" is a more accurate translation of *mimesis* than "imitation" as the process of mimesis, for Aristotle, is one of identifying and attempting to re-create the self-perfecting nature of "things themselves, by their own virtues (by their form, their moving force, by the enactment of their potential) […] To re-create that internal movement of things toward their perfection." This differs from imitation, as imitation understands the mimesis to mean the improvisation of a thing as it is, a finished product. So, "re-creation" better accounts for nature as the movement towards perfection, a creative principle, and not as perfection itself. He arrives at this interpretation by tracing the idea of mimesis from the school of Miletus, through its usages by Heraclitus and into the works of Parmenides and Plato before its use by Aristotle.

[31] "Pure and free productivity must resemble that of nature. And it does so precisely because, free and pure, it does not depend on natural laws. The less it depends on nature, the more it resembles nature. Mimesis here is not the representation of one thing by another, the relation of resemblance or of identification between two beings, the reproduction of a product of nature by a product of art. It is not the relation of two products but of two productions and of two freedoms. The artist does not imitate things in nature, or, if you will, in natura naturata, but the acts of natura naturans, the operations of the physis […] "True" mimesis is between two producing subjects and not between two produced things […] The only beauty therefore remains that of productive nature. Art is beautiful to the degree that it is productive like productive nature, that it reproduces the production and not the product of nature, to the degree that nature may once have been (was), before the critical disassociation and before a still to be determined forgetfulness, beautiful. The analogy leads back to this precritical time, anterior to all the disassociations, oppositions, and delimitations of critical discourse, "older" even than the time of the transcendental aesthetic" (Derrida and Klein, 1981, p. 9).

[32] In Callicot's (1983) exposition of the 'Land Aesthetic' that he saw at work in the work of Aldo Leopold (1970) he explains how the intention of paintings is that they are seen, and not heard, touched, or smelled. As such, they shape what our tastes in natural beauty have become, causing more people to prefer 'scenic" or 'picturesque' landscapes. Further, he contends that 'scene' in its original usage referred to the painted backdrop of a play and so the phrase 'scenic beauty' implies that nature provides merely a beautiful backdrop to human drama. So complete is this subversion that is has become one-way from painting to landscape aesthetic, making phrases that describe natural beauty without reference to painting or vision rare – 'landscape' refers first to a painting style and then to a countryside vista.

[33] Note here that the 'idea of health' allows room for uniqueness. What is healthy for person A or person B, just with ecosystem A and ecosystem B, is not equal and universal. Rather, like "farming to fit the farm" (Berry, 2002), it is living to enhance Life, or in complex systems terms as we have developed them, ensuring the complementary and mutually reinforcing aesthetic characters of cosmic ecology This sense of complementarity is contextually bound and will shift from place to place and person to person, but implies at once a movement from the micro- to the macro-Cosmos.

[34] As the biodiversity crisis closely linked to industrial agriculture and its tendency to increase levels of habitat destruction worsens (See Sect. 2.2.1 Climate Change, Biodiversity Loss and Soil Degradation) there is a growing warning raised by activists – such as Vandana Shiva (Shiva and Shiva, 2020), Malik Dasoo (2022), and George Monbiot (2022) – that society cannot aim for sustainability alone in the face of the damage already done, but must also aim for regenerative nature relations. This would mean mediating the relationship between society and nature in a way that not only stabilises the myriad of environmental variables in decline through agroecology and agroforestry, together grouped as 'regenerative farming'. Also worth noting is the concomitant goal of carbon drawdown – pulling carbon from the atmosphere through forests and the green leaf (preferred) or through as yet unscalable technologies such as carbon capture machines (unfavourable) – which is required for humanity to avoid the worst of the Climate Crisis (Hawken, 2017). See the work of Liz Carlisle (2022) and Matthew Stephen Alexanderson et al (2023) for this argument in full.

[35] "The very conceptualization of envisioning (as abstract, theorizing, speculative or rational-mythological concept) has been overhauled by a practice and politics that expose Afrofuturist takes not merely as evidence of the freedom to imagine (fantastic, tech-infused, alternative) future worlds, but the need, once more, to expose imbalances of power and set something in the way of material concretizations against existing patterns of domination and exclusion" (Pirker and Rahn, 2020, p. 284).

[36] Specifically LaFluer makes reference to "afro-holism where the past, present and future forever mingle at the crossroads of creativity, sampling each other at will" (TEDxFortGreeneSalon - Ingrid LaFleur - Visual Aesthetics of Afrofuturism, 2011).

37 LaFluer regards liberation-oriented imagination as a key tool and method in Afrofuturist imaginaries as they envision a post-capitalist and post-white supremacy world (TEDxFortGreeneSalon - Ingrid LaFleur - Visual Aesthetics of Afrofuturism, 2011).

[38] In addition to Womack (2013, chap. 1) who notes that her conceptualisation of Afrofuturism considers it an Afrocentric response to the lack of representation of black people (and people of colour more generally) in science-fiction across artistic mediums, but specifically in film and television, Adilifu Nama devotes an entire volume to, amongst other things, showing "the way in which race is represented and visually coded in SF [science-fiction] cinema" (Nama, 2008, p. 7).

[39] Important to note is that while we will be engaging largely with Afrofuturism as it has been diasporically developed since the early 1960s, filmmaker Wanuri Kahui (2016, p. 173) argues that "Afrofuturism and speculative fiction have always existed in Africa. Indeed, they predate western images of science fiction. Our unique creation myths from around the continent are proof enough of our Afrofuturistic aptitude." This claim is easily substantiated by paging through Credo Mutwa's folktale compendium *Indaba, my Children* (1971) which presents tales of aliens, gods and cosmic travel that would rival or supersede any work of SF from the West. The reason for our post-1960s focus is largely because of the richness of the available literature on the movement following its overt resurgence amongst diasporic Africans.

[40] According to J. W. Berry (2008), acculturation is closely tied to globalisation and describes a process through which cultures pushed into engagement with one another begin to lose their psychosocial essence and peculiar character, creating instead a culture of artefacts devoid of any peculiar cultural signification.

[41] Received extatically by the African diaspora, though not without criticism, Black Panther constituted what respected Video Essayist F.D. Signifier termed a "black event" that "sent shockwaves across the diaspora, not just to black folks in America but Africans in and outside of Africa" as opposed to being just another piece of black produced media (Signifier, 2022). Beyond its blockbuster appeal, the movie narrativized the "black experience […] the black psyche" to explore themes of "black colonial trauma, black generational trauma, internal black class struggle, Pan-Africanism, and a somewhat cloudy vision for the future" (ibid.). It was through the Afrofuturist lens that Coogler and his team were able to ignite a cultural moment in their depiction of an African state that never underwent colonialism but presented a vision of what scholar Bruce S. Cadle calls "afro-now-ism" (Cadle, 2020).

[42] Such intersectionality is also embodied by multi-hyphenate Janelle Monáe, whose work "serves as a powerful example of how intersectionality offers not just a way of understanding the matrix of domination, but also an illustration of how the networked organisation of digital media offers new opportunities for queer activism" (Hassler-Forest, 2022, p. 6).

[43] One need only look to the outfits and styling of one of Afrofuturism's progenitors: Sun Ra and his Arkestra.

[44] Seeing creation in this way also opens Afrofuturism up to the healing power of art (See. n. 4, and the feminine principle of creation central to African cosmology (Bujo, 1998, pp. 124–125; Mutwa, 2003, p. 33; Magesa, 2013, p. 73).

[45] Given when and where Ani was writing, the USA in the late 80s and early 90s, it is likely that she was exposed to and influenced by the early voices in Afrofuturism such as Sun Ra and Octavia Butler.

[46] See Sect. 4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens for a discussion of design in relation to Afroaesthetics.

[47] "Social Imaginaries allow society to evaluate their moral purpose and order" and "future imaginaries [are] a vision shared by a group of individuals depicting a desired future's political, economic and social configurations" (Gillam, 2023, p. 1).

[48] *A Solarpunk Manifesto* (The Solarpunk Community, 2021).

[49] Anarchism and specifically social ecology (Bookchin, 1977, 1982; Sepúlveda, 2002) will be discussed later. See Sect. 5.2.2 Anarchism and Social Ecology.

[50] Steampunk is a retrofuturist SF subgenre that "resituates aesthetic elements from the Age of Steam into our world [and] imagines an aesthetic that would occur had steam and electricity remained the primary industrial sources of power" (Brummett, 2014, p. ix).

[51] Cyberpunk is yet another subgenre of SF where SF meets postmodernism. Too complex to abbreviate here, Brian McHale's article *Towards a Poetics of Cyberpunk* (2012) provides the curious reader with a decisive overview of the currents (aesthetic, theoretic and political) behind the emergence and identity of Cyberpunk as such.

[52] Such as Serena Ulibarri's *Glass and Gardens: Solarpunk Summers* (2018), Pheobe Wagner and Brontë Christopher Wieland's *Sunvault: Stories of Solarpunk and Eco-Speculation* (Wagner and Wieland, 2017), and Christopher Rupprecht, Deborah Cleland, Norie Tamura, Rajat Chaudhuri, and Serana Ulibarri's *Multispecies Cities: Solarpunk Urban Cities* (Rupprecht *et al.*, 2021).

[53] Such as solarpunks.net and Solarpunk on Tumblr.com (https://www.tumblr.com/tagged/solarpunk).

[54] Andrewism (2020, 2021d, 2021a, 2021b, 2021c, 2023a, 2023c, 2023a)offers a comprehensive look into Solarpunk

[55] *Castle in the Sky* (1986) and *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984).

[56] The market's focus on Concentrated Solar Plants repeats the mistakes (and inequalities, harms, and systemic deficits) of fossil fuel energy architectures, so decentralisation and renewable energies are essential (Williams, 2019, pp. 15–16).

[57] Energy blindness is a concept developed by Nate Hagens to describe the effect of fossil fuels in altering humanity's perception of available energy with which to expand the productive capacities of society and in turn their populations (Hagens, 2022). He reasons that fossil fuels have created a false abundance of energy that most people are not aware of and are thus 'energy blind' to the complexities of energy production, usage, and scarcity as the transition to renewables takes place.

[58] Although Afrofuturism with its space-age visual tone relies more heavily than Solarpunk on increasing socio-technological integration, this is likely due to the proximity of the first to more traditional high-technology Eurocentric SF, while the second uses technology in as far as it is necessary (and even then, powered only via renewable energy – a question Afrofuturism leaves open). Regardless, either movement would still require the production-consumption of technologies, taken in the narrow sense of physical technologies from digital computers onwards, as well as mechanical technologies. Contra technology taken in the broader sense as *technè*, or "a way of applying intelligence to achieving goals and doing things" (Nate Hagens, 2023, sec. Techno-optimism vs Techno-pessimism), encompassing social and coordination technologies such as language, democracy, and institutions under the name technologies

[59] Extractivism applies to soil relations under industrial agriculture as well as the mining of various metals and rare Earth elements under cutting-edge techno-industrialism and its commitment to proliferating technologies like smartphones, computers, smartwatches, vehicles, and most worryingly in the case of Solarpunk, renewable energy technologies like batteries, electric vehicles, and solar panels. In 2022 humanity mined "almost 2.8 billion tonnes" of metals for market use (Venditti, 2023).

[60] "[…] an imaginary of production. Which is to say that the means of production—the research, funding, production, procurement, distribution, and installation of solar technologies, the mines, laboratories, factories, and finances; everything that goes into producing solar technologies as useful and useable realities on the global and urgent scale necessary—is already present, like a coiled spring" (Williams, 2019, p. 20).

[61] Andrewism (2024a) provides a vibrant discussion of some starting points in overcoming the technological complications posed in this chapter by considering Ivan Illich's *Tools for Conviviality* (1973).

[62] Daniel Schmachtenburger defines naïve-techno-optimism (contra realist-techno-optimism, and contra both realist- and naïve-techno-pessimisms) as a sub-set of the cognitive biases that support attitudes of techno-optimism and the progress narrative as a whole. Naïve-techno-optimism is the belief that technology (see Ch. 4. n. 58, technology used in the broad sense including capitalism, democracy, physical technology, language, etc.) is making the world undeniably better and better but without factoring in " the costs and the sustainability of the story" (Nate Hagens, 2023, sec. Techno-optimism vs Techno-pessimism; Consilience Project, 2024).

[63] To characterise a system as vast and complex as the Cosmos as having any singular and specific purpose would be both reductive and insufficient (See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory).

[64] See Ch. 1. n. 4.

[65] See Ch. 2 n. 17 regarding the sense of harmony we use.

[66] Good examples of this are Janelle Monae, Donald Glover (A.K.A Childish Gambino), Megan Thee Stallion, Ngcuti Gatwa, Burna Boy, Casspar Nyovest, Usain Bolt, Lasizwe Dube, Sizwe Mpofu Walsh, and Jamie Mighti, among countless others.

[67] Though the Situation is currently that of a Eurocentric aesthetic where starving children, impoverished adults, mass die-offs of fish and birds, decimated rainforests, and canyonesque open cast mines are acceptable as external to the aesthetic of industrial farms, bustling metropolises, professional corporations and brand saturation.

[68] See Ramose (2012). Reconfilliation, as opposed to reconciliation, connotes a greater degree of praxis as the primary mode of renewal and overcoming the division of Apartheid, as opposed to a distant juridical notion of reconciliation proposing comm-unity in law alone.

[69] The rhythm of life, that which we have referred to by the term vibe, is a way of expressing that which Placide Tempels had erroneously miscategorised or misunderstood in the term "vital force" (Tempels, 1959, p. 44).

[70] Research into the impact of low-frequency magnetism and soundwaves on mycelial production indicates that mycelia increase their productivity and growth rate when exposed to low-frequencies (Lu *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2023). Uncoincidentally, low-frequency sound oscillations of between 30Hz and 500Hz are also the frequency band in which drums, and specifically bass drums, carry their sound. This reinforces the link between the drum and its role in African spirituality, in connecting people, enabling aesthetic performance, and inducing cosmic ecstatic experiences. In relating the drum to African spirituality, Leonard Barrett goes so far as to say "the drum *is* Africa. It is the key to the rhythm which initiated the dance. Rhythm is the universal life-force, the essence of the African universe; it is the fluid that runs through all beings from God to man and from man to inanimate things" (Barrett, 1974, p. 83).

[71] See Ch. 4. n. 65.

[72] "The world view of African peoples is best described as the vision of a cosmic harmony in which there exists a vital participation between animate (God, man) and inanimate things. That is to say, all Africans see a vital relationship of being between each individual and his descendants, his family, his brothers and sisters in the clan, his antecedents, and also his God-the ultimate source of being. Thus, the world is not just an abstraction, it is a force field with all things interacting" (Barrett, 1974, p. 17).

[73] See Sect. 5.2.4 Social Ecology, Peculiarity and Afroaesthetics for a discussion of diversity as peculiarity and its relation to political organisation. See Sect. 2.3.2 for discussions on diversity in relation to ecological stability.

[74] Ibid.

[75] Three examples, amongst many, show how attempts at uniformity produce fewer stable systems that decay and collapse more quickly than systems characterised by diversity, and in so doing, create strife. First, the failure of the uniform Bantu Education system enforced on Black South Africans during Apartheid. Second, both the wear and tear of components in production lines producing consumer commodities and the diminishing returns on any produced commodity as uniform supply saturates the market and uniform applications of labour drive down surplus value production and the value of the product itself. Third, attempts at homogenizing human society, or ecosystems, through either fascism or industrial agriculture.

[76] See Reciprocal altruism in natural systems as an ecological concept developed by evolutionary sociobiologist Robert Trivers (1971) and expertly set out in the more recent work of Laura Schmidt et al (2021)

[77] That is, Afrignosis understands that reality, like the example of the tree in its forest ecosystem described in our discussion of reciprocity (See. sect. 4.3.3 Inter-Systemic Purpose: The Society-Nature Relationship), is capable of existing in a field of 'unconditional love and unconditional giving' when diversity and relationality are supported by a social order that pursues cosmic harmony.

[78] The Shadow, on the other hand, requires a more nuanced approach, the psychoanalytics of which are well beyond the scope of this thesis. However, worth mentioning is the nuance and compatibility of the work of C. G. Jung on both the personal- and the collective unconscious with the African cosmological worldviews. More research is needed, but there are promising linkages between African ways of understanding the composition of the Cosmos through various mythologies and the inter-cultural analysis he has already performed in his journey to understand the inner workings of the human Psyche as relationally constituted between archetypal forces as the constellated self ebbs and flows between them.

[79] We use the term economy here under erasure to signify the insufficiency of the term. As Marcel Hénaff writes, "Ceremonial gift exchange is not a relationship between humans mediated by things (this defines economy) but a relationship between humans mediated by symbols, which may be physical goods (because they are considered precious) but also persons (as in matrimonial alliance), gestures, words, dances, music, celebrations, songs or feasts. In this relationship the good offered is not considered something to be consumed but is presented as a mark of respect, as an expression of the desire to honor the existence and status of the other, and finally as testimony to an alliance" (Hénaff, 2010, p. 153). Hénaff contends that it is important to maintain both senses of exchange, each with a specific purpose, where monetary or economic-exchange still has a role to play in terms of compensation for work or wages of sort and gifting as total or cosmic way to "express esteem or to reinforce a relationship" (ibid., p. 129, 381-382). In the context being discussed, of societal purpose and mediating the engagement with the other, we believe this differential function is maintained through the symbolic function of African aesthetics.

[80] We will expand on the concept of an economy of reciprocal hospitality more in Ch. 5, but its inclusion now begins to lay the behavioural groundwork for rethinking Anarchism from the perspective of African thought.

Chapter 5: A Political Ontology of Food

Introduction

Chapter four envisioned an alternative to the future-trajectory on which the Situation has set us in Afroaesthetic terms and concluded with a purposes-constellation emergent therefrom. Key to this engagement was that it proposed aesthetic markers which indicate a society to be both ecologically sustainable, in terms of an agroecological base (solar punk), and meaningfully liberated from the ecocidal systemic elements of the Situation, which have also been the elements of anti-African domination (Afrofuturism).

Taking a lead from Arturo Escobar's work on (post)constructivist political ecologies (Escobar, 2010) and pluriversal politics (Escobar, 2020),[1] this section works backwards from these markers to discuss a political ontology[2] designed for the emergence of Chapter four's Afroaesthetic vision, at least in terms of the political-economy of agroecological food production as a condition for the possibility of such.

The purpose of this Chapter is twofold. Firstly, it is to identify and propose a solution to the problem posed by the moral obligation arrived at in Chapter three in light of the Afroaesthetic insights developed in Chapter four. Secondly, it is to imagine alternative tools and concepts for the (re)organisation of our food systems.

To do so, it will proceed as follows:

Section 5.1 will discuss the nature of food and food production. Section 5.1.1 will consider the nature of food by bringing an Afrignostic *also-is* perspective to bear on it towards the development of a concept of *cosmic value*, and Section 5.1.2 will consider the nature of production systems as consisting of, at least, material and labour elements. The purpose of this section is to sketch the markers of political-economy alongside Afroaesthetic markers from the previous Chapter that will be solved for in Sections 5.2 and 5.3.

Section 5.2 will then develop a political ontology framework aimed at agroecological food production as a condition of possibility for "civilisational transition" (Escobar, 2018) away from extractivism and towards a cosmic ecology.

For reasons to be discussed, a version of Anarchism, Murray Bookchin's social ecology (1977, 1982) is our proffered starting point. Thereunder, Section 5.2.1 will introduce Anarchism as school of political and economic thought and relate it to Africa; Section 5.2.2 will use Anarchism to analyse the Situation's food production system, bolstered by insights from Section 2.2.1; Section 5.2.3 will set out Afrignostic ecology: a non-materialist complexity reading of social ecology critiquing Bookchin's materialism as a form of ontological hierarchy; and lastly, Section 5.2.4 will engage the question of Land and its ownership using the perspective developed in Section 5.2.3, as a concern relevant to the question of political economy.

Concluding this Chapter, Section 5.3 will carry the alchemical nature of Afroaesthetics forward to show how it may be applied to the area of food production in a future African society under the name 'Ecognomics'.[3] Hereunder, Section 5.3.1 will describe a symbolic constellation-formula positing an 'ecognomic' insight that proportionally relates living a life of hospitality and rest, constrained by the limits of ecological abundance, to a state of enduring harmony. The elements of hospitality, rest and abundance, as will be shown, correlate with the senses of Trans-, Inter-, and Intra- systemic purposes developed in Section 4.3. Thereafter, we shall unpack the terms of said constellation-formula and accompanying strategies for making-real agroecological food production as a condition for the possibility of the emergence of the Afroaesthetic vision developed in Chapter four, beginning where we are now in the Solarpunk DIY fashion. These are Cosmic solidarity (Section 5.3.2), divine rest (Section 5.3.3), reasonable abundance (Section 5.3.4), and enduring harmony (Section 5.3.5).

As will become clear, (re)organisation on ecognomic terms will require a (re)conceptualisation of Order as it is related generally to the structure of society more generally, and so the relation of the fifth Chapter to this one is one of reflection. Chapter six will consider the limits of the current terms of order and suggest alternatives capable of supporting the African Aesthetic emergence of Afrignostic ecology using ecognomics as will be developed in this Chapter.

5.1 On the Nature of Food

This section will consider food and food production in relation to the concept of value as an aspect of political economy bearing directly on the political ontology under construction in this Chapter. To do so, Section 5.1.1 will conceptually consider the nature of food from the IAC perspective in more detail than Chapter two, and Section 5.1.2 will offer an alternative conception of it through the Afrignosis and Afroaesthetic perspectives developed in Chapters three and four respectively.

The purpose of this section is twofold: firstly, to delineate the markers of political economy for which the later sections in this chapter will attempt to solve for on Afrignostic grounds and, secondly, to describe the implications of food production as a total process, a political ontology vertically integrating ways of being-knowing-doing from their metaphysical premises to their concrete political-economic expression in modes of production.

5.1.1 The Value of Food as Food-Commodity

As discussed in Section 3.4.3, the intersection of complexity and African cosmology allows us to understand the identity of something from at least two different perspectives. This section aims to explore this insight in relation to food. Towards this end, we consider the nature of food under the IAC paradigm, and then (re)consider the nature of food from the perspective of cosmic ecology.

We suggest that food under the IAC's mode of production is first and foremost a *commodity* – the fundamental unit of a Capitalist mode of political-economy in the sense described by Karl Marx in Capital Volume I (1976)[4] - differentiated as the food-commodity from food in a more general sense.

We propose that food production under the IAC takes food-as-complex-substance and transforms it into food-as-commodity, produced in vast quantities utilizing alienated labour and standardized for market exchange. The food-as-commodity model assumes a simplistic view of food by (under)acknowledging the desacralized and materialist metaphysical base from which the IAC methodologically proceeds,

thereby reducing and disjoining food, as was argued in Chapter two. In place of a holistic conception of the value of food, the IAC paradigm substitutes a closed model of it, which emphasises its exchange value and role in surplus-value production and determines how and what is produced.[5]

This envelops food production within the framework of corporate enterprise and orients it toward the production of surplus-value.[6] Marx argued that surplus-value appropriation arises as the mechanism by which the capitalist class extracts value from the working class in order to accumulate it in their own hands, completing the transformation of Money into Capital as its commodity form (Marx, 1976, pp. 248–257).

With this political economy lens in place, we contend that the purpose of food production under the IAC is not the production of food, but the functional (re)production of Capital and the patterns for its accumulation utilising food production as its means and not its end.

5.1.2 Beyond the Food-Commodity: Food and Food Production also-as Cosmic Value

Challenging the food-commodity conception, we argue that food and food production ought to be understood as sacred and sacralising when approached from an Afrignosis perspective such as that which emerged between the CI and Hi approaches to ethics in African thought. Outside of an alienated labour paradigm, growing food can be seen as a way of relating, an ethical-spiritual-praxis, capable of binding humanity into the unceasing unfoldment (Ramose, 2009) of the web of life (Behrens, 2014) through Afroaesthetic performance (Magesa, 2013).

By this (re)consideration, we suggest that food and food production are material processes with labour and resource implications (as will be discussed in the next section) but *also-are* sacred processes in our embedded socio-cosmo-ecological (re)production system, symbolising in reality the abundance of vital force and our peculiar ability to cultivate its multiplication spiritually. Our argument is that if a society produces an abundance of diverse food,[7] such as an agroecologically

oriented Afroaesthetic food system may allow, everyone can be better fed and so made healthier and more able to (re)produce vital power, in addition to the very act of increasing vital force by fostering/stewarding rich biodiverse ecosystems. From this perspective, food production is a ritual process of being-with-and-within-becoming through realising our common need to feed ourselves and each other in cooperative communion with the cosmic community whose vital force we recognise and are anamnestically charged with stewarding (Bujo, 1998).

We use this sacred (re)consideration of the nature of food and food production to ground our notion of value in political-ontology terms as '*cosmic-value*'. We suggest that it can be understood as an Afrignostic category of use-value tying together the purposive trans-systemic insight of relationality-diversity-reciprocity as a measure of value that is (de)centred and cosmically ecological. Herein use-value is determined by a cosmic ecology of beyond-anthropocentric usefulness, and not a closed model of anthropocentric exchange-value, like that which encloses the food-commodity in the money-commodity production system. As such, cosmic value is an attribute of goods produced with a sensitivity to complex cosmic interdependence in line with the law of return (Shiva, 2014) and in anamnestic solidarity (Bujo, 1998) with the invisible elements of the world, such as the microcosmic community and the Ancestors.

We proffer such a change in the concept of value and argue that it may be useful in reorienting the purpose of food production and economic activity more generally. This happens in as far as we can conceptually understand that from an Afroaesthetic perspective the purposes of a future society are not concerned with the (re)production of the money-commodity but rather the enhancement of life. Herein, food produced and the food production mode practised become relational processes through which we are to mediate the metabolic interaction (Foster, 2000; Saitō, 2017) between human-society, the Earth-Life-system, and the cosmic community.

Speaking from an African *Utamawazo* perspective (Ani, 1994), that is a cosmic ecology perspective on the purposes of being based in complexity (Woermann,

2016) and Afrignosis,[8] the food that we eat is not merely an end in itself, but it *also-is* a metaphysical linkage in the chain of being, plausibly involving both the Sun and the return of compost to the Living Soil in an undulating rhythm of vital force (re)production. Thus, we suggest that alchemically we can consider food production to be a mode of energy transmutation with the potential to severely disrupt the entropic balance of the Earth-Life system if incorrectly practised.[9] As such, food production is (re)considered to be a type of cosmic cooperativity as discussed in our conceptualisation of Afroaesthetics. [10]

5.2 Afrignostic Ecology: An African Reading of Green Anarchism

With a (re)considered idea of the nature of food now established, this section will develop a political ontology oriented towards the agroecological production of cosmically valuable food, a reflexive condition of possibility for the emergence of the Afroaesthetic vision describe in Chapter four.

To do so, Section 5.2.1 will defend Social Ecology as a viable starting point for a discussion of political ontology in the African context on the basis of a precedent for Anarchism in Africa; Section 5.2.2 will define social ecology in general relation to Anarchism and in specific relation to the work of Murray Bookchin (1982); Section 5.2.3 will consider the relationship of Social ecology's materialist dialectical naturalism and Afroaesthetics; and Section 5.2.4 will proffer an alternate conception of social ecology in the form of *Afrignostic Ecology* by combining Afroaesthetics with our preferred articulation of social ecology in the work of Jesús Sepúlveda (2002) (Section 5.2.4).

The purpose of this Section is to provide a provisional model of political ontology aimed at making-real the obligation arrived at in Chapter three alongside the potential for the vision set out in Chapter four, and for which Chapter six will be a consideration of the 'terms of order' (Robinson, 1980) therefore.

5.2.1 Anarchism and Africa

This section will briefly defend why we are considering Anarchism in relation to Africa in this work.

According to Sam Mbah and I.E. Igariwey (1997), Anarchism is both foreign and familiar to Africa. It is foreign in the sense that "as a social philosophy, theory of social organisation and social movement, [Anarchism] is underdeveloped as a systemic body of thought and largely unknown as a revolutionary movement" (Mbah and Igariwey, 1997, p. 1). However, it is familiar in the sense of Anarchism as a "way of life" (ibid.).

Across the continent, and to varying degrees, "traditional African societies manifested 'anarchist elements'" in their forms of social organisation (ibid., p. 27).[11] One such element is a noticeable absence of state structures, with the majority of pre-colonial African societies preferring a mode of social organisation that was "horizontal in structure [and] characterised by a high level of diffusion of functions and power" (ibid., p. 28). In this, the element of organisational character that prevailed was leadership, a trait of individuals opposed to authority, a feature of state institutions founded on "imposition, coercion, or centralisation" (ibid.). In African societies that were communalist,[12] political leadership arose out of consensus processes[13] and responded to mutually understood needs through dialogical mechanisms that imposed, where necessary, social sanctions according to "traditional belief systems, mutual respect, and indigenous principles of natural law and justice" (ibid., pp. 29-30).

Without the need for legal 'order' and the state, the modern forms of which were a colonial imposition onto African societies that were in many cases, stateless, "agricultural, sedentary, and homogenous in character" (ibid., p 35), though not without ideas of law or state,[14] Mbah and Igariwey present colonialism as an asynchronous and diachronic process of conquest immediately followed by the "introduction of new production processes"[15] that fundamentally achieved a "restructuring" of traditional African societies to "bind" them into the dominant world economy (ibid., p 40).[16]

Prior to this period, Mbah (1999) considers the presence of "self-help, mutual aid, or cooperative traditions" and forms of social organisation that were "horizontal and diffused, not vertical" to be salient features of African society, which signal

not only their potential for anarchist organisation, but also identify them as a source for anarchists insights.

If we can reason that it was colonialism that introduced the state in its modern form into Africa, albeit in a dysfunctional form intended at centre-periphery patterns of inter-state dependence (Amin, 2011), and that prior to such a period Africa was largely anarchist, as evidenced by Mbah and Igariwey, then we suggest that Anarchism may be a mode of organisation familiar to us. As such, it may lend itself favourably to a theory of political ontology in South African designed on Afroaesthetic and Afrignostic grounds.

5.2.2 Anarchism and Social Ecology

This section will describe social ecology as an advancement of Anarchism and gesture at our proffered instantiation of it. As Social Ecology emerges from Anarchism, we shall begin with Anarchism and show how Social Ecology advances it.

Premised on an idea of social revolution and not political revolution,[17] Anarchism, in general,[18] can be described as a theory of Anarchy[19] – a vision of a (self)organised society to the exclusion of a state,[20] the existence of which presupposes a hierarchicalisation of power relations (Malatesta, 1891; Kropotkin, 1892; Gelderloos, 2010). Anarchism, like Marxism, is based on dialectical materialism and focuses on the contradictions and conflicts in history that drive change. However, the anarchists view hierarchy as the source of tension, while Marxism views capitalism as the source of contradictions.

Anarchists oppose hierarchy of any kind, as by their conception hierarchy, in all instances[21] (but especially in the instance of the state, its institutions, and private property), presupposes division[22] and begets a tendency towards centralisation, domination, and the further entrenchment of hierarchical power relations (Bakunin, 1953). Anarchy, as opposed to rule by the state, is a society organised on the basis of horizontality in power-relations and self-determination,[23] free association,[24] and mutual aid[25] in rejection of the notion based on a Malthusian misreading of

Darwin (Bookchin, 1982) that humans are by nature competitive, selfish, patriarchal and combative.

Anarchists hold that the state, by its nature, organises power-relations hierarchically, between the law-making, governing, and normalising on the one hand, and the law-abiding, governed and normalised on the other as a prerequisite for state technologies of governance such as law-enforcement or the rule-of-law to function (Proudhon, 1849; Bookchin, 1977).[26] [27]

Importantly, the anarchist conception of non-hierarchy is based on the idea that difference, peculiarity, should not breed domination (Gelderloos, 2010). One person's talent for industrialism and another's for art does not mean one ought dominate the other; difference is something to be welcomed and multiplied, not used to justify dominance and control, as subjective-colonial differences between the 'civilised' and the 'primitive' justified the imperial project of the former under the ideological guise of 'progress for mankind' (Ani, 1994).

According to Bookchin (1993), "Social ecology is an appeal not only for moral regeneration but also, and above all, for social reconstruction along ecological lines." Herein, social ecology is premised on the recognition that hierarchy as an organising concept is meaningfully absent in nature though anthropomorphasized into it when studied by humans.[28]

From this perspective, social ecology uses a concept of ecological "wholeness,"[29] a state of non-dual mutuality between nature and society, to "transpose the non-hierarchical character of natural ecosystems" onto society in replacement of hierarchy (Bookchin, 1982, pp. 36–39). As Sepúlveda writes (2002, p. 49): "the point [of social ecology] is to learn to live in the planetary garden without control or Authority [and] let ourselves be carried along with the river's current without imposing a control to stop it. The current of the river is the current of nature." As a part of its goal of (re)entering human society into the process of nature, "no less a humanisation of nature than a naturalisation of humanity," Social Ecology

envisions an "ecological society" premised on a theory of dialectical naturalism (Bookchin, 1982, pp. 315–318).[30]

5.2.3 On Dialectical Naturalism and Afroaesthetics

This section will argue against the rigidity of dialectical naturalism in Bookchin's social ecology in order to create a more conceptually open model that is amenable to our usage of it.

In the opening chapters of *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin (1982, p. 11) consistently distances his conception of social ecology from any "theological and mystical proclivities that have so often marred the formulations of a rational nature philosophy." Regarding dialectical naturalism, which we suggest is a sub-genre of dialectical materialism that expands from social dialects to natural dialectics of a material nature. Supported by anarchists like Brian Morris (2018), Bookchin is articulating the materialist, rationalist, and scientific nature of both Anarchism and his strain of Social Ecology, both of which hold that quasi-theological discourse renders the notion of an "immanent world reason [...] untenable to a more knowledgeable and secular society" (ibid., pp. 11; 179-189).

Now familiar to us, having dealt with a similarity in the SI approach to ethics in African thought in Chapter three, we see at work in Bookchin an appeal to secular scientism, which while more complex in its appreciation of complexity, still ultimately relies on a Eurocentric materialist foundation of the sort we conceptualised cosmic ecology to avoid. For him, the most epistemically viable explanations for the workings of the world are those to be found in a form of scientific rigour, embodied in ecology, that does not default to Mind as the source and sole claimant of reason but rather acknowledges "logic and reason" as attributes that "inhere in the world itself" revealing a kind of naturalist appeal to reason (ibid., p. 235).

While, from our first Chapter onwards, we have consistently appealed to such a reading of natural intelligence, we proffer otherwise that it is not to be boiled down to an *either-or* decision, the bifurcatory nature of which we suggest counter to Bookchin's core project as an anarchist introduces hierarchy. Rather, we argue

that what he regards as 'mystical' explanations - those gnostic outlooks guilty of maintaining an inherent dualism when read literally - are better understood as the dual-esoteric (Coombs, 2022) dimension of spiritual outlooks like Afrignosis.

We argue that these worldviews – which use myth, allegory, ritual, and taboo pedagogically (Melzer, 2007) to foster an *Utamawazo* that recognises the relevance (Vervaeke, Lillicrap and Richards, 2012; Vervaeke and Ferraro, 2013) of nature's autopoietic intelligence for (re)ordering African societies – can be seen as conversationally complementing (Chimakonam, 2021a) complex ecological explanations of nature without the need to devolve into one or the other. From this perspective, spiritual Relationalism (HI), or the "relational monism" (Black and Oeschger, forthcoming) in which it is based, need neither be hierarchicalised into a position of dominance that negates the epistemic value of complex Relationalism (CI), as it finds an articulation in social ecology, nor be disregarded completely. Rather, Afrispiritual Relationalism can stand alongside social ecology in a state of mutual co-arising as we seek out new conceptual schemata for political economics that are both philosophically accurate and politically pregnant.

5.2.4 Social Ecology, Peculiarity and Afroaesthetics

With a critically complex conception of social ecology in hand, this section will advance an ecopraxis notion of Afrognostic Ecology by considering Jesus Sepúlveda's conception of 'peculiarity' alongside the Afroaesthetic insights from Chapter four.

While Bookchin is credited with the idea of an ecological society, we prefer the way in which Jesús Sepúlveda (2002) uses the extended metaphor of "the garden of peculiarities" to describe it his book of the same name.

For Sepúlveda (2002, p. 6):

> *"all of reality is a garden of peculiarities forged from a constellation of other peculiarities, which at the same time disperse themselves in their own universe to the rhythm of the sap that flows and flowers, The fluid does not organize itself nor does it represent itself. It is only a flow. Everything that inhabits it is part of*

its own organicity, which grows in the constant movement of each unique and unrepeatable constellation. "

We suggest that this metaphor lends social ecology a rich onto-aesthetic character and highlights several commonalities between social ecology and this work, such as a conception of vital force ("the sap that flows and flowers") and a sensitivity to complexity ("constellations of peculiarities nested in constellations of peculiarities").

With the skills of a poet, Sepúlveda brings his conception of the garden to bear on various Anarchist concerns, including: the nature of revolution;[31] self-determination;[32] the abolishment of the state;[33] as well as concerns relevant to our current enquiry, such as the relationship of Cosmos to socio-political organisation (Afroaesthetics);[34] the relationship of Europe to the Garden;[35] and of course, the notion of peculiarity, a thematic concern of ours, and its relationship to socio-political organisation.

The amplification of peculiarity, writes Sepúlveda, is "a process distinct from history, that is to say from the standardisation of the official." (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 5). Peculiar things are those that carry the value of uniqueness though are not necessarily singular, as discussed in Section 2.3.2, meaning that it is their differences that both generate their ecological identity and enrich the aesthetic image of the totality. As such, we see in peculiarity the relational character of a thing in reference to that which it is not, measured by the qualitative distance between the thing that is peculiar and the norm from which its peculiarity differentiates it.[36] As indicated by Sepúlveda (2002, p. 5), the making of the norm, a historical and discursive process, and the norm itself serves only to flatten peculiarity into homogeneity and "domesticate" it to a lower rung in the hierarchy of power-relations, with ecological and political consequences.

To return to the concept of nature as a source of aesthetic inspiration introduced in Section 4.1.2, we find value in Sepulveda's framing of social ecology as a means bound up with its ends, Being-Becoming as tending to 'the garden of peculiarities'. Compounding on Bookchin's (1982) ecological insight into the nature of

constructed hierarchies, Sepúlveda's garden of peculiarities introduces an aesthetic logic, as opposed to instrumental logic, into the question of organising society and deconstructing the hierarchies by which it is ordered through a subversion of it (2002, p. 18). In this way, the refusal of standardization and the proclamation of "peculiarity itself" (ibid., p. 6) represents an Afrignostic-like *Utamaroho* that functionally erodes the hierarchical ideologies that reify art and beauty into petrified symbolic representations of the world, to be kept separate from it.

As a feature of all ecologies, we argue that just as a plurality of peculiarity, or a blossoming of difference, indicates ecosystemic health, so too may a bursting-fourth of Afroaesthetic performance(s) as peculiar pluralities related to how we grow food change the direction in which society is heading: orienting us away from collapse and towards an Afrignosis informed political ontology of food production.[37]

We suggest that peculiarity can be considered as the rule of exceptions to the rule, whereby just as consciousness is peculiar to being, and speaking is peculiar to breath, the conditions for emergence of either presuppose a non-hierarchical state of nature or ontological egalitarianism from which either could spring forth as peculiar, but for which neither ascertains any ontological superiority. By this, difference is ultimately nothing more than difference and so our aptitude for reflective consciousness does not give us permission to decimate the rest of the natural order (and ourselves in so doing). Such insights cohere with both social ecology and the Afrignosis, creating a constellation which depicts the primordial existence of Afrignostic ecology as a political ontology.

From this discussion, we can surmise that the emergence of the whole is an endless beginning resulting from evolutionary processes themselves characterised as the unfolding of complex peculiarities in relation to one another across, between and amongst boundless identifiable scalar levels. Herein, it is the complex interplay of divergences and diversities, of uniquenesses and peculiarities, that presents as the endless limits of existence, ontologically, sociologically, and ecologically. In relation, our conscious nature as part of the whole reinvigorates a sense of

Afrignostic praxis supported by an aesthetic logic for why we are and how we are to be, each moment a moment in relation. Afroaesthetics is thus the recognition of one's peculiarity within peculiarity itself as a marker of cosmic value that we ought ourselves cultivate.

5.2.5 Land, a Question Beyond Economics

With an idea of Afrignostic ecology as the combination of Afroaesthetics and social ecology in hand, this section will ground it in an African conception of Land as the spiritual source of Self (weNkosi, 2023) towards which being is at least partly, if not completely, oriented. The purpose of this section is to rupture (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012) economics, a discipline concerned with the allocation of resources (land), and open it up to a cosmic transmogrification of the restricted economy of economics into the cosmic ecology of ecognomics, an Afrignosis informed economics.

As discussed in earlier chapters, Land, when approached from the European *Utamawazo* (Ani, 1994), becomes simplified, washed of its sacral and relational connotations, and rendered as material commodity. Thereby, it was argued, the cosmic community became separate nature, dirt, objects for mankind's economic schematics, to use and abuse as it saw fit in the pursuit of progress. Land, by this notion, is primarily an economic good subject to legal frameworks that impose upon it the hierarchy of anthropocentric property: a question of my land and your land, public or private, but in any case, the property of mankind.

We suggest that, from an Afrignostic ecology perspective, land-as-property regimes establish frameworks for hierarchicalisation, between land and people, between land and its surrounding environment, and between 'pieces' of land compared on the basis of land-as-commodity. This means, for example, that the land under which an oil vein is located, or the land upon which an urban settlement is established, are assigned a comparatively higher value than an oceanside mangrove.

The problems with this perspective are increasingly well studied and can be rendered translucent using the concept of 'ecosystem services',[38] as briefly discussed in Section 2.2.1, to discuss something so economically mundane as a tree.

Under the commodifying gaze, counter to the ecosystem service perspective, a tree is valuable only upon its death and transformation into wood, an input for multiple production processes focussed on meeting narrowly human ends. A discounting takes place, where layers of value are rendered valueless and only that which is valuable in a non-cosmic sense emerges. However, this is counter to the full account of a trees value, the replacement of each particular element thereof, ecosystem service for ecosystem service, would bankrupt even the mightiest government were they attempt such a one-for-one usurpation.

While the ecosystems service perspective is useful, it is unnecessary if we use an HI or CI approach to African thought, both of which render the cosmic value of a tree apparent.

Hereby, a tree straddles the relationship of restricted and cosmic ecologies, representing in actuality what is only effable through myths and legends presenting "certain philosophical truths [and] the people's cosmology and understanding of their environment" (M. O. Eze as quoted in Roothaan, 2017, p. 146). As noted, such understandings are holistic, purporting the inherent sacredness or complexity of all that there is, and thereby designating the whole, embodied in the land, as the cosmic Self, the home of the Ancestors and the charge of the living.

We suggest that it is the binding of these aspects, the material and the invisible, which charge the land with the vitality that then became us, is us and will become us. The us-ness of us is of paramount importance here, as it reveals the incomprehensible shortsightedness of the Eurocentric *Utamawazo* in attempting to impose onto the whole a paradigm of simplicity, through the governmentality of the property regime: a technology of governance linked to a distinctly European rationality foreign to the perspective of African thought.[39] From an African

Utamawazo, such thinking is irrational and introduces both anecological and an aneconomic tendencies that necessarily, along the pattern of hierarchical organisation, tend towards imperialism (monopolisation), colonialism (domination), and apartheid (control).

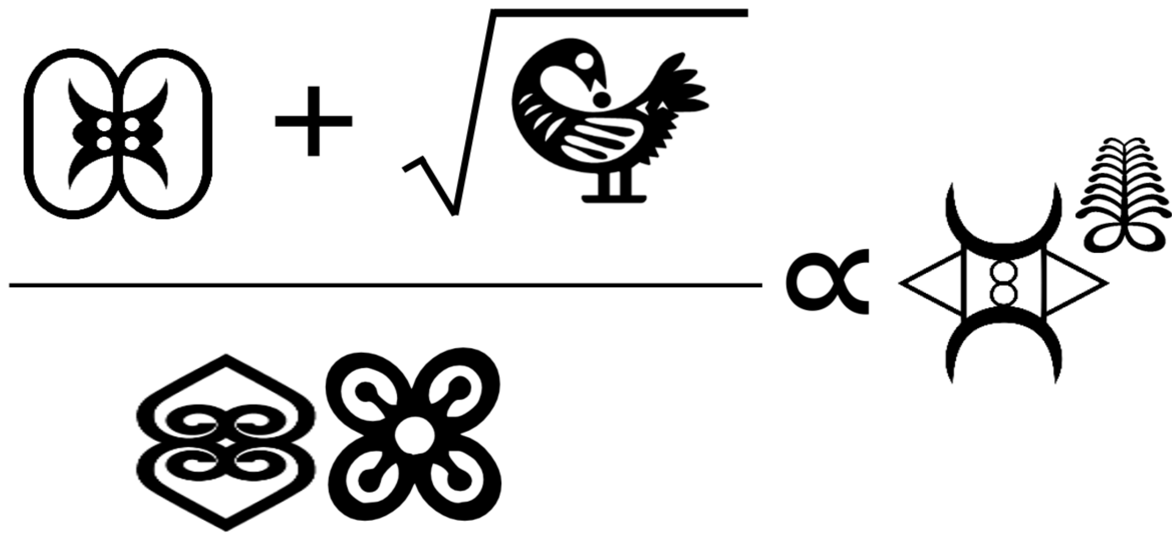
Therefore, economics considered on quantitative and descriptive terms alone is equally irrational and so, we argue, requires (re)consideration on Afrignostic and Afroaesthetic terms.

5.3 Ecognomics

This section will provide an example of a (re)considered economics in the form of *ecognomics*, a fusion of Afroaesthetic symbolism and our conception of purposes on the grounds of Afrignostic ecology. To do so, Section 5.3.1 will provide a symbolic alchemical formula for sustainable food production before proceeding to detail its terms and the strategies it symbolises, being pragmatic ways of solving for cosmic solidarity (Sections 5.3.2); sacred rest (Section 5.3.3); reasonable abundance (Section 5.3.3), and enduring harmony (Section 5.3.4) Underlying this formula is an aesthetic logic, hence our preference for symbolism, that links the present organisational character of society to an Afroaesthetic future imaginary which is as beautiful and peculiar as it is sustainable and just, as detailed in Chapter four.

The purpose of this section is to provide a radical example of generative problem solving when approaching the obligation to abandon the IAC in favour of agroecology from the Afroaesthetic perspective using the political ontology of Afrignostic ecology.

5.3.1 An Ecognomic Formula for Food in an Afroaesthetic future



The symbolic alchemical formula depicted above, invoking the aesthetic logic of Afrignostic ecology alluded to in Section 5.2.4, consists of three expressions of either one or two terms, each of which contains variables in the form of Adinkra symbols (AYEEKO, 2022) that in our usage are intended to denote conceptual constellations of political strategies.

The first expression, found above the horizontal line denoting a ratio, consists of the sum of two terms: the variable *Awkaaba*, representing hospitality or welcoming considered as 'cosmic solidarity', and the variable *Sankofa,* subject to the square root operator, which invokes a transtemporal dimension of rest in the present to reflect on the past and regenerate the future considered as 'Sacred rest'.

The second expression, the denominator, or that which designates the limits for what is above, consists of only one term that is the product of two variables, *asase ye duru* representing the divinity of a feminine Earth and *bese saka* representing abundance. Together they represent 'reasonable abundance' as the practive of wisdom and restraint in our agroecological stewardship of the earth

The final expression, found after a 'proportional to' symbol relating it to the magnitude of ratio between expression one and two, contains a single term produced by raising *asetana pa*, representing good living, to the power of *aya*,

representing the potential boundlessness of an always future tomorrow. Together, we consider them as a symbol for ‘enduring harmony’ as a prefiguration for truly sustainable food production in step with nature.

This constellation of concepts represents an ecognomic insight that proportionally relates living a life of hospitality and rest, constrained by the limits of ecological abundance, to a state of eating well for generations to come.

To give content to these notions of abundance, solidarity, rest, and harmony within the framework of Afrignostic ecology, we will explore each in turn and offer concrete socio-economic strategies and policy recommendations for immediately beginning to fulfil the obligation arrived at in Chapter three and moving towards Afrignostic ecology as a prefigurative political ontology for the Afroaesthetic vision from Chapter four.

Importantly, what follows is a-contextual in so far as it could be applied to South Africa in general but must be adapted to the specific local context into which it is brought if it is to succeed. Just as Berry (2002) urged that we farm in a way that suits the farm, we must ecologise our societies in a way that fits the ecology where they find themselves. As such, the following is presented at a level of abstraction that allows for granularizing and particularising in pursuit of the kind of epistemic particularism (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b, p. 178 Fn. 2) that would make it most virile in a definite context.

Lastly, as the word can only be arrived at through communal palaver, as held by both Magesa (1997) and Bujo (1998), and considering the sheer scale of the societal problems to be addressed, we acknowledge the inherent limits of the modelling exercise we are about to undertake. As such, we shall limit the model of Afrignostic ecology to one that addresses the limited but no less complex purview of human needs from an ecocentric perspective, seeking to describe the organisational character of a food production system that is cosmically valuable. This limited model aims only to account for a single necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the emergence of a deeply regenerative society premised on the

organisational insights of Afrignostic ecology and oriented towards the celebration and multiplication of peculiarity as a means for surviving the Situation.

As with the rest of this work, the discussion is not presented as an exhaustive model aimed at closure. Rather, it is a provisional model, exploratory and tentative, invoking the "fundamental philosophical call to wonder, not by constructing dogma, but rather by providing riddles" (Coombs, 2022, p. 13)

5.3.2 Expression One, Term One // Solving for Cosmic Solidarity

Building on the recognition of solidarity as an aspect of Afrignostic relationality discussed in Section 3.4.3, this section will focus on strategies for fostering solidarity by building up the capacity for identification with the other, first as the environmental other and second as the human other, through rewilding and storytelling towards cognitive awareness of, and respect for, other beings in the garden of peculiarities. Through these strategies, all aimed at making the other welcome in the *oikos,* we argue that it is possible to prefigure a conscious attitude we call "socio-spiritual hospitality" as the grounds for cosmic solidarity.

We suggest that practically, a society organising itself on the basis of Afrignostic ecology may, in the manner of Hans Widmer's *Bolo*, consist of individuals associated in small communes of 300-500 people, forming a "direct, personal, context for living, producing and dying" (P.M., 2011, p. 73). Within these communes a welcoming of the natural into human spaces and of cosmically valuable human activity into natural spaces through rewilding (Tree and Burrell, 2023) of all sorts presents as a hospitality to peculiarity whether ecological or social.

The nature of such organisational units, we argue, is that they place humans back in proximity with their food production needs. From these proximities, people may have greater exposure to experiences of identification with nature through working with it and fostering the notional solidarity of the whole. Thus, we suggest that smaller communal units, of the sort that can be achieved through policies of counter-urbanisation and the philopraxis of an 'organise where you are' maker-

culture, can help to extend the sympathetic capacity of human emotion to the natural world.

Metz provides a compelling case for understanding identification and solidarity from the perspective of African ethics (Metz, 2021, pp. 148–150). For him, identification is a matter of cognitively knowing oneself to be "a common member of a relationship of group"; emotionally experiencing a sense of belonging such as gladness at the presence of others as well as a shared sense of success or shame for the actions of other; practicing volition as a matter of "coordinating one's behaviour with them when pursuing goals, making adjustments to either one's own goals or one's pursuit of them, so that others' goals can also be realized" and finding the motivation to "participate in cooperative endeavours for reasons beyond prudence" (ibid.).[40]

Complementarily, Metz (ibid., pp. 151-153) articulates a multifaceted solidarity consisting of cognitive solidarity as a detailed awareness of another; emotional solidarity as feelings of empathy and sympathy that flow from the awareness of the condition of another; volitional solidarity as acting to improve said condition; and motivational solidarity as a matter of recognising the reason for acting to improve the condition of another as rooted in "empathetic cognition and sympathetic emotion".

For such identification and solidarity to emerge, Bookchin's (1982) injunction to interweave the social and ecological at a local socio-political and socio-economic level provides direction, such as was discussed in Section 3.2.2.3. Such Urban greening *qua* agroecology (Tornaghi, 2024) links together the strategies for abundance (to be discussed in the next section) with the psycho-social implications (Carrus *et al.*, 2015) of spatially reintegrating human societies and the ecosystem in which they find themselves as a condition for identification and then solidarity.

In the Ecognomic formula, rewilding is but one element in solving for the solidarity variable and creating conditions where there is a greater chance to experience identification as a necessary step in building ecological awareness. It contributes

to solving partly for identification between humanity and earth-life system, but not for solidarity.

We reason that a truly sustainable human-society consists of smaller communes in relation to one another, and also to the Earth, and so solidarity must be of the trans-systemic variety discussed in Section 4.3.2. As such, solving for solidarity ought be solving for solidarity across, within, and between communes and the environment wherein issues of transcommunal governance may arise. For this, a strategy of storytelling arises to give content to the condition of another that can later be supported by a strategy for reflecting on it.

Storytelling is a powerful tool prevalent throughout human history in one form or another (Fisher, 1997). The narrativization and the oral retelling of an experience, event, or fiction has played a pivotal role in psychological constellation from the individual psyche to a collective association with a national identity. The psychological ecology of cognitive solidarity in relation to the whole is what is at question here.

Where ecology plays the role of narrativizing and making apprehensible the condition of nature-entities and also of people, storytelling plays the same role but for comprehending the conditions of people, as well as nature-entities (Nanson, 2021). Unlike ecology that describes, analyses, and constructs ecological identities and histories, storytelling creates spaces were hearing the other can lead to one projecting parts of themself onto the other in a reflective way, thereby creating self-other overlaps where empathy can emerge.

Moreover, esoteric stories add mystery and interest to invoke, in this instance, Afrignosis, knowledge of the conditions for Being-Becoming cosmically interwoven. In myths and allegories, the hidden and revealed aspects of knowledge are used to describe cosmologies and theogonies that allow listeners to explore themselves, their knowledge, and how they relate to each other (Coombs, 2022). Taken from an Afrignostic perspective, the cosmological whole to which one may gain access lies beyond the veil of rituals, ceremonies, myths and initiations.

We suggest that esoteric stories and their involvement in rites and rituals, among other cultural phenomena, aim at a perspectival type of knowledge that cannot be articulated in as far as it can only be experienced in an altered state of consciousness. Such states, created through ritual processes (Turner, 2017), create the conditions for gestalt shifts in consciousness, or the move from apprehending the parts to apprehending the whole (Naess, 1989). Apprehension begets awareness, and awareness, we argue, is a step towards empathy in specific relation to the cosmic, ecological, and peculiar condition of the other. By this conception, esoteric storytelling, whether it be telling the cosmic story of an individual, a nature-entity, a commune, or a complex organisation of communes, compounds the listener's simple awareness of the other with experiential knowledge of the Cosmos, interbeing and ecological interdependence that solidifies the interrelation of the self-as-self and the self-as-and-other to bridge identification and solidarity.

In plain terms, we suggest that it is difficult to welcome the other if they are wholly other, in as far as one has no knowledge of them besides that they are strange and peculiar but have no history beyond that. To change that, we must listen to the stories of the other, of struggling single mothers stalked by the reality of food hunger or of the Okavango Delta in its degradation and decay at the hands of Royal Dutch Shell. Herein we humanise nature and other humans, recognise in them our shared peculiarity and vulnerability, and develop a sense of cosmic solidarity towards them and our collective best interests.

5.3.3 Expression One, Term Two // Solving for Sacred Rest

This section will focus on strategies to address the tyranny of the clock (Woodcock, 1944), or the Western construction of time and productivity, which keeps people and planet operating beyond their metabolic limits in terms of anxiety and extractivism. We will do so by first discussing the relationship between productivity and the modern world before describing the role of communalisation in processes of production-consumption as one means for liberating human action from the gridlock of instrumentality and efficiency.

The modern relationship to time is almost constantly one of not having enough of it. The pace of adult life, meaning the number of time-competitive activities and responsibilities with which one must contend in order to achieve even a modicum of material success, or a meaningful sense of comfort understood as the alleviation of material needs by keeping up with the 'cost-of-living', is backbreaking.

At the level of temporal organisation within the European *Utamawazo* leading to its Utamarohic expression in productivity, the modern world is ordered and scheduled according to a clock that separates the passage of time from its "natural and supernatural realms" and renders it imaginable as "a uniform continuum: linear, divisible, and abstract", available for commodification in the form of labour-time, or capitalist-time, where the measure of human value devolves to the rate at which one completes productive tasks, or one's efficiency (Dale, 2019).

Driving up productivity is cost saving, as a worker who can perform a task in one hour for one hour's wages as opposed to three hours for three hour's wages is more valuable to a boss who seeks to maximize profit production by minimising variable capital expenditure. Just so, a robot that can perform in one hour the work of 10 workers each working 10 hours, and over a lifetime of 200 thousand productive hours perform the equivalent of 20 million human work hours at only a fraction of the cost, the choice of the boss is always for the more productive worker. As such, and impossibly so but inevitably given the example of the robot, workers are forced to compete primarily in terms of productive efficiency, governing themselves to drive up their own output to maximise the chances of their labour-time being bought up in the marketplace as a prerequisite for survival, for being able to pay for food, water, and accommodation.

However, with increased productivity comes increased output, and output is worth little without a market for its uptake. As explored by Michael Burns across a growing number of video essays,[41] this tendency towards increased productivity, or the emergence of a "culture of productivity", positively reinforced the need for increased commodity consumption that early advertisers were eager to create (Burns, 2022).

As Dale argues, this process did not remain local to Europe and was gradually globalised as Europe's imperialist tendencies drew them to lands afar where "abstract-regimented time was simultaneously the banner and goal of European militarists, merchants and missionaries in their colonisation of the world who defined their civilisation as orderly, regimented, linear, and uniform, a culture to be imposed on the irrational, irregular and timeless — hence childlike — Others" (Dale, 2019).[42] Herein, the mere organisation of time, or the imposition of order onto providence, became a marker of progress and part of the civilising project.[43] Said project continues today.[44]

We frame this as yet another imposition of a power hierarchy, where capitalist time, championed by Europeans, attained and consolidated institutional power over all other temporal peculiarities, thus severing those under its tyranny from the rhythms of the natural world and placing them in service of the ruling governing (Weber, 1930).

Against this backdrop, we argue that rest or idleness, slow living (Parkins and Craig, 2006) and engaging in the production of slow food (Siniscalchi, 2023) is in itself revolutionary for several reasons.

Physical rest heals the body and calms the mind. Sedentary days are slow days, day for noticing and for thinking, for strolling and for conversation. Time spent moving slowly, thinking slowly, and doing slowly are not in themselves bad things. Take for instance the time experience of a big cat, such as a leopard or a lion. When not hunting, these creatures remain nearly stationary, save for rolling over one way or another. Yet we do not call them lazy or unproductive. They are healing, readying and anticipating, all of which resemble rest or living in step with a natural rhythm, in time with the natural metabolic rhythm of the land.

Thinking time is reflecting time. Storytelling time. And it is through this time that stories of old are retold and remembered, those still intact in the traditions of the high Sanusi (Mutwa, 2003), and also when new stories are to be remembered. Such time spent in memory and thought is innately anamnestic, making the past

present and together rethinking the future. Such anamnesis is captured aesthetically in the artwork *Resting with the Ancestors* (2017) by photographer Charlie Watt, featuring performance artist and founder of the Nap Ministry Tricia Hersey.

We argue that resisting the pace of modern life and reaffirming natural rhythms places us back into them, allowing room for superpositional vibes to emerge – vibes that signal a way of being in step with the world (Allen-Paisant, 2021). We need different experiences of time where capitalist time is not the default. We need time to slow down, to do less, talk more and think more without being governed by aristocratic projections of how the majority of people may choose to spend that time. For surely, where some may fall into weeks of debauchery, others may fall into weeks of artistry, weeks of productivity, or weeks of rest. But so what? Nowhere that matters to Africans is it written that all-time must be productive and efficient. Rest is as sacred as work, and both are as sacred as play: various constructions of time are temporal peculiarities to be welcomed and multiplied as gateways through which a gathering of new experiences and adaptations lie. In any form, time is phenomenological experience, and the standardization of time is then equally a domestication of experience.

In her book *Rest is Resistance: A Manifesto* (2022), Hersey presents the act of rest as way of resisting both capitalism and white supremacy by subverting the Eurocentric conception of being in relation to time and interrupting its progress.[45] Unlearning the unfounded belief that "rest is a luxury, privilege, and an extra treat we give to ourselves after suffering from exhaustion and sleep deprivation" leads to recognising that rest is "an absolute necessity if we're going to survive and thrive" (ibid., pp. 43-44). Herewith, rest is framed as a divine, disruptive right, the practice of which enables Africans to "recapture" the "DreamSpace" stolen from their Ancestors by colonisation and slavery and through imagination and dreaming, "be resurrected together there" (ibid., p. 62). Dreaming, she writes, "is deeply tied to the metaphysical and the spiritual [as] a time to be free from the confines of linear and grounded reality [and] heal from the massive load we have been carrying consciously and unconsciously" as a result of capitalist time and generational

black trauma (ibid., pp. 64-65). In this way, rest is "a deep journey towards decolonising and returning to our natural state [and] soften into the powerful proposal of thriving right now" (ibid., p. 86). Such a state, opposed to capitalist time, and evident in nature through its ceaseless unfoldment as thriving, is a state of Being-Becoming in ecotime.[46]

Strategically, we argue that solving for rest is a matter of reconceptualising both labour and its division among society. While the next section will discuss various strategies for the spatial organisation of an agroecological food system, this section will make an argument for communalising the work of socio-ecological (re)production or getting more people to practice agroecology. We suggest that such communalisation, an anti-work[47] redistribution of the labour involved in producing food and managing water away from farmers and towards broad society, is a form of Afrignostic agrarianism.

While we acknowledge that is more efficient to have 50 skilled workers productively and efficiently graft a portion of a farmer's land for half a day, the ends of food production are no less achieved by 200 together sufficiently knowledgeable amateur agroecologists working for two days distributed among themselves on an established community farm. In either case, the work would be done, but in the latter case, it is done without any fears for the future upon which the myth of urgency plays (ibid., p. 67). Without the constraint of productive time, which would have broken the backs of the fifty workers in its demand for maximum work-pace, likely run back-to-back for days on end anyway, a community of two hundred people achieve the same end working together while each exerting a quarter of the effort. Now instead of 50 workers trapped in an endless cycle of productivity that runs them from field-to-field day-in and day-out, we have 200 community members, each working half a day to ensure sufficient food and water supply to (re)produce one another and their environment and being left with one and a half days of time for rest.

The other side of the productivity coin is consumption, the communalisation of which realigns the quantity of good to be produced with the needs of a given

society, plus some emergency surplus. This is opposed to maximum commodity production linked to the construction of artificial scarcity. Strategies towards this end could include commoning (Bollier, Helfrich, and Commons Strategies Group, 2015), the creation of the library economies, and degrowth.[48]

Whether to do with production or consumption, there is an element of socio-productive generosity that must be practised. To ensure food and water for all, we each must be generous with a portion of our time in order to produce ourselves, each other, and the natural world. The logic and motivation for this are congruent with the discussion on solving for solidarity through socio-spiritual hospitality. Being hospitable to the other also includes playing host to them, and so playing one's role in making sure that they have food and drink.

It is the sum of cosmic solidarity and temporally reflexive rest that we have covered thus far, we now turn to the denominator that constrains the productive limits of their sum.

5.3.4 Expression Two//Solving for Reasonable Abundance

This section will outline some political strategies to solve for abundance by rekindling indigenous land relationalities. Abundance comes in many forms, but our focus will be on abundance in terms of food and water. In this instance, abundance indicates a level of availability that exceeds sufficiency and purposefully aims at a redistributable surplus of cosmically valuable food to be democratically managed for the ends of socio-ecological solidarity, community resilience and integrity, freedom and justice.

As indicated in our analysis of the food conceptualisations in Section 5.1, the system of food production is characterised by the legacy of colonial land dispossession which, in the first place, was a process of alienation from land through a usurpation of land ownership, the consequence of which was the erasure of indigenous land relationalities. This term refers to ways of knowing and being with and within the Earth-Life system that are shared by African cultural

communities across the continent, and myriad other indigenous peoples in the global South.[49]

We understand indigenous land relationalities as a complex subject-forming product of familiarity, familiality, and intimacy with the land that results from a conscious being's proximity to the land in how they come to think, understand, and act in the process of their self-(re)production. Such a state can only result from phenomenological and sensuous experiences that nurture a deep connection to the nature of a place, its rhythms, seasons, and subtle changes. Working the land and becoming intimate with its relationships, both between its parts and between it and us, cannot but otherwise enculturate the Afrignostic insight of interconnection, mutual inter-dependence and Ubu-ntu that over generations became so intuitive that oral traditions alone could safeguard the politico-epistemic centrality of it. Processually, and as a result of slowly, intentionally, and intimately working with Land, nature becomes a more intuitively undivorceable part of our being, bringing us back into relation with the cosmic community, the family of Being.

Indigenous land relationalities are the domain of the Ancestors, passed down to individuals and communities by intergenerational processes. Enacted through traditions, initiations, myths, stories and allegories, these processes steward esoteric experiences of interbeing, which shift the nature of consciousness towards an awareness of and sensitivity to Cosmos. The invocation of Ancestral knowledge is Anamnestic Solidarity, 'a remembrance of the dead [that] constitutes an effect of the dead in the present that re-members and re-constitutes, living communities' (Taylor, 2011, p. 3), which functionally "affirms that they are co-present in our contemporary struggles against different manifestations of the Empire" (Zacharia, 2017, p. 112). These processes promote two central relationalities in Afro-communitarian ethics, identification as "a matter of belonging, being close, sharing a way of life or feeling integrated" and solidarity as "promoting others' well-being, being sympathetic, acting for the common good and showing concern for others" (Metz, 2007, 2013, p. 81).[50]

To rekindle indigenous land relationalities, there emerge strategies for bringing fundamental production closer to home while nurturing resilience in food system organisation, contributing to ecosystemic regeneration, and shifting developmental paradigms for addressing the Situation as (Meta-)Polycrisis in the direction of decoloniality.

The first strategy is that of decentralisation *and* localisation of food production activities, supported by mutual aid in creating meaningful opportunities for upskilling, reskilling and skills transfers. To decentralise food production means to move power/knowledge and productive capacity away from a relatively small group of institutional actors, such as those that make up the Corporate Colonial Food System,[51] and towards non-institutional organisational clusters like families and communities across our nation. To localise food production means to create conditions for non-institutional food production clusters to attain food sovereignty as defined by the Declaration of Nyéléni, and quoted by Matthew Canfield (2022, p. 48), to be:

> *"The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. Food sovereignty implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples, racial groups, social and economic classes, and generations."*

It is likely that the success of society's movement towards decentralisation and localisation efforts will rely on two other movements.

The first would be a conscientisation movement around the IAC and its socio-ecological impacts, its coloniality and neo-coloniality and the coherence of its strongest alternative (agroecology) with Afrignostic insights. Such a movement is anticolonial by nature and enjoys broad support across the global South, as is evidenced by its uptake in the emerging fight for climate justice, also echoed in South Africa (Bond and Dorsey, 2010; Godard, 2017). It includes knowledge about

dietary colonisation and the need for culturally appropriate food linked to biodiversity-focused farming. The second is a 'land-back' movement that seeks to return land to colonised people and undo the spatial legacy of colonialism and apartheid. Such a land-back program would focus on making land available for small- and medium-size farmers in rural and peri-urban spaces requiring the incremental breaking up of large single-owner farms as well as urban spaces, accompanied by policies aimed at car-free cities where the land currently occupied by roads could be replaced with urban-wetlands and biodiverse urban agroecology managed cooperatively by communities in ecotime.

Mutual aid is a supportive framework for realising such ends by extending services linked to knowledge and productive elements of food sovereignty, as well as elements for service extension itself, between non-institutional clusters. Such extension services aim to cooperatively bolster knowledge/resistance capacity in communities. They might include programs that share agroecology and agroforestry know-how and maker-culture tips relating to creating and managing community agroecology cooperatives; techniques for soil-care and growing living-soil; local agroecosystem design, establishment, maintenance and regeneration; the concepts of seed-sovereignty and how to save-seed, manage-seed and distribute seed; home- and community-composting; community water management and nature-based water management solutions; mulching; appropriate crop selection; inter-cropping and integrated pest management; and methods for post-harvest storage, processing and cooking. Herein we see the groundwork for a political economy that better adheres to natures law of return in how it organises, creates and distributes cosmically valuable food that would over time lend itself to "quality and permanence" in socio-ecological (re)production (Bookchin, 1982, p. 344).

Given that we have already argued for agroecology at length across this thesis, we add one more reason for its presence here that the reader may have already picked up on: agroecology embodies the principles of return and so its large-scale practice is not only a condition for food and water abundance for human society but also for the microcosmic community and the rest of the food web they

support. It is cosmically valuable in as far as it respects and works within the limits of Mother Earth. By creating abundance for the living community, we increase vital force in the Earth-Life system, and so also support the wellbeing and abundance of Ancestral beings.

We anticipate critiques of this section may question the viability of decentralised food systems in the absence of high-margin markets that allow for the production of surplus-value leading to increase levels of satisfaction. However, such critiques may presuppose Eurocentric value schemas in which the lived satisfaction of individuals and communities is bound up with the accumulation of material wealth and the increase in productive output. Here, we offer a counter-vision grounded in cosmic solidarity, sacred reast and our inescapable inter-relatedness. As such, this vision of reasonable abundance does not depend on boutique economic models, nor does it attempt to compete with industrial productivity metrics. Instead, it seeks to redefine economic viability itself as ecognomic in relation ecological rhythms, and the distributed generativity of collective agroecological labour.

This concludes our discussion of the expressions on the left side of our formula, we now turn to the variable of enduring harmony to which the ratio of solidarity and rest over abundance stands in direct proportion.

5.3.5 Expression Three//Solving for Enduring Harmony

The final expression for our ecognomic formal is that which presents in correlation to the ratio of expression one to expression two, and so we shall not explain it, for it is wholly dependent on the other variables just explained.

But of their relationship to expression three, we can say plainly that the longevity of Afrignostic ecology is a correlative of how well we, as humanity, can come together to rearrange our food systems in recognition of and sensitivity to cosmic and ecological complexity. Counter this, should we not be able to come together, to see ourselves in the world and the world in ourselves through the everyday agroecological production of food in communities, then any sense of enduring harmony fades away fast.

In Section 2.3.1 of this work, we mentioned the Fermi Paradox: the tension between a universe that is so massive and so plural and the fact that we have yet been able to detect any signs of advanced life beyond our home planet. One solution to the paradox, proposed by Michael Wong and Stuart Bartlett (2022), may help to underscore the counter-reality proposed in the previous paragraph and in so doing provide us with language to understand the final term without describing it directly.

Proffering a version of 'the great filter' solution to the aforementioned paradox (Hanson, 1998), which posits that all advancing civilianisation reach some insurmountable barrier that prevents them from expanding beyond their home planet, Wong and Bartlett argue that what civilisations face, and arguably what we face now, is 'Asymptotic Burnout'. The concept illustrates the relationship between singularities (conceptualised as the points where infinite growth patterns confront finite resource bases), innovations (new tools that allow for resource constraints to be overcome), and time. Essentially, they showed how growing societies, extrapolated from the superlinearity of cities, will continually face singularities and so need to produce innovations to meet them, but as the resource constraint being faced grows in consequence, so too does the time in which to develop an innovation decrease. Herein, there comes a point where a system, unable to innovate on its excesses, reaches a point of collapse, as the time between innovation and singularity becomes too short for yet another innovation capable of overcoming the resource constraint to emerge.

At this point, civilisations have one of two choices, either learn to live within the resource constraints of their planet, a mode they call "homeostatic awakening" (Wong and Bartlett, 2022, pp. 4–5), or face Asymptotic Burnout, collapse, and eventual extinction.

We suggest that this framing is useful for our current discussion, as what we have sketched in Section 5.3 up to this point has been an alternative approach to the emergence of a homeostatic future African society, living in step with the cosmic ecology in which it is enmeshed in endless unfoldment, an Afrignostic insight or

piece of wisdom that infers a way of living-with and living-within the world as Being-Becoming.

We argue that it is, however, an unfortunate reality that analysis such as that provided by Bartlet and Wong seldom lands with people given its obvious inaccessibility, even when substantially simplified for presentation as done here. [52] We know that these types of analyses, heavily mathematical and scientific, do not 'land' with most people, because we have had this conversation in these terms, and nothing stirs. As with the SI approach, we suggest that their scientific rigour robs their conclusion of its gnosis, its ability to shift perspectival knowing (Vervaeke and Ferraro, 2013).

As such, while we can use their language to explain, indirectly and in reductive terms, what it is that this final term represents, such a representation lacks force and so we shall leave this final section here, with only a clear and concise analysis of what we are aiming at in analytic terms as evidence of the insufficiency of trying to spell it out in words, on a page.

5.4 Summary

This chapter developed a radical symbolic framework for realising the obligation established in Chapter three within the aesthetic horizon of Chapter four, by grounding agroecological food production in an Afrignostic political ontology.

It began by reinterpreting food not merely as commodity, but also-as cosmic value – a relational substance imbued with ecological, spiritual, and ethical significance. From this ontological reframing, we built towards a critique and reimagining of Bookchin's social ecology through an Afrignostic lens, proposing a spiritually-inflected, non-materialist alternative: *Afrignostic ecology*. This shift in metaphysical base allowed us to proffer a reinterpretation of land, production, and community in ways that resist extractivism and centre reciprocal relation with the Life-world by expanding our conception thereof to include land ontologies indigenous to Africa. Culminating in the alchemical notion of Ecognomics, the chapter offered a symbolic 'constellation-formula' for orienting the pursuit of enduring harmony. It

did so using three interlinked expressions: cosmic solidarity, sacred rest, and reasonable abundance, each mapped onto a level of purpose as constellated in Section 4.3 Chapter four.

Approached as a whole, these Ecognomic terms ground pathways for the sociopolitical and spiritual reorganisation of food production not in efficiency or domination, but in gratitude, sufficiency, and cosmic attunement. While the framework is visionary and intentionally symbolic, it functions as a mode of strategic myth-making - an invocation of another way of worlding. In so doing, it prepares the ground for Chapter six, which acknowledges the distance between the Situation's current ordering logics and the aspirational *Utamaroho* of the Afroaesthetic vision, and asks what new foundations of Order – cosmic, legal, and spiritual – might be required to support the performance of ecognomic alchemy in reality.

Notes

[1] Escobar (2020, p. 30) suggests a few principles for designing political ecologies capable of resisting the Situation that we keep in mind throughout this Chapter. They consist of three principle for design and redesign: "*The recommunalization of social life*, as a counter to the dominant individualizing imperative and as the foundation for human action from the perspective of the interdependence of everything that exists; *The relocalization of activities*, in the domains of economy, food, health, energy, transportation, education, building, and so forth, to resist the delocalizing tendencies of capitalist globalization, strengthen local and regional economies, and foster convivial modes of living; and, *The strengthening of collective local autonomies and direct forms of democracy*, as a means to lessen the dependence on norms established by experts and the state; critically revalorize local knowledges and values; and promote horizontal political strategies based on people's self-organization, potentially linking up with other similar transformative experiments and autonomous movements elsewhere." He further posits three broad principles for transition strategies: "*The simultaneous depatriarchalization and decolonization of societies*, as a way to move decidedly toward nonpatriarchal, nonracist, and postcapitalist social practices and organizations; *The liberation of Mother Earth*, as an ethical-political principle to create novel forms of existing as living beings and to rethink the relations between humans and nonhumans in mutually enhancing manners; and, *The flourishing of the pluriverse*, to weave multiple paths toward a world of many worlds, countering the power of the current model of a single globalized world and the capitalist hydra that anchors it".

[2] Escobar (2018, pp. 62–67) defines 'political ontology' as a progression of political ecology. For him, political ecology is "the field that studies the multiple intersections among nature, culture, power, and history". Now in its third phase, it is characterised by "a certain theoretical eclecticism" wherein questions of social production of nature and the cultural construction of nature have begun to take on a distinctly ontological character through the increasing relevance of indigenous onto-epistemic frameworks. From this emerges political ontology, which "examines political strategies to defend or re-create those worlds that retain important relational and communal dimensions, particularly from the perspective of today's multiple territorial struggles". First introduced by Mario Blaser, Escobar take emphasizes the world and ways of worlding, referring to both the "power-laden practices involved in bringing into being a particular world" and "a field of study that focuses on the interrelations among worlds, including the conflicts that ensue as different ontologies strive to sustain their own existence in their interaction with other worlds". It is "intended to make visible the ontological dimension of the accumulation by dispossession that is going on today in many parts of the world through extractivist development models, principally large-scale mining, agrofuels, and land grabbing linked to commercial agriculture".

[3] *Ecognomics* (our term, see Sect. 5.3 Ecognomics) describes the intersection of economics and Afrignosis. It is a novel philosophy of economics that operates from Afrignosis to align human economic with a sensitivity to complexity and Cosmos.

[4] Marx writes that "a commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties" (Marx, 1976, p. 163).

[5] Accounting for the capital expenditure throughout the production process (the cost of labour-power and constant- and variable- capital inputs) in relation to the market price of the commodity form.

[6] At first it is relative surplus-value that is produced, but the goal is the production of absolute surplus-value. This is achieved through extending the exploitation of workers and of the soil, through technologies and new strategies for increasing labour productivity. All of which is necessary if the capitalist wants to resist the law of the tendential fall in the rate of profit (Marx, 1981, pt. 3).

[7] See Sect. 5.3.4 Expression Two//Solving for Reasonable Abundance' for the sense of abundance we imply here.

[8] See Ch. 1 n. 4.

[9] Proof for the claim of entropic decay can be found in Sect. 2.3.2.1 Peculiarity, Evolution, and Entropy.

[10] See. Sect. 4.1.2 Healthy Nature as a Source of Aesthetic Inspiration.

[11] We will be using the terms 'government' and 'state' or 'the state' interchangeably. In normal discussion, the state could be said to represent the entire political entity that oversees a territory, while the government could be said to represent the collection of individuals who together wield power and manage the state. The state is therefore a collection of institutions while the government consists of the people who run them. In either case, what is of interest to us is the organisational relations that presuppose a certain order to society, whether they are attributable to the state or the government.

[12] Mbah and Igariway (1997, p. 28) use the term "communalism" in two senses, both of which we find agreeable for our usage. First, as a "definite mode of production or social formation" as akin to that between hunter-gatherer and feudalist societies if approached from an historical materialism perspective. And second, related to the first, as to describe a "way of life that is distinctly African" in so far as it is characterised by (nearly) self-contained, self-organising societies made up of individuals who "take part, without exception, either directly or indirectly, in the running of community affairs at all levels".

[13] The precedent for consensus democracy as a decision making process for political leadership is well established, specifically in the work of Edward Wamala (2004), Joe Teffo (2004), and Kwame Gyekye (Gyekye, 2004b, sec. 4.5), as well as the argument for its value in contemporary Africa championed in the work of Bernard Matolino (2018).

[14] Among these, Mbah and Igariway (p. 35) include "the Igbo, the Birom, Angas, ldoma, Fkoi, Nbembe, the Niger Delta peoples, the Tiv (Nigeria) , the Shona (Zimbabwe), Lodogea, the Lowihi, the Bobo, the Dogon , the Konkomha, the Birifor (Burkina Fac;o, Niger), the Bate, the Kissi, the Dan, the Logoli, the Gagu and Kru peoples, the Mano, Bassa Grebo and Kwanko (Ivory Coast, Guinea, Togo), the Tallensi, Mamprusi, Kusaasi (Ghana), the Nuer (Southern Sudan), etc.- numbering today nearly two hundred million individuals in all".

[15] New production models were "introduced" coercively with the new colonial state serving as the agent of coercion through its monopoly on violence (Lepuru, 2023a).

[16] The binding mechanisms include "monetarization (the introduction of money), trade, wage labour, taxation, and investment" superstructurally supported and enforced by the concurrent development of "appropriate social institutions and infrastructure" (Mbah and Igariwey, 1997, p. 40).

[17] Social revolution is a form of revolution that is not reliant on political leadership in the style of Vanguardist parties, preferring rather a sense of revolution where "people themselves must be in command, not leaders [and] Self-management will be established in all areas of social life, including the right of all oppressed races of people to self-determination" (Ervin, 2021, p. 35). Additionally, it is a common belief among anarchists that the socialist and communist sense of a an abrupt revolution is a falsity, with many preferring a 'get started now' approach that we too shall take up, in line with the DIY sentiment of Solarpunk (Andrewism, 2022a, 2024b).

[18] As this thesis is not focused on Anarchism, we present a general form of it. In doing so, we acknowledge the analytic impreciseness of such an approach, but suggest that this general definition is sufficient in relation to our broader focus. The literature on Anarchism is vast, and any precise definition will necessarily be insufficient given how fiercely various Anarchist authors disagree on such things as the nature of exchange or the sense of property.

[19] Anarchy needs to be differentiated from its colloquial association with a state of pure chaos and disorder as, for the Anarchist, Anarchy is not disorder but (self)order without hierarchy in the sense of self-organisation (Morin, 1992a). While its core critique is that of hierarchical power structures, it extends that critique to focus on the state as "guarantor of destructive repression" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 11). As Malatesata (1981) writes, Anarchy is not chaos but "natural order, unity of human needs and the interests of all, complete freedom within complete solidarity".

[20] The state in this instance refers to "the sum total of the political, legislative, judiciary, military and financial institutions through which the management of their own affairs, the control over their personal behaviour, the responsibility for their personal safety, are taken away from the people and entrusted to others who, by usurpation or delegation, are vested with the powers to make the laws for everything and everybody, and to oblige the people to observe them, if need be, by the use of collective force" (Malatesta, 1891).

[21] More especially, it is the case of hierarchicalisation as it relates to "the state, the government bureaucrats and the institution of private property" that anarchists purport as the most substantive barriers to a 'free' society (Ervin, 2021, p. 58).

[22] The divisions are of the sort we have discussed at length, civilised/primitive, valuable/valueless, and now, moving into the more overtly political, we see the binary pairing of the ruling/ruled, law-makers/law-takers, normalising/normalised, governing/governed, etc. See Sect. 2.1 The Disjunctive Ideology of Industrial Agriculture and Ch. 1. n. 69.

[23] "All people deserve the freedom to define and organize themselves on their own terms. Decision-making structures should be horizontal rather than vertical, so no one dominates anyone else; they should foster *power to* act freely rather than *power over* others. Anarchism opposes all coercive hierarchies, including capitalism, the state, white supremacy, and patriarchy" (Gelderloos, 2010).

[24] "People should be free to cooperate with whomever they want, however they see fit; likewise, they should be free to refuse any relationship or arrangement they do not judge to be in their interest. Everyone should be able to move freely, both physically and socially. Anarchists oppose borders of all kinds and involuntary categorization by citizenship, gender, or race" (Gelderloos, 2010).

[25] Following Pyotr Kropotkin (1902), Anarchists have identified mutual aid as an element of evolution useful when considering the character of (self)organisation capable of resisting hierarchy and building among people the capacities to sustain themselves together. Considering mutual aid, Peter Gelderloos (2010) writes "People should help one another voluntarily; bonds of solidarity and generosity form a stronger social glue than the fear inspired by laws, borders, prisons, and armies. Mutual aid is neither a form of charity nor of zero-sum exchange; both giver and receiver are equal and interchangeable. Since neither holds power over the other, they increase their collective power by creating opportunities to work together". For all intents and purposes, we can consider the concept of mutual aid to be akin to our discussion of cooperation in natural systems. See Ch. 4. n. 17.

[26] Modern anarchists (Anark, 2022) hold that such technologies are historical artefacts which continually reappear in socio-organisational matrices and allow for the state to establish and maintain relationships of Kyriarchical power-over the governed, amid brief interruptions or rebellions that last only "until the empire rearms, the government regroups, castes are revived, or until the system collapses, a victim of its own decadence" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 4).

[27] The state relies on paradigmatically simple technologies of government to impose order, control and "legibility" (Scott, 1998) onto the world in service of narrow ends relationally determined by the equally disjunctive and reductive global matrix of competing nation-states (Black and Oeschger, forthcoming). This introduction of complicatedness into a complex system breeds excesses of violence (police repression), suffering (homelessness, hunger, wage slavery), and the devaluation of nature as the state "homogenizes every living creature and organises life into unities [reductions] that categorise everything living and breathing on the planet […] a process suffered like a strange sickness that weighs on life in every corner of the planet, threatening to destroy the existence of all who inhabit its magic" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 5).

[28] Bookchin holds that "ecosystems cannot be meaningfully described in hierarchical terms" even though we consistently project sociological terms (dominance, power, leadership, etc) onto the description of natural systems when we describe them (Bookchin, 1982, pp. 23–27).

[29] For Bookchin, wholeness consists of "varying levels of actualization, an unfolding of the wealth of particularities, that are latent in an as-yet-undeveloped potentiality" (Bookchin, 1982, p. 31).

[30] We discuss this aspect of Social Ecology in Sect. 5.2.3 On Dialectical Naturalism and Afroaesthetics.

[31] "In every epoch militants have wondered what the revolution will be like and what will happen after it comes to pass. Maybe this future—near or immediate—will not be as bloody or implacable as some prophets have visualized it. Maybe it will be as calm as a fertile and fresh stream, as a meadow. Maybe it will be like a garden cultivated with patience and hands that distinguish the peculiarity of every strain of plant" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 17). See n. 10.

[32] "In the garden of peculiarities, flowers and plants realize the process of photosynthesis to the rhythm of their own sap. No one stops them. Nobody slows them down. Nobody speeds them up or controls them. Animals and insects that sneak through the garden cross the ephemeral heartbeat of the present. And so is the perpetual motion of the earth kept alive. And so persists the planet: the astral domus that provides us shelter and keeps us alive" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 27).

[33] "Nation states assemble their repressive apparati—police and military—to protect the transnationals and expand a lifestyle of standardization based on the reduction of humans into economic units of production and consumption. With this, a new kind of territorialization and labour slavery is produced. The technology and the goods that the global minority, dominant class uses are manufactured in sweatshops that operate with the logic of exploitation. Schools and factories are centres of control imposed by the state. In order to abolish the state, it is necessary to abolish factories and schools. The authoritarianism that the civilized order reproduces in these institutions is responsible for ethnic cleansing, political genocide, and social exploitation. In order to construct a work without hierarchies, jails, propaganda, or coups, it is necessary to sweep, away the state. And it depends on us to wipe it off the face of the earth" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 10).

[34] "In effect, the heart of the planet and of the Cosmos deserve to be celebrated in the everyday as well as in the collective. In this way leisure, the aesthetic, and social life can be woven together outside of all hierarchy, constructing a politics

based on celebration and a carnivalesque, ritualistic coexistence" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 34). See Sect. 4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens.

[35] "The bourgeois garden expanded like a plague under colonialism. It's pretty, but fake. The scenarios installed by civilization, as artistic as they are, lack reality. They require space and the eradication of undesirable species, turning the living world into a backdrop over which the garden can be imposed instantly, like a Polaroid. The civilizing garden enslaves, torments, and sooner or later, will die. This happens because the bourgeois garden standardizes the land, instead of unfolding it in order to have an open and horizontal space. What's more, its objective is luxury, neglecting the edible and self-sustainable garden. The bourgeois garden is about enclosure. In addition, through the illusion of illuminating civilized space, it kills the night. The garden of peculiarities deterritorializes and topples hierarchies. That is its nature. It allows the garden to grow, organically, under the concept of mutual recognition between the gardener and garden. It doesn't try to control the landscape by making it uniform. On the contrary, the point is learning to live with nature and in the midst of nature, orienting the human effect more toward aesthetic practice than standardization. Such a lesson starts by recognizing the otherness of nature as our own otherness. Only in this way is it possible to dissipate the ego among the ever-growing foliage in search of shelter rather than conquest" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 42).

[36] For example, the music of Sun Ra (See. Sect. 4.1.1 What Aesthetics is not: A View Beyond Eurocentric Aesthetic Abstraction) is peculiar in as far as it is differentiated from the norm of 'beautiful' music determined from the purview of a Eurocentric aesthetic determines Chopin's romantic compositions as a musical standard to be met.

[37] Non-hierarchy is of course the caveat under which "this flowering is the total and liberating unfurling of our being [that] permits an organic interaction between human beings and the planet" (Sepúlveda, 2002, p. 27). For such a flowering to occur, no one model can act to standardize, to impose its order of being onto being in its plurality and thereby decrease diversity and beauty, as well as vitality as the totality of vital force.

[38] 'Ecosystem services' is an anthropo-bio-centric concept that refers to the complex symbioses, generosities and interlinkages between an organism and its environment. The concept has been extensively used to provide economics with quantitative data around social and ecological systemic interlinkages and their impact on human well-being to encourage a consideration of the value of nature beyond humanity but has achieved pragmatic success in shifting economic analysis away from neo-classical concerns primarily focussed on productive growth and allocative efficiency. Ecosystem services include "*provisioning services* such as food, water, timber, and fibre; *regulating services* that affect climate, floods, disease, wastes, and water quality; *cultural services* that provide recreational, aesthetic, and spiritual benefits; and *supporting services* such as soil formation, photosynthesis, and nutrient cycling." (Millenium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005, p. v). So, in the case of a tree, its ecosystem services could be broken down into provisioning food, wood and other fibres, and in some cases medicine, as well as 'housing' and 'safety' for a plurality of animals; regulating air quality and ground temperature; providing cultural value in the form listed above; and supporting myriad ecosystemic processes and cycles through its role in stabilising soil moisture content, structure, and carbon content (photosynthesis and nutrient cycling). The term was introduced into the lexicon in the late 1970s, but the idea of linking human wellbeing to nature has a much longer history dating back to the Classical era in Greece.

[39] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity.

[40] In light of the discussion in Ch. 4 (See Sect. 4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens), we can conceptualise "for reasons beyond prudence" to mean 'reasons beyond instrumental logic' tied to Afroaesthetics, purposes and peculiarity.

[41] Burns and his colleagues explore several aspects of productivity and its impact on time in works that consider hustle culture (Burns, 2021), productivity-induced anxiety (Burns, 2024), neoliberalism and its relationship to time (Burns, 2023a), and ways to combat it (Burns, 2023b).

[42] Similar sentiments about the construction of time both during the period of primitive accumulation but also continuing today in the small moments of disciplinarity where the omnipresent work-drive intrudes on our most intimate moments to perform a violence upon animist, restful, joyous or other peculiar forms of time-experience are presented by David Thomas Suell (2022) and Jason Allen-Paisant (2021).

[43] Giordano Nanni (2013) devotes an entire work to the process of colonialism as it relates to time.

[44] The relationship between work, productivity, politics, self-governance and European culture is intimate and old. It can be explained by tracing the development of the protestant work ethic and its translation into culture via the spirit of Capitalism as discussed at length by Max Weber (1930). Byung-Chul Han (2017), Shoshana Zuboff (2019), and Benda Hofmeyer (2022) extend this vein of thought into modern neoliberalism.

[45] Among Hersey's influences we find Octavia Butler, a key figure in literary Afrofuturism.

[46] Sociologist Georges Gurvitch (1964) describes what we have termed ecotime as "enduring time".

[47] See Andrewism (2022b) for a more detailed discussion of anti-work. For the purpose of our usage, we define it as 'a movement against the western capitalist character of work and a return to a reintegrated labour'. Anti-work envisions a society of people" liberated from the shackles of employment [and] free to sloth and to slack, but also to do and to act" understanding that "Humans are verbing creatures [who] should fight for a world where we can verb to fulfil our needs and express ourselves instead of line pockets and destroy the Earth" (ibid.).

[48] See Andrewism's *Commons, Libraries and Degrowth* (n.d.).

[49] A caveat should be added that such relationalities were also a feature of many European indigenous 'pagan' societies before the process of ideological imperialization of the European Asili was undertaken during the militant expansion

of canonised Christianity beginning with the Edict of Milan in 313 AD that initiated a centuries-long campaign that essentially extinguished said cultures.

[50] While Metz does not extend these relationalities to be foundationally cosmic in nature, our earlier analysis of the complex and Afrispiritual approaches to relationality in African thought defend the plausibility of such an interpretation of his description of identity and solidarity.

[51] The Corporate Colonial Food System is our term for the economic structure within which the IAC is housed. Beyond Agrichemical and Agribiotechnology companies, the Corporate Colonial Food System extends the lines of accountability for the harm of the IAC to include soft commodity traders and the small and highly centralised group of global hedge funds who collectively own the majority shares in the world's largest agricultural sector businesses. Importantly, this small group of hedge funds are all co-owners of one another, and so it is their clients who ultimately control and direct the food system globally through their shareholding.

[52] Wong and Bartlett offer mathematical modelling that is difficult to make sense of when one has no background in complex equations, or at least some knowledge to follow along with their explanations and engagements thereof. For instance, in engaging the growth equation for cities $\frac{dN(t)}{dt} = \left(\frac{Yo}{E}\right) N(t)^{\beta} - \left(\frac{R}{E}\right) N(t)$, (Bettencourt et al., 2007) they make the argument for "homeostatic awakening" as follows: "Can this cycle (indeed, metacycle) of collapse be avoided? At some point prior to $t_{burnout}$, the civilization may be able to use its information-processing resources to construct a model of reality that reveals the trajectory that it is on. We define $t_{awakening}$ as the time scale between the emergence of the dataome and this realization. We consider the study by Bettencourt et al. , as well as related works, to be part of our own 'homeostatic awakening'. Hence, for the case of humanity, $\Delta t_{window} = t_{burnout} - t_{awakening}$ is positive. This Δt_{window} is the 'window' that a civilization has to purposefully affect some kind of fundamental, systemic change that alters its modus operandi away from unbounded growth that results in an arbitrarily large demand on energy in a finite amount of time. Note that there is no a priori reason why Δt_{window} must be positive. In many cases, $t_{burnout}$ may occur before $t_{awakening}$" (Wong and Bartlett, 2022, pp. 4–5).

Chapter 6: Order, Life and Spiritual Taboo

Introduction

The previous chapter went about developing an idea of Afrignostic ecology and providing a radical example of how it could be used symbolically to develop strategies for realising the obligation arrived at in Chapter three as a condition for possibility for the Afroaesthetic vision developed in Chapter four. However, the distance between the world-order driving the Situation and the *Utamaroho* of Chapters four and five may be apparent.

As such, this Chapter will consider the terms by which society is currently Ordered and propose an alternative foundation for thinking about order to support the emergence of Afrignostic Ecology. This provisional (Woermann, 2016) way of thinking will take the form of *Cosmic Jurisprudence* and it is intended to compliment Afrignostic ecology, enculturing the sorts of socio-spiritual ecologies that may support perform the performance of ecognomic alchemy.

To consider an alternative, we must come to grasp with modern society's Terms of Order (Robinson, 1980) and how they repress the potential for fulfilling our ethical-spiritual-praxis obligations in relation to the microcosm. As we seek to argue, such limiting factors revolve around a Eurocentric Order, and the terms by which it takes concrete historical form in socio-political and socio-economic relations that "subvert the capacity of the individual to respond to his or her environmental creatively, intelligently and ingeniously" (Robinson, 1980, p. 5).

To systemically confront such, this chapter will proceed as follows:

Section 6.1 aims to interrogate and deconstruct the dominant colonial terms of Order (the Law), its grounding ideals (legal positivism and logocentrism), and its specific instantiation (liberal democratic constitutionalism) in South Africa. To do so, Section 6.1.2 will offer some general remarks on the socio-historical context of Eurocentric Order, and Section 6.1.2 will frame the foundations and functional ends of Law as a limited monocultural expression of Order and explicate its role in modern society, placefully (Janz, 2009) deconstructing the paradigmatic

simplicity (Morin, 2008) of Law's dominant instantiation in South Africa's liberal democratic constitutionalism.

Having modelled the relevant colonial concept of Order, Section 6.2 seeks to pose a mythocentric[1] conception for thinking about Order in the form of Cosmic Jurisprudence as an alternative with which to conclude the substantive contribution of this thesis. To do so, we will consider four examples of Afrikan Ordering Ideals: Section 6.2.1 will consider Maat, a complex ideal from Ancient Kemet framed as the foundation of our alternative approach to Ordering; Section 6.2.2 will consider Taboo and Shaming, the former as a psychological mechanism for Order in Africa, and the latter as a social mechanism for cultivating Order; and Section 6.2.3 will consider Ubuntu as an overlooked disciplinarity responsive to mending the fallout from transgressing a taboo. Lastly, Section 6.2.4 will offer some notes on the normative implications of Ordering in relation to liberalism and Cosmic Jurisprudence as a way of pre-empting critiques of our position, especially as they pertain to the character of the Order which Cosmic Jurisprudential approaches may produce.

This Chapter will be followed by some concluding remarks.

6.1 The Colonial Concept of Order

This section will offer some general remarks on Order in relation to the Situation and Eurocentrism in Section 6.1.1; engage and then frame Law as the dominant (neo-)colonial and monocultural expression of Order today in Section 6.1.2; and discuss Law's instantiation in Constitutionalism as a positivist, self-referential (closed) model of Order in Section 6.1.3.

6.1.1 Introductory Remarks on Order

This section will provide some general remarks on order and specify what sense of it we will be engaging in this chapter.

Order is a massive concept, bearing as much on the relationship of electrons to nuclei and planets to stars as it does on individuals to communities and communities to states. Across its breadth, order has been engaged as a way of

making sense, that is, of trying to understand the relations of things, and in many instances change that relation to one that is able to produce a certain outcome, as was evidenced of order in relation to nature and agriculture in Chapter three.

In this Chapter, our concern is with order in the sense of organisation of a specific kind: the organisation of society, that is, how it is to conceive of that thing into which our sociality is encycled, arranged, directed, limited, and determined. While Chapter two considered the organisation of food production within society, with Chapter three being a reflection thereon using approaches to ethics in African thought, we can say that what Chapters four and five did was to venture beyond a specific type of Eurocentric order in search of alternative concepts for an order Afrignostic in character, a departure from the rigid materialism and tendency towards domestication and hierarchical control of Eurocentric organisation.

A result of this has been an *aporia*, the impossible distance between Afrignosis, Afroaesthetics, Afrignostic Ecology, ecognomics, and the reality and political organisation of the Situation, against which they envisioned an alternative order to being. This order, the unshakable consensus of capitalism and liberal democracy alluded to by Badiou (2013), presents itself as closed, complete, the end of history (Fukuyama, 2006). If our analysis in Chapter one is anything to go by, this order *also-is* an order orienting society towards collapse, an order of self-termination.

Of the character of Order, in so far as the dominant form of Ordering takes on the form of 'the political' (Robinson, 1980) with its own set of Eurocentric peculiarities made manifest globally on violent grounds through the processes of colonialism and coloniality, what puzzles us is the omnipresent force of Order, even in rooms vastly removed geographically from its source, such as the classrooms and lecture halls of South Africa.

The political Order, concretised into an always assumed positivist[2] *logos* in the form of the law, has (Foucault, 1995; Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, 2012), through codes, treatise, contract, and dictum translated itself into a disciplining matrix of subject-forming legislative measures, punishments, sanctions, and social

protocols instantiated at the level of *necessary survival mechanism* in the highly consequential consciousness of the postcolonial subject (Mbembe, 2001; Jabri, 2013). For the colonised, adherence to Order is safety, prosperity and life, and the transgression of Order is precarity, struggle and death.[3]

However, such Order of the Eurocentric variety is of the same organisational character as that which has been the recipient of constant critique in this work. Whether Order of this sort appears as the elevation of complicatedness over complexity, secular scientism over spiritual rationalities, an aesthetics of abstraction over an aesthetics of Life, or of the governing over the governed in a hierarchy of authority, the verticalization of relationality both conceptual and concrete belies itself as central to the European *Utamawazo cum Utamaroho* in service of their cultural *Asili* (Ani, 1994).

When we consider this Asili, it becomes apparent that wherever we turn, the terrain of the possible (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012) is determined on its terms. This work has been replete with examples of, and allusions to, instances where this is the case, from the smallest ordering of Microcosmic life on the ladder of moral considerability, to the largest ordering of the political in the realm of nation-states.

As such, given that even today (post)colonialism, (post)imperialism, (post)apartheid, the European *Asili* still orders the world to the detriment of the Global South and the Cosmic Community, it makes sense that we engage it. Between us today, our Afroaesthetic vision of tomorrow, and the ecognomic character of its Afrignostic ecological food system lies an interrogation and reconceptualization of the terms by which Order names and instantiates itself in the postcolony (Mbembe, 2001) in particular and the world more generally. Such, we suggest, is necessary if any of what has preceded us hopes to challenge the dominance of said Order in light of its impacts, and to open the possibility for future generativity as Africans embrace their slowly growing popular disillusion with it, turning instead towards the deep past and far future, in dreams and imagination, towards the time of (re)birth, of cosmic (re)ordering.

6.1.2 Monocultures of the Mind and the Role of Law in Modern Society

Now that we can see why it is the Eurocentric order must be engaged, this section will frame the nature of the Law and discuss its functional ends as the dominant expression of Eurocentric Order.

A European homeowner, arriving upon an African land, finds himself faced with a garden, whose abundant character of (dis)ordered peculiarities and overgrown edges bring ire to his controlling mind. He takes it upon himself, through mental designs made manifest as rules, first written, then enforced by line, spade and shear, to subjugate the overflow of nature's bountifulness and constitute anew some landscape of being more familiar to his consciousness. Uprooting the undesirable and planting deep the seeds of a Eurocentric vision, his mind-order (*Utamawazo*) thus determines the garden and its developmental horizon, but only as far as he is willing to maintain his institutions of Order, birthed in law, and set towards constantly intervening in the Garden's unfolding, reigning back its expression to within acceptable limits (*Utamaroho*). Such (re)enforcing, we argue, promotes European values – cultural, aesthetic or otherwise - and enacts violence upon the indignantly undisciplined elements in the garden who remain steadfastly (un)ordered.

This metaphor serves to illustrate succinctly the character of Law to the European mind along similar lines as Kenneth B. Nunn, who describes it as "an artifact of a Eurocentric culture [that] reflects the cultural logic, epistemology, axiology, ontology, ethos and aesthetic choice" to represent itself as equal to order (Nunn, 1997, pp. 345, 350). As we have introduced through the work of Ani (1994), Nunn maintains that that the Law functionally expresses the materialist metaphysic of a Eurocentric Cultural *Utamawazo* (ibid., pp. 334-338).[4]

Raised to the level of mythology, the Law as "a consciously false, illusory knowledge or legal fiction" (Motha, 2013, p. 94) domesticates diverse peculiarities (Sepúlveda, 2002) by confronting the "incompetent" with its own "omnicompetent" rationality (Fitzpatrick, 1992, p. 10). Through disciplinary matrices and

governmentalities of its own (re)production (Bröckling, Krasmann and Lemke, 2012), effected on both the governed and the governing, European cultural precedents become reified into Laws of self-referential validity. These dispositions attain global (re)inscription through neocolonial institutions, such as the World Trade Organisation, the World Intellection Property Organisation, multinational treaties and multilateral agreements (Nkrumah, 2004).[5]

All of this results in a single, nearly uniform global legal order, or a monoculture of Order expressed, as we have shown, through its instrument of authority, being the Law. The period of colonialism established a way of thinking about Order and in so doing colonised the very concept of 'an ordered society' into a single form, a society governed by the 'Rule of Law' that placed the question of "whose Rule" seemingly outside of the bound of legal rationality (Dladla, 2023).

Always, even under the auspices of most modern forms of democracy, outside of perhaps its most extremely direct manifestations, the Law as the base of the state has functioned to defend and represent the interests and cultural expressions of those who make it, the governing class, whether aristocratic, bourgeois, proletarian, black or white (Bookchin, 1982). This is because, as Robinson acutely diagnoses, democracy is an "ideograph"[6] whereby the "invisible and the invested" functionally rule society via "a political process engineered by infinitely smaller minorities" (Robinson, 1980, pp. 13–23). This manifests concretely in a legislatively established policing institution, which protects the physical assets of the state (schools, courts, government buildings) and those of its comrade class (mines, factories, retail outlets) from the political expression of the people *en masse*, that body for which the law is supposed to be a representation of their will.

Unlike African societies, where law is more broadly "understood as part of the seamless web that binds the community together [and it is thus] inconceivable to think of the law as an object, separate and distinct from custom, culture and morality", a conclusion shared by Ramose (2002a, pp. 84–87) and Jordan Ngbubane (1979, pp. 77–81), European legal Order "insists" on representing 'objective' legal objects, abstractly justified, as reality and given as "the command of the sovereign"

no longer in need of any higher authority or morality (Nunn, 1997, pp. 340, 347–348).

An example specifically pertinent to this is the contract, the pre-eminent tool of European legal subjugation used against a largely pre-literate people with no concept of written contractual binding. As Nunn writes, "Law was used at each step in the conquest and enslavement of African and other native peoples. Nothing was done without the law's guiding hand to regulate, manage and control" (Nunn, 1997, pp. 352–353). Such a paradigm of legal encirclement, entrapment and domination remained at play through the period of formal legislative Apartheid in South Africa – the unjust treatment of the black minority by the white majority was entirely legal, as was slavery and the period of colonial disposition.

While the Just in isolation stands as that to be strived for, the law as a Eurocentric attempt at making the Just real in the world has always rather functioned as a term by which the European Order came to (re)inscribe itself onto colonised peoples and territories to the detriment of the oppressed (Dladla, 2023).

This pattern of the use and abuse of Laws against the governed by the governing has not fundamentally changed in the 21st century. Prominent examples include: the brutal yet legal sanctioned responses by the police to the 2012 Workers uprising in Marikana (Marinovich, 2018); the 2016 #MustFall movement by students in South Africa (Mutekwe, 2017; Lange, Reddy and Kumalo, 2021); the United Kingdom's 2020 ban on the teaching of any material from anti-capitalist sources, including the work of Karl Marx or even the various historians of the labour movement (Luff, 2020); or the recent expansion of the definition of antisemitism by the United States House of Representatives to include any statement criticising the state of Israel while the latter commits genocide in Gaza (Al Jazeera, 2024).

Each example, while varied from a violence perspective, serves to reinforce a European order via legal means. As before, the law in modern society remains a pruning governmentality, functionally translating the order of a European rationality into governmentalities linked to technologies of governance (Bröckling, Krasmann

and Lemke, 2012) and of self (Nilson, 1998), which manifest as disciplining relationships of power/knowledge over the individual and biopolitical control over populations.

Bringing us back to the example that this thesis has been primarily concerned with, we see a confluence between the IAC as a monoculturing food production enterprise and the law as monoculturing Eurocentric order enterprise. In either case, the mode of unfolding is one of monoculturation, the former of the land, the latter of the body and the mind as law becomes the management of access, authorisation and control, as well as the author of legitimacy in the realm of power/knowledge; law defines hierarchies, legitimates authority, and superioritises that which is its progenitor, European cultural values. That which is legally sanctioned becomes hierarchicalised, raised above and given power-over that which is not.

6.1.3 Constitutionalism and the Paradigm of Simplicity in Jurisprudence

This section will consider constitutional Law (Bekink, 2012), and the concept of constitutionalism itself, as the dominant positivist expression of European legal order in South Africa, and frame it as an expression of the paradigm of simplicity as applied to the Order of society.[7] The purpose of this section is to complete our critique of Law as the assumed means for Ordering society, thus creating room for the forthcoming discussions of cosmic Order beyond it.

The constitution[8] of the Republic of South Africa, Act. 108 of 1996 established in its founding provision the following:

The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values:

(a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.

(b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.

(c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law.

(d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voter's roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.

Establishing popular sovereignty on the basis of a questionably performative "We, the people",[9] the constitution of 1996 is mired in problems. First, by its very naming, Act 108 of 1996, it signals a continuation of legal order between the time before its enactment and the time after, where that which temporally preceded it was a time of colonialism and racist governance, and the time after it is supposedly one of "non-racialism" and "equality" (Ramose, 2018b).[10] Secondly, unlike the three national constitutions of majority white governance which preceded it,[11] the 1996 constitution for the first time established the principle of constitutional supremacy, placing the basis of the law articulated in the constitution above the will of the people as embodied by their representatives in parliament. It is suspicious, to say the least, that such a change occurred at the time when parliament would be made up of a black majority for the first time, albeit a divided one.[12] Thirdly, the constitution embraces a Eurocentric and specifically legal rationalism that accedes to the order of Sovereign states, established in Europe by the treaty of Westphalia following the continental 30 year war between the holy Roman empire and various protestant groupings and eventually exported globally through the unjust wars of colonialism (Boundja, 2021). This pivotal disjunction of the world into nation-states pitted against one another on the basis of comparative advantage in economic terms, a way of understanding human social order at odds with the holism[13] inherent in African thought, is something we will return to in section 6.2.

Through its performative self-referentiality, the constitution establishes the political authority of the state[14] as presupposed political law-maker (Habermas, 1996, p. 134), while simultaneously legitimising its power to enforce the Rule of Law[15] over the people and lands of South Africa. It does, however, rely on the *concept of constitutionalism* as a means for determining, at the highest level, the order of society.

According to Bernard Bekink, “constitutionalism symbolises a state that is founded on the law” but “presupposes that all government powers are subject to specific limits and procedures and all rights are exercised in terms of *the letter* and *the spirit* of the law, including the constitution” (Bekink, 2012, p. 32 emphasis added). Herein we identify not only the tautology of constitutional law, wherein a state founded on the law requires a constitution but said constitution already presupposes the force of law *a priori*, but also its reliance on false universality, where a letter of law and a spirit of law are presented as the letter and the spirit. However, this latter falsity, we argue, is a symbol for a signified European *Utamawazo* that attached, before “we, the people” was possible, the limits of Order to the logocentric letter of the law and paired it with a Spirit of Order not of Africa, and yet bound Africa to it.

Despite this colonial history, the constitution remains heralded by the political establishment in South Africa, and also globally, as an unprecedented achievement in legal order, often touted as “’the best constitution in the world’ and taken to represent a “substantive and symbolic break with the past” (Modiri, 2018, p. 307).

When social problems arise in South Africa, as they often do, always among the first political responses is an appeal to the constitutional guarantee of some right paired with the government’s failure to deliver thereon, which requires the initiation of court proceedings against the offending minister or member of the executive committee of the responsible government department. Or, otherwise, where an injustice reaches a more noteworthy scale, as they often do, the president is then called upon to initiate a commission to investigate said injustice and, where the constitution and its laws were violated by officials, then make recommendations (which are never taken up) to the presidency for how to address the issue. This way of thinking holds the courts, the so-called independent judiciary, or the various commissions and committees, as the primary mechanism for reestablishing constitutional Order has led to the judicialization of South African politics (Gildenhuys, 2020; Nyane, 2020; Sibanda, 2020).

Regarding the ideal of an effective Constitutional order to be returned to, we argue that such has never existed. In fact, we go so far as to claim that there has been no point, anywhere or under any constitutional order, where a constitution has been fully and equally realised for all of the citizens of a nation.[16] Constitutional order is fallacious, and this is evidenced by the aforementioned over-reliance on the post-facto powers of the courts, as some kind of saviour intended to right wrongs and re-establish the Rule of Law, is evidence enough for this in South Africa and has resulted in a jurisprudence that encloses the process of making real justice within an ineffective framework of a liberal[17] litigative order while simultaneously grandstanding said order as inherently and profoundly rational, so perfect in its formulation that it is almost taboo to openly critique it outside of critical jurisprudential scholarship.

Pondering on the legacy of constitutionalism in South Africa, and why it is that as a country where the constitution maintains such as positive social connotation, Joel Modiri, following Jean and John Comaroff (2004), attributes a fetishistic attitude of "constitutional worship" to myriad factors, ranging from a "global hegemony of human rights" to the aforementioned "judicialization of politics", all combining to form the productive force of a "particular [European] political culture [and] conceptions of nationhood and subjectivity" (Modiri, 2018, pp. 306–307). He explains its effect almost as a kind of collective amnesia, whereby "the possibilities for reversing colonial order are silenced even before they can be spoken, and the exigency of complete justice is undermined even before it can be demanded" merely through an obfuscation of constitutionalism's historical facticity behind the "deification of the constitution" (bid., p. 308). The consequence of this is the closing of political possibilities in terms of (re)ordering society, rather than the opening one might have expected from the moment of liberation from colonial rule.

This turn of phrase is immediately reminiscent of approaches to reality that operate from the paradigm of simplicity. To remind ourselves, Morin (2008) describes the paradigm of simplicity as the use of reduction and disjunction to create order in

the universe and chase out disorder, reducing order to a set of laws, referent only to themselves. We argue that the concept of constitutionalism does just this when confronted with the 'disorder' of a complex human-society system.

To make-sense of, but also to render controllable and subject to domination, we argue that constitutionalism takes the cosmic Good, esoterically understood in the Platonic Form of "the source of order but not itself any particular kind of order" being both metaphysical entity and ethical principle (Lachterman, 1989; Corcoran, 2016, p. 164), and disjoins it into the sum of various defined normative 'values'[18] before orienting a single complicated meta-institution, being a sovereign state, towards its individualist realisation and establishing it as the only legitimate entity with the power and mandate to order society.[19]

Although the emergence of law is a complex (Murray, Webb and Wheatley, 2018), and discursive phenomenon (Habermas, 1996), we suggest that law operates within the paradigm of simplicity and thus misunderstands the metaphysical nature of that over which it maintains hierarchical power relations by maintaining a fixed "fragmentation inflicted on reality [as] reality in itself" (Morin, 2008, p. 4). Concurring with Woermann's analysis of the Law (Woermann, 2018, p. 248), we see constitutionalism's closing of the political and enclosing of the will of the people as a denial of Law as an "open form of life insofar as it engages and is engaged by, the world and with the empty ideal of justice" whose "limitations and fragile foundations" point not towards its sufficiency, but rather towards the possibility of other forms of order for which critique and transgression are rendered necessary.[20]

South African constitutionalism's allergy to complexity is nowhere clearer than the subtle exclusion of Ubuntu from the constitution, conspicuously vanishing from the text between the 1992 interim constitution and the final constitution that would come into force in 1996, with political consequences for the justice black South Africans sought to achieve with the end of Apartheid.

In South Africa, during the 'transitional' period between the end of Apartheid and the emergence of the democratic dispensation, a conversation around justice for

the collective harm done to African peoples was prominent. How can justice be served to the majority black population who had been violently and systematically oppressed and dominated by the minority white population? The given answer, problematic in many senses (Ramose, 2018b), was to adopt the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act that established, amongst other processes, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

The TRC purported to serve the ends of peace and transition through the lens of reconciliation and truth telling, with the logic that exchanging a public 'confession' of the wrongdoings of people on both sides of the Apartheid equation - a bringing into the light the acts in the shadows - in return for a promise of Amnesty for said acts that would reconcile the spirit of a broken society with itself.

However, the process, and the very conception from which it sprang was steeped in Eurocentric political epistemology reliant on conceptually colonised juridico-ontology and thus afro-existentially incongruent ideas (Dladla, 2023). Justice was a secondary consideration, and the TRC rhetorically tended towards European ideological approaches like those from which analytic interconnectionism proceeds. These being individualism; desacralisation (or at least a restricted Euro-Christian sacralisation); the unquestioned dominance of the Euro-legal Order; the maintenance of existing economic and property relations; and the failure to repudiate the unjust Right of Conquest (Ramose, 2012; Dladla, 2017a).

This leads one to ask the highly political rhetorical question: whose justice was served in 1994 and inscribed in the 1996 constitutional Order?

All of this points to the borders of Order as it has taken on a persistent colonial character, serving only to reinscribe and reinforce a way of being foundationally oriented towards the ends of the European *Asili,* being domination and control (Ani, 1994). Enough has been given for us to be hesitant of the Law in its entirety and thus prompt explorations of alternative orders beyond it, and specifically those forms that consider the order through a more general, cosmic, lens.

Taking post-conquest jurisprudential scholarship[21] as a "historical starting point for framing the South African historical and social reality" and dislodging "the political ontology of conquest" wherein "the fact of conquest has been excluded from the universe of juristic facts," (Modiri, 2018, pp. 315–316) what is to follow attempts to extend its critique to reconsider Order more generally.

6.2 Cosmic Jurisprudence

Now that we have proffered our critique of Law as the dominant instantiation of Eurocentric Ordering, this section will develop what we call 'Cosmic Jurisprudence' – a mythocentric *Utamawazo* for thinking about Order - as an alternative to it. We shall do so by showcasing four alternative Terms of Order from Africa, ranging from antiquity to the present, in the form of Maat, Taboo and Shaming, and Ubu-ntu. Maat – a complex esoteric ideal from Ancient Kemet – will be the central mythoform through which we will (re)conceptualise Taboo and Shaming, and Ubu-ntu.

The purpose of this section is to build upon the terms of Africentric Order introduced in this work so far, such as Asili, *Utamawazo* and *Utamaroho* (Ani, 1994); Kugusa Mtima (Ani, 1993); Ecognomics, Afrignostic Ecology (this work, Chapter 5); *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2003b); reconfilliation (Ramose, 2012); and, Anamnestic Solidarity (Bujo, 1998), as alternatives to the Eurocentric terms of Order such as the political, the economy, the government, the law, the state, and democracy.

The discussion will proceed as follows:

Section 6.2.1 will introduce the concept of Maat in the work of Maulana Karenga (2004) and Claver Boundja (2021) to frame it as an esoteric starting point, mid-point and end point for the rethinking of Order in Africa under the rubric of Cosmic Jurisprudence - a way of thinking about order and the process of (re)ordering that takes cognisance of cosmic complexity; Section 6.2.2 will consider an example of a non-textual social order mechanism in the form of taboos kept present in the 'the joke', a collective system of conscious taboos in the Ila Tonga

tribe, as set out in the work of Cedric Robinson (2016); and, section 6.2.3 will consider again *Ubu-ntu*, but this time as a means for constellating a more radical politics and dealing with those who transgress Maat, and thus jeopardize the harmonious Ordering by which the cosmic community is sustained and conditions of flourishing are enabled.

An important caveat prefaces the discussion to follow: we understand all of the alternatives Terms of Order in this section to be emic (Mostowlansky and Rota, 2020) in character. We argue that a term like Maat does not easily conform to the *a priori* frameworks of professional philosophy and its Eurocentric affinity for etic analysis and written language.[22] As Curruthers (1995) explains, later corroborated by Myers (2023), Maat is inseparable from Divine speech (*mdw ntr)* and Good speech (*mdw nfr*) and so can only be understood through experiences of it. Kemetic wisdom is always implicit (Browder, 1992; West, *1993*) in the worldviews, customs, ways of being-knowing-doing and in *mfw ntr;* it is never explicit, apparent, or articulated in a way that is analytically precise.[23]

As such and given the esoteric nature of the terms to be discussed, we forgo some degree of analytic preciseness in favour of an emic approach more faithful to the Terms and their contexts of origin (Mostowlansky and Rota, 2020).[24]

6.2.1 Maat

This section will describe Maat as the basis of a generative discourse on Order in Africa and position it in relation to Cosmic Jurisprudence.

Evolving in the context of ancient Kemet and "a theology at whose centre the king is firmly fixed" (Karenga, 2004, sec. 2.2.1),[25] Maat is, according to Jan Assman "a concept at the highest level of abstraction, associating human actions and the cosmic order and thus bringing law, morality, state, worship and religious imagination on the same level" (Assmann, 1990, p. 17).[26] We raise it as a response to an *isfetic* society,[27] devoid or deprived of Maat and thus "suffering from natural and social calamities, justice denied or perverted and personal and collective alienation" (Karenga, 2004., Sec. 2.4.4).

According to Théophile Obenga (1990), translated and arranged by Karenga (2004, sec. 2.1), the "wide range of interrelated meanings of the Maatian Idea" are expressed over four areas: "(1) the universal domain in which Maat is "*le Tout ordonne*," the totality of ordered existence, and represents things in harmony and in place; (2) the political domain in which Maat is justice and in opposition to injustice; (3) the social domain in which the focus is on right relations and duty in the context of community and; (4) the personal domain in which following the rules and principles of Maat, "is to realize concretely the universal order in oneself; to live in harmony with the ordered whole" prompting an understanding of Maat as an "interrelated order of rightness".

As "the foundational ideal of ancient Egyptian religion and ethics" that is "polysemic" and an example of "plurisignation", being simultaneously an epistemological, moral, metaphysical ideal, aesthetic,[28] and ecological ideal (opposed to "all enterprises which tend to destroy the cosmic order, nature and thereby commits itself to the future or destiny or humanity"), Maat's invaluable "conceptual elasticity [as] a category of interrelated ethical, social, religious, political and/or natural order" (Karenga, 2004, sec. 1.2) lends itself strongly to a conception as "the cosmic force of harmony" (Boundja, 2021, p. 10).

The ecological aspect of Maat, integral to this project as a whole given our conception of nature, society and spirit as bound together in cosmic community, considers what we have referred to as the autopoietic intelligence of nature to be an expression of the order that is Maat. As a kind of unboundedness that appears as disorder to the ordering mind, the self-organising and unfolding nature of nature is understood to be Maat-in-and-as-the-world, living and in a state of presence with us.

Integrally, Maat is not something only thought of, or written down, it is also something that must be reciprocally practiced within a worldview that "links the Divine, the natural and the social" as "interrelated, interactive and mutually affective" domains (Karenga, 2004, sec. 1.2.) requiring the "continuous and

collective" (Boundja, 2021. p. 10) efforts of humanity working collaboratively towards its manifestation in the world.

By speaking and doing Maat in "a dynamic equilibrium" (Frankfort, 1961) and "as an act of co-creation," Maat emerges from the world (Karenga, 2004., Sec. 9.5). This aligns Maat - in the expansive sense offered by Karenga (ibid) of "an interrelated order of rightness which requires and is the result of right relations with an right behaviour towards the Divine, nature and other humans" - with the ethical-spiritual-praxis framework we have developed thus far as Afrignosis, in both its complexity, its complex relationality, and its communality in collective action at the intersection of being-knowing-doing.

Adherents of Maat must, among other things, make of themselves worthy to others (Karenga, 2004. Sec. 8.1); uphold and pursue the dignity of all humans (ibid., sec. 8.2); cultivate virtue and eliminate vice in themselves to increase the "quality of human relations and the respect for the human personality and community" (ibid., sec. 8.3);[29] advance social justice and the protection of the most vulnerable (ibid., sec. 8.4); morally consider the Stranger (ibid., sec. 8.5); afford equal treatment to men and women (ibid., sec. 8.6); and recognising what Karenga terms "the relationality-responsibility paradigm" (ibid., sec. 8.7) comparable to our discussion of the nature of ethical obligation and responsibility in Section 3.4.3. It also extends the responsibility of adherents to cultivate worthiness in relation to nature as well, premised on a unity of being, a shared biotic heritage and the capacity of humans to engage with nature as a matter of "filial guardianship" understood as an "obligation to the future" (ibid., Ch. 9).

From Karenga's interpretation, we argue that Maat's inter-relating of the good, the just, and the beautiful reveals it as a paradigmatically complex concept (Morin, 1992a), which constellates itself through the conscious practice of Anamnesis (Bujo, 1998), a (re)membering of Ancestral Maat as a contemplative and action-determining Afrignosis. Consequently, and like the concept and lived reality of Ancestral existence, Maat can be thought to exist with us, as a being in the world,

a part of the world with which we relationally exist and are no more ontologically valid than, regardless of its seemingly epistemic character.

The Anarchist and black studies critique of hierarchalisation points also towards a critique, already supported in the complex relational approach to ethics in African thought, of a horizontality of ontological status, as an accompaniment to the horizontalisation of authority or the decentralisation of political power. Such a non-hierarchy in metaphysical status affords Maat a level of existence more comparable to, and as psychosocially important to recognise as, that of a human, a mycelia, an institution, or a concept performatively made manifest such as We, The People.

We suggest that Maat's vibrational density, or power-to (re)constellate the Ego-Self axis, derives from experiences symbolically structured through cultural practice, including initiation rites, rituals and day-to-day spiritual practices, which enculturate cosmic awareness into the individual psyche by placing them into relation with the cosmic community. Such processes, either facilitated or internally manifest by living life, achieve in the self self-transformation and self-transcendence a (re)orientation and (re)constellation of the Psyche towards a more balanced recognition of Self (Being) or Cosmos.

Awareness of Maat in this sense is theological (Karenga, 2004, sec. 4.6)[30] in so far as it grapples with the concept of death (the point of judgement), worthiness, (justification and vindication of the soul) and the immortality of the Soul after Death. For the people of Kemet, the worthiness of one's life, or to use our terms, whether one has lived a life of cosmic-value, is a question of whether one has both spoken Maat and done Maat in Life, linking the ethical-spiritual and the philopraxis. Upon one's passing, should a soul be weighed, symbolically, against the Maat, as a measure of the Good, the Just and the Beautiful, and found to be equal, meaning that one has cultivated Maat both internally and externally, then one may transition into the living dead and occupy the ream of the reeds, alongside other Ancestral beings who too have found such harmony with Being. This is to not die the death, but to "become a glorious one in the horizon" (ibid.).

The temptation to level an accusation of hierarchy at Maat is not unfounded, for it appears that if Maat is to be the measure of all men, then surely it is that Maat must stand on an ontological level above humankind. Above is, however, the incorrect term, as Maat, like the Ancestors, stands invisibly alongside humankind, in the place of cosmic unity, being a concept, an ideal, and a principle of order made manifest in humanity by living – it is "an ontological unity of God and humans" (ibid., sec. 5.2.2) creating the conditions for us to self-assert the cosmic value of Life and the role we have in unfolding the potentiality of Being-Becoming in full esoteric awareness of our own divinity, which "emboldens [us] to be active agents in [our] own lives" (Martin, 2015, p. 68) moderated by the cosmic wisdom of interconnectedness that accompanies such.

Without purpose, the assignation of which to Maat would constitute a categorical error as it is us who require things to have a purpose, Maat exists in and also is the world, just as we too are both within and a manifestation of it. Given a status of ontological equalness, Maat is the "metaphysical presupposition of a moral tradition" relating a worldview between human-society and Nature, which is fundamentally concerned with experience and practice or "defining and living the good life, of being a worthy member of family and community and of creating and sustaining the just and the good" (Karenga, 2005., Sec. 5.1).

The relationship between Order and Maat is one of ethical-spiritual-praxis rooted in the idea that "good is created and evil lessened and/or destroyed when one stands up and does Maat" (ibid., sec 5.2.1) for Maat is cosmic Order. To do Maat begins in speaking Maat, an act of divine speech or good speech (Carruthers, 1995), the reality of which emanates from the heart, informed by what it is that the eyes, nose, and ears bear witness to. Thus, it is such that upon witnessing the squalor of a forgotten township, the stench of a polluted river, or the deadness of an intensively farmed field, one may righteously proclaim "this is wrong, and we must fix it". For Maat to be realised, once spoken, it must be done by them who spoke it. Such is the order of Maat.

As Karenga writes (2004., sec. 503):

> *"If the orderedness of being is essential to the maintenance and flourishing of life and indeed to the maintenance of the* Cosmos *itself, then doing Maat can be and is translated as the performance of order. At the same time, it is important to note that given Maat's conceptual elasticity, to perform order is also to do justice, speak truth, be reciprocal, balanced and in harmony, practice propriety and do righteousness in general."*

Order here, we argue, represents a form of harmonising with the self-organization of nature, of dancing with the world and maintaining in said dance just relations, with yourself, with one another, and with the world. Unjust relations are those that foster *isfet* and disturb or otherwise jeopardize the harmony of world-Maat. The orderedness required here is one of restraint, of exercising wisdom to not do something just because one can, whether that thing be murder or the reckless pursuit of artificial general intelligence.

Maat must be put into the world in place of *isfet*, or wrongness. Herein a break is implied, a qualitative doing differently that demands of the present the act of (re)creating harmonious Order. Maat, as such, is a characteristic of "divine order established at the time of creation" (Frankfort, 1961, p. 63) where we read creation to be symbolic, not narrowly as the moment of creation, but Afrignostically as the power of creativity imbued in human persons deciding to externalise their will in a righteous way, being a way sensitive of cosmic value. Maat further conceives of the person as inherently teachable and capable of fostering in themselves the wisdom of Maat by way of interactions with *Geru-maa*, the paradigm of a self-mastered or exemplary person who "pursues righteousness above material gain" (Karenga, 2004. Sec. 6.4).

Maat then is the justification for our *Kugusa Mtima* (Ani, 1993), that which when (re)membered channels the vibrational organising force of our *Asili,* orienting us towards its expression in our *Utamoawazo* and *Utamahoro* (Ani, 1994), towards ways of being-knowing-doing that operate harmoniously in the Cosmos. It explains our dissatisfaction with the modern, Eurocentric and ecocidal world, and provides

us with a reason for doing away with it, for abandoning the terms of its Order and (re)memebering and (re)creating on the basis of our own, being Maat.

Such is rooted equally in tradition as we have attempted to put forward our frameworks herein, Maat evokes a continuity of moral tradition and a rationality for doing things in a cosmic sense informed by "Ancestor and elder veneration and a profound respect for ancient knowledge and achievement" but subject to constant, contextual revision and challenge, rejecting the fixity of all but Maat, which itself cannot be fixed given its elasticity or esoteric nature (Karenga, 2004., Sec. 7.2.2). Speaking and doing Maat is then also an act of Anamnestic Solidarity (Magesa, 1997; Bujo, 1998).

The primacy given to speaking Maat as the establishing moment of Maat in the world is where we enter the above conception of Maat back into the deepening discussion of Jurisprudence, or the modern discourse on Ordering, the Law and the relationship of the two.

Boundja (2021, forward) defines the concept of Bantucracy as a way "to think of a political system of the people (*bantu*) of good people for the good of people" and positions it, following Maat, as a system that "harmoniously integrates the cosmic, religious, political and anthropological dimensions" of being together in the world led by "bantucrates", comparable in character to the *Geru-maa*. Informing his concept is a way of thinking-about-Order, which we term 'Cosmic Jurisprudence', or a way of reasoning that attempts to reintegrate divine wisdom, Maat, as the guiding principle of Order while balancing the incompleteness of being and extending said incompleteness to Law wherein "legislation is always incomplete, always taken up and open at best" (ibid, p. 72).[31]

To overcome the increasingly obvious insufficiencies of modern democracy, and specifically for our discussion of modern positivist constitutionalism, Boundja determines that there must be a 'sovereignty of speech' as part of his rethinking of the political. He bases this need in the claim that "at the foundation of political power in modern Europe and in pre-colonial Africa" lies the word, though

supremacy is given to its written form in Europe and its spoken form in Africa (Boundja, 2021. p. 75). Confronting the impact of centralising power and authority in the word (law), Boundja advocates for the power to (re)order to be ultimately retained in the sociality of speech so as to allow that "democratic institutions must always be controlled by the interpersonal relationship [...] the original relational which is imparted to me by the presence of others" (Boundja, 2021, p. 78).

Herein, the efficacy of Maat-spoken and its transmutation into Maat-done is protected by returning to speech and its primordial sacredness, as was urged of us by Khunanpu in the tale of the Eloquent Peasant, found in the *Book of Khunanpu* (Papyrus of Berlin 3023, 320-322) where he wrote (Karenga, 2004, p. 243):

> *"Speak Maat*
> *Do Maat*
> *For it is mighty*
> *It is great; it endures*
> *Its worth is tested*
> *It leads one to blessedness."*

Such a treatment of speech, we argue, is equalising in so far as any person who speaks Maat may demand of another that Maat be done (Myers, 2023, chap. 3), thereby horizontalizing and diffusing the authority ossified into legal texts back into human sociality, meaning that a written law is not the prerequisite or the standard for wrongdoing and that it is the condition of community, resulting from people living in community (Ramose, 2002a, chap. 6), that ensures that Maat, when spoken together, is the measure of the Good, the Just and the Beautiful.

In sum, Cosmic Jurisprudence can be described as having the following three characteristics, the first implied and the second explicit. First, Cosmic Jurisprudence embraces decoloniality by recognising the inherent conceptual coloniality of the dominant Terms of Order (Robinson, 1980). Second, it (re)considers Maat (Karenga,

2004) as the primary source of Order, followed by sociality or humanness in Divine speech, which equally distributes such authority to all speaking persons.[32] And third, it critically rejects any and all laws which cannot, by way of speaking and doing, conform with the ethical, social, metaphysical, aesthetic and ecological ideals, or mythocentric pillars, of Maat, and embrace the directing of Bantucracy in their place (Boundja, 2021).

We consider the future society in Africa that we have outlined in the previous chapters as one that necessarily returns to the knowledge of Maat as it provides to said society a goal and a method for Harmony within the cosmic community. Additionally, and crucially, Maat, in the style of reflexive Afrignosis from Section 4.3's discussion of purposes, provides an ideal as measure of ethical-spiritual praxis.

This is because the Afrignostic wisdom of Maat, as ever-present with the Ancestors, enculturates a discursive framework for right action, opening, through its praxical orientation, Afroaesthetic notions of what food production sensitive to cosmic value look like. Herein, Maat presents as a grid of intelligibility through which an approach such as ecognomics can be made sense of, and so be made meaningful.

6.2.2 Spiritual Taboo and Ancestral Wisdom

Having established the foundation of cosmic jurisprudence as Maat, this section will describe the concept of Taboos and 'the joke' (Gluckman, 1977; Robinson, 1980) – a distributed moral ledger of sorts - as a means for Shaming as social pedagogy oriented at the ensuring (re)inscription of Maat into human socio-organisational outlooks. Evidenced in Kemet by the concept of "*bw.t*" (Densu, 2018, p. 41) – meaning "what the divine one hates" according to Karenga's (2004, sec. 4.4.2) translation of the 9th declaration to the Lord of Maat from the Declarations of Innocence (A) – the concept of Taboo is contextually relevant to the preceding discussion of Maat.[33]

According to the literature, taboos are socially enforced sets of unwritten oral norms (Baloyi, 2020) or 'avoidance rules' (Ajayi, 2022) functioning as a pedagogical

tool to establish boundaries for acceptable human action "aimed at inculcating desirable behaviour" from an early age both "towards the ontological wellbeing of the individual person and the environment at large" (Chemhuru and Masaka, 2010, p. 121).

By distinguishing and emphasizing various relationships within the cosmic community, such as between a man and a river in which it is Taboo to urinate, a grove in which it is Taboo to fetch wood, or the home of a woman occupied by her and her newborn child immediately post-partum that it is Taboo to visit, Taboos "set patterns and codes of behaviours which members of society must adhere to for the good of the community as a whole" (Ajayi, 2022, pp. 77–78). Taboos derive their social potency from the idea that any transgression of them would lead to some negative impact on the individual, but also on the community. Usually, negative effects are linked to metaphysical phenomena, such as curses, spirits or the Ancestors, the reality of which is taken as social fact, regardless of the pagan and irrational status afforded to them by Eurocentricity in the human and natural sciences.

Taught through proverbs, stories, and idioms, Taboos are an integral and relatively persistent part of Afrikan folklore and indigenous wisdom. First shared with children, these symbolic gnoses are meant to provoke such an emotional response in young beings that they learn quickly not to perform a certain action, speak a certain way, cross a certain boundary or otherwise behave in an *isfetic* way. These prohibitions, while extreme in their foretold consequences, often contain teachings that help to safeguard important aspects or features of a community or a locality, and, when read ecologically, some even contain insights for how to engage a given environment in a deeply sustainable way, as applicable today as 1000 years ago (Chemhuru and Masaka, 2010; Madavo, 2019; Sayi, 2019).

From the most simple taboo against water pollution in the Shona teaching that one does not fetch water from the well with a soot covered pot (Chemhuru and Masaka, 2010) to the most complex Taboos in examples like the Yoruba parable of the Irókò tree that conspired with the parrot (Elébuìbon, 2004, p. 1) or the

myth of *Eva-Mana* and its warning against the “blind confidence that anything can be achieved” (Bujo, 2009); Taboos function on the basis of esoteric wisdom, like Maat, to inculcate an Order to existence for which they are only symbolic instantiations.

Of course, a pressing concern arises: how might such culturally specific Taboos function in a plural, urban, and multi-ethnic society? We do not propose that pre-existing rural or tribal norms be transplanted wholesale into cities, nor that diverse communities must adhere to a singular set of sacred codes. Rather, we suggest that the form of Taboos – as symbolic ethical constraints emergent from shared values and ecological needs – is more important than the specific content of any one taboo tradition. Drawing on Arturo Escobar’s (2020) concept of the pluriverse, the city may be re-imagined as a site of ontological negotiation, where multiple ways of worlding co-exist, not through universalising imposition but through cosmopolitical conversation. As Achille Mbembe (2022) has written of Africa’s cities, they are places where earthly community might be reconstituted – where the ethical, spiritual, and ecological are entangled in new forms of belonging grounded in the materiality of the Earth and the living presence of others. Here, the for the Taboo overflows ethnocentrism to represent a ritualised negotiation of limits grounded in the sacredness of Being-becoming with and with-in shared life-worlds.

When speaking on epistemologies of the South as opening space for diatopical hermeneutics, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2015) introduces the non-hierarchical potentiality of dialogical translation between different knowledge systems. In this sense, the future-Taboos of which we speak may be considered as co-constructed across differences, informed by the ontological grammars of various traditions and lived cosmologies, emerging as urban cosmograms (Simone, 2010): dynamic, locally adapted, spiritually resonant codes of restraint. Much like the ubu-ntu functions as a shared value across ethnic lines, so too may Taboos – the idea of the sacred limit not to be crossed – be revisited and re-applied to guide moral and ecological regeneration. Hereby, Taboos operate less as a culturally exclusive impositions, and more as cosmic-communal invocations of care, shaped

contextually by the Ancestors of place, the needs of the Cosmic Community, and the emergent spiritual vibrations present among those who dwell together.

Where the deterrent mechanism safeguarding against taboo transgression provided by the threat of metaphysical consequence proved ineffective within an individual, an alternative social deterrent existed in tribes such as the Tonga, Tsonga, and Tallensi, in the form of 'the joke' (Gluckman, 1977, pp. 121–122).

This "joke", or what Robinson (1980, p. 202) describes as a "formalised and deliberate verbal antagonism whose conscious construction is bared to the "joker's" antagonist in order to emphasize the absurdity of the antagonism while ministering, on another level, to a real conflict which is frightful and unacceptable to both parties," functions on the basis of intersubjective *shaming* as its means for norm-building. Simply put, transgressing a Taboo would make the transgressor the tragic butt of a very long running joke levelled at them by members of the community. The Joke is ongoing, (re)membered and (re)enforced by the passing of stories from generation to generation. Such "joking relationships", as Max Gluckman (1977, chap. 3) had called this communal psychosocial dynamic, form "the vehicle for maintaining the continuity of mores and moral integrity among members of the clan-*mukowa*" (Robinson, 1980, p. 203). [34]

We recognise that even by mentioning the notion of shaming we invite serious ethical and psychological scrutiny. Indeed, in its modern forms - public humiliation, stigmatic exclusion and especially online shaming - shame can be profoundly damaging and disintegrative, leading to long-lasting psychological harm (Billingham and Parr, 2020; Frye, 2022). In its social form, Shaming has in the modern day taken on the form of call-out culture, where members of a community vilify another, sometimes prominent, member of a community for transgressing that which is Taboo in a given circle (Wynn, 2020). Taking on the traits of what Brian L. Ott (2017) has called "the age of twitter" (simplicity, impulsivity, and incivility),

However, the form of Shaming we advance, described here as part of a cosmic jurisprudence grounded in Maat, is different and of a culturally positive nature –

meaning it is reintegrative in the sense discussed by John Braithwaite (1989), akin to the Ubuntu concept of restorative justice (Mokgoro, 2012) – in so far as it aims to be congnoscent of the common tropes of cancel-culture[35] which would render its shame mechanism disintegrative or stigmatizing.

This form of Shaming aims to hold individuals accountable while still affirming their belonging and potential for redemption. The use of humour and the "joke" in example of the Tonga advanced by Robinson (1980), for instance, softens the delivery of moral feedback to render it digestible within community bonds rather than as a hostile confrontation. Furthermore, the efficacy of shaming in this context derives from its relationality - it reorients the ego not through fear or public degradation, but through a deepened sense of mutual-accountability to one's ego-ideal, one's community, and one's cosmic integrity. As such, we distinguish this sacred form of social correction from the violent shaming paradigms of the modern nation-state or digital media. We also caution, as throughout this work, against uncritical deployment — for even sacred tools require ethical discernment and an ecology of care to ensure their use affirms rather than violates the dignity of the human soul.

Rather, Shame, as Mario Jacoby (1994, p. 3) puts it, "arises when our self-respect is doubted or under attack" as a response to "the fantasy that I have been exposed to degradation, that I have been scorned by others and/or myself" upon the relationship between an individual and their ego-ideal, or the image they have in their mind's eye of how they want to be perceived by society. Thus, to transgress a Taboo is to run the risk of being shamed and jeopardizing ones standing in community. This socially creates a second psychological deterrent around Taboos, and thus a greater chance for their effectiveness as a mechanism for distributively (re)creating order.

It is important to distinguish the kind of socially reintegrative shaming described here from the disintegrative or punitive shaming most often critiqued in liberal discourse. Liberal critiques of shame tend to rest on a normative Eurocentric anthropology in which the individual is assumed to be autonomous, sovereign, and

deserving of absolute protection from moral intrusion by others. From this perspective, shame is often cast as inherently violent - a vindictive assault on personhood, dignity, or mental health. While these concerns carry merit in specific cases (e.g., targeted online harassment or public humiliation campaigns), they tend to generalise all shaming in a non-generative way, painting Shaming with broad strokes as always oppressive, thereby foreclosing its potential as a collective moral pedagogy.

What we describe is not the dehumanising shame, but rather a culturally embedded, community-oriented form of shame that works to reinscribe harmony-enhancing values and protect shared lifeworlds from ecological degradation. It is the shaming of extractive farming practices that poison soil and water; the calling out of disregard for ancestral land; the satirical exposure of conduct that undermines the dignity of the community or disrespects the relational cosmos. These forms of shame operate not in service of cruelty or exclusion, but of memory, repair, and fidelity to a more-than-human order.

At the same time, we intentionally reject both the liberal view that sees all shaming as unjust, and the nativist temptation to retrodict problematic aspects of traditional shaming practices without critique. Shaming, we suggest, are like Taboos in that they are a form of moral technology - neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but dependent on intention, context, and effect. Where ithey reinforces the relational ethos of Maat, sustain ecological integrity, and restores the dignity of violated bonds, they may serve as a necessary ethical tools for addressing isfetic patterns in modern society.

As a social mechanism for reinforcing Maat, we reason that social shaming functioned in Kemet by psychologically entangling itself with the relationship of a person to their ego-ideal, orienting thumos (Hofmeyr, 2022) in the soul towards Cosmos, as Justice, Truth and Beauty. Given the emergence of Maat in the Declarations of Virtues (autobiographical writings left in the tombs of the newly deceased of the Old Kingdom), to claim Maat upon ones death was to proclaim that one lived a life without shame and without accusation – to have lived with

“worthiness before God, king, community and family, sensitivity to and care for the vulnerable, good speech, honesty, justice and the moral desire to stand well with the Great God” (Karenga, 2004, sec. 2.2.2).

We suggest that, given its relationship to Africa, the symbol of Maat can tie the concept of Taboo to the concept of Ancestral wisdom, or those perennial gnostic insights that are passed down through elders in the form of myths, stories, parables, and other folklore, precisely because it is of, so to speak, the Ancestors of Africa and so part of the ancestral canon of traditions. When considered as part of a tripartite symbolic structure (Assmann, 1992), combining actions (shaming) with iconic representation (Ma'at) and a recitation (Taboo, usually in the short statement form), Maat reveals the social act of taboo enforcement to be a ritual, inculcating the sacred into the everyday and dissolving the European category of religious life into the complete, Afrignostic experience of living spiritually.

Of course, we suggest that the discourse of (re)membering the wisdom of the Ancestors is neither an uncritical act, nor is it one done without intention, as either would render it a closed-model in ignorance of the complexity of ethics and the ethics of complexity (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012) through which we have maintained our methodological approach.[36] As we sift through the materials of this study now, the question that preoccupies the mind is one of bricolage[37] – what aspects of the past can be combined to create a (re)newed way of Being-Becoming and of Ordering that curates Taboos for cosmic harmony, and the immediate political challenge of preconditioning Afrignostic ecology with food systems transformation as a crucial precondition?

Taking a cue from the Maatian ethical discourse on *serudj ta* (Karenga, 2004., Sec. 9.5), or environmental restoration, to “restore that which [we] find in ruins” and “replenish that which [we] found depleted”, we argue that the combination of strong Taboos and a social shaming mechanism, the integrative character of which we will discuss in the next section, ought to be sufficient to begin the process of (re)sacralising the world. This twofold and dynamic social Ordering, inculcated pedagogically from childhood and through initiation tempered into adulthood,

revealing to the initiated the reality of its symbolic representation, utilises the power of the individual psyche's drive to realise its ego-ideal as a means for changing the Utamarohic expression of peoples as a mode of self-preservation linked to the preservation of Self. On one level, the force of conformity is internal, relating oneself to Maat, and on another, it is external, relating one's community's recognition of one's worthiness before Maat. In either case, it is a way of inculcating a "way of worthiness" in how people choose to act (Karenga, 2004, sec. 7.1)

Where the transgression of a Taboo is known to represent an act of *isfet*, a usefully uncompromised signifier in the modern world, the respect of said Taboo becomes of one's worthiness, part of the daily quest to claim Maat, the criteria of judgement after death (ibid., Sec. 3.3.1). Where the Taboos regard internal well-being and acts of self-love, to not disrespect oneself, it is a matter of worthiness before God. Where the Taboos regard the well-being of others and of the human community, reinforcing the Declaration of Innocence as a way of worthiness (ibid., Ch. 4 & 7), it is a matter of worthiness before people. Finally, Maat taboos that concern the living world, which reinforce the "filial obligation to care and take responsibility for nature, i.e., as a loving son or daughter does for one's parents," (ibid., Sec. 9.3) are a matter of worthiness before nature. To live a life without transgressing the taboos of Self, Other, and Nature is to have met the criteria to claim Maat and the immortality of one's soul, or to be regarded as part of uNkulunkulu, the Great Ancestor, from whom and to whom Maat is directed.

The exact Taboos that may be effective, like the word, cannot be held by anyone other than the collective, and so it is beyond the scope of this work to attempt to develop any particular Taboos. What we have discussed is their reason for development and the terms to which their consequence may be tied. However, one may look to begin with *The Declarations of Innocence* (Karenga, 2004., Ch. 5 & &) or *The Axioms of Kemet* (Zulu, 2006) as a starting point.

6.2.3 Transgression and Mending: The Other Side of Ubu-ntu

This section will elaborate on what we term 'the other side of *ubu-ntu'* – the underacknowledged disciplining element of the Ubu-ntu philopraxis (Ramose, 2003b) – and seek to present it as a valuable counterweight to the overemphasized reconciliatory element of Ubuntu that has dominated the discourse thereon under South Africa's liberal democratic constitutionalism. Our primary concerns are the processes by which *Ubu-ntu* as psychosocial disposition is cultivated in and among people, and those that follow from the transgression of a Taboo by a community member towards their punishment and reintegration.

We will proceed by firstly justifying the continued relevance of Ubu-ntu's social value in critique of Matolino and Kwindingwi's (2013) argument that Ubuntu has come to an end, a sceptical position, and then secondly by offering a conceptualisation of Ubu-ntu as disciplinary force.

To clarify, when we use the term Ubuntu, we are referring to the more colloquial notion of it regarded as a narrow concept related to ethics in particular, without the philosophical weight of *Ubu-ntu* in Ramose's (2002a) conception, which is our preferred conception of the term for the reasons argued for in Chapter three.

As modern life in Africa has shown, especially during the so-called 'revivalist era' of Ubuntu that we would date over the last half century, Ubuntu has manifestly failed to enculturate a society of harmonious inter-relation. Through the persistence and deepening of inequality and lived-struggle in increasingly divided communities across Africa, Ubuntu has become either the tool of "a certain Africanist agenda when it best suites the elite" or "nothing more than a catch phrase with soap opera soothing qualities" due to in part to an underacknowledged precondition therefore - that Ubuntu can only be effected in "undifferentiated, small and tight-knit communities that are relatively undeveloped" – and an over-focus on Ubuntu to the exclusion of other potentially valuable philosophical insights out of Africa (Matolino and Kwindingwi, 2013, pp. 202–203). This has led to a situation where the question arises of how "ill-suited ubuntu could be to the current social realities

that call for ethical reflection" in light of the seemingly "irreversible effects of factors such as industrialisation and modernity" (ibid.).

Matolino and Kwindingwi's critique is not of Ubuntu itself, but rather of its use within a narrative of return. Such narratives are characterised by Christian B.N. Gade (2011) as an elitist narrative of transformation, drawing politically motivated and linear temporal links between a golden era (pre-colonial Africa), a period of decline (colonisation) and a phase of recovery (renaissance). The consequences of these narratives, according to Matolino and Kwindingwi (2013, pp. 189–199), are evidenced by the failures of African socialisms, myriad false claims to represent authentic African modes of being, the homogenisation of African life, and the shutting down of dissent, leading them to conclude that "the project of the return to the 'original' is neither new, nor successful".

While this framing of Ubuntu is not unfounded, it is also not complete, firstly in its characterisation of the originary character of the pre-colonial *Ubu-ntu*-context or the possibility of some features resurfacing and, secondly, in its discussion of return narratives.

Concerning the first, where the authors point to the size of communities and demographics of communities, as well as their preindustrial and premodern social organisation and economic conditions, the restricted economy of their analytical model excludes qualitative human-geographic, spiritual, pedagogical, subsistence and (Meta-)Polycrisis considerations that we argue bear strongly on the possibility for (re)cultivating an *Ubu-ntu* way of Being-Becomming.

Life in precolonial Africa was indeed lived in smaller and more close-knit communities, but we argue that what led to their close-knitness was more to do with the communal experience of life-making and the speed of life than to do with the small size or demographic homogeneity of a given village. Precolonial African peoples produced together in communities, and, especially in sedentary communities, did so in highly localised geographic areas where value chains were short, and the need for and availability of complex goods was limited. Much of

day-to-day life was concerned with fundamental production, growing food and rearing animals, and so life was slower in meaningful ways, increasing the availability of opportunities for knowing thy neighbour well. By characterising the effects of industrialisation and modernity as irreversible, the authors also omit a consideration of the consequences of (Meta-)Polycrisis, which may well force humanity back into smaller, less mobile communities without access to globalised supply chains for complex goods, and thus allow the material conditions of *Ubu-ntu* to resurface.

Importantly, and also omitted from their analysis, these communities existed in a time and context before the Christianisation of Africa (Mudimbe, 1988), and thus before the compartmentalisation of religiousness, operating in a mode of being steeped in spirituality (Ani, 1994). Modes of Order, such as those discussed through themes of Maat, ritual, and Taboo across this work, were omnipresent across the lifespan of an individual and their community. This also included the communal raising of children and the spiritual enculturation of such an ingrained and communal *Ubu-ntu* pedagogy.

As for their discussion of narratives of return, we ask from what sources they would propose a vision of the future be ought be gleaned from, if not from the fusion of memory and creativity? Without denying that narratives of return have in some cases resulted in disastrous consequences, we reason that they are, in spite of this, vitally important mythoforms that psychologically condition a society to (re)imagine their futures as peoples capable of living fulfilling, free, and peaceful lives. As much as narratives of return had fuelled the rise of Nazi Germany, they also played import roles in the European Renaissance, the Japanese Meiji Restoration, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany. Treating narratives of return in a decidedly negative light is thus throwing the baby out with the bathwater in a time when, as we observe, people are yearning for hope.

Return narratives offer to people having undergone an unarguable decline a hope-filled alternative for the future, for an escape from the tyranny of a Eurocentric world order that if they were once capable of, they can be capable of once more.

If *Ubu-ntu* is part of a narrative of return, in so far as it is a quest to revive the dignity of African ways of being-knowing-doing, then it is of the same ilk as Black Consciousness as a narrative of return, seeking to revive a sense of pride and eradicate an enforced sense of inferiority in the fact of being black. This argument is nonsensical - to disregard the legacy of African narratives of return completely robs Africa of a resource that Europe has used time and again in its history and which can be useful for identifying paths towards Africa's future.[38]

To position *Ubu-ntu* as a useful concept alongside Maat (both being part of the narrative of return that is this project) requires that we reconceptualise it in a way that overcomes the shortcomings described by Matolino and Kwindingwi. In terms of its contextual applicability, we hope the above, read in relation to Chapters four and five and the contextual implications of it (the context they may create), can provide sufficient argument that suitable context for *Ubu-ntu* can (re)emerge.[39] For their other charges, that of its hollowness in meaning and of an elitist agenda, we will deal with them together.

It seems that in modern South Africa there seems to have been a hope, which justifies the critique of an elitist-ends posturing in the discourse of Ubuntu post-apartheid, that *Ubu-ntu* would return to society by osmosis, leaching into the fabric of society from its questionable innateness in how black South Africans act towards one another. This has been proven demonstrably false. While instances of real *Ubu-ntu* do exist, they are far from numerous enough to alter significantly the character of South African society.

We argue that the hope was unfounded, and a bad bet was made on autonomous re-emergence when decisions were made to exclude *Ubu-ntu* from both the constitution and from any significant place in the educational syllabus. Without such actualising mechanisms, a making-present of what *Ubu-ntu* demands of us, it has proven unlikely that *Ubu-ntu* would (re)emerge in a society where the everyday experiences of people are those shaped and directed by the superstructure of Afro-neoliberal capitalism and all of the systemic implications that come with it. As either wishful thinking or intentional underdevelopment, the

utilisation of *Ubu-ntu* since 1994 has been half-hearted and largely attempted using "categories and conceptual systems which depend on a Western epistemological order" (Mudimbe, 1988, p. x).

Thanks in no small part to the Christian outlooks of its chief interlocuter, Archbishop Desmond Tutu (Buqa, 2015), and/or the ANC (Shai, 2019), who were the political vehicles for Ubuntu's rhetorical integration into South Africa's liberal democratic constitution order, from *Ubu-ntu's* totality was carved a "nucleated" (Tagwirei, 2020) likeness, 'ubuntu' (lower case 'u'), conforming to the Order of Eurocentric epistemic legitimacy reified through glocal Christian outlooks (Praeg, 2008, 2014). Notably, "no traditional diviner-priests (guardians of the ancestral world-view) participated in the T.R.C. context, where they could have articulated historic Southern African viewpoints on evil, sin, i.e. not only the possibility but also the limitations of expiation" (van Binsbergen, 2001, p. 76).

We argue that since then the gap between that which Praeg (2008) identified as 'ubuntu' and the *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2002a) formulation we have preferred signifies a difference in complexity, spiritual depth and strength of being, where the effect of Eurocentric ordering has been to strip the former of these qualities and rearticulate it as the latter in service of a "global institutional order" to which the former would have been incompatible (Mwipikeni, 2018) as a result of its historical role in underpinning "the struggle for liberation against the historical injustice of conquest, dispossession and domination" (Dladla, 2017b). We suggest that it is because of the discursive dominance of Ubuntu, that the totality of *Ubu-ntu*, including its other side that fuelled and justified the aforementioned struggle, has been obfuscated and so gone underacknowledged.

We explain this 'other side' of Ubu-ntu, Like Augustine Shutte (2001) does, by way of analogy to a mothers love, which, on the one hand, is compassionate, empathetic, patient and reconciliatory, and on the other, fierce, protective, disciplined, determined and dedicated. We argue that just because *Ubu-ntu* promotes non-violence and prohibits the taking of life, such does not imply that it is soft, apathetic, weak-willed, silent in the face of (Meta-)Polycrisis or averse to

the reasonable use of force or techniques of coercion in making of a person a complete person. It is only logical that when someone transgresses a taboo intended to safeguard the fabric of society, especially in a serious way, that a firm conversation would not in all cases be enough. This is moreover true in a society like South Africa, boasting the highest rate of rape in the world.

Before a person becomes a person through other people (*ka batho*), a person is first a person (*motho ke motho*) who brings with them all the fallibilities, paradoxes, inconsistencies and difficulties of what that means. The experience of being human and having meta-consciousness instantiated in the Ego, explained as much through the Buddhist concept of Dukkha, the Schopenhauerian concept of Angst, or the Jungian concept of the tension of the opposites, is one marred by a gap, between the beauty of existence and the subjective experience of strife. Regardless of societal positionality, this always presents an ineffable and volcanic discomfort within individuals.

Intuitively, and as argued persuasively by Metz (2007) in his discussion of solidarity as an aspect of Ubuntu, the relational recognition and identification with the ubiquitous reality of intrapersonal struggle and fallibility is part of the bedrock of Ubuntu, both in its reconciliatory and disciplining elements. While the former is more apparent,[40] the latter requires greater adumbration.

As the previous paragraph indicated, existing as a human being leaves open the possibility of acting out, of transgression, as a response to living in the world, or to mistakes and bad choices resulting from its complexity. However, we reason that the communalist nature of *Ubu-ntu* places the person guilty of transgression in a state of complementarity with their community. Such follows from the principle of incompleteness (Robinson, 1980), that the rest of society, those "strangers" to ourselves, thus have "the obligation to demand that the [individual] reintegrate into the community" (Robinson, 1980, p. 204). That is, we all have the obligation to make of the person who can be a person, a person in community, and therefore a complete person.

Such a 'complete person' is one who is beautiful in name, soul, spirit, action, and shadow[41] and who has both from within and with the help of their society been deemed worthy of Maat by the time of their passing. Given the much-attested to communalism across Africa (Mbiti, 1970; Menkiti, 1984; Gyekye, 2004b; Metz, 2013; Barnwell *et al.*, 2021), and also in Ancient Kemet (Carrithers, Collins and Lukes, 1985; Heller, 1990; Karenga, 2004, sec. 6.6), it is the human precondition of sociality that makes of worthiness a collective and relational quest. Each of us has a responsibility to live up to the obligation inherent in cultivating the worthiness of ourselves, each-other, and the Life-world – a sentiment that rings the same bell as much theory surrounding Ubu-ntu.

Whereas much as personhood as dignity can be earned, the capacity for dignity developed, it can also remain undeveloped or be socio-politically removed through word and deed. As argued by Ifeanyi Menkiti (1984) and later defended by Motsamai Molefe (2020), we argue that *Ubu-ntu* requires of people that they learn to behave in certain ways, towards themselves, each other, and nature, and also learn to act against others who do not. Was it not for such *Ubu-ntu*-founded standards of behaviour, which we might describe as a social code for Maat, how would it be that one could be seen as moving towards the attainment of full personhood? As missteps do happen along the road, it is the duty of the rest of us to help each other along the quest towards worthiness and Maat.

However, and it is here where we draw our argument for an alternative Order in service of Life to a close, the character of that help we are obliged to enact upon other people to aid them in becoming persons is not always a process characterised by gentleness, immediate forgiveness, silent coaching and loving encouragement. Yes, it ought to be those things, for such is Maat, but it may well involve other modes of disciplining and confrontation with *isfet*, such as rebellion or corporal punishment, among other disciplinary interventions.[42]

An important clarification must be made here to signal that the mention of disciplinary practices such as public shaming or corporal punishment is not made lightly, nor is it made with any desire to glorify suffering or return to uncritical

traditionalism. Rather, these disciplinary forms are raised as philosophical provocations intended to reopen a discussion around how to address the transgression of societal standards of behaviour (especially in relation to how we treat nature and one another) that has been foreclosed by Eurocentric norms about what forms of moral correction are possible and appropriate in postcolonial contexts. The notion of ubu-ntu we proffer - situated in relation to Maat - builds from Ifeanyi Menkiti's (1984, 2018) framework for personhood as a moral process and does not suggest the flagrant cruelty or abuse towards those who act in *isfectic* ways. Rather, it presents us with an opportunity to reflect and explore how future Afrignostic societies might approach the development of proportionate, spiritually anchored, and communally determined forms of accountability designed to reinforce belonging and facilitate amplification of harmonious vibes. The point of these disciplinary forms is not to strip a person of dignity, but to affirm the seriousness of the rupture and the communal responsibility for healing it.

It follows that where a comprehensive effort is made to instil wisdom in the form of Maat, through Taboo and pedagogical *Ubu-ntu*, in early childhood, the likelihood of needing these more militant expressions of *Ubu-ntu* is lessened. This does not forego, however, the central argument of this section: *Ubu-ntu* is not dead, and neither is it all 'feel good', and so conceptualising it as such presents a castrated form, one incapable of resisting the Eurocentric *Utamawazo* that so readily coopted it.

Wim Van Binsbergen offers a nuanced perspective on Ubuntu and its usage in contemporary South Africa, suggesting that multiple factors make any attempts at engaging Ubuntu in a (largely unavoidable) Globalised academic context replete with ethnographic, epistemic and political difficulties. Among these difficulties, van Binsbergen points out that since "the majority of the population of Southern Africa today cannot be properly said to know and to live ubuntu by virtue of any continuity with village life" then it must necessarily "take on a globalised format in order to be acceptable to the majority of modern Southern Africans" (van Binsbergen, 2001, p. 64). While his point has merit, in as far as much of the

mythocentric potential of Ubu-ntu today may rely on the prefigured receptivity of an audience "educated to pursue (under the name of *ubuntu*) a global and urban reformulation of village values" coming to them from "the globalised centre: politicians, university intellectuals" (ibid., p. 63), our conception has been careful to emphasize the (re)enculturation of *Ubu-ntu* as a psycho-social pedagogical process that relies, in part, on a strength of *Ubu-ntu* that van Binsbergen himself admits (ibid. pp. 73-74):

> *"[...] the symbolic technologies offered by local village-based symbols, concepts and practices, be they girls' initiation rites, ubuntu, or otherwise, constitute a form of symbolic empowerment for the very people who (in Zambia in the late 1950s, in Southern Africa in the 1970s and 1980s) fought to attain majority rule and cast off the yoke of North Atlantic cultural and symbolic, as well as political, military and economic, dominance. Ubuntu offers the appearance of an ancestral model to them that is credible and with which they can identify, regardless of whether these globalised urban people still observe ancestral codes of conduct (of course in most respects they do not), regardless of whether the ancestral codes are rendered correctly (often they are not)."*

Even though he still maintains that Ubu-ntu has profound potential as an accessible source of symbolic transformative potential, van Binsbergen cautions against its careless usage, as it may serve to obfuscate other grounds of commonality beneath a canopy of "shared humanity" or used abusively to pacify "situations where conflict is real and should not be obscured" (Ibid.), as was done with the TRC or is increasingly being done to shroud the emergent intra-racial (Black-on-Black) oppressive relations under the regime of Afro-Neoliberalism. Herein, we have consciously chosen to primarily constellate *Ubu-ntu* in relation to Maat, secondarily with the need for new Taboos coupled with mechanisms for integrative shaming, and thirdly within the Situational context, in order to allay the danger that the "emerging black elite" may turn *Ubu-ntu* "into a populistic, mystifying ideology, dissimulating the real class conflict at hand, and persuading the more powerless Blacks involved to yield to the more powerful ones as soon as the latter wave the flag of *ubuntu"* (ibid. p. 77).

We suggest that, as in the myth of the Eloquent Peasant (Papyrus of Berlin 3023, 320-322), *Ubu-ntu* stands in relation to Maat and the Word, invoked Cosmo-socio-linguistically through Anamnestic Solidarity, to bring conflict and the parties thereto back into relation with it, centring that which is at once True, Just and Beautiful in a definite but inescapably cosmic context. Processually then, those who invoke *Ubu-ntu* flagrantly do so at great personal and reputational risk when challenged through Palaver, for invoking a cosmically sacred word, such as *Ubu-ntu,* to defend actions that are *isfetic*, unjust by a measure of cosmic-value, would likely result in social sanctions and declarations of shamefulness that can only be rectified, in line with traditional conceptions of *Ubu-ntu*, at "far greater personal costs than just a verbal admission of guilt" (van Binsbergen, 2001, p. 76).

As a final caveat to this discussion, we ought to acknowledge and respond to Praeg's (2017) critical injunctions about the dangers of retrodicting any form of Ubuntu in the post colony. For him, several dangers arise when one engages Ubuntu without a) acknowledging that politics is *First Philosophy* or the reason why Ubuntu is engaged; b) developing an adequately self-reflexive awareness of the inevitable *aporia* presented by articulating ubuntu against the western Canon, using its terms and grids of intelligibility, and in relation to identity formation; c) engaging the historicity of the concept, or how it has been used; d) differentiating between Ubuntu as philosophy and Ubuntu as praxis, with the implications of phalloprimocentrism that the latter may entail; or e), engaging ubuntu in ignorance of the postcolonial context.

We suggest that our engagement herein has not attempted a closed reading of the concept, but rather has explored it alongside Maat, as a piece of Afrignosis that has, indeed, been used towards various ends, such as those of the ANC who provided to South African one of its most toothless retrodictions. By approaching it from a justice-oriented perspective, that is, in trying to engage the trajectory of the Situation and the IAC's role in it, we have maintained the political as first philosophy. Lastly, throughout this work, a reflexive decolonial attitude has been assumed, allowing us, as best we can while working within the Academy, to

(re)conceptualise a grid of alternative terms, cognisant of the historicity of the term, through which *Ubu-ntu* may be comprehended. The result of this, we hope, has been a view of *Ubu-ntu* that positions it, primarily, as a reflexive gnosis, urging an awareness of complexity, and of the complexities involved in living with one another and-also with the Cosmos, operating from the grounds of ontological egalitarianism within a world presented as relationally monist in character.

6.2.4 Normativity in Ordering

This section will consider the normative relationship between (neo)liberalism, as the theoretical precedent for statist-individualist constitutionalism, [43] and Ordering and between Cosmic Jurisprudence and Ordering. We will do so by considering the concept of a political conception of Justice in the work of John Rawls and countering it with a complex conception of Justice in the concept of Cosmic Jurisprudence as we have described it.

By way of this discussion, we seek to counter two possible objections to Cosmic Jurisprudence, that it is either guilty of (re)producing a similar hierarchicalisation of Ordering of political Authority, only now with Maat instead of the Law as its root concept, or that it no less a type of prescriptivity than the type offered by Law under the framework of sovereign states.

While discussing the question of Order and how people could go about conceptualising Order beyond Eurocentricity, embodied in the school of legal positivism and constitutionalism, we have been careful to draw on sources of Order that do not require the same Order by way of institutionalisation, by the hierarchicalisation of power-authority into state bodies, as Eurocentric Order. We did this by choosing indigenous Order-concepts from Africa, explicated in their African contexts by African authors. This is not to say that all African authors and all African concepts manage to escape hierarchicalisation, but rather that the type of hierarchicalisation peculiar to the contexts from which these Order-concepts were drawn is of an onto-epistemically different character. This conceptual character, unlike that of Liberalism as the genealogical condition of possibility for

the emergence of (neo)liberal democratic constitutionalism, operates from a paradigmatically different worldview, one that we have described at length as holistic (Ramose, 1994).

Power then, within this holistic framework, cannot be abstracted into anything other than the shared Life-world and the concepts that explain Being-Becoming's "ceaseless unfoldment" (Ramose, 2009) and encourage us to integrate harmoniously, to dance with Life as we too undergo our own unfoldment, never static, always moving in tandem with a universe whose principle is movement (Ramose, 2002a).[44]

It is precisely this which we allude to when we refer to our alternative Terms of Order as emerging from a categorically different onto-epistemic context. Shifting metaphysical grounds from bifurcation to integration has the effect of decentralizing the human, read as 'the rational' with all of its political, historical and philosophical connotations, as the responsibility therefore is not alienated from us, abstracted into forms and modes of expression placed beyond reach by those who claim their access to reason, of a specific variety, affords them the ability to perfect Order.

It is here that liberalism fails the vibe check, for in its ordering of society, the maintenance of its Eurocentric conception of Order takes precedence over all else. And so, when faced with the Situation, it is incapable of doing anything more than lamenting on other values from the menu of Terms that it has spent centuries so painstakingly justifying as Truth, accessible only to logic, embodied in text,[45] to the exclusion of their actual manifestations in the lived reality of peoples.

Metaphysically speaking, the dominant strains of liberalism that went on to inform the turn towards legal positivism, appear in the work of J.S. Mill (1963), Jeremey Bentham (1970), Karl Popper (1945), and John Rawls (Rawls, 1996). Articulated on the back of the modernity's turn towards hyper-rationality, Liberalism relies on reductive, disjunctive and ametaphysical conceptions of society, the self and justice in how it conceives of Ordering towards a better world, and we can look to three

excerpts from Rawls conception of the 'political conception of justice' as the foundation of Liberalism to see this.

In extract (a) he states (1985, p. 230):

> *"This agreement [political conception of justice] when securely founded in public political and social attitudes sustains the goods of all persons and associations within a just democratic regime. To secure this agreement we try, so far as we can, to avoid disputed philosophical, as well as disputed moral and religious, questions. We do this not because these questions are unimportant or regarded with indifference,' but because we think them too important and recognize that there is no way to resolve them politically."*

And (b) that (ibid., p. 231),

> *"In their political thought, and in the context of public discussion of political questions, citizens do not view the social order as a fixed natural order, or as an institutional hierarchy justified by religious or aristocratic values. Here it is important to stress that from other points of view, for example, from the point of view of personal morality, or from the point of view of members of an association, or of one's religious or philosophical doctrine, various aspects of the world and one's relation to it, may be regarded in a different way. But these other points of view are not to be introduced into political discussion."*

And (c) that (ibid., p. 249),

> *"The concept of justice is independent from and prior to the concept of goodness in the sense that its principles limit the conceptions of the good which are permissible."*

Concerning extract (a), Rawls performs two misdirections to make his point. The first is that he reasons that the bracketing of "disputed moral and religious" claims is both possible, and itself beyond dispute, essentially requiring that those who disagree ought to capitulate (i.e. give up their choice) to the liberalised form of Democracy, or else, be labelled "enemies of open society," as Popper (1945) deemed them, for opposing his "surface" (Rawls, 1985, p. 230) level formation of justice.

The second is that in so doing, he creates that which he opposes, “one conception of the good” (ibid., p. 248) by creating a single, very narrow and (im)possibly apolitical model of justice from which the good must follow. This is because justice is not a shallow concept, it speaks to the ethical-spiritual core of peoples. The injustice of such a move is coloniality at its worst, moreover when we take note of the time when he was writing – the period of independence when many more people of colour were gaining the ability to voice their opinions on social order, which he then denies them the ability to meaningfully express. We see this Situation as eerily akin to the shift from parliamentary supremacy to constitutional supremacy in the 1996 South African constitution.[46]

Extract (b) dives slightly deeper into Rawls (unacknowledged) metaphysics when he speaks of a way of thinking about justice and talking about politics that essentially divorces the self from the world, subversively establishing the same materialist physicalism we critiqued in Section 3.2.2.2. Outside the realm of relevant considerations for a political conceptualisation of justice, Rawls “brackets” (Grant, 2006, p. 205) *inter alia* the worldviews, religions, ways of knowing and opinions of the people about social order, claiming that those things ought not influence people's understanding of social order. This obfuscates the fact that those exact matters of “religious and philosophical doctrine” are precisely what has shaped myriad political and economic elements of the dominant form of social order today, including Rawls's theorisation on justice, which, in spite of its claim to objectivity, still sees *his own philosophical doctrine and worldview* inculcated in *his* model of justice, therefore presupposing a conception of Justice (Ricœur, 2000), an inevitable consequence of modelling when one chooses to ignore the complexity thereof (Woermann and Cilliers, 2012).[47]

This also thereby denies the ability of the people – and note how to Rawls it is only the consent of the citizen that must be conditioned for liberalism to take force, creating an outsider who cannot speak (Harvey, 2011) – to use their own rationalities to challenge said order.[48] This is moreover true where said rationalities foundationally consider moral-metaphysical outlooks, or concepts of the cosmic

Good, as indivisible from questions of politics and of justice (Ramose, 2001; weNkosi, 2023).

So, when Rawls advances a "political conception of justice", premised on "society as a fair system of cooperation between free and equal persons" (Rawls, 1985, p. 231) we argue that he can more accurately be described as advancing a 'Eurocentric political conception of justice'. His conception is fundamentally premised on an ideal Form and experience of society, which has from early modernity to the present only existed for large social groups in Europe, the conditions of possibility for which relied in no small part on the colonisation of the global South. Herein the societal mythoform functions as colonial border condition (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b) demarcating the range of permissible conceptions of the Good flowing from it and its roots in classic liberalism's "asocial and autonomous" (Grant, 2006, p. 204) concept of a person.

The end result of all of this is laid bare in extract (c), where the analytic model is stated clearly, alongside the unstated premise that any conceptions of the good that fall outside of the limits for its possibility would be impermissible. Herein, and considering that which was excluded in extracts (a) and (b), Rawls essentially calls for the definitional closure (Woermann, 2016) of the justice-concept, premised on the dubious pragmatist claim that only a closed model of justice, bordered by an apolitical no-mans-land, in essence an objectively agreeable to all justice, is even remotely workable in politics.

It is here where justice within the framework of Cosmic Jurisprudence is most obviously not alike. Cosmic jurisprudence, as rooted in Maat and expressed in Taboo and Shaming, and the disciplinarity of *Ubu-ntu*, as opposed to providing or requiring a closed conception of the Just or the Good or, for that matter, the Beautiful, operates from a complex paradigm, constituting a complex system of social Order that is open, primarily because of its mythocentrism, but also "operationally-closed and bounded" (ibid., p. 33), because it is still a Term for Order, albeit an alternative one.

By paraphrasing Poli (2009, p. 8), we can justify the complex interplay of openness and closure in Cosmic jurisprudence as a matter of how it denotes "the generation of [Order], understood as the set of *constraints* governing the system's internal processes." It does not require of people that they act in certain ways, but rather as a symbolic reference concerned with worthiness *in relation to* the King/Queen, the people and Nature, it is a code of what not to do, or a jurisprudence of limits that does not amount to set of commandments (Karenga, 2004, sec. 7.3). This is different from Rawls imposition of limits onto jurisprudence, which dictates the parameters of jurisprudence *a priori*.

Counter this, Maat as we conceive of it generalises instead of restricts the range of conceptions of the Good that can be identified, provided that the sense of Good conceptualised also coheres with a sense of the Just and the Beautiful, introducing both a complex as well as an aesthetic logic to Ordering. Cosmic jurisprudence bolsters this element of Maat by reaffirming the primacy of speech for all, an egalitarian outlook based in the myth of the Eloquent Peasant encouraging people to share with and engage in the creation of the word in their full selves.

Given its mythocentricity, which decreases rigidity in conceptualising the Good, Just and Beautiful, Cosmic Jurisprudence lends itself to an increased peculiarity in thought because it unapologetically embraces the Maat mythoform and recognises the innate dialogical teachability of people (Friere, 1970). While certainly normative in some sense, the flavour of normativity has a strong pedagogical undercurrent that subverts liberalism's dependency on the dominant terms of order. It is not that everyone is already fully formed choosing subject in an atomised society. No. A Maat society is premised on interconnection, using *Ubu-ntu*, Taboos and shaming to recognise the journey of becoming a person with other people.

6.3 Summary

This final chapter addressed the gap between the Afroaesthetic vision articulated in Chapter four, the ecognomic strategies of Chapter five, and the entrenched

ordering logic of the Situation by proposing a radically different foundation for social and legal organisation: Cosmic Jurisprudence.

The chapter set out by critically interrogating the colonial concept of Order - as instantiated through legal positivism and constitutionalism as the monocultures of modern law - arguing that such frameworks functioned to suppress the type of spiritual, ecological, and relational complexity required for an ethical-spiritual praxis-prefigure Afrignostic ecology to emerge in an African future. In contrast, Section 6.2 introduced Cosmic Jurisprudence as a mythocentric *Utamawazo*: a symbolic and provisional reorientation toward Order that intentionally foregrounds relationality, ancestral wisdom, and the sacredness of Life by drawing on African terms of Order both ancient and contemporary to present an emic constellation of juridical ideals animated by experiences of divine speech, cosmic balance, and reparative relationality.

Rather than prescribing a fixed legal model, Cosmic Jurisprudence was proposed as an enculturing force capable of sustaining Afrignostic ecologies and ecognomic alchemy by cultivating socio-spiritual orders rooted in harmony rather than hierarchy. It complements the decolonial ecological vision of prior chapters by gesturing toward an ethics of normativity that honours complexity, transgression, and mending—what we might call the other side of Ubu-ntu. In doing so, the chapter offered not a replacement of liberal law, but a deeper, symbolic foundation from which future African societies might reimagine legitimacy, authority, and flourishing in a world no longer beholden to the paradigmatic simplicity of the Situation.

Notes

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[1] Mythocentrism as we use it is a movement away from the Logos, usually in oral form, as the source of order, to Myth as a "dynamic system with a constant minimum number of mythemes" (Tremoloso, 2012, p. 152), which constellate a complex ideal that cannot be reduced to them. See the Ch. 1. n. 4.

[2] A distinction must be made between the sense of positivist or positivism used in this Chapter, which pertains to *legal* positivism in jurisprudence, and *logical positivism,* which pertains to a technical discipline within Philosophy. According to Sabitri Devi (2013, p. 34), logical positivism is a school of philosophy, associated with thinkers like G.E. Moore, Betrand Russel, Karl Popper, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, which considers philosophy to only have a "narrow and technical function of evaluating the scientific assertion [making] philosophy to science [what] grammar is to language". The logical positivists hold that it is logic, expressed in language, that is the only means by which Truth can be expressed or comprehended, thus arguing that it is science, and not philosophy, by which we can access reality. By extension

then, and upon their analysis of metaphysical philosophy, the school, except in some nuanced ways offered by Wittgenstein, has attempted to eliminate metaphysics from Philosophy, and it is here that we take issue with it but cannot expand here. Legal positivism, not completely dissimilar from logical positivism, purports that access to the Right, the Just and the Ethical are all exclusive functions of legal reasoning (logic), elevating written law from social-subjective construction to universal-objective Truth (Dupret and Parolin, 2022). This makes law, and by inference jurisprudence, at least in its European type, a type of science related to Order operating on certain rationalities linking legal texts to technologies of government, or in short, a governmentality. While issues with this viewpoint in light of the arguments made throughout this thesis on the parochial rationality of Eurocentric thought highlight issues with both schools, the delineation is no less important for the sake of clarity.

[3] Understood more bluntly, the relationship of the colonised subject to Order is akin to their proximity to whiteness as a way of being. The more a Black individual follows the rules, stays in their lane, head down and working hard, disciplining in themselves the Utamaroho of whiteness towards others, the more likely one is to be granted concessions of comfort by the system, translating into a more materially opulent but no less spiritually disjunctive and tiring form of life. To rebel, where rebelling can be as simple as speaking out from the position of Black employee at the sexist, racist or inhuman comment of a white employer, means to risk a return to a more precarious position in relation to the social capital that one's silence may have garnered in service of further promotion, money, and distance from precarity. While each day the pervasiveness of the lie upon which this way of thinking reinforces itself is being revealed, as adherence to Order increasingly fails to yield the aspirant benefits needed to outpace the rate of systemic tendency keeping an ever-growing poor, poor and an ever-shrinking rich, rich, this way of thinking has become generationally entrenched in the minds of most Black Africans. Such internal disciplinarity is what Bantu Biko had in mind when he wrote "the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed" (Biko, 2004, pp. 101–102).

[4] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity

[5] While called 'agreements', the penalty for non-conformance is severe - exclusion from the international economic system – enough that it essentially limits the ability of any state to self-determine.

[6] An Ideograph, as introduced by Michael McGee is "a high-order abstraction representing collective commitment to a particular but equivocal and ill-defined normative goal" (McGee, 1980, p. 15). They function as "rhetorical devices that cultures use to justify and maintain their systems of power relations" (Hutchison, 2013, p. 25).

[7] One might reasonably ask, as a form of caution, whether critique of constitutionalism - especially one so deeply inscribed in the postcolonial imaginary - risks yielding worse outcomes than the flawed but familiar juridical order it seeks to problematise. This concern is not lightly dismissed. Indeed, it reflects a broader philosophical tension between the disruptive potential of critique and the stabilising role of legal institutions in plural societies. Yet, the argument advanced here is not for chaos, nor even for the wholesale negation of constitutional legal forms. Rather, it is to lay bare the limits of constitutionalism as the dominant positivist expression of European legal order in South Africa, particularly when its perpetuation suppresses alternative, Afrignoses on justice and relationality. Herein, the goal is not to displace law with disorder, but to open conceptual space for alternative Terms of Order, many of which long predate the dominant Eurocentric ones and continue to animate African social life in subterranean, resilient ways. What this work terms Cosmic Jurisprudence is one such alternative – see Sect. 6.2 Cosmic Jurisprudence. It does not pretend to offer a totalising system to replace the constitution but rather sketches a plurality of ordering principles grounded in African metaphysics -principles which may be better attuned to the ecological, spiritual, and communal dimensions of life than the proceduralist rationalism of the modern legal order. In this way, critique becomes not an act of destruction, but a clearing - an Afrignostic invitation to imagine otherwise.

[8] The word 'constitution' is intentionally written with a lowercase 'c' following Ramose (Ramose, 2018b, pp. 327, Fn. 1) to signal its contentiousness as a term in critical African jurisprudence and as a resistance to its epistemic elevation.

[9] The "we" from whom "the people" emerges does not contain the entirety of the population it hopes to represent, and so is rather an expression of "we, the elected" as opposed to "we, the people". As argued by Judith Butler (Butler, 2016b), this paradox between the "constitutive outside" of "we, the people" and the group of people who performatively use "we the people" as a "legitimating ground for those who do come to represent the people through elections" establishes "Something nonrepresentative and nearly tautological [as] the basis of democratic forms of government". This paradox sanctifies the constitution of a people (performatively constituted only after the fact of the declarative act) in an unsanctionable way "because the institution of law cannot be justified on legal grounds and because the instituting agents are only defined as agents once the law is enacted" (Derrida, 1992; Woermann, 2018, p. 240). Similarly, we suggest an equal performativity in this thesis and its chosen personal pronouns. However, in the instance of this thesis, we do not try to hide the *aporetic* tension such performativity reveals and explain our interaction with it through complexity. See Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory.

[10] This was later corrected by the Citation of Constitutional Laws Act 5 of 2005. However, said Act did not amend the name of the constitution in the Constitution, it only made it law that in legislation, no Act number is to be associated with it when citing the constitution. As such, the constitution itself remains Act No. 108 of 1996.

[11] The Union of South Africa (South Africa Act, 1909) was the first constitution. It incorporated the four existing colonies into a single state and established a judicial order under the sovereignty of King Edward VII and administrative authority of a territorially supreme Parliament. Second came the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1961,

which established South Africa as a Republic under the sovereignty of God and the supremacy of the President and National Parliament. The third constitution took the form of the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act, 1983, which (re)established the republic under the sovereignty of a (Christian) God and the authority of a supreme President with far ranging powers and a less powerful parliament. It is only with the 1996 constitution that sovereignty takes on its dubious "we, the people" (See Ch. 6. n. 9 above) form embodied by parliament but rendered subservient to the Constitution as supreme law.

[12] Section 1(d) of the founding provision established the form of democracy in South Africa as a "multi-party" democracy while section 74(1)(a) and 74(1)(b) require that a super-majority of 75% be required for the amendment of the Section 1. As yet, 30 years later, South Africa has yet to have a single party or a coalition of parties cross that threshold and thus gain the capacity to amend the constitution. And there is broad consensus that such is unlikely to be possible in the foreseeable future, at least for a single party to achieve such.

[13] See Sect. 3.1.3 Articulating Complex Interconnectionism.

[14] The state, as confirmed in *Mateis v Ngwathe Plaaslike Munisipaliteit and Others* 2003 (4) SA 361 (SCA), takes on the form of an "amorphous juristic-political concept" without "fixed, general meaning in legislation" (Bekink, 2012, p. 10). Despite its insistence on rationality, this is one example of paradox in Eurocentric order within the South African context, where the concept that is given the definite authority to make and order power/knowledge relations is itself without definition or consistency, making it an empty signifier, or, as convincingly argued in David Grant's (2006) doctoral thesis, a myth, unaware or in denial of its own mythoform.

[15] This turn of phrase, common in South African political discourse is nonsensical in its essentially circular positivism. Rule, from the Latin *rego*, being a mode of ordering, governing, ruling, or overseeing, and attaining the middle English meaning of legal code, the orderly efficiency of regulating and supervising by he who is it, the ruler, became *of* Law, from the Old Norse lǫg ("things laid down fixed", "the things that are laid down"), plural of lag (layer or stratum, a laying in order, measure), is thus a 'governing of order' or 'overseeing of that which is "laid down" by the rulers". Where rulers once derived their authority from God, then usurped by natural law, an inherent reason in nature accessible to the rational mind, Law, transmogrified by positivism, became the force of its own legitimacy (Nunn, 1997). This, we argue, reveals how the "Rule of Law" as the law of laws or the rule of rules, is nothing other than the metaphysical force of objective reason outside of social context, able to determine the order of relations from an abstract outside made manifest and perpetual by logocentric appeals to European mythologies of power and their intolerance for uncertainty (Fitzpatrick, 1992), the character of Being in its ceaseless unfoldment (Ramose, 2002a).

[16] Examples of this are myriad, even in the 'most advanced' constitutional states in the world. Access to justice, access to the basic conditions of existence (food, water and housing), the safeguarding of life and the conditions of dignity are not and have never been fully realised for all peoples under any constitutional order, whether it be in the USA where their constitution relegates prisoners (still citizens) to the status of slaves, or the UK, Canada, France or other nations which embrace a closed-model of the governed. Of course, in each constitutional state there are peculiarities and differences, pointing to a spectrum of constitutional successes with some countries faring better and some worse in their quest to realise constitutionalism. However, this does not adequately negate the argument being made within the bounds of this project: constitutionalism, by way of it's complicated Eurocentric organisational presuppositions is failing to meaningful address the Situation and the systemic forces driving it.

[17] See Sect. 6.2.4 Normativity in Ordering for a discussion of liberalism.

[18] Section 1 of the constitution establishes (a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms; (b) Non-racialism and non-sexism; (c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law; and (d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness, as the 'norm-making' values upon which South Africa is to operate. Yet, these values, especially in the history of the constitutional jurisprudence that informs them, are products of European modernity and the unique Eurocentric rationality that we have set out at length. As Lepuru (2023b, pp. 12–13) writes, "The entire constitution is a legal embodiment of the epistemological paradigm of the European conqueror. Its norms, values and spirit are foreign to the Indigenous conquered people." See also Koos Malan (2019, Sec. 5.2.5 - 5.2.8) for a comprehensive discussion of how South Africa's dynamic socio-political reality renders the proposed fixity of the founding values as an explanation for the indifference of the South African people towards the constitutional values – The values exist almost exclusively in theory, but constitutionalism is unable to manifest them in reality. Additionally, see Tshepo Madlingozi (2017) and Gideon Van Riet (2016) on the problematic foundations of constitutionalism in dignity, human rights and freedom as opposed to liberation; Makua wa Mutua (1997) on the insufficiency of Rights based legal discourse in the post colony; Ramose (2001) on the danger of choosing democracy over decolonisation; Nigel Gibson (2001) on the "ideological capitulation" and lazy intellectualism of South Africa's constitutional order; and Van Marle (2007) on the difference between a constitutionalism as monument and spectacle versus memorial approaches focussed on ordinary social reconciliation, the latter of which she advocates for as more contextually and culturally appropriate for South Africa.

[19] Koos Malan (2019) terms this approach "statist-individualist constitutionalism" as the dominant form of constitutional thinking encapsulated and limited by the contemporary territorial nation-state that divides questions of governing between the state and the individual, to the exclusion of communities, whether they be human, ecological or cosmic.

[20] See Sect. 6.2 Cosmic Jurisprudence for a discussion of transgressing the law to consider those (im)possibilities that are its exterior.

[21] Within this field, scholars such as Ramose (2003a), Joel Modiri (2018), Ndumiso Dladla (2023), and Masilo Lepuru (2023a) have identified the constitution's failure to repudiate the unjust right of conquest and return title to territory to African peoples as a fundamental flaw in South Africa's approach to jurisprudence. Where post-facto it is clear that Europe's wars of conquest had neither *intentio recta* (right intention) nor *justa causa* (a right or justified cause), signalling a lack of *jus ad bellam* (grounds for allowing war) and thus the unjustness of the wars, the failure to, on the basis of Europe's own legal reasoning, refute any and all title to territory claims made by Europe over South Africa is a substantive jurisprudential oversight, made worse by the Europeans waging of war *sans jus in bello* (without following the rules of right conduct in war) (Ramose, ibid.). The strength and spirit of this constitutional critique is exemplified by Lepuru (2023b, p. 13) when they write, "The entire current constitution and its predecessors, of which it is a mere reconfiguration, are epiphenomena of conquest; that is, their condition of possibility for existence is land dispossession, and as manifestations of epistemicide, their fundamental objective is to preserve White settler colonialism, both materially and epistemologically."

[22] Otherwise put, using the language of decoloniality (Chimakonam and Ogbonnaya, 2021b), esoteric gnoses such as these allow us to identify an intellectual border, universalised during modernity and imposed on the rest of the world during the period of colonisation. As the "bully" that "tramples territory into submission" (ibid.) coloniality requires that we perform 'knowledge' making within the predetermined limits of Philosophy disciplined, which is, using the language of Critical Complexity theory (Woermann, 2016), a restricted economy of meaning, incapable and unwilling to account for, or reconcile with, its excesses, thus rendering the esoteric value of concepts such as Maat and Ubuntu 'outside' of knowledge *proper*. See. Sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity and Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity. If we take the longevity of Egyptian civilisation into account and compare it to the mere 300 approximate years that European modernity has taken to bring not only itself, but the entirety of human civilisation, to the brink of collapse, it can persuasively be argued that the presence of such an esoteric relationship not only signals a strength of African of African deep thought, but a weakness of modernity in its absence.

[23] Chimakonam (2021b), in his conception of *Ntapịa* as an explanatory concept for the interpretation of Nmekọka metaphysics and our interpretation also admits a degree of esoteric hiddenness in the nature of existence. This, naturally, places some of it beyond the capabilities of the human to access, and by inference to express via language, He writes, "*Nmekọka* conceives the universe and, indeed, every individual existent as a coded entity. Reality in whatever shape is encrypted. It is the job of the metaphysician to decode or decrypt any reality they study. Often, what is perceived or detected is not the full picture. The universe does not have a face value. The metaphysician has to scratch beyond the surface and dig deep to unveil the underlying nature of each reality. This attempt at unknotting and uncovering of reality which is relational is what *ntapịạ* is about in our metaphysical system. The universe is not what can be perceived or detected; there are underlying mechanisms."

[24] While we shall maintain a high degree of philosophical rigour, the complexity of the subject matter surfaces the (im)possibility (Woermann, 2016) of closure. Modelling in a way that is open, then, means that some sentences to follow can only be made sense in terms of a general economy of meaning, contextualised within both the conceptual constellation of this thesis and infinitely broader pluriverse of meaning in which it lies. Elsewise, taken as restricted models, or read alone and on the basis of text alone, certain statements in this Section are epistemically (im)possible and would require for the possibility of apparent meaning within analytic frameworks doctoral studies of their own. See Sect. 1.1 (Post)Structuring (Post-)Interdisciplinarity and Sect. 1.3 Critical Complexity Theory.

[25] Where we make reference to the Sacred King, Divine King or Kingship, implying also Queen or Queenship, we are not making reference necessarily to any mortal king, though we concede that said reference is not omitted or unintended but is rather insufficient if taken alone as the mortal kings of antiquity, as argued by Jungian theorists, were the embodied but symbolic representation of something other than what they corporeally were. Rather, we make reference more explicitly to the King Archetype in the masculine psyche (or its Queen counterpart in the feminine psyche) in the work of Carl G Jung as explored in the work of Robert L. Moore and Douglas Gillete (1992). For the purpose of our discussion of Maat, what matters is that the Pharos (Shu) of the Kemetic epoch were closely identified as a corollary of Maat (Tefnut), with the former being the son of the Ra and the latter being the daughter. The Pharos were understood as Gods in corporeal form on Earth who carried and acted according to Maat, or rather, had the task of replacing Isfet (an order of wrongness) with Maat (an interrelated order of rightness) as their duty on Earth (Karenga, 2004).

[26] This is a translation of the original text in German by Claver Boudja (2021, p. 9) that reads: " *Mit dem Konzept Ma'at hat eine vergleichsweise sehr frühe Kultur auf höchster Abstraktionsstufe einen Begriff geprägt, der menschliches Handeln und kosmische Ordnung miteinander verknüpft und damit Recht, Moral, Staatses, Kultleme und geltbildiötame auf höchster* ."

[27] *Isfet*, is described by Karenga (2004) as Maat's anti-ideal. While we do not have the room to delve further into the concept now, we find Scott Alexander's essay '*Meditation on Moloch*' (2014) to be a useful starting point for conceptualising *isfet* in the modern world on mythocentric grounds.

[28] A discussion of the relationship between Beauty and Maat is outside of the available scope. However, many overlaps can be found between the holistic conception of Maat under development here and the discussion of beauty in Ch. 4 (See. 4.1.1 What Aesthetics is not: A View Beyond Eurocentric Aesthetic Abstraction), specifically as they relate to the

emergence of a sustainable and beautiful society. However, some attention, given the generativity of this project should be paid to creativity, Beauty, and Maat to concretise the point. As Willie Cannon-Brown (no date, p. 52) wrote in his thesis on the topic, "The meaning of the divine, the beautiful within Kemet relies on the underlying assumption that the Great God or the Creator God is the origin of all things. This assumption was the world view of the people of Kemet, which became the telos of the style of life" and so it follows that creativity is a divine cognitive process. It is a reservoir of higher thought and wisdom. First the idea is visualized in the mind or thought, then the process of materializing takes place. For the creator of the universe, the making process of the world of matter was caused from energy force. The thought produced matter through sensory resources. In order to build and maintain the world of matter, humans use the same divine creative cognitive process that the creator used to mirror the spirit world, i.e. the "world above" in the world of matter" (ibid., p. 57). Herein, the enactment of creativity, or what we have termed the performance of cosmic purpose(s), is framed from the Kemetic perspective as a divine act, in line with, inspired by, and in service of Maat. See Sect. 4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens.

[29] Karenga includes a chapter length discussion of this point (See Karenga, 2004, Chapter 7: The Way of Worthiness). He includes under Maatian ethics the cultivating of virtues and eradicating vices in oneself, a precursor to Aristotle's Virtue ethics, as well as behaving towards others in ways that mean, for instance, that one does not mistreat another or do isfet unto them (including strangers) and not to impoverish others, not to cause pain, to cause anyone willingly to weep, to not do harm to others or mislead them, to not close ones ears to truth or to "wink at injustice", and also to not discriminate, for all are equal with Maat.

[30] Karenga establishes a plausible chronological link between Maat in ancient Kemet and its contributions to "human spiritual and ethical development" (Karenga, 2004., Sec. 4.3.1) in the time since, concurring with S.G.F. Brandon that this conception "of the post mortem judgement finds its most complete expression in the Book of the Dead" (Brandon, 1967, p. 41). Beginning most clearly with Plato's conception of the immortality of the Soul, the themes of judgment, justification and immortality went on to inform much of the history of Religion, taking on highly influential forms in Judaism and Christianity. However, unlike the form assumed under the Abrahamic religions, Maat avoids the bifurcation of the world into heaven and earth due to its complex relational monism. Additionally, what Maat sets forth as directives for living with it, it does not do so as command, but as council (Karenga, 2004. Sec. 7.4).

[31] This way of thinking, while also being sensitive to the complexity of ethics and the ethics of complexity, also aligns with what Robinson (1980, pp. 198–202) calls the Principle of Incompleteness – that "absence of discrete organistic integrity" whether metaphysical or other, that explains the underlying counterstatement of Ubuntu - a person is not a person, without other people. From this perspective, no being is complete, and it is precisely the dynamic relationality with the rest of the Cosmos that brings wholeness to being. Such a principle means that Order cannot be of the sort that relies on its own logocentric positivistic authority, as a constitutional order established under the weight of its own supremacy might do, for such subscribes to metaphysical principle of completeness. The amendment clauses in the South African constitution do little to change this, as they established bars for amendment unlikely to ever be reached timeously within its fragile multiparty democracy.

[32] Of course, there is the consideration of people living with disabilities that prevent them from accessing the power of speech. Given Maat's recognition that we must protect the vulnerable, it is reasonable to conclude that those with speech-impediments would be assisted in whatever way society can manage, such as through various assistive technologies or through sign language interpretation, to engage in the speech act of Maat where they are called to do so.

[33] The purpose of discussing Taboo in the context of this work is not to advocate for the resurrection of all taboos, for some have been proven to have no use by the test of time – such as the idea that it is taboo to give birth to twins, an act for which a mother would be assigned guilt and tasked with burying one of her children alive in Tsonga societies (Baloyi, 2020, p. 6). Rather, raising Taboo is part of the search for alternative measures and mechanisms beyond written law by which African societies have historically maintained socio-ecological Order to thereby prepare the ground for (re)growth and imagination.

[34] A clan-mukowa is a tautological term, as Robinson (1980, pp. 195–197) rightfully points out, for a social grouping in Tonga tribal societies that can be read as a group of people who share matrilineal descent, but are not necessarily located in the same area.

[35] Natalie Wynn (2020) identifies the common tropes of cancel culture to be 1) the presumption that the accused is guilty; 2) the abstraction of the accusation away from its material details (from "he did X on Y date" to "he is Z"); 3) the reductive essentialisation of the perpetrator to the wrongness of their actions; 4) a sense of pseudo-moralism (where the accuser is not motivated by a sincere sense of moral integrity, but rather, for example, personal gain); 5) the denial of the possibility of forgiveness to the perpetrator; 6) transference of cancellation from the specific act to any act the perpetrator performs; and 7) and the trap of dualism (Wynn, 2020).

[36] See Sect. 1.4 Decoloniality and (Afro)centricity.

[37] See Introduction, n. 14.

[38] There is also another argument to be made about the metaphysics of return, (re)birth or renaissance, and its intersection with myth and cyclical notions of time (Eliade, 1954) or the concept of perennial wisdom (Schlosser, 2014; Laude, 2020), especially as they weigh up against the progressivist and linearly constructed conception of time used by Gade, but we do not have the room to make it here.

[39] Micheal O. Eze in his book Intellectual History in Contemporary Africa (2010) makes a comprehensive argument that the usefulness of Ubuntu is limited to the context in which it is articulated, and so is shaped thereby in order to function as an evaluative norm that is "context specific" (ibid. p. 185) and a product of "public discourse" which "[induces] the *very context of ubuntu* to become located within specific practices and context." Taking this critique seriously, our (re)conceptualisation of *Ubu-ntu* is proffered within the context of our provisional Afrignostic response to the Situation as set out across Chapters four to six.

[40] At some level, reconciliatory justice is premised on an acceptance of the fallibility of people and a faith in their teachability or capacity for reform. Mistakes happen, people find themselves embroiled and coerced by structures larger than themselves, they make bad choices, and also, in many cases, are ignorant. All of these are innately human fallibilities that can be identified with

[41] See Sect. 4.3 Future Society Through an African Aesthetic Lens.

[42] Foucault (1995) reminds us that modern conceptions of what 'appropriate', 'civilised', and 'humane' forms of discipline and punishment look like have a history that is decidedly one that is of Europe. The European export of modernity to the rest of the world epistemically denied the rest of the world a chance to attempt for themselves modes of punishment, determined by them, and to see whether or not they worked for those people in their unique contexts. As such, a punishment such as placing a person in stocks for a period of days in full view of their community, flogging, or banishment, have been excluded from contemporary criminological discourse, largely developed during the period of globalisation and democratic liberalisation and its emphasis on order, dignity and the idea that even "in the worst of murderers, there is one thing, at least, to be respected when one punishes: his 'humanity'." Here lies the rupture (See Sect. v. A Complex Cosmic 'Rupture') of Afrignostic insights, where Menkiti (1984) draws a distinction between humanity and personhood, where the former is a fact of being born of the species human being, and the latter is a collective project of becoming a person that admits of gradation (Menkiti, 2018). Gradation means one can advance in personhood, or even regress, and should the transgression be bad enough, one can regress out of the category of person altogether. Where it is the personhood, then, of the human that matters, and not the humanity of the person (a much narrower biological fact), then the logic by which modernity came to suspend certain corrective measures falters, for you may have a human appear before you in stocks, for example, but depending on their actions, that human may for the time being not be a person.

[43] See Ch. 5. n. 19.

[44] Notice, grammatically, the effort we have taken, following the exploration of African spirituality and perspectives on interconnectedness in Ch. 3, to avoid using the term "it" to denote the ontological status of the life world, preferring to lay flat the ladder of ethical considerability after recognising the bound onto-epistemic idea of what microcosmic life is. As not an it, we have proffered to denote all life as a "who" whose flourishing and unfoldment is on par with our own and also with that of the universe.

[45] See Ch. 5. n. 2.

[46] See Ch. 5. n. 11.

[47] There is most definitely a section of the population, though a philosophically ignorant one, who does understand some degree of mimesis (Derrida and Klein, 1981) between elite values, religion and the order of the world and so have been conscious about influence they have on one another.

[48] The contradictions of (neo)liberal thought are so apparent that Muria H. Davis (2011) saw it fit to liken it to Albert Camus' concept of absurdity.

Conclusion

Let us remind ourselves of what we set out to do:

Against the context in which it is thought, that of *the Situation as (Meta-)Polycrisis,* this thesis aims to consider *two paradigms of food production* in society from *an African thought perspective on the world, order, and future-imaginaries* towards a *complex cosmic 'rupture'.* The purpose of this thesis is to gesture at that which lies beyond said rupture, "the possibility of reasserting the values that would make our existence endurable" (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012, p. 229)

Beginning with the last of the italicised terms and working backwards, let us consider how we fared, and what we managed to argue in relation to our stated ends, some of which we admitted would appear as non-sense until we introduced a slew of new terms for their ordering, meaningfulness-making in practice, and sense-making.

v. On Complexity, Cosmos and Rupture

Across this work, we have shown how the European *Asili* attempts to impose onto the Cosmos its terms of Order, ranging from how it organises food production and approaches ethics in African thought (Chapter two and three), to how it conceives of, and engages with, beauty (Chapter four), food (Chapter five), and the order of the political (Chapter six), in both the space of thought and deed. At each step, what we made apparent is the clear tendency it displays towards organising order in a paradigmatically simple form.

Introduced in Section 1.3, this Eurocentric order-form is "totally unconscious of the praxis, metaphysical, anthropocentric character of its vision of the physical sphere" (Morin, 1992b, p. 374) and creates "order in the universe and chases out disorder, [reducing order] to one law, one principle [that] can see either the one or the many, but [cannot] see that the One is perhaps at the same time Many" (Morin, 2008, p. 39). The many, which we characterised as the complex whole of

countless (co)dependent and (co)arising peculiarities in Chapter three, became the vision of Cosmos, summarily represented as Afrignosis.

As a sense of living-wisdom informed by the principle of movement (Ramose, 1994, 2009), Afrignosis was developed across this thesis to indicate, on the one hand, the mediative wisdom of ontological interbeing inherent in Ancestral discourse and accessible via ritual processes of anamnestic solidarity (Magesa, 1997; Bujo, 1998), and, on the other, a force of socio-political organisation, orienting those who relate to it to the ceaseless unfoldment of Being-Becoming, towards harmony with Cosmos, a way of being-knowing-doing tied to the mythoform of Maat (Karenga, 2004) and of *Ubu-ntu* (Ramose, 2002a). To the Eurocentric *Asili* and its penchant for causal-closure (Robinson, 2014), described as the pathological (Morin, 2008; Kastrup, 2016) search for precision, definition, and manipulability, such mythoforms, we have argued, are unjustifiably and absolutely other, and so are apparently outside of knowledge, outside of what disciplinarity and the Law can access, and so (un)knowable, (im)possible, (non)sense.

However, as we have presented them, Maat and ubu-ntu, alongside a reading of Taboo as socio-psychological enculturation of Afrignosis, offer to us an alternative that is as complex as it is African.

Confronting the limits of the possible as rupture (Eisenstein and McGowan, 2012), these (re)newed Africentric Terms of Order (Robinson, 1980) were presented as the emergence of a peculiar order to which the Eurocentric is an incomplete other, (non)sensical. From the perspective of this Order, ordering to the exclusion or ignorance of Cosmos is *isfet*, that which is wrong and introduces (dis)order into the Cosmos.

Taking on the question of food production from an African thought perspective between Afrignosis, Afroaesthetics, and Afrignostic ecology, we demonstrated, through vision and strategy, how these insights have the potential to (re)constellate otherwise a new terrain of possibilities for which they are the possibility.

If, as we have engaged it, Maat is taken to be the emergent constellation of the Good, the Just and the Beautiful, then it is best served by living in a way that embodies all three in relation to one another, and not any one in isolation, as Western theories of Goodness, Justice, and Beauty have attempted to do.

iv. An African Thought Perspective, the World, Order, and a Future-Imaginary

Drawing on African sources across time and space, we have presented three constellations as an African thought perspective on the world, Order and a future-imaginary.

The first was Afrignosis and it provided us with a framework for the Good in relation to food production. In Chapter three, we arrived at its insight by interrogating how authors have approached the question of ethics in African thought. Of the three approaches appraised, the more African of them, being the CI and HI approaches, were shown to ground an argument through which we can understand why it is that the IAC's treatment of the microcosmos is wrong, whether it be through a concept of cosmic ecology or through a complex cosmology, respectively. Herein, the emergent ecology of the Good urged us to recognise and act on the reality of microcosmic harm, presented as a moral obligation to abandon industrial Agriculture as the system of harm, in favour of agroecology, an alternative system of argoecosystemic harmony.

However, Afrignosis was not only presented as a framework for the Good by engaging it in this way, it was also presented as a framework for the epistemically Just, as a mode of decoloniality in food production thought engaging the injustice of coloniality as it bore down on African thought, and also as a framework for the ecologically beautiful, in its appetite for conducting ourselves as a species in a way that protects and enhances the plurality of peculiarities that make up ecologies and so predisposes them towards resilience and conditions favourable to evolution, the multiplication of peculiarity.

The second was Afroaesthetics, emerging from Chapter four as a future-imaginary response to the Situation grounded in Afrignosis. Presented as a framework for the beautiful in relation to societal aesthetics and food production, Afroaesthetics asked and answered the question: what is the aesthetic character of a future African society that feeds the cosmic community and is as beautiful, as it is just and good?

Herein, and using the work of African scholars on aesthetics, Afroaesthetics brought together the liberatory aesthetic of Afrofuturism with the sustainable aesthetic of Solarpunk. It sought to thereby balance the beautiful, as a performance of purpose(s) embedded in the everyday aesthetics of peoples and places, with the politically Just, as the liberation of African peculiarity from Eurocentric aesthetic domination, and the ecologically Good, as the sensitivity in attitudes of design to the complexity of nature and the human-nature relation.

Lastly, the political ontology (Escobar, 2010) of Afrignostic ecology was presented in Chapter five as a framework for Just strategies in ecognomics. Emerging from an Afrignostic (re)conceptualisation of food, opening it up to the insight of cosmic value relating human food production ends to the nature of vital force as an indicator of cosmo-systemic health, Afrignostic ecology pushed the boundaries of thinking about Order in political terms to develop implementable strategies for making real the Good outcome of fulfilling Chapter two's Afrignostic obligation.

However, as with Afrignosis and Afroaesthetics, Afrignostic ecology was developed in a complex way. In so doing, we presented it as a framework for the Just, at least in terms of food production against the contextual history of the Situation, and also a framework for Afrignostic Good, given its intentional sensitivity to the cosmic community, and also Afroaesthetic Beauty, given its eco-aesthetically appreciative engagement with hierarchy in relation to Eurocentric political ordering and its victims, having had our very peculiarity denied and suppressed.

Following this train of thought, Maat was presented in Chapter six as a signifier for understanding and appraising African cosmic complexity, Goodness, Justness,

and Beautifulness of each new term, the combination of which, we suggest, offers a sense of what the conditions for the possibility of Maat's (re)emergence may be, at least insofar as it relates to food production – that no people struggling with hunger and ecological collapse shall escape *isfet*.

Importantly, as each new term emerged in consideration of the work of Africans, and the history of African struggles against Eurocentric ordering, we suggest that they are by their nature based in values that bring meaning to African experiences of Cosmos, such as relationality, liberation, and peculiarity, and so make the inescapably difficult experience of being human more endurable by fostering modes of relating to one another coloured by hospitality, generosity, and abundance as discussed towards the end of Chapters three and four.

iii. Food Production (Re)dux

What, then, have we made of the two paradigms of food production with which we started this investigation?

Silliness is perhaps, we suggest, an apt term to describe the paradigm of the IAC, and the *Utamawazo* of which it is an *Utamarohic* instantiation, representing a type of 'unnecessary', 'gratuitous' and 'narrow minded' behaviour peculiar to Eurocentric culture, but which they have sought to impose globally (Ani, 1994). While there is no doubt merit in taking apart the world in order to understand it, from the African thought perspective we have taken up it is clear just how bizarre it is to then go and engage the world, and require that everyone engage the world, as if said apartness is its nature, to the threat of violence, exclusion, subjugation.[1] We can say the same for seeing a note as a part of music, the commodity-value of food as a part of food, and law as a part of order, and then engaging these elements as if such part-hood was the total nature of each, and go on to require that all others do the same or be rendered as irrational, primitive.

On the basis of 'progress', the European Asili, exemplified in the character and history of the IAC, has seen itself positioned and styled as the arbiter of being, the measuring stick for advancement, development, and the singular legitimate

authority on the character of the future of Agriculture. The arrogance of this position, as we can infer from the discussions thus far, is characteristic of an other-negating Euro-anthropocentrism asserting itself as an evolutionary dictator of sorts. Through law and market, its impact on the world is one of domestication, monoculturation, and the destruction of peculiarity, to the evident detriment of the Cosmos-system as a whole.

Reversing back from apartness to the whole and seeing that the one *also-is* many, as we have characterised agroecology as doing, reveals to us that there is little we can bring to cosmic evolutionary unfolding that does not act to the detriment of said unfolding by elevating us above it in a socio-politically constructed and systematically enforced hierarchies of value, requiring at once the debasement of that which is, and also-is, us. We can, however, analyse nature in order to learn from it, biomimetically (re)building our societies from its teachings, such as Afrignosis.

Our discussion in Chapter three made this abundantly clear, arriving at an obligation to abandon this silliness and choose otherwise a system of food production that enculturates us, and our impacts, into a cosmic ecology of vital force (re)production. Identified as already at work in nature in Chapter three and four, this Afrignostic insight into the self-organisation of Being-Becoming was only apparent from two of the three approaches to ethics in African thought that we had considered – the CI and HI approaches.

Counter them, and as a microcosm of the broader tendencies of a Eurocentric analytic perspective on the world, the SI approach proved incapable of accounting for the nature of the world by insisting, on shaky grounds legitimate only from a singular perspective on logic and rationality, that we ought not consider the world as inherently valuable and inherently sacred. This position, taken up in conscious disregard of the testaments of myriad African thinkers on the issue ("the default position" evident in the HI approach specifically) and then presented as both 'the best' moral theory from Africa and the only one which an international audience

of professional philosophers would take seriously, betrays an epistemically arrogant coloniality of the same variety so discussed, a dictatorship of the rational.

Carrying this monoculturing philosophical logic forward, that an analytic secularism is the best way to do philosophy, also at once creates and justifies hierarchy within Philo-epistemic approaches, leading, we suggest, inevitably to the types of conclusion that elevate an analytic approach to aesthetics, politics and Order, to the status of the best, a self-justifying rationality for coloniality and imperialism, of both the epistemic and food productive variety. This is because, less than a philosophical method, we have presented it as a worldview, and so necessarily something which binds together and (co)informs an all-encompassing perspectival knowledge (Vervaeke, Lillicrap and Richards, 2012).

The HI and CI approaches, contra this, indicate to us a way of (re)particularising a universalist discourse, to show how it is that some approaches have strengths, but also have weaknesses, and where specific weaknesses, in relation to Cosmos, predispose our society to reductive and disjunctive ways of Being-Becoming, premised on a scientifically unsupported and subversively metaphysical, and so fundamental, presupposition of possible separateness as the limit of possibility. Rather, these complex cosmic approaches urge us, in the strongest terms, to develop and enculturate Afrignostic wisdom, recognising the innate, inextricable, inescapable, interrelatedness of all that there is. We have, following Wong and Bartlet in Section 5.3.5 Expression Three//Solving for Enduring Harmony' referred to the emergence of this type of wisdom as a "homeostatic awakening."

ii. Facing the Situation

In responding to the Situational question "where to from here?" posed at the end of Chapter three, we have shown how an Afrignostic way of reasoning, while often neither precise nor initially apparent, may help us to confront the Situation in a way that disciplined analytical thinking has not.

When talking about the loss of life on an ever-growing and more violent scale across the complex Earth system, from the micro-nodes in the web of biodiversity

to the macro-nodes of human population groups threatened by the asymmetric dispersion of climate impacts, it is simply not good enough to have an arms-length discussion about moral considerability, moral value, and the boundary conditions of inclusion and exclusion from the moral community, as the SI approach and its methodological kin would have us do.

As we have shown, these cerebral frameworks sow severe and violent realities for those forms of life that fall outside their moral meaning models, the consequences of which we, our progeny, as well as all those of the rest of the cosmic community, will reap in ecosystemic collapse, potentially preceding centuries of an inhospitable Earth (Archer, 2010). Such an approach to moral action misapprehends the nature of the world, resulting in a scenic epistemic detour we cannot afford, given the ecological trajectory that the IAC, among other systems, has set us on.

Arriving at this conclusion, provisional at best given the multifaceted nature of the Situation, its complexity, and the limited perspective from which we write, took us through an exploration of African cosmic complexity that touched on, among other things, ethics, metaphysics and ontology, aesthetics, politics and the question of Order so as to (re)invigorate a spirit of ethical action which, we suggest, has been driven out of African thought by the SI approach to it.

As we have argued from an African thought perspective, spirituality is an inextricable aspect of Being-Becoming, bound to how it is that we understand our relation to the Cosmos and what acting in relation to it can look like, posing as a strategy for overcoming, through engaged philosophy, the barriers that stand between practical action and the disproportionately Eurocentric ethical attitudes that claim to merely present the 'best' way to live ethically without actually living it.

What we did, instead of engaging in a thesis length arms-length away moral interrogation, was to arrive at Chapter three's moral obligation from a complex cosmic perspective early on (the merely theoretical work) and then trace its implications across multiple arenas of Being-Becoming, showing the alternate

futures that such a way of knowing could give way to, informed by our interactions in the realm of politics. This approach, we argue, not only contended that practical food systems decolonisation through agroecology could have multiple non-linear causal effects on the network of being, but also that it is Afrignosis as a wisdom tradition, enculturated in relation to mythoforms such as Maat and ubu-ntu, realised through socio-psychological rituals involving taboos and complex systems of shaming, that offers us an effective pedagogical tool for societal (re)orientation in both the political and epistemic realms in South Africa *today.*

Cohering with a complex view on ontology (Woermann, 2016), evidenced as already present in African thought,[2] we suggested that a change to a single aspect of Being-Becoming-together (how we conceive of and produce food) could impact multiple interrelated aspects of being, such as: ecosystemic health, by farming in a way that is sensitive to ecology; social-cohesion, by working together to mediate our metabolic interaction with the environment; human health, by cultivating a more diverse diet using less (Agri)chemicals; and community resilience, by decentralising food production and so decreasing the risk of catastrophic food system collapse of the sort the globalised IAC predisposes us to, among other benefits.[3] Through this, we characterised agroecology as an emancipatory agricultural praxis, grounded in Afrignosis and oriented towards Afrignostic ecology and the emergence of an Afroaesthetic vision.

i. Closing remarks

In the Situation, our experience of the world, outside of brief moments of intimate reprieve with friends and partners, has become uniform: a colourless intermingling of monotony, immorality, and injustice. Day to day, we are faced with an onslaught of crises, threatening the very possibility of a liveable future, punctuated only by the relentless routine of an ever-online east-sleep-work repeat cycle, casting us further into deeper holes of social atomisation. As the world falls apart around us, we are told, reassuringly, that everything will be fine, we have innovated our way out of problems before, and so if we just keep our heads down and play by

the rules of a Eurocentric order, we can live under the Situation forever and should be joyous at such prospects.

Being so mundane and so total, this lie obfuscates the fundamental harm its routine requires and perpetuates: a relation of *isfet* to the Cosmos, which is a disregard of the Ecology ubu-ntu implies that is nowhere more clear than the treatment of the microcosmos by the IAC, as if their destruction has no significance, as if they do not *really* matter. Such a disregard for Cosmos, for ourselves, is not Maat.

Having spoken Maat, we go forth now to do Maat and engage the insights generated across this work in practice. For such is Maat, and Maat is mighty, for it endures. As shall we, where the Afrignostic insight of Maat is (re)membered.

Notes

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[1] Such is the difference between empirical reductionism and fundamentalist reductionism (Woese, 2004) introduced in sect. 2.1.1 How the IAC (Mis)understands Ecology: The Dance of Fundamentalist Reductionism.

[2] See Sect. 3.1 Complex Interconnectionism' and Sect. 3.2.2.1 Complex Cosmology at the Forefront'.

[3] While it is not always the case that the solutions to two separate problems will align simply because their causes are similar, it can be the case that the impacts of a single complex solution may yield redress for multiple problems. Scholars are increasingly referring to these types of polycrisis solutions and 'polysolutions' (Henig and Knight, 2023; Mark et al., 2024).

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