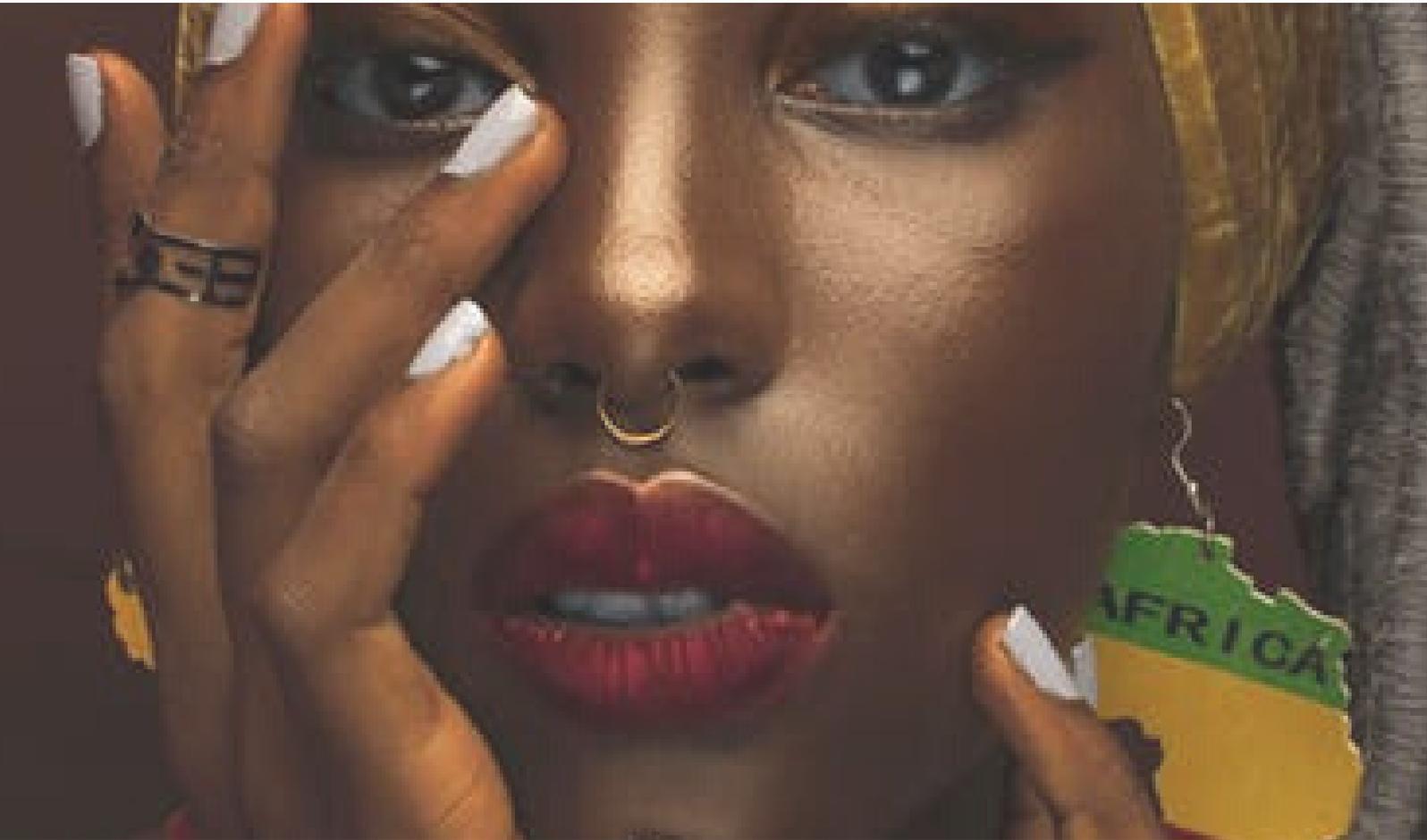




# AFRICA-FRIDAY REFLECTIONS

## "AFROCENTRIC THOUGHT"



### THE ONTO-TRIADIC NATURE OF UMUNTU.

BY ZAKHELE MTHEMBU

Ubuntu is the ground norm, if so were, that not only acts as the epistemic base of Umuntu but rather also the ontological foundation upon which 'existence' is experienced and constructed.

Umuntu is the physical manifestation of the cosmological force, Ubu-Ntu in space and time. Umuntu exists always, as a relation if so were, with space and time, as the concrete expression of the all-encompassing, universe creating force of Ubu-Ntu.

Umuntu is defined, that is, her nature, is a triad, that explains this continuous existence/relation umuntu has with space and time.

Umuntu first exists or is made up of amathonga/living dead as one part of the triad, they of course also exist in the here and now present, with their own distinctive personality and they are also a representation of those who are to come in the future, the unborn future generation but not non-existent, for their seed is already within you.

This is the onto triadic nature of umuntu, a holonistic existence in space time, encompassing ones, past, present and future.

The triad is inherent to batho bothle/bonke abantu. Instead of the false duality between individual and collective existence, wrought by the confused Hellenistic culture and their shallow grasp of the true nature of reality, the onto triadic nature of umuntu, has in it, the clarity in thought of realizing that one's past is also a part of them in as much as their future is,

and a conception of personhood that appreciates that, makes for better social relations, beyond being the truth of the nature umuntu in any case!

There is a saying in the Nguni subgroup of languages that says 'Akekho umuntu ovela ehlathini'. This beyond just being said to remind one of home or their past, in the literal sense, it speaks to the true nature of umuntu seeing as there is no present without the past nor the future without both the present and the past.

**"...AKEKHO  
UMUNTU OVELA  
EHLATHINI..."**

And rather than thinking of these mental distinctions in time as real, Abantu in their genius aptly conceived of themselves as the triadic unity that they are.

This onto triadic is the reason the greetings of Abantu are mostly in the plural, even if a single individual is greeting another. Individuality, being, what constitutes the singular, is a triad that encompasses their past and future, thus when you greet a singular person, you are stating your consonance with the vibrations of their own triad, as stemming from the cosmological force of Ubuntu.

This onto triadic be-ing of umuntu, as Baba Mogobe Ramose would say, is an ontological epistemology upon which the social institutions and relations of Abantu are built upon.

Abantu were/are ingenious, and this is reflected in the onto triadic nature of the individual that stems from the entanglement/unity of abantu.

One's ancestors presume a union of not only individuals but families in the past, one is after all a product of the trinity of the family unit, this aspect of the onto- episteme-triad of umuntu is reflected in one's family praises, which are a great source of historiographical material, being an aspect of the 'individuality' of umuntu and his constant entanglement with abantu.

In action, the unified yet separate nature of action in space time, with the entanglement between present and future, is reflected in the two other aspects of the triad of umuntu.

The presence of umuntu, as an aspect of the triad, that is, her personality, is conceived as to highlight the definitional power as well as the presumed and/or 'demonstrated' agency of umuntu since this speaks to a separation of individuality and will from the 'past' aspect of the onto triadic nature of umuntu.

The present is defined by agency, umuntu, has agency, will, the power to act that is reflected in the ends and consequences of said agency, being the future aspect of the onto-triadic nature of umuntu.

The future aspect of the cosmological triad that is umuntu is an 'as is', just like all aspects of the triad, in that they are demonstrated aspect of what makes up umuntu. The future is the legacy of umuntu, that is crafted in the present with its unity but separation, entanglement, with the past. The future as an aspect of the triad represents the will, the agency of umuntu, represented in 'undefinition'. All three aspects are unified and materialise in space time as umuntu.

In constructing/theorising a social system or analysing the social institutions exemplified in polities, clans, families, the being that is the centre, in the sense of being an initiator of such institutions, is umuntu, in her onto-episteme-triadic self. Umuntu makes law, partakes in commercial transactions, accumulates wealth and its mutual dependency on interaction with abantu, builds a family, communities, nations and empires.

Umuntu transcends the dichotomous object/subject conception of knowledge production and acquisition, epistemology, in the modern age because his onto-episteme-triadic nature encapsulates both distinctions represented in ontology and epistemology.

Umuntu after all is the manifestation, in space time, of Ubu-Ntu, and his ultimate purpose is to find consonance once more with this cosmological force from whence she stems.

Ubuntu is within us whilst simultaneously being what we strive towards through our actions in space time as abantu.

The aim is to centre umuntu and his spirito-cultural base; Isintu in the study and subsequent interaction with the world.

Our languages are windows to the to the thinking processes of our ancestors, the definitional or rather creationary power of language in relation to reality and one's operation in it as well as understanding its laws, must never be understated. A fact Ngugi wa Thiongo tries to communicate to us.

In a higher level of synthesis, language is but a byproduct of one's communication from their centre, which in our case would be Isintu sabantu abanobuntu/setho sa batho abanale botho.

This outline of the onto-triadic nature/being of umuntu does not proclaim to be THE truth, but it is rather the author's continued pursuit of truth, as best as he understands it and has synthesized thus far.

The aim is to centre ourselves, to be aware of the agency we have, and the duty like responsibility that comes with channelling it to bettering our conditions in life.

For if not us, whom else? As it has been emphasised by the author, we are the ones we have been waiting for.

The Eloquent Peasant.

**"...UMUNTU  
TRANSCENDS THE  
DICHOTOMOUS  
OBJECT/SUBJECT  
CONCEPTION OF  
KNOWLEDGE  
PRODUCTION AND  
ACQUISITION..."**

"Afrocentric Thought"

