

African Philosophy of Education as a Response to Human Rights Violations: Cultivating *Ubuntu* as a Virtue in Religious Education

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Abstract

Human rights violations on the African continent have emerged as a predicament for human flourishing. This article reconsiders the notion of an African philosophy of education as a response to human rights violations, in particular how the notion of *Ubuntu* (human interdependence and humaneness) can be used to counteract violence. It is argued that *Ubuntu* in becoming – with reference to the thoughts of Giorgio Agamben – can counteract human rights violations. In this way, *Ubuntu*, as an instance of African philosophy of education, can respond more positively to genocide, tribal conflict and wars, and the rape and abuse of women and children on the continent. And, as a tribute to Cornelia Roux, specifically her seminal work on religious and human rights education in South Africa, it is also argued that religious education ought to be constituted by the virtues of deliberative human engagement and cosmopolitan action, which constitute an *Ubuntu* in becoming that can offer pathways to enhancing religious education.

Keywords: African Philosophy, education, human rights, *ubuntu*, religious education

Introduction

In previous works I have argued extensively that the notion of an African phi-

osophy of education in the form of *Ubuntu* (human interdependence and humaneness) is capable of counteracting inhumane acts, such as genocide, torture, murder and the abuse of human beings (Waghid & Smeyers 2012; Waghid 2014). I have argued that *Ubuntu* is a moral concept that can contribute towards the eradication of human rights violations, which have become so endemic in many parts of African society – whether perpetrated by military rulers in oppressive Egypt after the Arab Spring (people’s revolt against unjust state rule in several northern African countries), or the ongoing rape of thousands of women and the maiming of innocent children in the Democratic Republic of Congo by Hutu militia. These acts of human rights violations have not abated, and the very idea of *Ubuntu* has been questioned by several critics of the concept as being incapable of disrupting gross inhumanity since more and more people are suffering the fate of genocide, torture and abuse. It is with such an understanding of unabated human rights violations in mind that I offer a reconsidered view of *Ubuntu* – one that can deal more positively with the inhumanity that seems to be increasing on the African continent.

Human Rights Violations on the African Continent

Human rights violations, in the form of mass slaughter on religious grounds in the Central African Republic, ethnic targeting and civil war in South Sudan, massive loss of life (genocide) and atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and political repression in Egypt by the military-dominated authorities, are poignant examples that all is not well on the African continent. Drawing on the 2014 Human Rights Watch World Report: Africa, the following gross human rights violations are reported in several countries: arbitrary detentions of political dissenters (Angola), ill-treatment and arbitrary arrests of religious worshippers (Burundi), raping of women and girls and destruction of villages by oppositional Seleka forces (Central African Republic), sexual violence against children (Côte d’Ivoire), war crimes against civilians by rebel forces (Democratic Republic of Congo), torture, prolonged detentions and unfair trials against political opposition (Equatorial Guinea), indefinite conscription and forced labour (Eritrea), massacre of civilians (Guinea), extra-judicial killings (Kenya), recruitment of children and child labour (Mali), Boko Haram violence against civilians with

the intent to enforce a harsh form of Shari'ah law (Nigeria), genocide (Rwanda), al-Shabaab suicide bombings (Somalia), xenophobic attacks (South Africa), anti-insurgency abuses and ethnic conflict (South Sudan), illegal arrests and detentions (Uganda), and intimidation by security forces (Zimbabwe) (Human Rights World Report: Africa 2014:73-198).

All the mentioned atrocities against humanity persist, despite African communities' apparent awareness that *Ubuntu* should be actualised in their lived experiences, particularly in relations between individuals and others. *Ubuntu* (human interdependence and humaneness) has been constitutive of African communal practices (and nowadays popularised through the media) for a very long time, to the extent that the practice has been linked to forms of communitarianism that should be actualised, such as having respect for elders, treating the destitute and helpless with care, and cultivating sharing and trust amongst Africa's peoples (Waghid 2014:58-62). One cannot deny the need for *Ubuntu* to manifest itself in the practices of people, considering the escalating levels of human indignity that have become endemic in certain parts of African society. There are those critics of *Ubuntu* who use the inhumanity that prevails in certain parts of the continent as reason to take issue with the practice, and even to question whether Africa has the moral commitment to remedy its own continuing societal demise (Horsthemke, 2004). There are others who go so far as stating that *Ubuntu* contributes towards Africa's moral malaise on account of its incipient potential to polarise communities along ethnically divisive understandings of *Ubuntu* (Pityana 1999). Small wonder, then, that ethnic rivalries are so dominant and acrimonious in several parts of the African continent. I do not for a moment think that these criticisms are valid, as the ethical caring and compassionate mutuality associated with *Ubuntu* makes the practice an unlikely candidate for the discordant inhumanity some people suffer on the continent. For me, the answer lies perhaps in looking at *Ubuntu* differently again – this time through the paradigmatic lens of the radical political theory of Giorgio Agamben. It is Agamben's views on **actuality, potentiality and becoming** that will be used to reconsider *Ubuntu* as a moral imperative for Africa to become more attentive to the inhumanity that has permeated several parts of the continent – a situation that affects all Africans, as well as those intent on seeing humanity holding sway on the continent, and everywhere else for that matter.

Potentiality and a Community in Becoming: Rethinking *Ubuntu* again

In my most recent book (Waghid, 2014) I contend that much of the literature on an African philosophy of education seems to juxtapose two strands of African philosophy as mutually exclusive entities, namely traditional ‘ethnophilosophy’ on the one hand, and ‘scientific’ African philosophy on the other. Whereas traditional ‘ethnophilosophy’ is associated with the cultural artefacts, narratives, folklore and music of Africa’s peoples, ‘scientific’ African philosophy is concerned primarily with the explanations, interpretations and justifications of African thought and practice along the lines of critical and transformative reasoning. ‘Scientific’ African philosophy is premised on the idea that the oral traditions of people are subjected to explanations and reasons (a matter of being critical) for their enactments in relation to the African context in which they find themselves and happen to shape (a matter of transforming the contexts in which they are situated). These two different strands of African philosophy invariably have a different impact on understandings of education: that is education as constituted by cultural action as mutually independent from education constituted by reasoned action. The position I argue for in this text is for an African philosophy of education guided by communitarian, reasonable and culture-dependent action in order to bridge the conceptual and practical divide between African ‘ethnophilosophy’ and ‘scientific’ African philosophy. Unlike those like Horsthemke (2004) who argues that African philosophy of education cannot exist because it does not invoke reason – that is, it is erroneously assumed that oral narratives are merely incoherent utterances that do not constitute reasonable expressions, or that reasoned African philosophy of education is just not possible, I argue instead for an African philosophy of education constituted by reasoned, culture-dependent action – that is, even oral traditions are reasonable expressions enframed by people’s cultural situatedness that should be subjected to explanations and justifications. In the main, my argument in defence of an African philosophy of education is aimed at developing a conception of education that can contribute towards imagination, deliberation and responsibility – *Ubuntu* (human interdependence and humaneness) actions that can help towards enhancing justice in educative relations, specifically in relation to African education (Waghid 2014). By provoking students towards imaginative action and a renewed

consciousness of possibility, they will learn to acknowledge humanity in themselves and others; by encouraging students to work cooperatively through sharing, engagement and remaining open to the new and unexpected, they will contribute towards cultivating learning communities; and by learning to show outrage at injustices and human violations, students will learn to attend to those on the margins (women, children and those who suffer from dictatorships and displacements on the African continent and elsewhere). The upshot of the afore-mentioned pedagogical initiative is that educators should create conditions (say in classrooms) whereby students are summoned to use their capacities to produce reasons – a matter of announcing their equal intelligences – in order to disrupt meanings of *Ubuntu* that seem to hinder critical and transformative action. Put differently, educators and students should pursue pedagogical encounters that view *Ubuntu* differently – a matter of disrupting the taken-for-granted.

As was mentioned earlier, *Ubuntu* is a form of moral consciousness in terms of which communal Africans embark on caring, compassionate, hospitable and forgiving human engagements to ensure that human interdependency and humanity become actualised – that is, that they are manifest in the practices of individuals and communities, including educational institutions (Waghid & Smeyers 2012:13-15). At first glance there seems to be very little wrong with arguing that acts of *Ubuntu* should be actualised in communal practices so as to prevent human injustice. However, looking at the argument again, this might also be where the potential problem with *Ubuntu* and its implementation lies. To assert that something is in actuality or that something is being realised is to say that something has been exhausted in action and that there is no need for it to happen any longer, as its veracity is in the act itself – that is, something has already been achieved. Simply put, having passed into actuality, *Ubuntu* has no reason to happen again, as it is already with certainty in the practices of people. And perhaps this is the reason why people seem to be disinclined towards *Ubuntu*, as it is erroneously assumed that the practice is already there in reality, yet interdependency and inhumanity are prevalent. That is, if human co-existence and respectful human relations are constitutive of *Ubuntu* and, such actions have already been realised, then it is wrongly assumed that *Ubuntu* is already actualised. Consequently, all enthusiasm for the practice is reduced when human indignity is observed, despite the apparent actuality of *Ubuntu* in the lived experiences of some Africans. So, the question for me is not whether

Ubuntu is there (a matter of actualisation), but rather whether it ‘can’ be there. It is to such a discussion of whether something ‘can’ be there that I now turn.

Agamben (1999:177) recounts the story of Anna Akhmatova, a gifted poet in the 1930s, who queued outside the prison of Leningrad with lots of other women trying to hear news of her son, who had been incarcerated as a political prisoner. On being asked by another woman whether she (Anna) ‘can speak of this (situation)’, Anna was reticent to respond until she said, ‘yes I can’ – that is, ‘I can ... [which] does not refer to any certainty or specific capacity but is nevertheless absolutely demanding ... the hardest and bitterest possible: the experience of potentiality’ (Agamben 1999:178). Although Anna could skilfully use language to tentatively describe the atrocities that happened to the prisoners, Agamben does not rule out the possibility that Anna might not actually be in a position also to describe the inhumane acts experienced by her son. In other words, for Agamben, the possibility that Anna can speak of atrocities is there, yet the possibility that she also cannot speak of the atrocities is equally not there. That is, the potentiality that Anna can speak of atrocities and also not speak about them is always there. Drawing on Aristotle’s idea of potentiality, Agamben (1999:179) characterises two kinds of potentiality: generic potentiality, for example when a child has the potential to know or potentially can become someone; and existing potentiality, in the sense that someone suffers an ‘alteration’ or ‘becoming other’. So, whoever already possesses knowledge (who already knows) is not obliged to suffer an alteration, but those who do not already know potentially can come to know – a matter of becoming an other. In this way, potentiality is not annulled in actuality, but remains conserved and ‘saves itself in actuality’, which, according to Agamben, ‘survives actuality and in this way, *gives itself to itself*’ (1999:184). To come back to the practice of *Ubuntu*, those who claim to have actualised *Ubuntu* have not given itself to itself, because *Ubuntu* was annulled in its actuality. If *Ubuntu* has been actualised there is no reason why it should become, as it is already in actuality. Put differently, its potentiality to contribute to human beings becoming altered others will simply not be possible. This perhaps explains why human inhumanity is still prevalent on the African continent, despite claims that *Ubuntu* has passed into actuality. The fact that it is perceived to be in actuality makes its potentiality an impossibility.

My interest in potentiality as contributing towards an altered other or

a becoming other brings into play how individuals engage in community, in this instance in communal *Ubuntu* (interdependent) practices. Agamben (1993:86) argues for a conception of community that does not presuppose commonality or identity as a condition for belonging: ‘Whatever singularities cannot form a *societas* because they do not possess any identity to vindicate nor any bond of belonging for which to seek recognition ... the singularities form a community without affirming an identity, that humans co-belong without any representable condition of belonging (even in the form of a simple proposition [or statement that expresses a judgement])’. Agamben argues that a community of belonging is heralded in the event of Tiananmen Square, when thousands of Chinese students, workers and other protesters demonstrated against government corruption without clearly articulated demands on the basis of a ‘common interest deriving from a shared identity’ (Mills 2008:130). In the words of Agamben,

[w]hat was most striking about the demonstrations of the Chinese May was the relative absence of determinate contents in their demands (democracy and freedom are notions too generic and broadly defined to constitute the real object of a conflict, and the only concrete demand, the rehabilitation of Hu Yao-Bang, was immediately granted).

Considering that the practice of *Ubuntu* (human interdependence and humaneness) has always been thought of as entailing communal practices, in which human beings share a common identity – ethnicity, culture, and language, it follows that an Agamben perspective of *Ubuntu* does not necessarily require humans to co-belong with reference to ethnic identity or ethnic difference. Communal *Ubuntu* practices can still exist without appropriating a shared ethnic identity. In other words, Kenyan Kikuyus (the majority ethnic tribe) potentially can co-belong in community with minority ethnic groups, such as Merus or Kalenjins, without reference to their identities – that is, they can co-belong and thus co-exist peacefully under conditions of humaneness and interdependence (*Ubuntu*), without laying claim to the ethnic purity and language that often drive them apart. An *Ubuntu* community in becoming exists in ‘whatever being’, in which singularity is no longer sequestered in a common identity. At once, ‘I am because we are’ (the common phrase in African communities to depict

Ubuntu) can potentially be ‘I am because we can become [we are not yet]’. The political potency of such a view of *Ubuntu* as a community in becoming potentially can disturb the ethnic conflicts and clashes that often leave behind division, suspicion, destruction of the environment, loss of human life, homelessness, destitution, traumatisation, stigmatisation, stagnation of the education system, and hatred and anger amongst ethnic rivals (Nyakuri 1997:5). The fear that ethnic rivals might have is that their culture, language and ethnicity will be sacrificed in the name of a common identity, often reflected in what the majority desires. In a way, an *Ubuntu* community in becoming allows for a community of beings without identity. Such a community co-belongs without sharing a common identity, where the potentiality of inhumane treatment of the other remains in potentiality.

An *Ubuntu* community in becoming is a ‘community without presuppositions and without subjects [where different human beings are brought] into communication without the incommunicable’ (Agamben 1993:65). When an *Ubuntu* community in becoming is potentially brought into communication without the incommunicable, then the differences of language, of dialect, of ways of life, of character, of custom, and even the physical particularities of each, are brought into the open (Agamben 1993:63). This implies that such a community has nothing to hide and would not shame its individuals through arrogance and self-destruction. Such a community instigates its individuals to communicate that which might appear to be incommunicable. For example, the ongoing ethnic conflicts between rival tribes in several parts of Africa – commonly referred to as Africa’s forever wars – are a sufficient justification for individuals to communicate the incommunicable. Gentleman (2010) is bold enough to communicate the incommunicable – as not too many journalists are as courageous as Gentleman in describing the perpetual violence on the continent – when he attributes Africa’s bloodiest, most brutal ethnic wars that never seem to end to the combatants not having the disposition to restrain their unjustifiable expansionist actions to take over major cities:

Today’s rebels seem especially uninterested in winning converts, content instead to steal other people’s children, stick Kalashnikovs or axes in their hands, and make them do the killing What we are seeing is the decline of the classic African liberation movement and the proliferation of something else – something wilder, messier, more

violent, and harder to wrap our heads around. If you'd like to call this war, fine. But what is spreading across Africa like a viral pandemic is actually just opportunistic, heavily armed banditry I've witnessed up close – often way too close – how combat has morphed from soldier vs. soldier (now a rarity in Africa) to soldier vs. civilian. Most of today's African fighters are not rebels with a cause; they're predators. That's why we see stunning atrocities like eastern Congo's rape epidemic, where armed groups in recent years have sexually assaulted hundreds of thousands of women, often so sadistically that the victims are left incontinent for life. What is the military or political objective of ramming an assault rifle inside a woman and pulling the trigger? Terror has become an end, not just a means.

What is clear from the above depiction of ethnic conflict – terror – on the African continent is that the most obvious common interest that seems to perpetuate the ceaseless conflicts by mostly brainwashed child soldiers (boys and girls) 'who ransack villages and pounder newborn babies to death in wooden mortars' is crime and popular support (Gentleman 2010). If the only proposed solution to the 'forever wars' is to capture, with the prospect of prosecuting or killing, the rebel leaders, then to my mind there potentially would not be any end in sight for the violent conflicts, as violence only breeds violence, as Hannah Arendt (1969) reminds us.

It is here that I want to argue that ethnic conflict will remain in potentiality as long as an *Ubuntu* community in becoming is not considered as a community that potentially can combat the violence under conditions of communication without the incommunicable. Ceaseless ethnic violence in the form of brutality, warfare, tyranny, rapes and murders can be considered as incommunicable acts of violence, especially when speech such as 'ramming an assault rifle inside a woman and pulling the trigger' is communicated. An *Ubuntu* community in becoming potentially can engage warlords in communication without the incommunicable, because there always is the potentiality that ethnic conflict might be combated within its potentialities. What has emerged from the arguments in defence of an *Ubuntu* community in becoming is that an instance of African philosophy of education – *Ubuntu* – potentially can undo the brutality and inhumanity associated with ethnic conflict and military coups on the African continent. Such a community in becoming potentially would offer more to combat the predatory style of

warfare and conflict that have become endemic in African society. An *Ubuntu* community in becoming seems to be Africa's potential solution that can bring people from all spheres to co-belong as they set out to trouble the continent's conflicts that seem to remain in potentiality. Such a community would not predetermine who should be excluded, but rather consider each individual and group worthy of engaging with their own singularity and potentiality, even if just on the basis of their being human. Only through recognising that humans have the potentiality to communicate, without ending the communication on the basis of not using the incommunicable undignified, barbaric and brutal acts of violence to exclude perpetrators, the possibility is always there for the impotentiality of such heinous acts of savagery. This is not suggesting that perpetrators of brutal acts against humanity should not be reminded of their deeds. Rather, they should be (and potentially be prosecuted), but the heinous crimes should not be a reason to prematurely exclude them from the act of dialogue, as this in itself potentially would not end the barbaric savagery. Put differently, people cannot show an unwillingness to communicate on the basis that the perpetrators of acts of brutality should be excluded. This is what an *Ubuntu* community in becoming can do in both its potentiality and impotentiality. It is such a community that offers Africa hope to potentially bring its ethnic conflicts to an end and, if not, potentially so.

Now that I have given an account of an *Ubuntu* community in becoming, in particular how such a community can counteract human rights violations on the African continent, I want to examine how religious education informed by constituent aspects of an *Ubuntu* community in becoming can contribute to thinking differently about religious education, specifically on the African continent. Religion in African cultures was often berated by proponents of Eurocentric origin as being 'fetishist' or 'animistic'. That is, Africans were portrayed as pagan people without a religion and their beliefs were considered as 'spiritually inferior to Europeans' (Oladipo 2004:335). The European missionaries' task was to 'civilize the heathen' in Africa (Imbo 2004:368). Similarly, the view that, for Africans, religion is always an expression of a relationship between individuals and God – the Supreme Being, maker, sustainer and ruler of the world, giver of life who is above all divinities and humankind – is also far from correct, as many Africans do not necessarily worship God in the sense advocated by monotheistic religions, such as Christianity, Islam and Judaism. Instead,

many Africans also worship divinities or deities perceived to be more accessible to attend to people's immediate problems (Oladipo 2004:357). Hence, the structure of African traditional religions includes the following aspects: belief in God, belief in divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine (Oladipo 2004:356). This is not to suggest that all African religions are the same or that some should even be accorded preference over others, but rather that some African religions include some of the aforementioned aspects, whereas other African religions do not recognise some of these aspects. For instance, the practice of magic is not recognised by monotheistic religions, but by some religions that focus on the worshipping of divinities. In the main, the purpose of religious life for many Africans (as is the case for all religions) is to acquire good morals that can inculcate in them the desire to act with hospitality, selflessness, kindness, humility, abhorrence of wickedness, respect for truth and rectitude, regard for covenants, high regard for honour and respect for old age (Oladipo 2004:360). In essence, monotheistic religions are not all-pervasive in African cultures, and African religions are also of a non-revealed kind (Oladipo 2004:361). However, what is significant about religions and religious education on the continent is that they aim to cultivate a sense of morality in people – virtues such as respect, kindness, hospitality and dignity.

At the core of religious education in African cultures is the advancement of ethics in the pursuit of cultivating a balanced individual (Bewaji 2004:396). By this is meant that, in African society, a person has an ethical obligation to cultivate his or her well-being in the interest of community. As aptly stated by Bewaji (2004:396),

... each person is a representative of himself or herself as well as of his or her family ... [which] has the implication that an individual has to consider not only how a course of action contemplated by him [or her] will affect him [or her] personally, but also how it will affect his [or her] family ... in terms of the way in which they will be perceived by society. Thus, ethically speaking, when one pursues one's own goals one undermines the credibility of one's traditions. Likewise, the community does not also reduce its responsibility toward the individual, so that the moral obligation that arises between the individual and the community is 'an interactive one.

What follows from the aforementioned understanding of ethics is that it is not only found in the religious practices of Africans, but also motivated by the concern to be in service of and to humanity in all aspects of human life. In other words, ethics in Africa is strongly humanistic. This is so despite the human rights violations we witness on the African continent. Taylor (1991:94) would argue that some Africans have lost contact with themselves – that is, people are driven by an imperative of domination that condemns them to ceaseless battle against nature, both within and around them. In short, the human predicaments we witness on the African continent from time to time are instigated by sporadic surges of atomistic individualism that bring a concern for human welfare into conflict with other despotic and patriarchal imperatives, such as to dominate and exclude people from authentic ways of living – that is, peace, stability and prosperity. However, despite the lapses in living ethically, African cultures are still concerned innately with living worthwhile lives, as cogently stated by Wiredu (1980:6):

There is an aesthetic strain in our traditional ethical thought that is worthy of special mention in this connection. As noted already, what is good is conceived to be what is fitting ... what is fitting is what is beautiful There are, indeed, aesthetic analogies in the moral language of other cultures.

What has been expounded thus far is the fact that, in African cultures, religion and ethics are not only intertwined, but their authenticity is determined by concerns to advance both morality and human welfare on the continent within a spirit of community, that is, *Ubuntu*. Like all religions, then, Africa is not unique in espousing moral actions to be embedded in people's lives.

Towards a Reconsidered View of Religious Education in Africa

The question arises: what should a reconsidered view of religious education on the African continent advocate if it wants to remain true to the idea of the coming *Ubuntu* community? *Firstly*, religious education should look at students as individuals with their own privations who have the potential to

enact ‘whatever singularity’. The ‘whatever’ in question for Agamben (1993:1) ‘relates to singularity not in its indifference with respect to a common property (to a concept, for example: being red, being French, being Muslim), but only in its being *such as it is*’. For once, students would not be taught to share differences and commonalities as they tackle important human-affected issues in society. Rather, without affirming their identities they are taught to address issues in society that affect them as humans who co-belong, without insisting on establishing a shared intersubjective community that should tackle the issues with a common identity. They are ‘being-*such*, which remains constantly hidden in the condition of belonging’ (Agamben 1993:2).

Secondly, the fact that an *Ubuntu* community in becoming is not constituted by belonging means that students would be initiated into practices on the basis of a genuine commitment to bring about change, without privileging any dominant cultural community. They do not embark on action to please a particular community whose interests are considered as important solely on the basis of their hegemony, but rather, they engage in action as a consequence of their humanity and reason for living. And, what makes such humane action important for an *Ubuntu* community in becoming is that the potential is always there to contend with adverse forms of hegemony such as political and economic oppression and subjugation. In a way, such a person can be considered a cosmopolitan – one ‘whose allegiance is to the world wide community of human beings’ (Nussbaum 1996:4). Inasmuch as Nussbaum’s argument for a cosmopolitan citizen seems to resonate with some aspects of an *Ubuntu* community in becoming, such a community of cosmopolitans would already also imply that the community has been actualised and therefore would render potentiality incommensurable with cosmopolitanism. A cosmopolitan community is already recognised by a particular identity – one that presupposes commonality along the lines of being rights-bearing individuals by virtue of their humanity. As stated by Benhabib (2011:75), a cosmopolitan society is ‘a global society, [where] individuals are rights-bearing not only in virtue of their citizenship within states but in virtue of their humanity *simpliciter*’ – that is, a humanity without qualification. What makes a cosmopolitan community not one in becoming is that it is framed by a collective existence with claims to justice and legitimacy – that is, it is already an actual community of cosmopolitans.

Thirdly, religious education that educates students about potentially coming into community also has in mind bringing students ‘into a communication without the incommunicable’ (Agamben 1993:65). That is, students are taught not to reserve their opinions in relation to any matter – nothing should remain unsaid in a community in becoming, even if speech denounces the ‘vacuous declarations of human rights’ (Agamben 1993:87) that are often ignored by powerful nations. Instead, students are initiated into practices of speech whereby they exercise the ‘free use of the self’ (Agamben 1993:28) to speak their minds. Yet, they should be reminded not to rush to judgement, as that would be the end of speech, because potentiality would then have been surpassed by actuality. Suspending judgement would ensure that communication continues even in the face of sometimes difficult speech. For instance, one of the dystopias that manifests itself is hatred towards Muslim immigrants in many European societies, a manifestation that remains on the upswing. In the event of the increasing marginalisation of these immigrant communities, fuelled by the pronouncements of rightist governments, we require free speech that potentially leads to innovative solutions to prevent immigrants from further suffering indignity and humiliation.

In sum, I have encountered Cornelia Roux as an astute intellectual and immensely dignified individual who encourages deliberative speech, yet always remains reserved in her judgement of others. More recently, the mere fact that I was invited as a scholar with a non-Christian identity to speak to her doctoral students on educational research is evidence that Cornelia only recognises people for who they are and what they can contribute to the cultivation of rigorous intellectualism and a better society. I am deeply privileged to have written this article in her honour and I have no doubt in her scholarly intentions to counteract human rights violations through the medium of an emancipatory form of religious education – one that is guided by an *Ubuntu* community in becoming.

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