

Ubuntu at Akoefe

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Ubuntu



A traditional worldview in much of sub-Saharan Africa based on the values of kindness, respect, compassion, and especially, community and interdependence

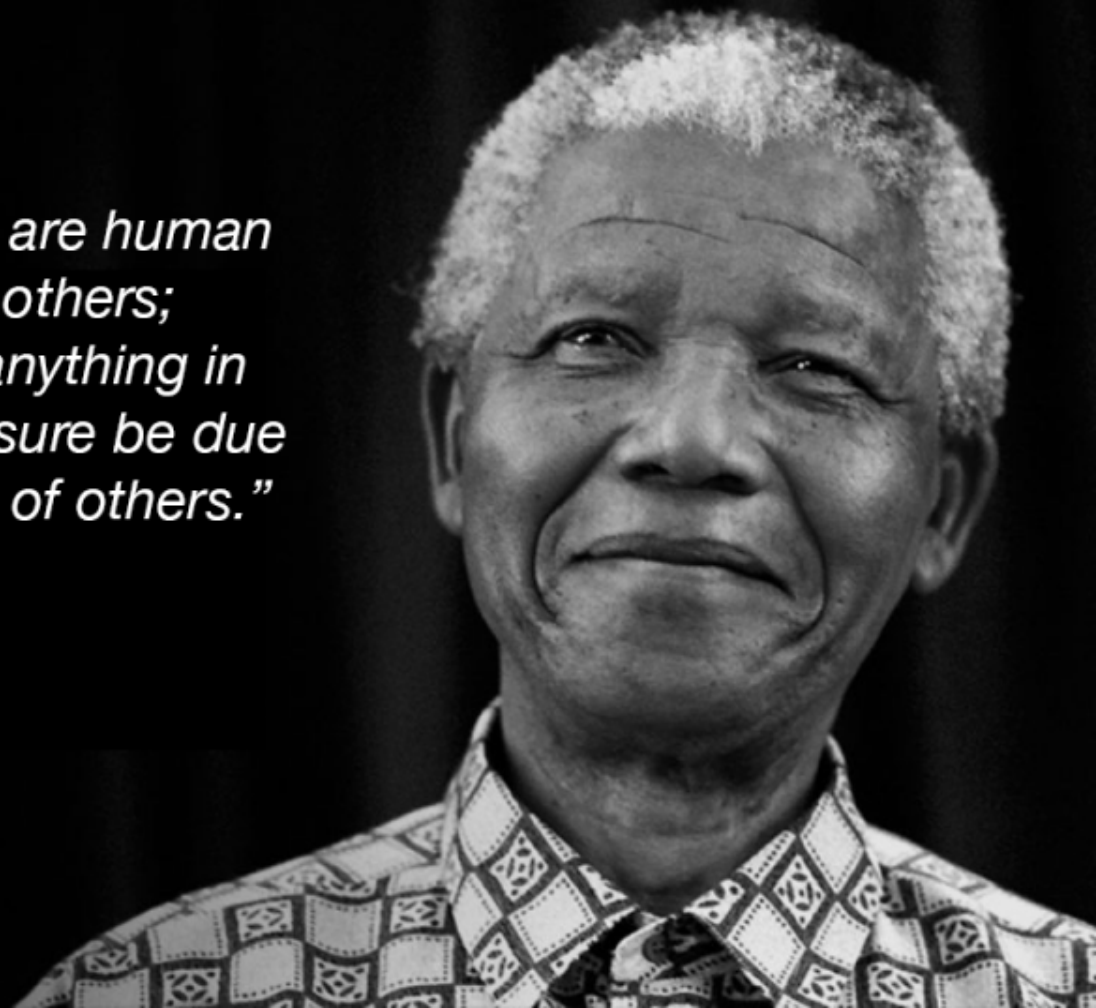


Celebration at Akoeffe



“The profound sense that we are human only through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievement of others.”

— Nelson Mandela



Sharing in the Nima Community; feeding your neighbors



Caring for and educating orphans in the Agotime Vocational School of kente weaving in the Volta Region





Ethnophilosophy

Ethnophilosophy is the taking of cultural beliefs embedded in indigenous myths, folk wisdom, and proverbs, and reformulating them in the language of professional philosophy to show their philosophical implications.

Ubuntu Philosophy is one example of ethnophilosophy. It has implications for concepts such as personhood, rationality, and justice.

Ubuntu philosophy

The Nguni proverb *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, origin of the word *Ubuntu*, has different possible translations.

One philosophical rendering is:

‘I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am’

(John S. Mbiti's, 1990)

Ubuntu Personhood

Ubuntu **relational personhood** contrasts with Western **rational personhood** and individualism.

In Ubuntu philosophy, what makes us humans, selves, or persons is not rationality, but our relations with others.

Other non-Western philosophies such as Confucianism and Buddhism, as well as feminist theories, share with Ubuntu the view that social relationality is more important than individual rationality to define who we are.

Ubuntu Justice

Desmond Tutu used the concept of Ubuntu to frame the underlying philosophy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Post-Apartheid South Africa.

He advocated restorative rather than retributive justice.

“The oppressor must be liberated just as surely as the oppressed. A man that takes away another man’s freedom is a prisoner of hatred, he is locked behind the bars of prejudice and narrow-mindedness... The oppressor and the oppressed alike are robbed of their humanity.” Nelson Mandela.

The challenge to rediscover and cultivate Ubuntu

Ubuntu has guided much of Africa's traditional government and culture. But this ideal has been forgotten or challenged in many parts of Africa, in good measure because of Colonialism, which endorses a more individualistic way of life. But as we could see in our trip, Ubuntu is still present in many places, and it is being restored as an antidote against such Colonialism.

But it is not just Africans who can benefit from cultivating this ideal. The whole world needs Ubuntu in this Anthropocene age, the age in which the impact of human beings on the whole planet is a determining factor. To face this crisis, Ubuntu's values such as solidarity, empathy and unity are essential.



An anthropologist proposed a game to the kids in an African tribe. He put a basket full of fruit near a tree and told them that whoever got there first won the sweet fruits. When he gave them the signal to run they all took each other's hands and ran together, then sat in a circle enjoying their treats. When he asked them why they chose to run as a group when they could have had more fruit individually, one child spoke up and said: "UBUNTU, how can one of us be happy if all the other ones are sad?"

'UBUNTU' in the Xhosa culture means: "I am because we are"