A psycho-philosophical exploration to facilitate a better understanding of offending-related factors within a traditional Southern African context

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African traditional philosophy, worldviews, offending behaviour, psychological metasystems, social learning, *ubuntu*

Abstract

This article reflects upon notions of an African paradigm, as well as the ideals on which social and normative interaction and principles can be based in contemporary society. It is argued that Western and African perspectives have different epistemological and ontological points of departure. However, contemporary African society has developed into its current form through the advent of Western thought and should therefore be understood within a framework and awareness of the conflicting nature of the two ideas of Western and African knowledge systems. This provides a basis for African perspectives to be examined and extrapolated in co-existence with existing theories. Due to limited criminological theories from a predominantly African perspective, known psychological theories and premises are reflected upon to arrive at a better understanding of the factors that are relative to offending behaviour within an African context.

Introduction

The focus of this article falls upon the traditional African beliefs and customs of the Southern African region. According to Gyeke (Van Dyk 2001), it is indeed possible to reflect upon an overarching African perspective that can be distinguished from Western and Eastern perspectives despite cultural diversity among Africans. Gyeke (Van Dyk 2001) confirms the existence of a dominant socio-religious philosophy shared by traditional Africans. Traditional African beliefs and customs are assimilated by many Africans and are based on "a holistic, anthropological ontology" that man forms an inseparable whole with the cosmos and that everything is seen in its unique interaction with man as the centre of

the universe (Van Dyk 2001: 3).

It therefore emerges that Western and African perspectives or theories have different epistemological and ontological - and therefore philosophical - points of departure (Ovens & Prinsloo 2010). These philosophical constructs remain of paramount importance to all philosophical endeavours: Western as well as African. They were influenced by and informed by the classical Greek philosophers and therefore remain in a dialectical juxtaposition to African philosophy (Sogolo *sine anno*). Afrocentrists are also of the view that Africa's ancient civilizations encompassed civilizations of North Africa and the Mediterranean, including ancient Greece (Irele & Jeyifo 2011), where the focus remained the welfare and happiness of the people (Agozino 2010), which is not an unfamiliar principle in ancient Greek philosophy and justice-related philosophical principles.

The dominant focus of Western theories is argued to be predominantly scientific, analytical and reductionist; whereas the African approach is based upon subjective and direct experience. Current criminological theories are predominantly based upon a Western perspective and explain the phenomenon of crime and criminality from a similar perspective, by implication exerting a limiting effect on criminological research in Southern Africa.

On the contrary, however, contemporary African society has developed into its current form through the advent of Western thought and should be understood within a framework and awareness of the conflicting nature of the two paradigms of knowledge: those Western and, alternatively, those African. Therefore, the basis of African theories or paradigms can be established by examining and extrapolating from existing theories. Due to limited criminological theories from a purely African perspective, as well as the fact that so-called criminological theories originated from psychological and sociological theories, socio-cognitive psychological theories are explored in an effort to come to a better understanding of offending behaviour within an African context. It should therefore be borne in mind that the intention behind this article is not to provide a general theory to explain offending behaviour within an African context. The complexity of such a task will require a longitudinal research project and continued meta-analyses. The authors looked at African psychological premises, socio-cognitive functioning (especially within a social learning context) and Jung's psychoanalytical approach in relation to principles underlying systems theory and postmodernism – all of which are relevant to gain deeper insight into the life-world of the "African", including offending behaviour. However, more proactive measures

that are reconcilable within traditional African contexts will hopefully also emerge from this.

African psychology

"African" psychological theories are based upon knowledge that has been gained from anthropologists and are still in their infancy (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen 1997). This knowledge has been accumulated from examining traditional worldviews, norms, values and customs among Africans.

It is important to consider that because of the shift from a traditional way of life to a modern and more Western-oriented lifestyle, African thinking is also changing. The more modernised Africans become, the more they may be inclined to think and function like Westerners. However, traditions, values and norms are often deeply entrenched and may play a more important role in the people's daily functioning than may be expected. As early as 1969, Mbiti (1969: xi) wrote: "... If anything changes they are generally on the surface, affecting the material side of life, and only reach the deeper levels of thinking patterns, language content, mental images, emotions, beliefs and responses in situations of need." It therefore emerges that African culture has a rich heritage and African thought is derived from symbols, myths and collective rituals (Meyer et al 1997).

The African view of the world and other people is founded on a holistic and anthropological ontology. Human beings form an invisible whole with the cosmos and can be viewed in unity with God and nature. Human beings are the point of departure and centre of the universe. The African cosmic whole comprises of the macro-cosmos, the meso-cosmos and micro-cosmic systems (Sow in Van Dyk 2001).

The macro-cosmos is "the highest universe which consists of God, the ancestors of the chosen dead" (Van Dyk 2001: 3). Although God as the Supreme Being is the creator of the world in a traditional African sense (Wiredu *sine anno*: 103, 104), he constitutes – together with the world – the "spatio-temporal totality of existence". According to Busia (Wiredu *sine anno*: 111) the Supreme Being of the traditional African "is the Creator, the source of life, but between him and man lie many powers and principalities good and bad, gods, spirits, magical forces, witches to account for the strange happenings in the world". "Living spirits" of deceased ancestors are usually protective forces and therefore of more importance to African people with regard to their daily existence than God, who is perceived to be "distant" from the people. Ancestors can also punish people if social norms are not

adhered to by withdrawing their protection, which makes it possible for witches and sorcerers to attack them (Van Dyk 2001: 3). The macro-cosmos therefore influences the ethos and values among people. Furthermore, the macro-cosmos is influenced by both the meso-cosmos and the micro-cosmos.

The meso-cosmos level is a kind of no-man's-land or "intermediate universe" where supernatural forces such as evil spirits and sorcerers dwell. Sow (Van Dyk 2001: 4) describes it as the "structured collective imaginary" because it regulates people's desires, fears, anxieties and hopes for success and is where the "day-to-day psychological fate of individual human beings in Africa is regulated and controlled by the complex relations between humans and the invisible but powerful creatures of the meso-cosmos" (Van Dyk 2001: 4).

The micro-cosmos is the source of an African's daily living or everyday life (Van Dyk 2001). This gives rise to the collective existence, which is influenced by both the macro-cosmos and the meso-cosmos.

It is at the level of the African cosmic universe that the difference between African and Western ethos and values is the greatest. The micro-cosmos influences the relationship between the individual and the community. The meso-cosmos informs the human dynamics of the African individual. Behaviour is seen to be caused by neither intrapsychic nor interpersonal dynamics, but by external agents outside the person. The African perspective on life therefore engages intrapersonal and interpersonal, as well as intrapsychic factors, within the universal context of the ultimate Supreme Being and the supernatural as antecedent factors in causality.

It is therefore clear that the traditional African functions within a collective existence and that the very identity of the African is embedded in the collective existence; life experiences (such as suffering, life and death) and events (such as marriage) are shared with the group. From an African perspective, the person does not draw a line between the "self" and the object. The African will sympathise, abandon his or her personality and identify with the "other" (Meyer et al 1997: 52). The African does not assimilate, but becomes assimilated. In the authors' views, this may create a criminogenic precipitant in terms of social learning, which may encompass anti-social and even offending behaviour.

When the abovementioned psychological components and processes are taken into account in relation to an African perspective of personal accountability, it can be said that collective African practices pose an antithesis to the modern legal system. From a

traditional African perspective, behaviour is not caused by intrapsychic or interpersonal dynamics; individuals are not held responsible or accountable for their own actions or behaviour because the cause thereof is ascribed to external, supernatural beings or powers. Thus the person is unable to take the initiative to seek solutions and it is necessary to look for metaphysical powers and beings behind the empirical, rational reality that Western traditions may impose (Meyer et al 1997; Van Dyk 2001). However, to merely follow a tradition where social behaviour is in conflict with the law is no solution to an ethical dilemma (Prinsloo, *sine anno*). Although these factors should not excuse behaviour or exempt the individual from responsibility, they have to be recognised as mitigating as well as treatment needs and objectives.

The abovementioned principles link up with sociocognitive processes and functioning, as well as subsequent social and cultural interactions.

Sociocognitive processes

Sociocognitive processes are important mediators of environment–behaviour associations (Santrock 2001). For instance, the association between crime and social decay, as well as fear of crime, can be attributed to (amongst other things) classic conditioning where a neutral stimulus becomes associated with a meaningful stimulus and acquires the capacity to elicit a similar response and serve as the basis of generalised fear. Apparently "safe" public environments used to eliminate a situational fear of crime and served to counter the conditioned response (fear).

Bronfenbrenner (Santrock 2001) is an important exponent of ecological theory and his environmental view of development comprises the microsystem (setting in which the individual lives), mesosystem (relationships between microsystems and connections between social contexts), exosystem (experiences in other social settings in which the individual does not have an active role), macrosystem (culture in which individuals live) and chronosystem (patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course as well as socio-historical circumstances) which range from direct interactions with social agents to broad-based cultural influences (Santrock 2001). Furthermore, the process of stratification refers to ranking people into strata according to social class or socio-economic status, which is usually based on a person's income, occupation and educational realisation, and will influence with whom they interact (Knox & Schacht 2002). In a similar

context, "race" is perceived to be a social construct, "the meaning of which has less to do with biological differences than with social, cultural, political, economic, behavioural differences" (Knox & Schacht 2002: 25) and, in this instance, African offending behaviour.

At-risk youth often find themselves in a multi-problem environment and research results confirm that problem behaviours in adolescence are interrelated, for example early substance abuse is related to early sexual activity, lower school grades, school failure and anti-social and criminal conduct (Santrock 2001). Dryfoos (Santrock 2001) indicates that high-risk youth often engage in two-problem or three-problem behaviours. Programmes that target adolescent problem behaviour focus on early identification and intervention to reach young persons who are at risk and their families before they develop problems (or at the beginning of their problems). These programmes aim at intensive individual attention (individual counselling and treatment for specific needs) and community-wide, multi-agency, collaborative approaches (health promotion campaigns and substance abuse programmes). These factors are not exclusive or unique to either Western or African social and normative interaction and are reconcilable with both worldviews.

Furthermore, from a proactive perspective, behaviour can also be positively influenced by the following structural and cultural factors (cf. Knox & Schacht 2002):

Social structure (parts of society):

- Institutions (family, economy, education and religion).
- Social groups (persons who have a common identity, interact and form a social relationship):
    - Primary groups (a small number of individuals who are characterised by interaction that is intimate and informal).
    - Secondary groups (a small or large number of individuals who are characterised by interaction that is impersonal and formal).
- Status (a position one occupies within a social group that defines one's identity [who we are] within a social context and is changed by the choices one makes).
- Roles (sets of rights, obligations and expectations associated with status that identify what a person is expected to do, guide behaviour and serve as a basis to predict the behaviour of others).

Culture (meanings and ways of living that characterise a person in a society):

- Beliefs (definitions and explanations about what is "true"; influence choices).

- Values (standards regarding right and wrong, desirable and undesirable; influence choices):
  - o Familism (a group orientation which guides decisions in terms of the interests of the group).
  - o Individualism (decisions are made based on individual interests).

Other personal and social factors:
- Unconscious motivations.
- Habit patterns (mere conventions).
- Individual personality.
- Previous experiences.

The family *per se* serves as an extremely significant institution in relation to crime prevention. According to a functionalistic view (Knox & Schacht 2002), the family (especially the "nuclear family") serves as an institution with values, norms and activities. These are meant to provide stability for the larger society that is dependent on families serving various functions within society and to replenish society with socialised members (replacement). In addition to the primary functions of emotional stability, economic support and replacement, the family serves to provide:
- Physical care.
- Regulation of sexual behaviour.
- Status placement in society.
- Social control (less criminal behaviour).

However, the less idealist-oriented conflict perspective (Knox & Schacht 2002) recognises that family members have different goals and values which result in conflict:

- Not all family decisions are good for every member of the family.
- Conflict is perceived to be neither good nor bad but natural, normal and necessary for change and growth.
- There is conflict over scarce resources (time, affection, space and finances).
- There is conflict over power (a desire or need not to be dominated by others,

domination of social roles and spaces, discrimination, inequality and oppression).

According to Lubbe (2004) crime precipitants can be addressed via a developmental pathway of intervention that finds application in either individual or contextual assessment. Individual assessment focuses on obtaining a holistic view in terms of competence, assets, strengths and areas of difficulty within microsystems such as the family. Lubbe (2004) emphasises that in addition, an extended (holistic) profile of the person can be obtained through the increased input and varying opinions of trans-disciplinary assessment that is based upon comprehensiveness, mutual purpose and collaboration.

Resource-based assessment assumes that families and communities have assets and strengths. Recognising the quality of the relationship influences the sustainability of the intervention. Communities and intervention programmes can provide opportunities for support and competence development. Therefore, emphasis is placed on the development of (sustainable) partnerships with families and for families to participate in opportunities that may lead to the reduction of the impact of risk factors. The main purpose remains empowerment of families to make responsible decisions. Lubbe (2004) indicates the following components underlying such an approach:

- Sources of support (personal social network members, associated groups, community programmes, professionals and specialised services).
- Community resource mapping (mapping various kinds of resources that families can access when necessary).
- Building community capacity (recognising the strengths and assets of a community).

Asset-based assessment focuses predominantly on community-based assessment that can easily be adapted to suit family and individual assessments. The underlying premise of this approach is one of enablement and the humanistic belief that each individual, association, community or organisation has something to contribute. A graphic representation of the assets of each individual, family, classroom, peer group, school community or organisation can be compiled through asset mapping. Provided that these skills, gifts, capacities and resources can be mobilised and linked to form symbiotic relationships in the immediate support system, "internally driven development" (positive

change) will take effect (Lubbe 2004: 323).

The African psychology of collectiveness, collective responsibility and sociocognitive functioning is of relevance here and may play an integral role in the sentencing of offenders whose value systems are based upon the African perspective. Okafo (2006: 40) emphasises that the traditional worldview of the African person is based upon the ideal types of self-control and conformity with social and behavioural norms: "A person may or may not conform to societal expectations based on the person's inherent or learned dispositions and convictions. Some inherent dispositions are in part biological, psychological, and in others natural traits of the person, whereas other dispositions are learned, such as observation of traditions, cultures, customs, and practices."

However, the modern legal system does not take psychological overtures into account. It is necessary to contextualise information of the abovementioned nature for assessment by the court during adjudication, sentencing and decision making regarding forms of punishment. The use of pre-sentence investigations and the presentation of pre-sentence reports to the court would bring about a just process of decision making by introducing African causality theories. An important part hereof would be the introduction and explanation of the collective conscious, which is a fundamental premise of Jung's psychoanalytic approach (Otu & Horton 2005).

As already indicated, African psychology does not account for the individual personality structure. The naming of children is a typical example. The name given to a child describes his or her personality or an event in his or her life. In other words, the name is descriptive of the individual. It is believed that African behaviour and functioning can best be explained from an ecosystemic perspective where the person is viewed as a system comprising subsystems, which in turn form part of a larger suprasystem (Santrock 2001; Knox & Schacht 2002; Lubbe 2004). Traditional African cognitive functioning is based on intuition and emotion and not on pure rationality as among Westerners. African rational functioning is linked to the collective way of life and reasoning is intuitive through participation.

The African concept of time further influences African epistemology. The African concept of time is two-dimensional, with a long history, a present and almost no future (Meyer et al 1997). Experience is derived from previous generations. Traditional Africans have actual time, potential time and no time. Actual time comprises events that are currently taking place, while potential time includes events that will definitely happen in the

near future or in a natural rhythm (such as the certainty that the sun will set and rise). This has implications for the incarceration of the inmate and the rehabilitation programmes that are offered to Africans. Programmes that are offered are future orientated, where rehabilitation is aimed at reintegrating the offender back into society in the future. It may thus be postulated that it would be difficult for the African to accept rehabilitation programmes that are future orientated.

All the latter components play an integral role in the mental health and optimal functioning of the African individual. According to Meyer et al (1997), African personality theory accepts that Africans use the left and right sides of the brain in a balanced manner, unlike Westerners who only use one side at a time. The perception is held that the balanced use increases optimal psychological health and functioning. It is therefore believed that imbalanced use of the brain, as in the case of Westerners, causes stress and tension. Furthermore, the collective existence of the African is also believed to promote optimal functioning. Where Westerners strive towards individualisation and competition, which often results in stress, Africans are characterised by selflessness and a collective existence. This offers security and thus counters anxiety and stress or tension. The traditional system has immense super power; the group is stronger than individual members and this results in a strong social control mechanism. A break from tradition may result in weaker social control mechanisms, which contributes to crime when the individual feels a lesser level of social cohesion and belonging. A breakdown in social control may make the individual more prone to committing crimes against society. In 1969, Mbiti foresaw this process of separation and alienation and warned that modernisation will isolate the African from the support group where stressors such as poverty leave the individual alienated and without support (Mbiti 1969). In this regard, one cannot discuss African personality without elaborating on the concept of *ubuntu*.

The concept of *ubuntu*

When an African is separated from the collective group or becomes alienated, the resultant stress and tension levels are not as easily dealt with. Stressors encountered in the criminal justice system may intensify this stress and may affect the mental health of African offenders; it may lead to alienation and normlessless. In the authors' views, the need to belong to a group may be a major contributing factor why African offenders become

involved in gang activities when removed from their family systems and support networks.

African ontology and epistemology are two aspects of the same reality which manifest in the philosophy of *ubuntu*. This term encompasses the idea of "being" in general. As already indicated, traditional African religion does not focus on the individual but rather on the community to which the individual belongs. This illustrates the collective consciousness and implies collective responsibility. The modern legal system is based upon individual responsibility where only the offender is held responsible, unlike earlier times when tribes or families were held collectively responsible for a member's infringements or actions – thus the collective consciousness. The implication of the slow withdrawal from this system is that the modern African has become isolated. Modernisation has led to the destruction of the solid religious base of African culture, which in turn has led to people struggling with the conflict of losing their historical roots. Prinsloo (1999) describes this process as the disintegration of the regulating systems which results in a state of dysfunction.

Fourie (2008: 53) views *ubuntuism* as an intellectual quest to rediscover and re-establish idealised values of traditional African cultures and traditional African communities: "A person is a person through other persons." In African tradition, this saying has a deeply religious meaning. The "person" who one will eventually become in a process "through other persons" is, ultimately, an ancestor. In this context ancestors include extended family and in African society an inextricable bond exists between man, his or her ancestors and whatever is regarded as the "Supreme Being". *Ubuntu* forms an integral part of African religion and indicates a deep respect and regard for religious beliefs and practices.

Ubuntu claims that the self or individual is constituted by his or her relations with others. Schutte (1993: 56) concurs with this concept and views people and personal relations as "equally primordial". According to Schutte, African epistemology explains this by means of the concept of *Seriti*. *Seriti* is an energy, power or force which allows people to unite through personal interaction with others. Thus "the self" and others can be seen as "equiprimordial" or as aspects of the same universal field of force. However, as Schutte (1993) observes, this "solution" of the contradiction posed by the *ubuntu* conception of individuality comes at a price: "... in the perspective opened up by the African idea of the universe as a field of forces, it is difficult to see how the existing individual can have any enduring reality at all, much less how he or she can be possessed of the freedom and responsibility that is usually reckoned the most valuable mark of personhood" (Schutte

1993: 56).

However, care must be taken not to see the inclusivist, collectivist or communalist conception of individuality as an oppressive collectivism or communalism. The African concept of man does not negate individuality; it simply discourages the view that the individual should take precedence over the community (Ndaba 1994). Furthermore, Ndaba (1994) states that the collective consciousness that is evident in the African culture does not mean that the "African subject wallows in a formless, shapeless or rudimentary collectivity. It simply means that the African subjectivity develops and thrives in a relational setting provided by on-going contact and interaction with others" (Ndaba 1994: 14).

Van der Merwe (1996) poses the question whether Africans do adhere to *ubuntu* or, at least, endeavour to do so? And if so, he queries whether *ubuntu* is uniquely or exclusively African? The example of the relatively non-violent transition of South African society from a totalitarian state to a multi-party democracy is seen as not merely the result of the compromising negotiations of politicians. Van der Merwe (1996) believes that it is the result of the emergence of an ethos of solidarity, a commitment to peaceful co-existence amongst ordinary South Africans in spite of their differences, in the spirit of *ubuntu,* which represents the principle that social conduct and/or social ethic recognises human beings as social beings who need to be with others (Nafukho 2006).

The authors' are in agreement with Otu and Horton (2005) that Jung's psychoanalytical theory has the closest bearing on the African perspective.

Jung's psychoanalytical approach

Jung's theory reflects the multi-dimensional influence of his travels to North, East and Central Africa where he developed a fascination for Africa (Otu & Horton 2005). Jung's views were greatly inspired by his contact with African philosophy and perspectives on life. The influence of the African epistemological viewpoints greatly influenced him and was realised in his later work. The most prominent indication of this African inspiration can be seen in Jung's interpretation and explanation of the collective subconscious, the unconscious and communal species memory. In his view these aspects never achieve consciousness and represent accumulated experiences. Jung's view on the collective subconscious corresponds closely with the African perspective of the collective consciousness and the role that it plays in the development of ethnicity, in a process

whereby the individual internalises experiences from earlier social positions and ethnic matrixes (Otu & Horton 2005).

Other Western theories which correspond with the African philosophical view on circularity, rather than the more linear Western perspective - and serve as a frame of reference - are systems theory and cybernetics.

Systems theory and cybernetics

The construct "system" describes any "experience-cluster" that can be mapped as a set of interacting elements over time. Typically, a system is mapped by identifying the pathways of information flow, and possibly also the flow of energy, matter and other variables. Cybernetics is an extension hereof. Reciprocating loops (or more complicated looping structures) in the network define the flow of information which takes place within any system. Bateson (Becvar & Becvar 1996) defines systems theory as the study of systems which can be mapped by using any kind of network to define the flow of information. This includes the study of systems whose emergent properties we cannot yet predict owing to a lack of plausible mechanisms, rigorous mapping techniques and/or robust mathematical treatment. This view helps us to understand the African perspective as it studies the properties that emerge from the interconnectedness and complexity of relationships between parts, which is clearly illustrated by the collective consciousness.

Muir (2000 *sine pagina*) states that the need for cybernetics and systems theory is based upon the following: "When we try to pick up anything by itself we find it is attached to everything in the universe." This interrelatedness is comparable with the wholeness of the African experience. Muir (2000 *sine pagina*) speculates that if the science, religion, philosophy and epistemology of Western civilisation were "in better shape (more organic), we would not need cybernetics and systems theory as separate areas of inquiry. Rather they would be woven into the fabric of our knowledge as already are other prior mental tools such as, the flexibility of language ... our tradition of education has a blind spot when it comes to complexity, interconnectedness and relationship".

The postmodernist approach

The South African approach to postmodernism favours pluralism, diversity and freedom,

and questions the role of the normative theory of legal moralism as a (hegemonious) political act of power that is perpetrated in the name of "public interest" (Fourie 2008: 57). Dworkin (Amatrudo 2009: 137), amongst others, believes that if "legal interference is a necessary element in the proper running of society, if needs be by coercion to the 'welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced'".

Cultural theory and postcolonial theory are considered to be two significant interdisciplines within a postmodern agenda (Sey 2006). Ratele (2006: 539) believes the postcolonial construct elucidates two understandings thereof: "(1) a specifiable period, when former colonies won their freedom, and (2) a transdisciplinary form of thinking, a critical modality of engagement". In the authors' views, both understandings can be linked to the emancipation of African criminological theory. However, it is a complex issue to attempt to integrate traditional values with modern practices when the law follows Western tradition. As already indicated by the authors, a prolonged and concerted effort of continued meta-analyses is necessary. Despite the complexity of this challenge, De Liefde (2003: 80) nevertheless argues that the call for inclusive responsibility on a broad, social level is gaining momentum, and transgressing the conventional divide between government and the corporate world in which each person commits to the principle of social responsibility. De Liefde (2003: 80) is of the opinion that against this background of the postmodern world, it is possible to integrate African principles in Western contexts.

Conclusion

In this explorative review to gain a better understanding into variables that are relative to the context of offending behaviour within a traditional African context, the authors looked at African psychological premises, sociocognitive functioning within social learning contexts, and Jung's psychoanalytical approach in relation to principles underlying systems theory and postmodernism – all of which are relevant to gain deeper insight into the life-world of the "African", with an emphasis on proactive and crime inhibiting factors.

This article is in no way proposed to be complete or the only way to explain this encompassing phenomenon of crime as it manifests in Southern Africa. It rather strives to generate critical discourse in the field of the related social sciences concerned with crime questions and offending behaviour. It represents an applied attempt to illustrate that existing theoretical approaches can be useful and can be a foundational point of departure

from which Southern African perspectives can be approached. The intersection of Western and African approaches, as well as the broader relevance which is achieved through demonstrating how existing theoretical theories can contribute to inclusive theoretical debates and the application thereof in different contexts, can be considered a positive contribution towards this end.

Due to the diverse and eclectic nature of South African society, criminological theories or models would require a multivariate analysis and application on a multitude of levels, allowing for a reflection of the many nuances of a diverse society relative to the collective existence of all. The claim of the humanistic nature of African philosophy requires that in exploring common ground, the focus should rather be on commonalities than irreconcilable differences. It is believed that this view can be reconciled within a metasystemic perspective where intrapsychological, interpsychological, ecological and metaphysical subsystems are familiar to most cultures in both the Western and African worldviews. The intersubjective nature of humanistic and symbolic interaction makes this a distinct possibility. Not only does Jung's view on the collective subconscious correspond closely with the African perspective of the collective consciousness and the role that it plays in the development of ethnicity, but it allows for interaction whereby individuals can internalise experiences from other social positions and ethnic matrixes, as confirmed by Otu and Horton (2005). The cybernetic interrelatedness of these systems is reconcilable with both holistic cosmic views as explained.

Furthermore, the fact that the African concept of "man" does not totally negate individuality (Ndaba 1994) is indeed a principle of immense significance. The authors concur with Van der Merwe (1996) where he cites the example of the socio-political transition of South African society from a totalitarian state to a multi-party democracy as a result of the emergence of an ethos of solidarity, a commitment to peaceful co-existence amongst ordinary South Africans in spite of their differences, and in the spirit of *ubuntu* (Nafukho 2006), a real-life application of the principle that social conduct and/or social ethic recognises human beings as social beings who can coexist in an orderly and socially responsible society.

The tradition of *lekgotla*, an African traditional forum where matters of justice are discussed (including the question of individual responsibility and culpability), needs mentioning in this regard. It is, however, a separate theme that will receive attention as a substantive issue in due course.

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