

SARTIRICAL (ONLINE) COMMUNICATION AND UBUNTU

JESUS IS A SHANGAAN!

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ABSTRACT

Satire is a genre of ar

INTRODUCTION

Satire is a genre of artistic or theatrical production. It identifies, then mocks and besmirches generalized characteristics which are associated with its targets. Ideally it is presented with a view to reflecting how the vices identified in its targets could be improved. On this view, it is not satire when dramatic irony is used to merely lampoon those to whom the harsh humor of satire is dished out.

But as illustrated by the recent Paris attacks on the offices of Charlie Hebdo of 7 January 2015 in which gunmen killed 12 people, satire can be met with disdain, hurt and even violence. Online mediated communication accentuates possibility by making more fluid and complex the relations between satirists, audiences and the objects of satire (Lewis, 2011). Responding to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, respected South African philosopher of communication, Bert Olivier (2015) responded by offering a stout defense of satire which denounced those who arrogate to themselves the right to render judgment on those who critically satirize dogmatic beliefs. He concludes that such people should “Get a life, learn to laugh”. Yet, it is apparent that not everyone can laugh at the same joke, particularly not those who are positioned to be the butt of the joke. There is a case, one may think, for thinking that satire, as with all expression, has limits that ought not to be exceeded (Goldhammer, 2015). This paper will think upon the view, which Murray Williams (2015) was prompted to suggest in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, that from the African moral perspective of Ubuntu it is desirable to both tolerate the bad taste of satirists and to a satirist who recognizes and respects the dignity and worth of others because, in the ideal, shared engagement should involve trying to be a humble being. Williams (2015) says, directed by Ubuntu:

I will try to listen. I will seek to earn your respect. And I will celebrate, and help to protect, what you hold dear. Even when I disagree with you.

I will act this way in relation to your family, your community, your religion, your sexual orientation, your gender, your language and your nationality.

Even your politics... your party is fully deserving of my respect – as the repository of your hope and dreams.

Not content to simply rest on repeating Williams' Ubuntu inspired statement of principle, we think that it is worthwhile to present an attractive scholarly account of what the African moral philosophy of Ubuntu may say about how people should satirize. For two sets of reasons we will think about this with special consideration of how people should satirize tribal identities and representations online.

First, satirists use a wide variety of techniques as they separate themselves from the society they belong to – in order to be able to most powerfully challenge aspects of that society that they believe should be destroyed or overcome (Schlegel, 2005, p. 5). There is however wide agreement that satire is an offensive art which caricatures, parodies and makes a travesty of the enemy in ways (Freud, 1995, p. 829) that fundamentally distorts and exaggerate, usually with malice that is often justified and made lighter because it also intends to be humorous (Freedman, 2009, p. 165; Schlegel, 2005). Wit is an important tool in the satirist's arsenal as it 1) ridicules the enemy in ways that would otherwise be restricted while, 2) making the whole experience pleasurable in ways that also would have been inaccessible, and 3) presenting an idea as more attractive and pleasurable than more deliberative approaches

would likely allow (Freud, 1995, p. 745). Because of its ability to enable people to say the unspeakable, satirical wit very usefully enables people to speak up against attempts to limit free speech (Freedman, 2009) or generally to express opposition to authoritarian dominance (Freud, 1995, pp. 746-751). So, we wish to reflect on *how* satirical representations of tribal *should* appear online because with its practice of fragmenting communities and directing violent speech against others, we are concerned that satire may appear to go against widely recognized the African values which Archbishop Desmond Tutu thinks prioritize maintaining harmonious and friendly community relations which maintain and maximize social welfare.

Tutu (1997, p. 29) says

Harmony, friendliness, community are great goods. Social harmony is for us the *summum bonum* – the greatest good. Anything that subverts, that undermines this sought-after good, is to be avoided like the plague. Anger, resentment, lust for revenge, even success through aggressive competitiveness, are corrosive of this good. To forgive is not just to be altruistic. It is the best form of self-interest. What dehumanizes you inexorably dehumanizes me. It gives people resilience, enabling them to survive and emerge still human despite all efforts to dehumanize them.

This view of African moral values which Tutu expresses is fundamental to how Metz (2007, p. 338) derives his philosophically elegant view that *ubuntu* teaches that, “An action is right just insofar as it promotes shared identity among people grounded on goodwill; an act is wrong to the extent that it fails to do so and tends to encourage the opposites of division and ill will”

Our second reason for valuing thinking about how people should satirize tribal identities and representations online is that people in online discursive practices tend to express more extreme views than would otherwise be the case in offline worlds (Hargrave & Livingstone, 2009, pp. 162-170; Lewis, 2011). In online discussions some of the harshest views are expressed as regards, for example, the realities and legacies of colonialism and apartheid. We therefore think that discussing how Ubuntu may guide online satire in contemporary South Africa is a hard case for thinking about the viable understandings of the quintessentially African traditional moral philosophy of Ubuntu. Conceptual approaches to Ubuntu and satire that are conceived in relation to this hard case are likely to be applicable to satire in other variously fractious contexts in which inertial effects of colonialism and apartheid can also be examined and relinquished.

JESUS IS A SHANGAAN

An immediate problem that arises for presenting a scholarly reflection on tribal identities and representations is that there is such a proliferation of commonly held ideas concerning tribal identities and representations that this fact alone threatens to make discussions so broad that they barely touch on anything. We will attempt to overcome this problem by focusing on a specific instance in which tribal identities and representations have meanings that can be imaginatively grasped vividly enough for us to be able to appeal to intuitions of the good and reasonable that the proverbial 'common woman or man' can be expected to show. To this end, this paper casts a critical gaze at an online video titled *Jesus is a Shagaan* (2012) and purposively selecting online comments from a Youtube site (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bekg59wQVgE>) on which the video is featured.

Jesus is a Shangaan (2012) is part of the Izikhokho series of online animation productions created by Mdu Comics. It starts off with a Zulu speaking male who is ensconced in his hospital bed. He is telling his friend that he hurt his toe. His doctor comes in and we then find out that the injured man is named Jesus. The doctor informs Jesus that his DNA does not match that of God and the doctor further tells Jesus that there is no easy way to tell Jesus the terrible news – that *Jesus is a Shangaan*. In the next scene, while walking on the street, Jesus speaks to himself saying that people will no longer take him seriously. If he does the ‘second coming’, people will say ‘the Shangaan’ has returned again. Jesus then buys four bags of oranges and uses the sacks to scrub off his ‘Shangaan-ness’ and states that he feels better after the bath. As he talks to himself in Zulu, he realises that he pronounces his ‘s’ exactly like a Shangaan and laments to himself – with face in hands and a voice of disappointment – ‘I truly am a Shangaan’. The animation ends with Jesus writing a suicide note, wanting to die because he does not want to live as a Shangaan.

When Mdu Ntuli, the animator, first released the video on twitter (@Mducomics) in May 2012, he wrote, “Jesus is a Shangaan [not italicized in original] is a new Izikhokho cartoon! I’d like to apologise to Shangaan people in advance. Enjoy” (Mducomics, 2012). After a woman lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission, Ntuli said the cartoon “is purely fictional. Every nationality has a joke on each other and that’s just how it is. For me, it is just ridiculous for any Tsonga [Shangaan] person to take this personally” (Chauke, 2012). As far as we know, to date, he has never issued any sort of apology for the video.

What is for us disturbing is not so much that Ntuli appears to think that it is important for people to, in Olivier’s (2015) language, “get a life” and joke about themselves. Rather, it is that he appears to give little relevance to black, racialized experiences of being tribalised. This is to

say he appears to trivialize the everyday black problem of having to constantly seek ways to rise above being the fiction of a racialized and tribalised being, of being “[a] hoax... better to laugh at?” (Fanon, 1986, p. 87) In yet other words, we are accusing Ntuli of failing to tell his joke well, of failing to locate it well within historical, cultural and economic and other material conditions that matter. We are arguing not for denying space for jokers who see that there is satire to be expressed about the socially constructed mess that is racism and tribalism but for saying that such satire gains strength and depth when it is located at the crux of how history, culture and economic and material arrangements meet and interact to make a joke of people.

OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Online communication, satire, tribalism and the representation of Africans are significant concepts which are difficult to weave together. We are content with rendering this rather aleatory overview of the literature since it allows us to systematically discuss an eventually interrelate relevant concepts. In this overview we critically discuss how online communication often frees people to express themselves in extreme ways. We proceed to point out that Shangaan people are often made the butt of jokes. The section concludes with a discussion of how Africans are represented in tribalistic ways. The concluding subsection does much of the work of weaving the material of this overview into a coherent whole. A discursive mechanism that enables this weaving together of the conceptual concerns of this overview is our references to *Jesus is a Shangaans* which illustrate key points and in so doing add some unity to the discussion.

Online communication

In richly mediated interpersonal communication encounters, individuals have much that demands that they attend to demands of the other. One could speculate that as encounters become progressively more mass mediated this richness is denuded so that television and newspapers, for example, appear to have to find sensational content in order to gain audience attention. Internet media have enabled richer interactions on what have been dubbed social media yet the tendency of social media interactions towards the sensational and provocative may indicate that users may be actively attempting to compensate for the inability to more fully engage with others that the richer interpersonal encounter still embodies. A well-known tendency in online communication is that significant numbers of people tend to resort to ethnic type casting, using more and more extreme forms of expressions of self about others.

This is consistent with the view that Sherry Turkle (2011, p. 280) who finds that in online communication:

we easily find “company” but are exhausted by the pressures of performance. We enjoy continual connection but rarely have each other’s full attention. We can have instant audiences but flatten out what we say to each other in new reductive genres of abbreviation.

Online communication is pressured to be meaningful, suggesting that those who engage in it are aware that ‘there is something missing in it.’ The compensation is that the cyber-sphere tends to enable people to producing a wider range of viewpoints that express more diverse personae than is the case in the off-line world of face-to-face interaction with its greater sociality and greater social pressures which limit freedom of expression. The wide range of responses to *Jesus is a Shangaan*, often evidently using avatars to enable them to express

themselves with less strictures, illustrates this. To be sure, freeing people to challenge authority figures is often extremely useful because it limits abuse of power, enabling people to trample on the less powerful and most marginalized in society appears grotesque. It is however to be critiqued that people sometimes use their freedoms of expression to make the most marginal and weak the targets of offensive jokes. Shangaan people who are seemingly lampooned in *Jesus is a Shangaan* are often made the butt of jokes.

Making Shangaan people the butt of jokes

The Shangaan occupy a distinct and particular misanthropic space in the pantheon of apartheid prejudice. Making them the butt of offensive jokes is surely problematic. Such a realization lead Sarah Britten (2008) to say in a *Mail and Guardian* article titled “Kill the Shangaan”:

To call a non-Shangaan a Shangaan [in South Africa] is considered a grave insult, because Shangaans are viewed as country bumpkins, if not actually subhuman. A substandard type of wors in the townships is known as Shangaan wors. Pedi people have bad body odour. Xhosas are ambitious, cunning and tend to look out for each other, hence the Xhosa Nostra theory, also known as the iLuminati. Zulus are dumb but strong and brave — most security guards are Zulu — and rely too much on Indians. Sothos are lazy; probe far enough into the family history of most criminals and you’ll find a Sotho. And you won’t get far in Durban if you’re a Pondo.

In many an offensive joke, as Fanon (1986, pp. 84-85) could say, the Shangaan body is often, in a tribalistic manner, made into a horrid subject for objective examination, for discovery of

blackness and ethnic characteristics in ways that so thoroughly thematise and dislocate individuals that they are so overdetermined as to *not* exist as persons in constructive community relations. Nearly ten years after the formal end of apartheid, well-known comedian, Desmond Dube, on the popular show *Dube on Monday* (2003), spoke of Shangaan people being so ugly that even baboons look better than them. He seemingly did not immediately see anything wrong with his statement. But after defending his 'joke' for almost two weeks he succumbed to pressure from Shangaans who had lodged a complaint to the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa and the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). He made a public apology in the form of a voiceover recording at the end of his show while the credits were running. This apology was not welcomed by some as they felt that it was not sincere. According to Hlatshwayo (2003), the XiTsonga language board chairman, Mandla Mathebula, also rejected Dube's apology based on the fact that "[Dube] was in front of the camera - clear and bold when he called [Shangaans] baboons" and he was hiding when he issued an apology.

We need to explore what it means to represent Africans by tribalising them.

Representing Africans by tribalising identities

Dominant ways of representing Africans by tribalizing their identities are a product of debates and moral discourses within which late eighteenth-century Europeans contested how to relate "European and Other, savagery and civilisation, free labour and servitude, man and commodity" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2010) in a context in which the ideologies of race and tribalism were being invented with their ideas of the chain of being (Mafeje, 1971; Comaroff & Comaroff, 2010; Mudimbe, 1988). Some Afrocentrists say that the West tragically

destroyed pristine African tribal practices progenies, ontogenies or histories that were characterised by harmony (Appiah, 2010).

Part of what these Afrocentrists are emphasizing is the idea that the word 'tribe' describes:

a whole society, with a high degree of self-sufficiency at a near subsistence level, based on relatively simple technology without writing or literature, politically autonomous and with its own distinct language, culture and sense of identity, tribal religion being also co-terminous with tribal society. (Southall, 2010, p. 83)

Yet, under the influence of social constructionists, since the 1970s it has been widely seen as politically incorrect to speak of tribes. It has become common to substitute the word 'tribe' with the word 'ethnicity' which appears to be marked with fewer pejorative connotations. While essentialist views of ethnicity are similar to common views regarding 'the tribe' in that they emphasise primordial, ancestral, cultural and language bonds; social constructionists are keen to show that ethnicity does not involve suprahistorical and quasi-natural ties but that it merely reflects social identities which are chosen, formed and constructed in historical-political circumstances (Lentz, 1995, p. 376). Whatever term one uses to describe tribes or ethnicities, it is however viable to argue that aside from fairly specific genetic markers that relate to proneness to certain diseases and ailments, there are, outside of states, hardly any societies today that have the kinds of autonomy or linguistic unity, and there are hardly any that for example have no people who are literate. In short, there are hardly any societies today that answer to the requisite stipulations to be described as tribal or ethnic. It is hence illusory to speak of tribes as though they exist. Those who insist on dragging imagined or possible

historical notions of such communities into lived contexts are fairly described as practicing tribalism (Southall, 2010, p. 84).

For our purposes what matters is that the Afrocentric claim that Africans are tribalistic peoples is fundamental to thinking of Africans as tribal peoples among whom tribalism is to be expected (Vail, 1989, p. 3). At the same time, this suggests that one can present Africans as though their contemporary discourses about tribes and about tribalism were created by Westerners, and as thus, as though Africans have no choice and agency in the tribal discourses they are implicated and involved in (Vail, 1989; Mafeje, 1971).

Among the online comments we looked at, C1 said the following:

Black people! Our ignorance is consuming us. It's a cancer. READ A GOD DAMN BOOK! Were we barbaric and cannibalistic animals or lesser human beings before we knew about Religion (which was brought by colonialists to Africa)?! ... I don't think so... Stop being sheep to outdated western "prescriptions" for Africa, which were meant to keep you docile and obedient while the colonialists loot the land and [explosive deleted] up our communities! READ and Question even your Bible and Koran!

C1 suggests tribalism is a disease that attacks the body. Such metaphorical use of disease has been investigated by Susan Sontag (1978), first in *Illness as Metaphor* and later in *Aids and its Metaphors* (1989). Sontag suggests that such usages of disease as metaphor suppose disease is the work of a foreign agent who enters and attacks the body – even when an outside agent is not at work. Albert Camus' (1947) *The Plague* is brilliant existential narrative

metaphor of colonialism – presented as the story of a plague that enters from outside and mysteriously afflicts a community that must find ways to reestablish health and control (O'Brien, 1970). Specifically this comment accuses some Africans of failing to have the education and concomitant critical consciousness to challenge and overcome Western practices of othering Africans. C1 also insinuates that, notwithstanding the vast variety of histories and contexts in which we find ourselves, as stated more than five decades ago by Sartre (1963, p. 10), for many Africans key notions of “differences are born of colonial history, in other words of oppression.” C1’s view is supported by Mafeje who, for example, argues that in many African languages even the word ‘tribe’ did not even exist until:

the colonial authorities helped to create the things called ‘tribes’, in the sense of political communities; this process coincided with and was helped along by the anthropologists’ preoccupation with ‘tribes’. This provided the material as well as the ideological base of what is now called ‘tribalism’. Is it surprising then that the modern African, who is a product of colonialism, speaks the same language?” (Mafeje, 1971, p. 254)

The language of tribalism is a colonial language that expresses a colonial culture informed by economic and political realities that underpin societies (Cabral, 1973, p. 41), then it is evident that tendencies towards self-hatred and towards black-on-black violence are structurally encouraged by apartheid practices and logics of extreme exploitation and segregation. Colonial and apartheid regimes were adapt at exploiting these experiences using divide-and-rule tactics which further encouraged tendencies towards black-on-black hatreds, denigrations, jealousies and violence subsumed in tribalist expressions.

To understand the anger with which *Jesus is a Shangaan* is received by some, one could perhaps attempt a Foucauldian archaeology of the knowledge and power relations by which colonial, apartheid and tribal relations are constructed and sustained in postcolonial and postapartheid South Africa. Such an analysis may dwell on the significance of the satirist electing to give us the moment of denouement as one in which a Shangaan man discovers that his belief that he is a messianic figure is shattered by Western medical science data which reveals that he has no genetic relations with the biblical Jesus. It may recall that, as Valentin-Yves Mudimbe's (1988, p. 33) fundamentally Foucauldian writings on the invention of Africa profess, Western 'civilizing' or Christianising discourses functioned as ideological explanations and pragmatic justifications for inventing, exploiting and conquering an Africa that was accordingly presented as 'beastly' and 'barbaric'. The tribalization of Africa is a project that is deeply intertwined and implicated in racist, colonial and apartheid logics. In this context anger and violence appear as forms of the naked truths of decolonialization that Fanon (1963, p. 37) thinks evoke "searing bullets and bloodstained knives". One comment, C2, simply says: "A guaranteed R15 000 cash for anyone who can kill this cartoonist."

The peculiar colonial language of tribes enables colonialism and apartheid to produce 'the other' who exists as a form that cannot speak (Spivak, 271-313) and that cannot be known except as 'a being who is not what is Western' (Said, 1995; Mudimbe, 1988; Mbembe, 1992). Youtube commentators who wrote on *Jesus is a Shangaan* did not explicitly comment on this. However C3, below, can be read as founded on the understanding that all people are equal – which fundamentally challenges colonial and apartheid logics. C3 says:

I honestly don't think Jesus minds being Shagaan (sic) at all. The Jesus that I know, who is also the King of the Universe, always takes up a role so low that He is

accessible to everyone and anyone. So Yes, Jesus would gladly be a Shangaan and not only the that. . .the poorest Shangaan you can ever imagine (If being Shangaan is something of low esteem, that is).

In our view, C3 challenges the basis for colonial and apartheid 'divide and rule' practices. It fatally undermines the viability of cultures grounded on practices and relations that involve colonial and apartheid narcissism and misanthropy.

Here, the important point must not be lost: Western colonialism is a narcissistic system that narcotically denies the existence of others even as it denies and others them (McLuhan, 1994, p. 42). This is not to deny that colonized and tribalised peoples have agency. Indeed, they act with consequences that are fundamental to how the tribe fixes contestations in ways that deny the worth of the interacting individuals whose interactions give texture, sense and meaning to enactments of community.

Contestations over identity are substances of the communication by which individuals and groups describe themselves. Colonial and apartheid practices distort these using 'divide and rule' strategies to conjure up meanings that simultaneously limit the power and authority of indigenous scripts and knowledge regarding free, cooperative co-existence and participatory engagement (Wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the mind: The politics of language in African literature*, 1981). The point is that under colonial and apartheid rule, language was used to replace indigenous knowledge and value systems with mores and norms that fix into place the 'modern tribe'.

The tribe that colonialism and apartheid invented claims to be traditional. But it is merely traditional in the attenuated sense of what Ranger (2010) calls an invented tradition. For the

apartheid government and its operatives, emphasis on the purported 'primitive' aspects of black African groups, demonstrated by the rural squalor of many of the Bantustans illustrated black 'traditional' lifestyles. This served to legitimise the exclusion of blacks from mainstream urban society which was increasingly white and prosperous. In the chain of beings that apartheid deemed to be on separate paths of development, some black people were presented as more barbaric than others (Hayward, 2007). In South Africa, the othering of blacks that talk of invented traditional tribes permitted legitimated the removal of blacks from their lands and it justified their (re)assignment to what were called Homelands, or Bantustans, based on purported tribal affiliations. Today the invented traditional tribe is best seen in the remnants of the apartheid enacted Bantustans. In artistic expression one could say that the tribe exists in South Africa today as a museum or garden culture. John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff's (2009) *Ethnicity Inc.* gives a scholarly and systematic account that expounds this point well. For our purposes, the point is simply to say that the contemporary tribe is an illusion composed of categorisations and scenarios that are invented, often *in the name of the people, but not for the people.*

In South Africa, uncritical and uncaring usages of tribalising representations are arguably perpetuating the legacy of apartheid and its potentials for conflict, violence and civil war. This potential was briefly realised in the harrowing 'third force' violence of the 1990s and it has been intermittently and less directly seen in the deadly xenophobic violence that has plagued the country after 2008.

The psychological effects of apartheid structural violence continue to be felt today, even as the country battles to rid itself of the remnants of apartheid planning and practices (Fassin, 2007; Commission, 2010). For many the work of getting out of structurally violent class and race

positions involves overcoming the legacies and logics of apartheid. Psychologically, colonial rule and apartheid denigrated black people, preventing them from becoming all that they could become so that they lived as mere shells of what they could be (Biko, 1987) leaving many experiencing shame and aspiring to inflict violence on fellow blacks (Fanon, 1963). This is particularly important for South Africa, where issues of identity and diversity are so fraught with conflict. Online media may have the potential to bridge some of these divides. It also has the potential to extend historical separations associated with apartheid.

We should be careful to not present the view that everyone deems unpalatable and undesirable satirical materials that deal with difficult topics in difficult ways. Indeed, it is noteworthy that not all the Youtube commentary that we found thought *Jesus is a Shangaan* is offensive. Some commentators expressed the view that the satirist was exercising his right to freedom of expression through that video. C4, for example, felt it was necessary to respond to critical commentators by saying:

Ah, People JUST GET OVER YOURSELVES! Mdu is just utilising his talent which he was GIVEN by God. What happened to, "Nobody can do against God`s will" ??
The point im driving home here is, God wouldnt have given Mdu such a talent if it was against his will, SO WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE GOD`S CREATION???
@Mdu, this is FUNNY man, we always laugh at it in class, KEEP IT UP!!!

The problem is that what is witty for one person is not humorous to another. In the case of satire, what amuses narrators and some audience members is often structurally painful for those who are intended as the butts of the joke.

In the increasingly globalised world, digital-internet information and communication technologies have ensured that we can no longer be sure who audience members are. We also tend to know less about the information context within which our messages are interpreted. After all online content is networked, linked, tagged, and generally bound-up with other individually or group produced content which may constitute vulgar, derogatory and generally offensive but powerfully persuasive renditions of media messages (Hargrave & Livingstone, 2009, pp. 162-170). The repercussion is that communication acts intended to be satirical which are aired online are received by audiences and butts of jokes that are “less finite, less predictable, less knowable” and communication and media scholars are duty bound to develop new ethics of humorous communication for the digital world (Lewis, 2011, p. 227). A particular implication is that in today’s world of viral and digital-interconnectedness we must rethink what it means to tell ethnic jokes as these may now be received by a wide variety of others who do not share the same interpretive reference systems.

The next section presents a brief set of thoughts about what Ubuntu may say about online satire.

DISCUSSION

Commented [CC1]: Community

If tribal identities and representations are myths which have consequences, how does one satirize about them? How does one make a joke of something which makes a joke of the people it is directed at? How may storytellers tell stories that go beyond the historically informed and linguistically constrained universes in which imagination takes place? As, for example, shown in Herman Giliomee’s (1989) or Jeffrey Butler’s (1989) histories of the formation of Afrikaaner

ethnic/racial identity, how may South Africans realize that racism is another term for an unjust discrimination whose other forms are seen in ethnic and tribal bias? What does Ubuntu say about how satire may be performed ways that ensure that tribalism and racism subside and draw to an end?

As South Africa strives to achieve development, clumsy communication on problems such as those of tribalism will not elegantly enable the country to deal with complex forms of othering. Enabling people to gain and use freedom of expression is a well-researched way to ensure that development can be achieved (Mill, 1874). Freedom of expression will enable the flourishing of thought-provoking media content that sparks debate among otherwise diverse and divergent people and challenges their beliefs, views and ideals in ways that conduce to the articulation of complex, open and sustainable democratic statehood. Satirical media content is a powerful tool for this.

Satire as an ever-shifting and negotiated discursive practice is chosen and acted out by human agents. It requires constant ratification, redefinition and 'taking-up' by satirists, audiences and targets who must take risks to manage their situations, knowing that satire may misfire and relationships may be both destabilized and reformed (Simpson, 2003, p. 8). An initial point to note is that the setting of satire assumes a relational perspective in which individuals are fundamentally in society and their value and worth or least the pleasures and harms that may be served to them are produced by and in social relations. Satire hence provides valuable new insight to the isiZulu aphorism, much understood as summarizing the idea of Ubuntu, which says, *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* (a person is a person with others).

Finding that satire locates people in relations is not strange. On the one hand it simply reveals the a priori fact that satire is a form of communication and communication does involve practices by which individuals are related, one with another. On the other hand, the ubuntu aphorism, 'a person is a person with others', connotes that *how* people are enabled to participate in society matters (Chasi, Violent communication is not alien to ubuntu: Nothing human is alien to Africans, 2014, p. 301). If we are concerned to understand what Ubuntu may contribute towards articulation of a desirable approach to online satire, there should be every attempt to increase the extent to which individuals are granted the right to the free speech with individual participation in concerned matters is secured. There is no evidence that Africans have historically done anything but value freedom of expression (Seleane, 2001; Chasi, 2014).

We think that Ubuntu does not prescribe limiting of the production of satire but that it rather encourages the production of better satire. This view is echoed in a comment, C5, which responds to *Jesus is a Shangaan* by saying:

Nt [sic] funny, improve [sic] your work man. Think of how the audience will receive your work before you publish it. Dont [sic] be like a Dj [sic] who's playing himself instead of the crowd.

We think it is possible to present satire that enables everyone to be the most they can be. Satire admittedly is violent. So too is all other human communication (Sonderling, 2013). This is why for one to be called an artist of satire requires exercise of fine skill and judgement. Accordingly we think those who perform satire badly so that it carelessly misfires should be encouraged to improve their skills. Censorship does not teach people to

improve their skills. Rather, enabling people to practice their skills as satirists better enables them to use this extremely important tool for vital tasks such as those of making people laugh and upbraiding authoritarians. If we fail to do this, we may end with societies in which proverbial elephants in the room may remain undisclosed and undiscussed with horrid consequences.

Digital online offers grand possibilities for Africans in many states to challenge tribalistic and 'war of civilisations' ideas pit imagined ethnic communities against one another in ways that ironically perpetuate neo-colonial arrangements, apartheid separations, authoritarian rule and underdevelopment.. Investment in the creativity by which satirists and others can learn and apply excellence of the arts of communication to the work of breaking down undesirable orders is vital for African development.

Nineteenth century existentialist, Søren Kierkegaard (1940) decried that modernity, driven by the advent of the modern printing press, was levelling all people in the mocking satire of newspapers which were newly available in large numbers. In the twentieth century sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu (1998), moaned that television was lowering standards of public communication. Yet today people remain capable of achieving high moral standards. We can hope that in the 21st century people can refuse to give in to the despairing thought that global digital-internet interconnectedness dooms weak Africans to being the eternal butts of harmful satire from global centres. With creativity, the globalisation which is in part enabled by digital-online technologies, can be used to ensure that in this era more than any other in human history, we can ensure that the metaphorical "floweriness of the different flowers [of humanity] is expressed in their very diversity" so that different flowering peoples

communicate to cross-fertilise one another in ways that make best use of the fact that each human being contains “in themselves the seeds of a new tomorrow.” (Wa Thiong'o, 1993)

This vision demands further articulation of Ubuntu which meets big new global challenges by embracing the fact of global humanity in ways that re-member and en-courage (take *into* heart) a most altruistic sense of the African *summum bonum* of social solidarity expressed in the view that ‘persons are persons with other persons’. Such Ubuntu will surely embrace satire.

CONCLUSION

Satire is a powerful approach to communication. Africans can use the sharpness of satire in order to carve our new pathways to democracy and prosperity just as they can use its bluntness to push back against authoritarian tendencies. The possibilities of using satire are many and varied and it is in the interests of Africans to think of the best ways of using satire and/or of accommodating it in everyday lives, particularly as the advent of digital-internet interconnectedness ensures that satire comes from or reaches unintended audiences and/or hits unintended targets. We think that in this context it is important to think about how the African moral philosophy of Ubuntu should direct how, why and to what end Africans should communicate using satire. With this in mind, we noted that Ubuntu encourages the kinds of freedom of speech by which individuals are enabled to become the most that they can be in a world in which satire is an important form of communication.

There is need for scholars to elaborate more systematically and adequately what Ubuntu requires of satirical communication – how African excellence in communication can be

understood when that that communication is satirical. Further work in this area is important, particularly given, as shown in this article, that tribalism, for example, thrives in conditions in which satire is poorly developed. One can imagine an African future in which satire is embraced to advance the establishment of forms of community that best enable individuals to be the best they can be.

Another line of future studies can consider adapting how the philosophy of Ubuntu is thought to value humans for their capacities to have relations of solidarity and shared identity with other 'normal humans' (Metz T. , 2008), and to rather think about how Ubuntu can encourage relations of solidarity and shared humanity of identity even with the most offensive people who nevertheless seek to improve what humanity, for example, by standing outside social norms in order to challenge us to improve ourselves. Given that we do not have perfection of insights into other people's motives for actions, the pursuit of such a new approach to Ubuntu may yield highly attractive philosophical foundations for making moral judgements that have consequences for cooperative communicative actions by which democracy can be advanced.. There is great honest, attractiveness and promise for scholarship on Ubuntu that does not involve asking people to make judgements about the motives of others that are fundamentally opaque.

Finally, in the last paragraph of this article which references *Jesus is a Shangaan*, it is irresistible to observe that Ubuntu has been read, by Bamford (2007), as having surprisingly broad shared values and concerns with those articulated by Nietzsche. Those interested in pursuing Bamford's line of argument may find exploring Nietzsche's satirical *The Anti-Christ* (2007) most fascinating, for the ways in which they urge people to be original and

hence dangerous to tradition – in a manner that Nietzsche thinks makes Jesus great in contradistinction to those who make his life and lessons into mere doctrine and dogma.. One may suggest that, consistent with the above noted Nietzschean line, the article has presented the beginning of a critique of discipleship of Ubuntu that does not threaten tradition by seeking to reinvent moral value systems for current and future needs.

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