

**Human Ontological Vulnerability: Culture and Identity Decay in the Face of Cultural  
Devastation.**

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

of

RHODES UNIVERSITY

By

AWONGWA GCELU

G18G5110

Supervisor: Prof. Pedro Tabensky

March 2025

## PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

I know what plagiarism is, and I have not plagiarised this thesis or any of its parts



---

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The journey to completing this programme has been long and challenging. I have met many people who offered help and guidance in various ways, and I cannot name them all. I appreciate all the contributions that have been made, whether directly or indirectly. I am truly grateful for my supervisor, Prof. Pedro Tabensky, who has been by my side since the inception of this project. Tabensky has helped me not only with the content of my thesis but also with administrative matters that I faced as a middle-income student. I'm thankful to Dr. Lindsay Kelland, who helped me formulate my proposal and set the direction of this research. I am also grateful for my mother, Mrs. Nontuthuzelo Gcelu, who made significant sacrifices to ensure that I reached this level. My dear friend, Mr. Sesona Yedwa, who offered his support and helped me to review my writing to prepare it for submission. Finally, I want to acknowledge my brother and friend, Mr. Sandiso Rawuka, for his support.

## **ABSTRACT**

South Africa's brutal history of colonialism and apartheid has threatened the survival of the country's indigenous cultural identities and ways of being. The American philosopher Jonathan Lear explains that all cultural groups live with what he terms "ontological vulnerability" – the possibility that a group's cultural identity and ways of being might become devastated. In this thesis, I argue that in post-apartheid South Africa, the mainstream society continues to create conditions that threaten the cultural integrity of AmaXhosa. I demonstrate that members of the AmaXhosa cultural group face an impossible choice to either participate in the country's mainstream society or maintain their traditional ways of being, without the option to integrate both meaningfully. The cultural ways of being of AmaXhosa are not adequately recognised or accommodated within South Africa's mainstream society. To substantiate this argument, I will present three cases where significant cultural practices of AmaXhosa are marginalised and forced to deteriorate by the pressures of mainstream South African society.

Through an analysis of these practices, I conclude that South African society undermines AmaXhosa cultural identity and traditions, steering their heritage toward erosion. AmaXhosa people face a dilemma to either maintain their cultural practices and risk economic marginalisation or participate in mainstream society by adopting Eurocentric values and behaviours – a prerequisite for meaningful social and economic inclusion. Confronted with this hostile environment, most AmaXhosa choose mainstream participation, which results in alienation from their cultural roots and abandonment of cultural AmaXhosa ways of being.

To address the ontological vulnerability of AmaXhosa people, the South African society must redirect the trajectory of AmaXhosa culture from potential cultural devastation toward meaningful participation in the country's mainstream society. This transformation requires adjustments from both the AmaXhosa cultural group and the dominant mainstream South African society. The AmaXhosa community needs to engage with modernity while recognising that modernity is not synonymous with Westernisation, Eurocentrism, or forced acculturation. Rather, changing natural and social conditions define the evolving living circumstances of human communities. For cultural survival and vitality, AmaXhosa traditions must adapt to contemporary realities while preserving core cultural values and perspectives.

Simultaneously, mainstream South African society must acknowledge and embrace multiple conceptual frameworks and worldviews that can contribute to improving living conditions for all citizens. This requires developing a genuinely multicultural social framework that values diverse knowledge systems and cultural practices. The integration of these complementary adjustments would help AmaXhosa and other marginalised cultural groups to find a balanced path between a nostalgic attachment to the past and an uncritical acceptance of Western cultural models. This balanced approach offers the possibility of cultural renewal and meaningful participation in a diverse South African society.

## **Terminology**

**Mainstream society:** The dominant cultural framework within South African society, characterised by standardised norms, practices, and belief systems that are widely accepted and institutionalised by the majority population. This encompasses normalised conduct within government institutions, corporate entities, and behaviours prescribed by national legislation. Mainstream society functions as the hegemonic cultural standard against which other ways of life are measured and often marginalised.

**Hostile society:** A social environment that systematically marginalises, suppresses, or delegitimises the cultural practices and ways of life of minority or non-dominant groups. Such societies actively or passively resist cultural diversity, creating barriers to the full participation and recognition of alternative cultural frameworks that differ from the established mainstream culture.

**Social framework:** The epistemological foundation of a given society—encompassing the collective worldview, knowledge systems, and interpretive structures through which members understand their existence and social reality. This framework shapes how individuals and groups make sense of their environment, relationships, and place within the broader social order, influencing both individual behaviour and collective meaning-making processes.

**Ways of being:** The comprehensive system of cultural practices, behavioural codes, belief structures, and meaning-making processes that define how a cultural group understands itself and navigates its existence. This concept encompasses the epistemological foundations that guide daily life, social interactions, and identity formation within specific cultural contexts. In this thesis,

"ways of being" is used interchangeably with "culture" and "way of life" to denote the holistic systems through which societies organise human behaviour and understanding.

**Cultural Group/Societal culture:** Drawing on Kymlicka's conceptualisation, this term refers to "a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres."<sup>1</sup> A societal culture offers a comprehensive framework for living that extends across all dimensions of human experience and social organisation.

**Culture/way of life:** The constellation of daily practices, customs, rituals, and conceptual frameworks through which a given society organises its collective existence and constructs meaning. This encompasses both the observable behaviours and the underlying systems of understanding that shape how members of a society interpret their world and conduct their lives within it.

## **Table of Contents**

<b>PLAGIARISM DECLARATION</b> .....	1
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	2
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	3
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
<b>1.1. Context of the research</b> .....	1
<b>1.2. Rationale</b> .....	2
<b>1.3. Research Problem</b> .....	4
<b>1.4. Justification for the Research Problem</b> .....	4
<b>1.5. Research goals</b> .....	6
<b>1.6. Research Methods</b> .....	6
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE PRECARITY OF WAYS OF LIFE, CULTURES, AND IDENTITIES</b> .	7
<b>2.1. Introduction</b> .....	7
<b>2.2. The Structure of our Ways of Life</b> .....	8
<b>2.3. The Central Cultural Practices and Social Roles</b> .....	11
<b>2.4. The Structure of the African Way of Life: A Xhosa Perspective</b> .....	16
<b>2.4.1. The African Practice of Ubuntu: A Concern for AmaXhosa</b> .....	17
<b>2.4.2. The Medical Practices for AmaXhosa: UbuGqirha and UbuXhwele</b> .....	21
<b>2.4.3. The Practice of Ulwaluko: The Initiation into Manhood</b> .....	23
<b>2.5. The Culture as a Holistic System: Education and Growth</b> .....	24
<b>2.6. Summary of Xhosa Ontological Vulnerability</b> .....	27
<b>CHAPTER 3: ESTRANGEMENT AND ALIENATION: THE EROSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES</b> .....	28

3.1. Introduction.....	28
3.2. The Role of Resources in Ways of Life.....	29
3.3. Apartheid South Africa: Resource and Cultural Inequality.....	31
3.4. Economic Power and Recourse Availability for Cultural Groups.....	32
3.5. The Alienation of AmaXhosa: A Transition from African to European Ways of Being	35
3.6. Summary.....	39
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE QUEST FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA</b> .....	40
4.1. Introduction.....	40
4.2. Lear’s Radical Hope .....	41
4.3. Transitioning Societies and Cultural Gaze .....	44
4.4. Responding to the Modernity Transition.....	47
4.5. The Basis for Multiculturalism and Cultural Cultivation .....	51
4.6. Aspects of Culture to be Cultivated .....	52
4.7. Summary.....	56
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	59

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Context of the research

In his book *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*,<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Lear explores the idea that our way of life partly constitutes our identities as human beings. He argues that since we are social creatures by nature, we necessarily inhabit a way of life that is expressive of a culture. Our cultures are constituted by practices that are meaningful to us and shape our conceptual world, including our perceptions of virtue and ideas about how virtue can be practiced or enacted in the physical world. In this way, the meaningful practices that we partake in constitute our way of life and, thereby, our identities. Put differently, Lear argues that human beings are social creatures who partake in social practices that they inhabit as a way of life.<sup>2</sup> The ways of life that we partake in or inhabit are constituted by various practices and are expressive of a culture that shapes our perceptions of virtue so that we come to care for and identify with the performance of these practices. ‘Inhabited practices’ are shared across a cultural group that shares a given environment and constitute a way of life for that cultural group. Thus, a cultural group in a different environment will have its own practices, way of life, and identity.

Lear focuses on the idea that our ways of life are vulnerable to destruction. The continued existence of the conceptual world that informs my identity depends, that is, on my ability to practice the ideas of that conceptual world in the actual/physical world. This means that I must be able to live out my conceptions of virtue and ideas of how to lead my life as a person of a particular culture. This would include being able to physically engage in those practices or virtuous acts that align with the ways I think I ought to lead my life from my particular cultural point of view and the people who form the social group that shares the concerned conceptual world. The problem, however, arises when aspects of my identity can be taken away from or made unavailable to me. That is, there are things that could happen to me such that I end up losing my way of life and, thereby, a significant, indeed constitutive, part of my identity—leading to a collapse of the whole. Lear terms the phenomenon of the possibility of losing one’s way of life ‘ontological vulnerability’.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*.

<sup>2</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*, p6.

The breakdown of a way of life occurs when the conditions, material or otherwise, that sustain a particular way of life have been altered to such an extent that this way of life becomes unintelligible to those living that life. In Lear's terms, my identity is vulnerable to the possibility of collapsing should the physical world be altered such that my culturally constructed ideas of virtue, or the virtuous life, no longer find expression or purchase in the world. For Lear, cultures are holistic systems of mutually constitutive practices and beliefs. They constitute a whole such that the elimination of some aspects can lead to the collapse of the whole.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, he explains that a practice that I am performing is not merely constituted by my body's physical movements and the objects I am using to perform it. For it to be the practice that I take it to be, it must be part of a 'conceptual world', one that is formed by a way of life with other practices that it is interconnected with and the people who partake in them.<sup>4</sup> It is the same conceptual world that constitutes who I am and what matters to me.

## **1.2. Rationale**

Lear brings the concept of ontological vulnerability to life by examining the history of the Crow nation—a social group that forms part of the Native Americans—with the aim of understanding in what ways our ways of life are vulnerable to devastation. Lear's recounting of the Crow nation's history is that they were hunter-gatherer warriors with a semi-nomadic lifestyle. Their way of life—their culture and perceptions of virtue—was oriented around hunting buffalo and fighting with rival cultural groups to protect their territory. Having lost their territory in a battle against the Sioux, one of their rivals, the Crow reached an agreement with the American government, which resulted in the Crows quitting their nomadic way of life and moving into a reservation. Lear examines how Plenty Coups, a chief of the Crow, led his cultural group to transition from a nomadic lifestyle, which was no longer possible to live, to an agricultural way of life, which was more suitable for life on the reservation. In discussing the problem faced by the Crow, Lear argues the following:

“We do not grasp the devastation that the Crow endured so long as we think that the issue is who gets to tell the story... The issue is that the Crow have lost the concepts with which they would construct a narrative. This is a real loss, not just one that is described from a

---

<sup>3</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p32.

<sup>4</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p32.

certain point of view. It is the real loss of *a point of view*... For an act is not constituted merely by the physical movements of the actor: it gains its identity via its location in a conceptual world. And it is the world which has broken down. The very physical movements that, at an earlier time, would have constituted a brave act... are now a somewhat pathetic expression of nostalgia.”<sup>5</sup>

When other Crow members were interviewed, they complained that they were living a life that they did not understand. The medicine woman, Pretty Shield, said, “I am trying to live a life that I do not understand.”<sup>6</sup> Another Crow chief, Two Leggings, commented on the social group’s transition to the reservation life by saying, “nothing happened after that, we just lived.”<sup>7</sup> These comments manifest from the materialisation or lived experience of ontological vulnerability made real. Lear discusses a long list of things that occur when a way of life is lost. These include the loss of meaningful practices, practical reasoning, systems of evaluating practices, and a sense of autonomy or agency, amongst other things.

In this thesis, I aim to explore to what extent Lear’s concept of ontological vulnerability and the insights he offers can help us better understand the existential conditions of Black South Africans today, focusing particularly on the tribe of AmaXhosa after the colonial onslaught that eroded our traditional and cultural ways of being. Drawing on Lear’s concepts of ontological vulnerability and cultural devastation, I will argue that when a social group—like AmaXhosa—is dominated and their environment is changed to suit the interests of the dominant social group, then the practices that informed their lives are made unavailable to them. The unavailability of their social practices causes a mismatch between what they believe they ought to do as a cultural group—what they believe it would be virtuous to do or their picture of the good life—and what they can actually do in their now changed environment. I argue that certain cultural practices of AmaXhosa as a cultural group have largely lost their meaning in contemporary South African society. These practices include Ubuntu, medical practices, and *Ulwaluko* amongst others. The loss of meaning in cultural practices results in the erosion of the culture identity of the Xhosa people and an experience of alienation.

---

<sup>5</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p32 [emphasis added].

<sup>6</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p56.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

### 1.3. Research Problem

Considering the problem that AmaXhosa are faced with, I seek a solution to this, aiming to address how a people can retain their cultural identity and authenticity in the face of cultural devastation. The central question I am interested in answering is whether there is a way of being in situations of cultural devastation that is neither nostalgic for a past that will never return nor assimilationist and, hence, defeatist. Here, I explore Steve Biko's idea of what a truly integrated society should look like, asking whether such a society is even possible given all that has been lost in the long and devastating road to the present.<sup>8</sup> To supplement Biko's account, I explore Franz Fanon's influential discussion of the veil in *A Dying Colonialism*<sup>9</sup>, where he argues that cultures are dynamic and everchanging. The critical point that I wish to take from Fanon's work is that cultural change should be driven by members of oppressed groups rather than by an external imposition if the culture's practices are to retain their meaning and place in the life and identity of a people. These three authors, taken together, offer us a rich picture of how a given people whose way of life has been deeply eroded can continue to make sense of their lives in conditions that are hostile to their modes of existence.

In the book *I write what I like*, Steve Biko examines the problems Black South Africans faced during the apartheid era. His work focused on what he terms 'psychological complexes' in the two racial groups—Black people and white people. In this regard, the former has a psychological complex of inferiority, while the latter has one of superiority. For Biko, it was the development and manifestations of these psychological complexes that results in white people assuming authority and determining a way of life for all South Africans and Black people allowing them to do so.<sup>10</sup> Biko made this assessment of the problem that Black people were faced with in the heights of the apartheid regime. My concern here is that South Africa, as a democratic state, has not done much to provide an environment that is conducive for Black people to restore their way of life and consequently resolve the problem of the differing psychological complexes between Black people and White people.

### 1.4. Justification for the Research Problem

---

<sup>8</sup> Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*, p20.

<sup>9</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*.

<sup>10</sup> Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*, p20.

In his article, *Towards an African Critical Philosophy of Race: Ubuntu as a Philo-praxis of Liberation*, Ndumiso Dladla argues that “although 1994 is popularly represented as a year of major transition from an oppressive society to a democratic one in South African history, it did not mark the end of White Supremacy but instead its evolution from one constitutional form into another.”<sup>11</sup> He argues further that the South African law in the post-apartheid era adopted a Eurocentric jurisprudence and even went further to violate some of the European principles of justice that would potentially benefit Black people.<sup>12</sup> One dubious account that was given in defence of this move was that Indigenous South Africans' jurisprudence was not developed enough to rule a large bureaucratic state. Having established the existence of this problem in contemporary South African democracy, a question arises: ‘How can we restore the ruptured way of life of Black people and enhance their identity without either being nostalgic for a past that will never return or merely capitulating/assimilating to the Eurocentric system of values?’

Biko discusses two ideal conditions that Black South Africans should strive to achieve. He terms one a “true integration”<sup>13</sup> and the other “a true humanity where power politics will have no place.”<sup>14</sup> For Biko, these could be achieved when black people are given a space to assert themselves and their values in the context of the larger or mainstream South African society until mutual respect is earned between White and Black people.<sup>15</sup>

I will supplement my discussion of Biko’s work with Franz Fanon’s ideas of postcolonialism. Fanon offers a clear picture of how Black people can reinstate their ontological foothold in their lives in a modern society. This assist to avoid a nostalgic yearning for an irrecoverable past. Considering that culture is dynamic and constantly changing, an account of how culture should change after long periods of colonial onslaught must be advanced. In *A Dying Colonialism*, Fanon argues that when the meaningful practices of one social group are eroded, the members of the concerned social group will shift from being complacent to those practices as accepted parts of their culture, and they will begin to think more critically about them.<sup>16</sup> This is a step that would

---

<sup>11</sup> Dladla, N. (2017) *Towards an African Critical Philosophy of Race*, p39.

<sup>12</sup> Dladla, N. (2017) *Towards an African Critical Philosophy of Race*, p40.

<sup>13</sup> Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*, p21.

<sup>14</sup> Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*, p90.

<sup>15</sup> Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*, p21.

<sup>16</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*, p45.

then lead the members of the cultural group to develop or form new practices that meet their needs in the new circumstances.

Fanon acknowledges that there might come a time when meaningful practices in a cultural group might lose their meaning. Thus, they would have to be changed or abolished by that cultural group. However, he is more concerned with how cultural changes come about. Regardless of the reason for abolishing or altering a cultural practice, Fanon emphasises that the decision to either change or abolish the practice must come from within the social group itself.<sup>17</sup> If the decision comes from another cultural group, such as the dominant European culture, it will constitute oppression. Fanon believed that when a culture is changing, there must be a dynamic process of a particular sort, one that is expressive of the wants and needs of a people rather than their oppressors.

### **1.5. Research goals**

- 1.5.1. To make a philosophical contribution to the ongoing discourse in South Africa on the state's transformation and the reparations needed for previously oppressed social groups, focusing on culture and identity.
- 1.5.2. To add the cultivation of culture, an often-overlooked concept, to the discourse of redistribution and restoring what previously disadvantaged groups have lost.
- 1.5.3. To add the concept of cultivation of culture as a forward-looking approach that can be taken by previously oppressed cultural groups as they rebuild their way of life and identity post an era of oppression.

### **1.6. Research Methods**

As with all philosophy research, I will review and engage with the relevant literature as discussed in the context section. I will assess the arguments advanced by the authors discussed above from a philosophical perspective and draw conclusions based on the evidence provided.

---

<sup>17</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*, p49.

## CHAPTER 2: THE PRECARIETY OF WAYS OF LIFE, CULTURES, AND IDENTITIES

### 2.1. Introduction

To understand our cultural identities and their inherent vulnerability, we must examine the nature of our ways of life. By cultural identities, I primarily refer to our sense of communal belonging within shared cultural groups – how we define ourselves in relation to those with whom we coexist. This chapter will demonstrate that our cultural identities emerge from social practices and conduct that have become meaningful to us. While the term "cultural identity" encompasses a broad spectrum of social and cultural groups, my focus in this discussion centres on what Will Kymlicka terms "societal cultures" in his seminal work, *Multicultural Citizenship*.

Kymlicka defines a societal culture as "a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres."<sup>18</sup> I will examine these meaningful practices through Lear's analysis of the Crow nation's way of life before and after their forced confinement to reservations. By comparing Lear's examination of the Crow with Biko and Dladla's analyses of indigenous South African communities, I will demonstrate how Lear's concept of ontological vulnerability applies to AmaXhosa life in post-apartheid South Africa.

To demonstrate the ontological vulnerability of AmaXhosa culture, I will examine three foundational practices of their way of life both before and after the devastating impacts of colonialism, apartheid, and South Africa's Eurocentric democracy. These practices include Ubuntu (communal ethics), the cultural healing systems of ubuGqirha and ubuXhwele, and ulwaluko (the sacred manhood initiation practice). Through analysing these cultural cornerstones, I will illustrate how mainstream post-apartheid South African society creates an inherently hostile environment for AmaXhosa cultural practices and those of other indigenous groups. These hostile conditions effectively render such practices unavailable to Xhosa people by systematically framing them as either irrelevant to modern life or unintelligible within the dominant Western paradigm.

Lear contends that the Crow people lost their fundamental identity when confined to reservations, as they could no longer engage in the cultural practices essential to their way of life.<sup>19</sup> While the

---

<sup>18</sup> Kymlicka, W., (1995), *Multicultural Citizenship*, p76.

<sup>19</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p49.

case of AmaXhosa differs in that their cultural erosion has been gradual rather than immediate, Lear's framework remains applicable to understanding how AmaXhosa identity has progressively diminished in post-apartheid South Africa. I argue that when a cultural group is prevented from participating in meaningful practices that define their collective existence, their way of life ultimately collapses. This erosion of cultural identity leads to a profound form of alienation as the connective tissue between individuals and their heritage disintegrates.

## **2.2. The Structure of Our Ways of Life**

While Lear's book focuses specifically on the way of life and culture of the Crows, the notions of a way of life and culture apply to all human beings. Considering this universal application, a more general structural account of way of life and culture must be advanced. For Lear, a way of life refers to a system of interconnected and interdependent beliefs and practices that constitute an identity for those who partake in and live by such beliefs and practices.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Bhikhu Parekh contends that culture depicts a system of beliefs and practices. However, Parekh emphasises that a culture's system is constituted by beliefs and views formed by human beings regarding the meaning and significance of human life and relationships.<sup>21</sup> Since beliefs, practices, meaning, and significance all reflect ways of perceiving or conceptualising, it can be argued that a way of life reflects a system through which a cultural group perceives or conceptualises the life they live.

Parekh argues that cultures are created historically and encompass most aspects of human life.<sup>22</sup> In this sense, culture entails a system of beliefs and practices formed over time. Through these practices and beliefs, human beings develop ways of conceptualising, understanding, structuring, regulating, and organising human life both collectively and individually. For Parekh, cultural conceptualisations contain a practical thrust in their structure.<sup>23</sup> This means cultural ideals are not merely abstract theories but are based on practices that relate to how a cultural group actually lives. Simply put, cultural ideals must be lived out in the environment where the culture exists. This aligns with Lear's argument that cultural practices must find purchase and relevance in the world where the cultural group lives.

---

<sup>20</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p32.

<sup>21</sup> Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, p142.

<sup>22</sup> Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, p143.

<sup>23</sup> Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*, p143.

When a cultural group is unable to practice its cultural ideals in their environment, its members lose some sense of self. Lear argues that if a cultural group experiences devastation of their collective practices, they also experience devastation of their potential identities.<sup>24</sup> We can better understand Lear's argument by observing how cultural doctrines normally operate. When a cultural group forms ideas that define what their culture is, they simultaneously define what their culture is not. Cultural ideals not only prescribe how members ought to conduct themselves but also how they ought not to. Now, we can imagine a case where one cultural group conquers another, subjecting the conquered to a new set of cultural ideals. These new ideals not only prevent the conquered group from practicing what they believe they ought to do but also force them to do what they believe they ought not to do according to their original cultural ideals. Consequently, members of the conquered cultural group lose a sense of their identity as defined by their cultural ideals.

In essence, the concept of ontological vulnerability entails the possibility of a breakdown of a way of life which would result in a breakdown of the identity of those who live by that way of life.<sup>25</sup> Lear acknowledges that the environment in which a cultural group lives could be changed to the point where all the group could do falls outside their cultural practices. Should this happen, the cultural identity of those who live by that culture would come to its demise. In other words, when one's cultural identity is defined by living according to a particular system of cultural practices, and the environment changes such that these practices become impossible, one cannot maintain their cultural identity. With this understanding of ontological vulnerability, one might ask: Would the cultural identity of a cultural group cease to be, if the practice only a few of their significant cultural practices were made unavailable to them?

This question can be answered affirmatively by examining Lear's analysis of how certain practices establish broader context and meaning within cultures. In his discussion of the Crow nomadic culture, Lear identifies buffalo hunting and warfare against rival groups as foundational to the Crow way of life. Crucially, Lear argues that these practices were not merely the domain of the warriors who physically performed them.<sup>26</sup> Rather, the entire cultural group—including women and children—participated in and drew their identity from these activities, which provided

---

<sup>24</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p42.

<sup>25</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p50.

<sup>26</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p12.

meaning and context for other aspects of the Crow life.<sup>27</sup> Lear offers two specific examples that illustrate this cultural integration. The first one is that even a task that would seem mundane and necessary, such as preparing a meal, would find meaning in the practices of hunting and fighting.

Lear contends that in Crow culture, meal preparation—traditionally a woman's responsibility—gained significance within broader cultural practices. Crow women understood their cooking not merely as sustenance but as preparing their families for hunting expeditions or warfare.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Crow children incorporated tribal warfare traditions into their play, imitating these vital practices.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the elimination of certain foundational practices that provide meaning and context for an entire way of life could potentially devastate the cultural identity of the entire group. Put differently, when key practices that frame and give purpose to daily activities are removed, the coherence of the entire cultural framework may collapse.

In light of this discussion, the general structure of a way of life or a culture has three aspects. First, there are central practices which provide context and meaning for the way of life. Second, the way of life consists of ideals that guide the conduct of members within the cultural group. Third, these ideals have a practical dimension linking them to the practices encompassed in the way of life of that particular cultural group. When these three aspects are compromised, we experience ontological vulnerability. To better understand this vulnerability, how it manifests in a cultural group, and more importantly, how a people could maintain or restore their identity in such circumstances, let us explore Lear's discussion of the Crow nation in greater detail.

Lear begins by examining the Crow nation's cultural structure and way of life prior to their reservation confinement. Drawing from Plenty Coups' narrative as documented in Frank Linderman's book (2002), Lear identifies key aspects of Crow existence, organising them into the three categories mentioned previously. The first aspect highlights the central practices of the Crow, buffalo hunting and territorial battles with rival groups, which were fundamental to their social fabric. These activities provided the essential context and meaning that informed the broader Crow cultural identity.<sup>30</sup> Within this framework, the Crow established defined social roles, including

---

<sup>27</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p12.

<sup>28</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p60.

<sup>29</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p12.

<sup>30</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p39.

positions such as warriors and squaws, along with socially sanctioned practices like marriage ceremonies and other ritualistic observances.<sup>31</sup>

The second aspect is that Crow culture instilled in its members distinct ideals and standards of excellence that shaped what their identity ought to be.<sup>32</sup> This cultural identity represented an achievement of excellence in their way of life, fostering deep communal pride. The third aspect is that Crow cultural practices consisted of intelligible acts that derived their meaning and enforceability from the specific Crow environment. Lear argues that for cultural practices to maintain significance in a community's life, they must find meaningful expression and application within the environment the cultural group inhabits.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.3. The Central Cultural Practices and Social Roles**

Lear contends that human beings naturally organise into social groups which are defined by distinctive practices. These embedded practices form a crucial part of our identities and characterise who we are through our ways of life. Fanon, meanwhile, observes that cultural practices vary in their significance to group identity – some practices fundamentally define a cultural group more than others.<sup>34</sup> While Lear similarly recognises that certain cultural practices are central to a group's identity, Fanon and Lear's perspectives differ significantly. Lear offers an exclusively internal understanding of culture, whereas Fanon presents a more comprehensive view that encompasses both internal perspectives and colonial interpretations of cultural practices.

For an example, Fanon refers to two practices of the Arab culture in Algeria, the practice of wearing a veil and that of abstaining from food and sex during the month of Ramadan.<sup>35</sup> The culture of Algerian Arabs has a practice in which female members of that culture are required to wear a veil.<sup>36</sup> The practice of wearing a veil is done consistently and unanimously among the female sex. Thus, it is evident to the Arabs, the French settlers, and any other observer that an Arab Algerian woman is she who wears a veil.<sup>37</sup> While the practice of fasting and celibacy during the month of Ramadan

---

<sup>31</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p42.

<sup>32</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p42.

<sup>33</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p42.

<sup>34</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>35</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>36</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>37</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

may be equally important to the Arabs, it does not have the same effect in characterising how the Arabs are perceived. I shall refer to the practices that have a stronger hold in the characterisation of a cultural group as central practices of the concerned cultural group. In Lear's case, central cultural practices provide a broader context and meaning for the way of life of concerned cultural group.<sup>38</sup>

In Lear's book it is evident that hunting buffalo and fighting rival tribes for territory were the central practices that were embedded in the Crow way of life. Thus, they were practices that strongly characterised the identity of the Crows. Lear argues that one's identity as a member of a cultural group is an indication of an excellency in the way of life of that cultural group.<sup>39</sup> This means that if one identifies as a member of a given cultural group, then one's identity entails that one partakes in the practices of that cultural group in a meaningful manner. In this sense, the nomadic way of life encompassing the hunting of buffalo and the fighting of territory wars against rival groups constituted the Crow identity. These central practices provided a theme for the Crow way of life. That is, they set out what the Crow way of life was about.<sup>40</sup> It is in this way that the central practices provided a broad context and meaning to the Crow way of life.

The pursuit of buffalo hunting and warfare against rival tribes formed the cornerstone of Crow identity, with all other cultural activities organised to enhance these central practices. This prioritisation of hunting and warfare shaped the Crow into a society of nomadic warriors, with their entire social structure designed to support these essential pursuits. Lear examines two significant ceremonial practices within Crow culture. Namely, 'Planting Coups' and 'Counting Coups.' These cultural activities derived their meaning and significance from their relationship to the Crow central practices, serving to reinforce and celebrate the skills and values necessary for success in hunting and warfare. The interconnected nature of these practices created a cohesive cultural framework in which individual achievements in battle or hunting contributed to both personal status and collective tribal identity.

---

<sup>38</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p43.

<sup>39</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p43.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

Lear describes how each clan within the Crow nation possessed a ceremonial implement called a 'coup-stick.'<sup>41</sup> The practice of 'planting coups' occurred during battle when a Crow warrior would deliberately plant his coup-stick into the ground when facing enemy forces.<sup>42</sup> This act represented the establishment of a sacred boundary that opposing warriors were forbidden to cross.<sup>43</sup> The warrior who planted the coup-stick made a solemn vow to defend this position to the death, pledging neither to retreat nor abandon his coup-stick irrespective of the pressure that the enemy might present.<sup>44</sup> This warrior was obligated to either successfully repel the enemy or sacrifice his life in the attempt to prevent enemies from crossing the established line.<sup>45</sup> Lear's analysis reveals that this practice served multiple functions within Crow society. It demonstrated exceptional bravery, reinforced cultural identity, by physically manifesting the Crow's conceptual world views into the material world. Through this cultural practice, abstract cultural ideals were transformed into concrete practices that were realised by both the Crows and their rival groups.

Lear argues that when a Crow warrior 'planted coup,' he was making a powerful declaration that non-Crow warriors could not penetrate established tribal boundaries. This practice represented how the Crow conceptualised their world and sovereignty through the cultural practice of "planting coups."<sup>46</sup> The Crow warrior would actively fight to ensure this declaration manifested in reality, thereby bringing life into the Crow cultural ideals. Even non-Crow warriors had to acknowledge this declaration and recognise its legitimacy within the inter-tribal warfare.<sup>47</sup> Thus, during rival battles, the Crow concept of "planting coups" gained practical significance and was actively enforced within their world. This practice was complemented by the practice of 'counting coups,' which similarly derived meaning from and reinforced the central practices of the Crow way of life.

Plenty Coups explained that to count coup, a Crow warrior had to strike an armed rival warrior in battle with his coup-stick, bow, or squirt before he could actually harm the rival warrior.<sup>48</sup> Alternatively, the Crow warrior could steal a horse from the camp of the rival cultural group, strike the first rival warrior falling in battle, or strike the rival warrior's breastworks while he is under

---

<sup>41</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p13.

<sup>42</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p13.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p14.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p14.

<sup>47</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p14.

<sup>48</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p15.

fire.<sup>49</sup> According to Plenty Coups, the practice of counting coups was used vaguely to entail any of the acts enlisted here, which were all acts of bravery in the lens of the Crow culture – that is, in their conceptual world.<sup>50</sup> Additionally, one could also count coup by exhibiting acts of bravery in a hunting expedition that has turned out to be dangerous.<sup>51</sup>

From the explanations provided, one could easily note that the meaningfulness of planting coups and counting coups as Crow cultural practices was sourced in the central practices of the Crow way of life. Should the practices of fighting rival battles and hunting buffalo cease to exist, the practices of planting coups and counting coups would lose their context and cease to be meaningful. Therefore, the continued meaningfulness of planting coups and counting coups depended on the continued existence of the central practices of hunting buffalo and fighting territory wars with rival cultural groups. Should the central practices collapse the practices of planting coups, and counting coups would also collapse.

From the argument above, we can deduce that the collapse of central practices within a culture's way of life may cause a deteriorating effect, leading to the disintegration of the supporting practices that maintain that way of life. Since we have established that the central practices of a way of life fundamentally characterise and constitute the identity of the cultural group who embodies them, we can further deduce that the collapse of these defining practices inevitably entails the dissolution of the way of life itself and, consequently, erodes the collective and individual identities of those who orient their existence through that cultural framework. To better elaborate this deduction, we must explore Lear's conception of a way of life as a holistic system in which cultural practices are interdependent and mutually reinforce each other.

Lear argues that a way of life is a holistic system comprised of interconnected and interdependent beliefs and practices.<sup>52</sup> This framework enhances our understanding of his concept of ontological vulnerability – the possibility that a way of life could collapse as a whole. Lear's insight was profoundly influenced by Plenty Coups, who, while recounting his life story to Linderman, refused to discuss the period after the buffalo were exterminated and the Crow confined to reservations.

---

<sup>49</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p15.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p59.

<sup>52</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p48.

At this crucial moment, Plenty Coups made a statement that would shape Lear's thinking about cultural collapse. This statement was expressed in the manner that follows:

“I can think back and tell you much more of war and horse-stealing. But when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened. There was little singing anywhere. Besides... you know that part of my life as well as I do. You saw what happened to us when the buffalo went away”.<sup>53</sup>

In light of the above statement Lear asks: What would it mean for happenings to come to an end? How could we interpret Plenty Coups as saying something true? In his attempt to answer these questions, Lear applies the philosophical principle of humanity in a manner that is more demanding than how this principle is ordinarily understood. The principle of humanity stipulates that we must interpret others as saying something true guided by our own sense of the truth.<sup>54</sup> Lear critiques this principle of humanity by pointing out that it would reflect our own sense of humanity and not necessarily that of Plenty Coups.<sup>55</sup> Unless we are Crows, our sense of humanity is different from that of Plenty Coups because we have different ways of conceptualising and understanding.

To understand the demise of Crow culture, we must examine how their conceptual frameworks, beliefs, and practices lost meaning and relevance in the reservation life. When the traditional Crow way of life collapsed, they found themselves in an environment that was fundamentally incompatible with their worldview. Therefore, it rendered their cultural understandings to be essentially unintelligible. During their discussions with Linderman, the Crow often expressed that they simply could not comprehend the life that they were forced to adopt.<sup>56</sup> The Crow lacked evaluative systems for these imposed practices and, crucially, found no meaningful connection to their new existence on the reservation.

To understand how the realisation of ontological vulnerability may affect a given cultural group, one must understand the nature of a way of life and its importance to its people. With this understanding, we can proceed to examine the AmaXhosa culture, exploring their central cultural practices and identities that have been profoundly affected by the onslaught of apartheid and the

---

<sup>53</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p2.

<sup>54</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p4.

<sup>55</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p3.

<sup>56</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p61.

subsequent Eurocentric society. This examination will illustrate how the concept of ontological vulnerability applies not only to the AmaXhosa but also to other indigenous South Africans. In the following section, I will discuss the central practices of AmaXhosa culture, alongside supporting practices, and analyse how the erosion of these practices within mainstream South African society has affected the holistic framework of AmaXhosa culture and identity.

#### **2.4. The Structure of the African Way of Life: A Xhosa Perspective**

In, *Some African Cultural Concepts*<sup>57</sup>, Biko argues that in ordinary circumstances it would be unnecessary to speak to Africans about African culture.<sup>58</sup> The very nature of culture, particularly its aspect as a continuum, accounts for any necessary discussions that are relevant to the practice of the culture. However, Biko notes that there is significant confusion that has been sown into the African culture.<sup>59</sup> He states that this confusion does not only exist amongst non-African observers, but it also exists amongst the Africans who live by the concerned culture.<sup>60</sup> Provided that Biko writes to address the effects of the onslaught of colonialism and apartheid on the lives of Black South Africans, we can note that at the time of his writing the African ways of life were already ruptured.

The main characteristic of a cultural group whose way of life has been ruptured and whose ontological vulnerability has been realised is that members of such a cultural group would be confused about their ways of being. A ruptured culture can profoundly affect a group's sense of identity. When Africans experienced the undermining of their cultural authority, it created widespread confusion about their ways of being. Biko observes that, in South Africa, the White community – despite having a fundamentally different cultural background – assumed authoritative positions over all aspects of African life.<sup>61</sup> According to Biko, Africans were not expected to possess deep understanding of their own culture and traditions.<sup>62</sup> He argues that White authority made it nearly impossible for Africans to speak authoritatively about their own cultural

---

<sup>57</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p40.

<sup>58</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p40.

<sup>59</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p41.

<sup>60</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p41.

<sup>61</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p40.

<sup>62</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p40.

practices and beliefs.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, Africans found themselves caught between their indigenous ways of being and those imposed through external White authority.

Considering these circumstances, Biko argues that Africans must advance and emphasize the authentic aspects of African ways of life by developing an account – of their ways of being – from their own perspectives.<sup>64</sup> Given that Africans were already experiencing confusion about their cultural identity, it seems best to begin with an examination of their ways of being before the colonial and apartheid disruption. Biko proceeds to discuss the African way of life authentically, identifying its central value: the profound importance that African culture attaches to people.<sup>65</sup> Biko contends that African culture is fundamentally people-centred, fostering intimate interpersonal relations.<sup>66</sup> This people-centred orientation manifests in distinctive patterns of interaction and relationship formation among Africans.<sup>67</sup> The way of valuing, interacting with, and relating to human beings in African life is perceived and understood through the lens of Ubuntu, a philosophical practice that guides human conduct for Africans.

#### **2.4.1. The African Practice of Ubuntu: A Concern for AmaXhosa**

AmaXhosa are Africans, and they share some of their practices with many other cultural groups of African origin. One of the shared practices is the highly valued philosophy of ubuntu. It would be a cardinal sin for me to claim ubuntu solely for AmaXhosa, thus in the following discussion of ubuntu I shall refer to AmaXhosa as Africans to acknowledge that the practice is not theirs alone but that they are part of it as Africans.

An authentic understanding of ubuntu can be gained by examining the expression *umntu ngumntu ngabantu*. While this particular formulation is in Xhosa, all Bantu cultural groups possess their own versions of this fundamental principle, each offering essential insights into ubuntu as an African philosophical practice. Quoting Ramose, Dladla translates this expression as: "to be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognising the humanity of others and on that basis establish humane relations with them."<sup>68</sup> The aspect of ubuntu most relevant to this study is its

---

<sup>63</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p41.

<sup>64</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p41.

<sup>65</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p42.

<sup>66</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p42.

<sup>67</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p43.

<sup>68</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). Towards an African critical philosophy of race: Ubuntu as a philo-praxis of liberation, p53.

dual nature as both a theory (a way of idealising) and a practice (a way of conducting one's behaviour).

Ubuntu encompasses both a philosophical dimension, comprising African ideals of living, and a practical dimension that is lived out through the cultural practices of respective indigenous African communities. The idealistic and philosophical aspects of ubuntu thus provide an orientation that guides the practical application of this philosophy in daily life.<sup>69</sup> From this, we can deduce that ubuntu was fundamentally structured to promote healthy communal living among Africans. As an inherently African practice, ubuntu encompasses the African way of life, including epistemological systems, cultural ideals, and traditional practices. Ubuntu promotes humanistic ideals through its integration within African cultural frameworks and worldviews. However, in mainstream South African society, there appears to be a shift in the foundational ideals that this practice embraces, potentially diluting its original African philosophical foundations.

Dladla (2017) examines the practice of Ubuntu in South Africa since 1994, the year that marked the end of the apartheid regime, and compares it to how it was practiced before colonial and apartheid disruptions.<sup>70</sup> Dladla argues that various versions of ubuntu have been developed, studied, and discussed in academia since 1994.<sup>71</sup> He notes that these versions have often been articulated by non-African scholars, including White South Africans, Europeans, and Americans. Dladla critiques these interpretations because they fail to encompass the lived experiences of Bantu Africans – the people whose culture embodies ubuntu. In his critique, Dladla contends that most mainstream versions of ubuntu in South African society (in academia, law, and state institutions) are framed from an outsider's perspective – someone who lacks the ontology that comes from being a participant in the practice.<sup>72</sup>

Dladla argues that most versions of Ubuntu are disconnected from the culture and way of life of Bantu Africans, as well as from their perspectives. In Dladla's words, these versions of Ubuntu "are 'Ubuntu's' without abantu (the Bantu speaking people whose philosophy it is). Also, they are quite often 'Ubuntu's' without isintu; the culture which is the basis for the philosophy of Ubuntu".<sup>73</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race*, p53.

<sup>70</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race: Ubuntu as a philo-praxis of liberation*. p43.

<sup>71</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race*, p44.

<sup>72</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race*. p44.

<sup>73</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race: Ubuntu as a philo-praxis of liberation*. p43.

This argument suggests that in post-apartheid mainstream South African society, the practice of Ubuntu has been removed from its original context. It has been reinterpreted into versions that do not necessarily serve the culture and people from which Ubuntu originates. If this is the case, we must ask whether Ubuntu is still truly Ubuntu. This question invites an assessment of whether Ubuntu, as conceptualised in mainstream South African society, still possesses the essential qualities that characterise it as Ubuntu according to Bantu African ways of being.

Ubuntu, when understood as both a philosophy and a cultural practice with practical implications, cannot be separated from its African roots. When examined through Lear's framework of interconnected and interdependent cultural practices, it becomes clear that mainstream South African interpretations often fail to embody the authentic concept of Ubuntu. This interconnectedness extends beyond practices within a cultural system to encompass the people themselves and their societal conduct. Consequently, any version of Ubuntu which is disconnected from Bantu African peoples and their cumulative cultural heritage lacks legitimacy. Such decontextualised interpretations cannot constitute genuine Ubuntu, as the practice derives its meaning and relevance specifically from its location within African culture and its relationship to African peoples.

Ubuntu is both a practice and a philosophy that guides human conduct among Bantu Africans who constitute the majority of South Africa's population.<sup>74</sup> To assess whether South African society accommodates African ways of being, we must evaluate whether it provides fertile ground for Ubuntu to flourish. Since 1996, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa has served as the country's supreme law, establishing the boundaries of acceptable human conduct in post-apartheid society. This constitutional supremacy means that any cultural practice inconsistent with its provisions will be prohibited, effectively removing it from the cultural repertoire of its practitioners.

Despite Ubuntu's foundational role as a philosophy and cultural practice among Bantu African cultures, which constitute the majority of South African society, it occupies a surprisingly peripheral position in the country's legal framework. The South African legal system operates on

---

<sup>74</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race*. p44.

a hierarchical structure that determines the status and validity of various sources of law.<sup>75</sup> The dominant sources of law in South Africa include the Legislation (which the supreme constitution forms part of), Case law/Judicial precedence, and Common law, all of which remain fundamentally Eurocentric.<sup>76</sup> Within this hierarchy, African customary law, the only source of law explicitly grounded in Ubuntu philosophy and African practices, is relegated to the lowest status and can be overridden by any other legal source.<sup>77</sup> Therefore, Ubuntu loses its significance as a practice that regulates human conduct when Africans participate in mainstream South African society.

It has been argued above that the Eurocentricity of the South African legal system extends to the Constitution itself, as it draws heavily from Western legal traditions despite governing a predominantly African population. Consequently, "legal" conduct in South Africa typically entails a subscription to Eurocentric values and perspectives, unless the behaviour in question falls outside the purview of European scrutiny and thus avoids being invalidated by higher-ranking legal sources. This arrangement constitutes an insult to African ways of being and knowing. To illustrate how this this plays out in South African communities, one must consider issue of witchcraft and how it is addressed by the country's legal system.

The treatment of witchcraft within the South African legal framework illustrates the impact of our society's Eurocentrism in African communities. Customary law recognises the reality and impact of witchcraft in African communities.<sup>78</sup> The principles of Ubuntu and Customary law acknowledge witchcraft as an act of criminality and prohibit its practice in society. Consequently, if one is accused of being a witch she may be brought to a local chief, and a formal hearing would ensue.<sup>79</sup> Should she be found guilty, a punishment would be handed out. This punishment is usually corporal, however an act which causes physical harm to another person is consider criminal in Western legal principles.

The Eurocentric Legislation and other Western legal sources which formulate the South African legal framework do not recognise witchcraft as a genuine phenomenon.<sup>80</sup> This creates a

---

<sup>75</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial: What South Africa's Treatment of Witchcraft Says for the Future of Its Customary Law*.

<sup>76</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial*., p23.

<sup>77</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial*., p23.

<sup>78</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial*., p29.

<sup>79</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial*., p29.

<sup>80</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial*., p23.

paradoxical situation which shows how disempowered Africans are. Witchcraft itself (considered criminal under customary law) falls outside the purview of South Africa's formal legal system, while customary punishments administered by traditional chiefs for witchcraft are recognised by that same Eurocentric system as criminal acts.<sup>81</sup> Thus, customary law is stripped off its power to address matters central to the communities it serves because such matters do not align with Western knowledge.

#### **2.4.2. The Medical Practices for AmaXhosa: UbuGqirha and UbuXhwele**

The medical practices of the AmaXhosa are multifaceted and deeply embedded in Xhosa cultural ways of being. This discussion will focus on two significant aspects of the Xhosa medical practice: UbuGqirha and UbuXhwele, with their respective practitioners known as AmaGqirha and AmaXhwele. UbuGqirha is a medical practice bestowed upon practitioners through ancestral calling, which typically manifests as dreams, illnesses, or a combination of both to a prospective practitioner.<sup>82</sup> When experienced practitioners interpret these signs as a divine summons, the prospective practitioner becomes an initiate and undergoes a series of ceremonial rites that encompass both spiritual and medical training. Fundamentally, UbuGqirha represents a holistic medical system that is inextricably interwoven with Xhosa religious beliefs and spiritual practices.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, UbuXhwele is a Xhosa cultural medical practice whereby practitioners, AmaXhwele, are taught about different medical plants and trained to use them to produce medicine and heal people.<sup>84</sup> UbuXhwele differs from UbuGqirha because in the former, religion and spirituality are not the primary founding concepts of the practice. One becomes iXhwele only through training and may encounter and learn about the religious and spiritual elements of the cultural medical practice later when he encounters circumstances that involve them.<sup>85</sup> Both these Xhosa medical practices, alongside other African medical practices, are faced with a problem that aims to cripple them in the mainstream society of the post-apartheid South Africa. The problem is a European gaze which misclassifies the practices in crippling aspects.

---

<sup>81</sup> Ludsin, H. (2012). *Cultural Denial.*, p23.

<sup>82</sup> Mndende, N. (2002). *Signifying practices: AmaXhosa ritual speech.*, p60.

<sup>83</sup> Cakata, Z. (2023). *Ubugqirha: healing beyond the Western gaze.*, p95.

<sup>84</sup> Mndende, N. (2002). *Signifying practices: AmaXhosa ritual speech.*, p61.

<sup>85</sup> Mndende, N. (2002). *Signifying practices: AmaXhosa ritual speech.*, p61.

The European gaze undermines and cripples Xhosa medical practices in two critical ways. First, these practices are categorised as "traditional" rather than cultural health approaches, implying primitiveness rather than acknowledging their cultural foundation. Second, they are frequently dismissed as mere "beliefs" instead of being recognised as legitimate medical methodologies or healthcare systems. These classifications have profoundly shaped how society perceives, alters, and invalidates the health-seeking behaviour of these Xhosa practices. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on how this European gaze systematically diminishes and marginalises the medical practices of AmaXhosa.

When a medical practice is viewed as traditional rather than cultural, it often carries a connotation of stagnation. Frantz Fanon contends that culture embodies a dynamic way in which people navigate their contemporary circumstances, while tradition represents a more rigid interpretation of cultural identity that may not align with modern realities.<sup>86</sup> Tradition tends to reflect heritage rather than contemporary ways of living.<sup>87</sup> Consequently, when a medical practice is labelled as traditional, it can evoke perceptions of chauvinism among its practitioners. This perspective suggests that both the practice and its adherents are resistant to growth and adaptation, clinging to outdated methods that may no longer serve the needs of today's society.

The negative connotation of chauvinism associated with the Xhosa medical practices is further reinforced by the second aspect of the European gaze. By categorising these practices as mere beliefs, mainstream society has found a rationale to avoid institutionalising them. This societal attitude suggests that only institutionalised medical practices are deemed legitimate and relevant, while cultural medical practices are dismissed as chauvinistic beliefs. Consequently, the acknowledgment of AmaXhosa and other African cultures' rights to their beliefs is perceived as a form of justice by mainstream society. However, this perception is misleading. The South African institutional health system is designed in a way that excludes medical pluralism, leaving no space for alternative medical approaches.

Therefore, in South Africa, Xhosa medical practices are often dismissed as alternatives to the institutionalised healthcare system provided by trained doctors and nurses. The cultural health systems, including faith healing, are frequently not recognised as viable medical options for the

---

<sup>86</sup> Fanon, Frantz. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth.*, p160.

<sup>87</sup> Fanon, Frantz. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth.*, p160.

population. This presents a significant challenge to the notion of allowing individuals a right to their beliefs as a way to serve justice in this matter. When members of the AmaXhosa community encounter health issues within institutional settings, such as workplaces and schools, they are often required to present proof of treatment from the formal healthcare system, which does not accommodate those who choose to pursue cultural medical practices. When this happens, members of the AmaXhosa group are forced to either abandon their ways of being and adopt the Eurocentric ones, or to pursue both at double the cost.

### **2.4.3. The Practice of Ulwaluko: The Initiation into Manhood**

*Ulwaluko* is a practice that marks the transition of a male member of the Xhosa culture from boyhood to manhood.<sup>88</sup> The idea of having a practice that marks a transition from boyhood to manhood does not only exist amongst AmaXhosa, rather it is a commonly shared practice across the Bantu African cultures. For instance, the BaSotho nation has *Lebollo* which marks the transition of their boys to men. For AmaXhosa, the idea of transitioning in this sense has a broader understanding which is centred in the African culture. The understanding that those who lack experience, wisdom or knowledge must learn from those who have these values. Thus, the Xhosa idiom *inyathi ibuzwa kwabaphambili*. When we consider general life lessons, it follows that a child must transition into an adult through the help of adults in his community. The idea of transitioning from childhood is not necessarily a male thing. Thus, there is a practice of *Intonjane* which marks the transition of a female child from girlhood to womanhood.

We can understand Ulwaluko as the practice which grants adult males an opportunity to teach younger males the proper ways in which a man must conduct himself in the Xhosa community. Ayanda Mkhondwana (2024) understands Ulwaluko as “an initiation rite of passage among the Xhosa people that facilitates the transition from boyhood to manhood”.<sup>89</sup> Drawing from Ntombana, Mkhondwana argues that the duration of Ulwaluko would take 3 – 6 months.<sup>90</sup> The initiates, *AbaKhwetha*, would have a cut on their flesh and would be taught lessons as they are

---

<sup>88</sup> Mdokwana, A. (2024). Ulwaluko: A critical site for black theological reflection. 80(1), p1.

<sup>89</sup> Mdokwana, A. (2024). *Ulwaluko: A critical site for black theological reflection*. 80(1), p1.

<sup>90</sup> Mdokwana, A. (2024). *Ulwaluko: A critical site for black theological reflection*. 80(1), p3. [Under the subheading: Post-apartheid constitutional state and epistemic violence].

treated to heal the cut. The trope, *indoda iyanyamezela*; a man is he who endures, is a good summary of the initiation pedagogy.

The colonial and apartheid eras in South Africa forced men to move from their villages and go work as miners in the urban areas. On other hand it forced boys to go to school in the formalised education institutions of South Africa. Both the work and education systems of South Africa did not acknowledge that AmaXhosa males and males from other nations have a transitioning practice to partake in. AmaXhosa had to conform to the work and school systems as they are. This meant that they could only partake in the practice during work leaves and school holidays. Thus, the duration of practice of Ulwaluko was cut from 3 – 6 months to just 3 – 4 weeks. The cutting of the duration of the practice has had many negative implications on the implementation, the value, and the purpose of the practice in the Xhosa community.

## **2.5. The Culture as a Holistic System: Education and Growth**

Drawing from Lear's framework, we understand that a way of life represents a holistic system comprising the perceptions, beliefs, and practices of a cultural group. While comprehensively examining all practices within such a system is unfeasible, our discussion of select practices offers valuable insights into the AmaXhosa way of life and illuminates their significance within this holistic framework. Educational systems often serve as windows into a culture's broader worldview. Cultural groups develop distinct educational methodologies through which they transmit their way of life – including conceptions, beliefs, and practices – to younger generations, preparing them for meaningful participation in the cultural context of their society. Furthermore, these educational systems establish evaluative criteria that guide individual conduct toward what the culture defines as a good life.

The mainstream society of South Africa provides the same educational system for all cultural groups. In this section, I intend to argue that very little, if any, of the significant AmaXhosa practices discussed above are enshrined or catered for in the country's education system. I also aim to understand what effects the AmaXhosa way of life experiences when these practices are excluded from the education system of a society that they are part of. For example, in the case of the Crow Nation, one can note that there was an established way of educating the young which was disrupted upon their confinement to reservations. Lear argues that "the end of the nomadic

way of life left the whole society of the Crows, including women, in some sort of a social limbo."<sup>91</sup> The manner in which this social limbo affected the intelligence of the cultural group and the ways in which the cultural group educates its members is worth examining.

In Lear's book, he demonstrates that Crow society maintained a sophisticated education system tailored to instil appropriate conduct and cultural values in their youth. The phrase "Education system" here refers broadly to teaching methods embedded within a culture, whether they were institutionalised or not. This distinction is worth emphasising since contemporary perspectives often overlook non-institutionalised practices. This oversight parallels the stereotype in South Africa that Black South Africans are reluctant to therapy, when in reality, the issue lies in defining therapy exclusively as formal sessions with fee-charging professionals. By shifting focus from method to purpose, we recognise that Black South Africans often receive therapeutic support through community-based conversations. Similarly, this analysis examines how Crow education effectively transmitted cultural ideals and virtues through their own culturally appropriate methods.

Traditionally, the Crow people educated their members primarily through oral communication. They had structured their society in a way that naturally encouraged young people to listen to and respect the wisdom of adults and elders. When their social organisation fundamentally changed, the Crow were forced to adapt their educational practices accordingly. As the medicine woman Pretty Shields explained, the traditional Crow approach to teaching children relied on verbal instruction and explicitly avoided corporal punishment.<sup>92</sup> However, after moving to the reservation, Pretty Shields resorted to physically disciplining her granddaughter, explaining that she could find no other way to make the child listen. Pretty Shields also expressed uncertainty about whether this departure from traditional practice and using corporal punishment ought to be morally justified in their new circumstances.

In reflecting on corporal punishment, Pretty Shields expressed two conflicting sentiments. On one hand she hoped that the punishment benefited her granddaughter.<sup>93</sup> On the other hand, she felt

---

<sup>91</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*, p60.

<sup>92</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*, p60.

<sup>93</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*, p61.

shame for administering that kind of punishment to her grandchild.<sup>94</sup> This shame stemmed from traditional Crow cultural values which was shaped by their nomadic heritage. In accordance with their culture, physical punishment was prohibited as a means of securing children's obedience. However, life on the reservation, a radically different social context, seemed to demand such approaches. This poignant dilemma illustrates the profound clash between traditional Crow worldviews and those of the American society that they were forced to inhabit. It reveals how indigenous child-rearing practices had been rendered ineffective in this new context, necessitating the adoption of unfamiliar disciplinary methods that contradicted cultural values and induced deep personal shame.

When a cultural group's educational system becomes irrelevant to their contemporary society, they face pressure to adopt a more relevant system. While there is theoretically an option to modernise the existing system, this option becomes impractical in cases of colonial acculturation. For the Crow people, Plenty Coups encouraged youth to embrace white education and religious practices, recognising that their traditional way of life was already fading. This encouragement involved a significant trade-off. Adopting another culture's practices often leads to the decline of one's own culture. According to Lear, Plenty Coups had already witnessed the collapse of the Crow way of life, explaining his pragmatic approach to their circumstances.<sup>95</sup> By contrast, in South Africa, Biko rejected the notion that African ways of life were obsolete, which led him to take a fundamentally different stance toward Black South African education compared to Plenty Coups.

Recognising that apartheid policies were fostering an inferiority complex among Black South Africans while simultaneously cultivating a superiority complex among white South Africans, Biko conducted a critical analysis of the South African education system and its detrimental impact on African cultural identity. In his examination, Biko argued that the South African education system fundamentally contradicted and undermined African cultural values and ways of knowing.<sup>96</sup> His critique highlighted how this misalignment served as a tool for psychological oppression rather than liberation, observing that the system was deliberately designed to reinforce

---

<sup>94</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*, p61.

<sup>95</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical Hope*, p14.

<sup>96</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p94.

racial hierarchies rather than promote genuine intellectual development for all South Africans. To this effect, he made the following comments:

“Children were taught, under the pretext of hygiene, good manners and other such vague concepts, to despise their mode of upbringing at home and to question the values and customs of their society. The result was the expected one --- children and parents saw life differently and the former lost respect for the latter. Now in African society it is a cardinal sin for a child to lose respect for his parent. Yet how can one prevent the loss of respect between child and parent when the child is taught by his know-all white tutors to disregard his family teachings? Who can resist losing respect for his tradition when in school his whole cultural background is summed up in one word --- barbarism?”<sup>97</sup>

From Biko's analysis, we observe that the education system imposed on Black South Africans undermines three essential elements that make education integral to cultural life. First, there's a disruption of traditional authority, as the educational content disregards the approval from authoritative figures within African communities. Second, the system fractures cultural harmony by failing to encourage youth to embrace their cultural ideals and virtues. This causes a disconnect that prevents the natural progression where young people aspire to become cultural authorities themselves. Third, this education actively devalues African ideals and virtues, implicitly teaching that they are neither worthy nor valuable. Such a system clearly does not serve the interests of Black South Africans as subjects of African cultural life. This raises critical questions: whose interests does this education system truly serve, and will the aggrieved cultural groups in the emerging society have the autonomy to transform it?

## **2.6. Summary of Xhosa Ontological Vulnerability**

The culture and way of life of the AmaXhosa nation, like any indigenous culture, faces existential threats in the mainstream South African society. Post apartheid, South Africa adopted social structures that inadvertently exploit this vulnerability, potentially undermining the fundamental ontology and essence of AmaXhosa and other Bantu African peoples. This threat to Xhosa ontology stems from the adoption of a social framework that marginalises Ubuntu as a lived philosophy and cultural practice. Ubuntu forms the essence of many African worldviews and

---

<sup>97</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p94.

cannot exist in isolation. It functions as part of an interconnected system with Abantu (the people whose practices it is) and Isintu (cultural practices and norms of those people). For Ubuntu to be meaningfully practiced, it must exist within this cultural ecosystem. The version of Ubuntu enshrined in the South African constitution, and other parts of the mainstream society, represents a decontextualised concept which is detached from its essential connections to Abantu and Isintu. This constitutional Ubuntu, separated from its cultural foundations, fails to authentically represent the philosophy and way of life central to the African communities from which it originated.

The social structure established in post-apartheid South Africa marginalises and creates hostile conditions for many other Xhosa cultural practices, including the indigenous medical practices (UbuGqirha and UbuXhwele) and initiation rites (Ulwaluko). These practices, along with Ubuntu, are not merely customs but fundamental components that constitute the identity of AmaXhosa and other Bantu peoples. The erosion of these practices threatens the very essence of the Xhosa identity. Drawing on Lear's concept that a way of life comprises a holistic system of interconnected and interdependent meaningful practices, we can understand that undermining these specific practices endangers the integrity of AmaXhosa culture as a complete system. This does not suggest that AmaXhosa would be left without any cultural framework, but rather that their way of life would become disconnected from its traditional ideals and inherent values. Should this occur, there is no wonder on whose values the Africans would be forced to connect.

## **CHAPTER 3: ESTRANGEMENT AND ALIENATION: THE EROSION OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES**

### **3.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how our ways of life are vulnerable to disruption and demise. While drawing on Lear's insight that cultures comprise many interdependent and interconnected elements, a critical question emerges: does one factor exert greater force than others in shaping a cultural group's way of life? Various authors who wrote on cultural issues such as Fanon, Parekh, Kymlicka, and Karl Marx, have observed that cultural dynamics are influenced by technological advancements, resource availability, and economic conditions, among other factors. However, these authors do not explicitly establish a hierarchy of importance among these factors

in determining how cultural groups function within societies. In this chapter, I argue that economic power and resource control constitute the primary forces determining a culture or way of life for any cultural group in a multicultural society.

In multicultural societies, history demonstrates that economic power significantly influences how the cultural groups will coexist. This relationship between economic power and cultural positioning forms the foundation of my inquiry in this chapter. Rather than examining how economic power influences the development of cultural practices, I investigate how it affects the perception of established cultural practices within mainstream society. I argue that in South Africa, the economically dominant white community (Afrikaner and English groups) effectively determine the terms of participation in mainstream society for all cultural groups. This dynamic creates a disconnect between how AmaXhosa people navigate spaces connected to mainstream society versus how they live in their homelands. This disparity leads to a form of alienation, as AmaXhosa's African beliefs and practices are supplanted by European customs in South Africa's mainstream social contexts.

### **3.2. The Role of Resources in Ways of Life**

Drawing on Lear's work, I established that each cultural group possesses distinct worldviews that require active expression in the physical world to maintain their validity. These cultural frameworks depend on environmental resources – which here, I define as any physical materials used to manifest cultural concepts or practices. To comprehend how cultural identities are embodied by members of their respective cultural groups, and how individuals might become estranged from these identities, we must examine how resources enable the practical realisation of cultural ideas. Within multicultural societies, cultural groups develop worldviews and conceptual frameworks that encompass not only self-understanding but also perceptions of other cultural groups. Consequently, each group maintains a set of beliefs about itself alongside interpretations of other cultural groups. These beliefs focus particularly on intercultural relationships and interactions.

Cultural groups require sufficient resources to transform the worldview or ideas they have, whether about themselves or other groups, into reality. In Lear's book, the Native American Crow tribe's economic success and resources were evaluated through their essential practices – hunting and

warfare. The Crow valued owning excellent horses and 'counting coups' amongst other things. A successful Crow member excelled at ensuring tribal survival through warfare or hunting skills. By mastering these cultural practices, Crow members acquired valuable resources such as superior horses, abundant territory, and effective weapons. These resources gave them more power to enforce their worldview both internally and among the neighbouring cultural groups. The practice of 'planting coup sticks' (marking territorial boundaries) was recognised not only by the Crow themselves but also, as Lear argues, by the Sioux and other rival groups whose warriors faced death when transgressing boundaries marked by these coup sticks.

The Crow tribe's ability to maintain their cultural practices and worldview clearly depended on their access to sufficient resources. However, when the Sioux launched a surprise attack on them, the Crow's resources were severely diminished. This increased their vulnerability to further attacks, malnutrition, diseases and the like. Thus, they were ultimately forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle and relocate to reservations. The white settlers who established these reservations held significant economic power and resources which allowed them to impose their cultural values and governance systems with very little opposition from the Crow. This case illustrates the idea that cultural groups with greater resources can more effectively preserve their own worldview while also imposing it upon less-resourced groups. It will be demonstrated later in this chapter, that when a powerful cultural group forces its values upon a less powerful one, the latter's way of life is often significantly compromised or destroyed.

Therefore, it can be argued that in multicultural societies, equality between cultural groups implies a sense of equality in the distribution of resources among such cultural groups. This doesn't mean each group must possess identical resources, such a rigid idea of equality would be impractical. Rather, it suggests that no single cultural group should overwhelmingly dominate others in terms of resources. When resources are more equitably distributed, no group can unilaterally dictate how another cultural group ought to live without facing meaningful opposition. Whether such opposition would succeed is a separate question, but the possibility for different groups to assert their identities and values within mainstream society represents an important form of equality. This equality is notably absent in South Africa, where the white community continues to exercise disproportionate influence over the ways of life of AmaXhosa and other indigenous South Africans.

### 3.3. Apartheid South Africa: Resource and Cultural Inequality

In an interview that was held in 1977, Biko discussed the liberation strategy of the Black Consciousness Movement. What is relevant here from his discussion is that he analysed and critiqued the structures of liberation organisations which were sanctioned by the apartheid government. His criticism was that these organisations had the same structure as the mainstream society of the apartheid South Africa. Biko's analysis of the structure of the apartheid South African society was that white people have a monopoly in intelligence and moral judgement, such that all programs of the South African society must be run in accordance with the perceptions of white people.<sup>98</sup> Biko also noted what he termed a totality of white power which is adjacent to the described monopoly. The totality of white power refers to a structure whereby white people are the main participants in the oppression of black people and simultaneously the main participants in the opposition of the same oppression of black people.<sup>99</sup> This white monopoly and the totality of white power are enabled by the excess of economic wealth and resources in white communities and its deficit in black communities.

This white monopoly and the totality of white power were enabled, amongst other things, by the excess of resources amongst white people and the deficit of the same amongst black people. Later in the interview, Biko argued the following with regards to the distribution of economic success and resources in South Africa:

“In South Africa there is such an ill distribution of wealth that any form of political freedom which does not touch on the proper distribution of wealth will be meaningless. The whites have locked up within a small minority of themselves the greater proportion of the country's wealth. If we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions what is likely to happen is that black people will continue to be poor, and you will see a few blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society will be run almost as of yesterday. So for meaningful change to appear there needs to be an attempt at reorganising the whole economic pattern and economic policies within this particular country.”<sup>100</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p22.

<sup>99</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p145.

<sup>100</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p150.

Biko argues that a prerequisite for Black South Africans to achieve true liberation is for them to assert themselves in their society, until mutual respect is earned between them and white South Africans. Within the framework of this thesis, self-assertion requires putting one's conceptual world (cultural worldview) and cultural identity into practice until recognised by other cultural groups. As established earlier, cultural groups possess unique conceptual worlds that must be lived out through tangible cultural practices. This process involves implementing a group's ideologies within their environment through practical cultural expressions. When these ideologies are actively expressed, they transform from abstract concepts into lived experiences. However, each cultural group requires material resources to perform the practices that bring their ideological framework to life.

Like the Crow, the Xhosa had ways of life which reflected their conceptual world. The practices of ubuntu, ubugqirha and ubuxhwele, and ulwaluko are ways in which the Xhosa conceptual world was enforced into the physical world. The white monopoly and the totality of white power result in black people being in a position where they are unable to participate in a meaningful way in the mainstream society of South Africa. The main element that enables the white community to enforce its own cultural concepts on other cultural groups is its economic power and resource availability.

#### **3.4. Economic Power and Recourse Availability for Cultural Groups**

This is a work of philosophy: thus, it would not be my primary concern to discuss and examine the series of events that preceded South Africa's transition from an apartheid to a democratic state. However, to properly address the manner in which the post-apartheid South African society deteriorates the African ways of being we must first dismantle the illusion that the end of apartheid entailed a realisation of the equality of people and their cultures in South Africa. For this illusion to be dismantled, an account of whether the democratic South Africa has created an environment that is conducive for the indigenous cultural groups who were conquered in the unjust wars of colonialism and apartheid to assert themselves into the mainstream society of South Africa must be advanced.

In his incisive book *The ANC Billionaires*,<sup>101</sup> investigative journalist Pieter du Toit examines the complex relationships between wealthy apartheid-era industrialists, prominent members of the apartheid government, and the leadership of the African National Congress (ANC) – the foremost liberation movement that fought to free Black South Africans from the oppressive apartheid system. Du Toit's research reveals that international pressure proved to be the most effective strategy in bringing down the apartheid regime.<sup>102</sup> The ANC leadership strategically lobbied Western nations to condemn the South African government's apartheid regime and successfully campaigned for comprehensive international sanctions.<sup>103</sup> These sanctions severely restricted the apartheid government's ability to conduct international business, crippled South African corporations' global operations, and devastated the national economy. Faced with mounting economic isolation and growing internal unrest, the previously intransigent apartheid politicians finally recognised the unsustainability of their position and reluctantly agreed to negotiate the dismantling of the apartheid system and the transition to democratic governance.

When we presume that the international sanctions compelled the apartheid government to negotiate for the end of their regime, it follows that white South Africans were motivated by economic pressure rather than a moral recognition of the need for various cultural groups to have equal rights in their country. In this regard, Biko argues that "we must learn to accept that no group, however benevolent, can ever hand power to the vanquished on a plate. We must accept that the limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."<sup>104</sup> This suggests that the apartheid regime's primary interest was not acknowledging cultural equality but rather removing international sanctions. Consequently, during negotiations, they likely sought to minimise compromises to their apartheid-derived privileges while achieving sanction relief.

Therefore, it follows that the construction of post-apartheid democratic South Africa was significantly influenced by the white community's priorities, which focused primarily only on addressing Western nations' condemnation of the regime. Du Toit argues that the white community's primary concern was avoiding economic ruin which was about to come through

---

<sup>101</sup> Du Toit, P. (2022). *The ANC Billionaires: Big Capital's Gambit and the Rise of the Few.*, p175.

<sup>102</sup> Du Toit, P. (2022). *The ANC Billionaires: Big Capital's Gambit and the Rise of the Few.*, p175.

<sup>103</sup> Du Toit, P. (2022). *The ANC Billionaires: Big Capital's Gambit and the Rise of the Few.*, p175.

<sup>104</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p91.

international sanctions.<sup>105</sup> This approach meant that the grievances and perspectives of Black South Africans, particularly those articulated through the Black Consciousness movement, were inadequately incorporated into the new democratic framework. Consequently, while the transition responded to external pressure, it failed to fully address the fundamental concerns of those who had suffered most under apartheid. This suggests that the democratic society that emerged was incomplete in its reconciliation efforts.

An account which states that the democratic society of South Africa still has an ill distribution of wealth would be obvious and trite. Rather, we must examine the nature of the ill distribution of wealth and its implications on culture and cultural identities. In Biko's terms the White community in South Africa assumes a monopoly in intelligence and moral judgement.<sup>106</sup> This in entails that white people decide what ways of being should be practiced in the South African society. It is their access to wealth and resources that grants them the ability to enforce the ways of being that they have decided on to all cultural groups in South Africa. Since ideas about how to live are embedded in culture, we can conclude that in South African the white community assumes cultural monopoly. This cultural monopoly – the power to enforce one's own cultural ways of being in a multicultural society – has been carried over from the colonial and apartheid eras into the democratic era of South Africa through wealth and resources amongst other things.

The democratic state of the South African society started with the shift from state of parliamentary sovereignty to that of a supreme constitution in 1994. This was given effect by an interim constitution and later a final constitution which came into effect as an Act in 1996. In the constitution we find that there is section which solely aims to protect private property. With regards to this section Dladla asks a question that is quite profound:

“If one considers that under colonialism and apartheid after it, a combined period of more than 350 years, the European conqueror and his posterity acquired property through the seizing of the indigenous people's land and property (a racially differentiated crime), the question is “who exactly had property to protect in 1996?” In other words, “precisely whose property was being protected by the constitution?”<sup>107</sup>

---

<sup>105</sup> Du Toit, P. (2022). *The ANC Billionaires: Big Capital's Gambit and the Rise of the Few.*, p175.

<sup>106</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like*, p66.

<sup>107</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race.*, p41.

The answer to Dladla's question concludes the account for the carrying over of wealth and the consequent power of white people from the apartheid regime into the democratic state of South Africa. This power and ability to enforce one's cultural ways of being into other cultural groups forms a basis for the alienation of the cultural identities of those whose cultural ways of being cannot be enforced. Here, we adopt the concept of alienation from Karl Marx's discussion of an estranged or alienated labour in his critique of what he terms a political economy in a capitalist society.

### **3.5. The Alienation of AmaXhosa: A Transition from African to European Ways of Being**

Marx argues that the nature of a political economy enables the existence of a competition between people and their labour productions – the products of their labour.<sup>108</sup> He argues further that the manifestation of this competition results in the existence of two classes of people which are property owners and propertyless workers.<sup>109</sup> In this case, a worker is one who has been out competed in a political economy, such that he ends up labouring for a property owner. A property owner is the victor of the economic competition, the one who controls industries and employs workers. Marx argues that this aspect of the political economy creates an inverse relationship between the power of the worker and the magnitude of his labour production.<sup>110</sup>

From Marx's discussion I take a particular interest in his argument that, in a political economy, a worker is alienated or estranged from the product of his labour.<sup>111</sup> The cause of this alienation is the inverse relationship which is created between the worker and the product of his labour. The logical order of Marx's argument seems to be the following: A political economy structurally sets in motion a competition between people through the products of their labour. In that competition, one is outcompeted and becomes a worker, while the other outcompetes and becomes a property owner. The property owner is empowered and continues to be enriched under the doctrine of private property in a political economy. For the worker however, an inverse relationship is created between him and his labour production. The consequence of this inverse relationship is that the more the worker produces through his labour, the more he gets disempowered. This shows that the

---

<sup>108</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Karl Marx and the Communist Manifesto.*, p61.

<sup>109</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, p62.

<sup>110</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, p62.

<sup>111</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, P63.

worker is alienated from the product of his labour, and the magnitude of his labour production works against him.<sup>112</sup>

Let us further examine Marx's argument to understand the nature of this alienation and its cause – the inverse relationship between a worker and the product of his labour. Naturally, when an individual works, he adds a part of himself – his labour – to some material and produces a product. The product empowers him and, in some way, advances his life in society. However, Marx argues that the product of the worker's labour is alienated from him because the structure of the political economy makes it such that the worker and the product of his labour exist as independent commodities. Not only do they exist as independent commodities, but the labour production also exists as a force against the worker – it exists as that which disempowers the worker. With the worker being a commodity himself and the product of his labour another commodity against him, the relationship between them takes the form of an inverse proportion. This occurs because the product of the workers labour empowers the property owner who has out competed him.

The more the worker's activity, or labour, produces objects – that is, the more he creates products through labour – the stronger the objects become and the more disempowered he becomes.<sup>113</sup> Since the worker is propertyless, the products of his labour belong to the property owner who defeated him in the competition of a political economy. Thus, the product of the worker's labour confronts the worker as an alien product that works against him.<sup>114</sup> The part of his life – his labour – that he conferred into the object he produced – his labour production – confronts him as something hostile and alien. Instead of empowering him, his labour production empowers a stranger who is a competitor against the worker. This sense of alienation is similar to the alienation that occurs between a member of the Xhosa nation and his cultural identity in the South African society.

I have established above that the mainstream Soth African society operates through a Eurocentric cultural monopoly. That is, it only accounts for the Eurocentric culture while disregarding African and other ways of being and African practices. Within this cultural monopoly, I observe an inverse relationship between AmaXhosa people and their cultural identity which is analogous to Marx's observation of the alienation between workers and the products of their labour in a political

---

<sup>112</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, P64.

<sup>113</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, p64.

<sup>114</sup> Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts.*, p65.

economy. The structure of mainstream South African society ensures that only those who conform to its Eurocentric norms can meaningfully participate and achieve material success. Ideally, South Africa's public sphere would have developed from a position of cultural pluralism, where diverse traditions could engage in dialogue and potentially merge to form a more inclusive social fabric.

However, when South Africa's democratic society emerged following the apartheid regime it inherited a power structure where the European culture maintained dominance. Furthermore, the white community who aligned with the European cultural traditions were permitted to transfer their privileged positions into the new democratic framework. Consequently, mainstream South African society began from a foundation where European culture occupied a dominant position, while African culture was, *ipso facto*, relegated to a subordinate position. Thus, when we consider Marx's discussion, we can argue that the mainstream South African society has two classes of culture: the dominant European culture and the subjugated African culture. Biko accurately argues that such structural inequality inevitably produces a unidirectional acculturation process and cultural monopoly, where one culture's values, traditions, and worldviews are systematically privileged and dominant over others.

In a cultural monopoly, the dominant culture takes control of the manner in which societal affairs are run. Put differently, the dominant culture sets the concepts with which Kymlicka's full range of human activities which include social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life could be realised in the public affairs of the given society.<sup>115</sup> It is only the intelligence and ideas of the European culture that informs the South African ways of being and what the picture of a good life ought to be like. The same culture sets the standard of how the whole South African society ought to live. However, to keep this argument in good proportion to the reality that it alludes to, we must acknowledge that the dominant culture tolerates the African culture under an imposed condition.

The condition imposed is that African cultural frameworks must accept their subordinate position without challenging the dominant culture, even in domains where the latter appropriates elements from the subjugated culture. To illustrate this, Dladla refers to the jurisprudence of the South African legal system. He argues that where the legal system is informed by various sources of law

---

<sup>115</sup> Kymlicka, W., (1995), *Multicultural Citizenship*, p76.

in a hierarchical arrangement. In this legal system, the only source of law which has a framework that is grounded in African legal philosophy is customary law. The other sources of law which this legal system adopts are of European origin. These include Roman-Dutch law, Common law, and Legislation as previously discussed. The system nominally accommodates customary law while ensuring its perpetual subordination. The hierarchical arrangement positions customary law at the lowest rank of legal authority, rendering it vulnerable to being overridden by any Eurocentric legal source. This structural inequality reveals how an apparent inclusion can mask continued domination, as recognition of African legal traditions comes with the implicit requirement that they remain non-threatening to the established colonial legal order.

With the European culture setting the standard across the full range of human activities in the public domain of the South African society, a condition for the alienation of the AmaXhosa culture from the AmaXhosa is generated. For umXhosa to participate in the mainstream affairs of the society that he is part of, he must halt participation in his Xhosa culture and adopt the European culture. The people who identify with the European culture – the White people – control a large majority of the country's wealth such that their culture sets the standard in both private and the public sectors of the South African economy. The result of this condition is the expected one, for anyone to obtain economic success he must adopt the European culture which will enable him to participate in the Eurocentric economy. Since economic success is necessary for one's survival and well-being, it is almost certain that AmaXhosa will do what is necessary to participate in the economy.

In simpler terms, UmXhosa must sacrifice his cultural identity to participate in the public affairs of his society. In this regard, Marx's inverse relationship is established between the UmXhosa and his cultural identity. The more he participates in the mainstream affairs of his society the less he becomes himself. The more he accumulates material/economic success, the less he identifies with his cultural group. Even he, is aware of this. His awareness of it is shown when he flaunts his economic success to the members of his cultural group. While the flaunting may be expressed in various ways, its message is always the same – I am not like you. In this sense the cultural identity of UmXhosa is a force against himself and against his chances of survival as that person. If we revisit Lear's contention that a cultural identity entails an excellence in the exhibition of that

culture's way of life, we note that such has ceased to be the case for the AmaXhosa culture in the South African society.

The idea of a cultural identity entailing an excellency in way of life is brought into life by a simple fact which Lear explains. The cultural identity entails that one partakes in the ways of life of the cultural group that he identifies with. It entails that he partakes in the meaningful practices of his culture and that his views are mainly informed by the conceptual world of his cultural group. The catch here is that each cultural group would have a conception of success. For Crows consisted in counting coups, but even then, there was some material that was attached to this conception of success. For example, a warrior who counted coup was allowed to marry while young, he had access to good horses, and he was paid great respect. These are the examples found in Lear's discussion, but it seems likely that there are more examples. This makes it clear that material success consists in acquiring that which advances one's life and increases his chances of fulfilment in the life he lives.

The one who is perceived to be excellent in the South African society is the one who shows very little, if any, of the African ways of being. There is a shift from members of a state where a cultural group has group pride over material success to a state where it is individual pride. The group members cannot see themselves in the successful individual for he does not live like them. Instead, they see less of themselves – that which they lack and not that which they are. He who has found material success is he who is less of an African, at least in his ways of being. It is he who has found ways to infiltrate through the barriers that have been placed in front the African ways of being. For this infiltration to occur he had to pass for a European way of life.

### **3.6. Summary**

In this chapter, I have established that mainstream South African society functions as a cultural monopoly where European cultural practices have systematically marginalised the indigenous AmaXhosa cultural practices. Within this hegemonic structure, meaningful mainstream societal participation demands conformity to European cultural norms. AmaXhosa and other indigenous populations face a profound dilemma where they must either adopt European cultural frameworks to access economic and social opportunities or maintain cultural authenticity at the cost of economic marginalisation. Such a phenomenon creates a bifurcation where AmaXhosa individuals

who engage with mainstream society become increasingly disconnected from their culture. This results in an inverse relationship where meaningful participation in mainstream society correlates with cultural alienation and diminished cultural identity.

## **CHAPTER 4: THE QUEST FOR CULTURAL FREEDOM IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA**

### **4.1. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how AmaXhosa have experienced systematic cultural domination by Eurocentric forces. During apartheid, this acculturation occurred through explicit mechanisms such as violence, discriminatory legislation, and institutional structures specifically designed to privilege white cultural expressions while suppressing indigenous African cultures. Biko argues that this system deliberately created conditions where only European cultural frameworks could flourish.<sup>116</sup> This cultural subjugation continues in post-apartheid South Africa, albeit through more subtle means.

Dladla argues that contemporary jurisprudence remains fundamentally Eurocentric, effectively preserving a ‘right of conquest’ that protects advantages gained during colonial and apartheid eras.<sup>117</sup> This persistent cultural hegemony profoundly damages the ontological foundation of Black South African identity, as material success and meaningful societal participation still largely demand conformity to European cultural paradigms. This chapter aims to address a critical question: How might we facilitate the restoration of disrupted African cultural systems and

---

<sup>116</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like.*, p20.

<sup>117</sup> Dladla, N. (2017). *Towards an African critical philosophy of race.*, p39.

strengthen authentic identity formation without succumbing to either impractical nostalgia for an irretrievable past or uncritical assimilation into Eurocentric value structures?

The precarious existence of AmaXhosa in post-apartheid South Africa demonstrates ontological vulnerability in action. When seeking solutions to this vulnerability, we must navigate between two extremes. First, the nostalgic yearning for an irrecoverable past. Second, the complete capitulation to the dominant cultural forces. An effective approach neither romanticises a return to traditional ways which are now impossible in contemporary circumstances, nor advocates for AmaXhosa to abandon their cultural identity in favour of Eurocentric values and practices. Before proposing solutions for the AmaXhosa, it is worthwhile to examine Lear's concept of 'radical hope' which he suggests as a possible solution for the Crow nation. After analysing ontological vulnerability and its devastating cultural effects on the Crow, Lear presents radical hope as a potential framework for maintaining cultural integrity while facing hostile conditions that threaten cultural survival.

#### **4.2. Lear's Radical Hope**

It seems, *prima facie*, that restoring a ruptured way of life requires revisiting the purposes and values of the practices of the affected cultural group and finding ways to achieve such purposes and values within the new mainstream society. This approach aligns with Lear's concept of 'thinning out and rethickening in' the cultural practices that have lost relevance in changed environments.<sup>118</sup> This concept is integral to 'radical hope' which is a framework that Lear proposes to address cultural devastation. Here, I aim to show that while radical hope is a promising idea, it ultimately proves insufficient for addressing the lived experience of ontological vulnerability. Having established this limitation, I will explore an alternative solution by combining Biko's concept of 'true integration' with classical Chinese political philosophy's ideas of human nature and ethical cultivation. To ensure objectivity, I begin with a detailed examination of radical hope, particularly focusing on its compelling notion of adapting cultural practices across different environmental conditions.

In developing the concept of radical hope, Lear argues that it consists of believing that something good yet unimaginable will emerge in future, and it will enable an aggrieved culture to continue

---

<sup>118</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p108.

existing meaningfully.<sup>119</sup> This future goodness, he contends, transcends one's ability to understand what it may be.<sup>120</sup> Lear demonstrates this concept through Plenty Coups who, he believes, leveraged radical hope to guide the Crow people's transition from nomadic warriors to reservation life. Plenty Coups recognised that the Crow could not defend themselves through warfare against the Sioux or white settlers. Further, he acknowledged that traditional Crow ways would become impossible to practice once they moved to a reservation. Therefore, Plenty Coups encouraged his people to embrace white education and to be open to their religion.<sup>121</sup> He actively participated in agricultural practices and urged other Crow members to do the same. Through these actions, Plenty Coups recognised the need for new methods to achieve the goals of his cultural group. More importantly, he maintained hope that these new approaches would eventually develop into something meaningful for the Crow people in generations that would succeed his.

For example, the Crow people historically served as warriors who defended territory against rival groups. This practice lost relevance after they were confined to reservations within American society. According to Lear's concept, the Crow needed to examine this the underlying purpose of this practice and find ways to achieve it within the acceptable frameworks of the new mainstream society. American society permits legal advocacy for land rights and cultural preservation through the court system. Therefore, those traditionally destined to be warriors could instead become lawyers fighting legal battles rather than a physical warfare. This transformation would allow the Crow to maintain their foundational purpose of protecting their territory through practices relevant to the new social order. Indeed, Plenty Coups made trips to Washington leading delegations that negotiated with the American government for the Crow to keep some of their land.<sup>122</sup> However, this adaptation notably lacks the artistic and ceremonial dimensions through which the Crow traditionally fulfilled their warrior practices. This is where radical hope becomes relevant.

Lear expands upon the concept of thinning out and rethickening cultural practices through his notion of radical hope, which brings about a possibility for rethickened practices to be infused with artistic and poetic dimensions. Radical hope, which Plenty Coups exemplified, is hope that transcends mere cultural assimilation of white practices. Rather, Lear demonstrates how Plenty

---

<sup>119</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p103.

<sup>120</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p103.

<sup>121</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p5.

<sup>122</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p5.

Coups made a profound strategic assessment. He realised that protecting Crow territory required diplomatic negotiation with the white government instead of traditional warfare, while ensuring the Crow peoples' survival necessitated transitioning to agriculture rather than hunting. What distinguishes Plenty Coups' vision as radical hope, according to Lear, was his conviction that future Crow generations would transform these pragmatic adaptations into culturally meaningful practices that would resonate with core Crow values and identity.<sup>123</sup> This represents not simply substituting one practice for another, but rather an imaginative faith that the Crow people would eventually imbue these necessary adaptations with the same cultural significance that warfare and hunting once held, thereby preserving the essence of Crow identity through radically transformed expressions.<sup>124</sup>

In essence, traditional Crow ways of being became virtually impossible to maintain. The Crow people were forced to adopt new ways of living that served merely as pragmatic measures, to retain their lands and secure adequate nutrition, rather than as meaningful cultural practices. These imposed ways fundamentally contradicted rather than expressed Crow identity. Plenty Coups encouraged his people to adopt these new ways of living with the hope that future generations might eventually transform them into meaningful cultural expressions. His vision was that Crow ways of being would once again find relevance within the new social order, allowing the Crow to live meaningfully through an evolved cultural identity. However, Lear's concept of radical hope fails to acknowledge a critical flaw of the new society. This flaw is that the dominant culture continued to determine ways of being for all cultural groups in the new society. Radical hope assumes that the dominant social order would allow the Crow sufficient autonomy to develop culturally in the first place.

In his constructive criticism of Lear's concept of radical hope, Pedro Tabensky argues that Lear insufficiently addresses whether the new environment and social order that the Crow encountered actually allowed them to rebuild their culture.<sup>125</sup> Tabensky contends that "Lear does not pay sufficient attention to the importance of the quality of the soil upon which new Crow seeds can germinate, and perhaps he should have spent time with postcolonial thinking, particularly

---

<sup>123</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p140.

<sup>124</sup> Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope*, p140.

<sup>125</sup> Tabensky, P. *Rising from the Ashes of Cultural Devastation.*, p9.

Fanon's."<sup>126</sup> Drawing on Fanon's work, Tabensky maintains that for racially divided and unequal societies to achieve true liberation for oppressed cultural groups, the society must dismantle its hostile gaze toward these groups.<sup>127</sup> This necessitates changing both the subjugating systems and the attitudes of those who perpetuate them which is a prerequisite for any formerly subjugated cultural group to meaningfully rebuild their way of life.

### **4.3. Transitioning Societies and Cultural Gaze**

While I concur with Tabensky and Fanon on their analysis of the gaze, my focus extends beyond critiquing white South African oppressive culture. Instead, I examine how oppressed cultural groups might respond to this dehumanising gaze and other hostile societal factors that threaten their ways of being. In addressing cultural liberation, we must confront an additional challenge which is the problem of modernity. Though colonialism and apartheid undoubtedly disrupted the ways of being of AmaXhosa and other indigenous South African cultural groups, I argue that South Africa simultaneously experienced a form of modernity that challenged the modes of existence for all cultural groups. The historical burden of oppression likely prevented indigenous communities from prioritising engagement with modernity, while oppressors not only engaged with it but claimed its advancements exclusively for themselves. This dynamic explains why modernisation is frequently conflated with Westernisation.

In his book *China: The Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom*, Tongdong Bai develops a concept of modernity which is distinctly separate from westernisation. His conception of modernity is not tied to any specific cultural group but rather emerges from the processes of nature and how humans organise social structures around them. Bai argues that classical Chinese political philosophy responded to an earlier form of modernity, one that China experienced approximately two centuries before Western modernity emerged.<sup>128</sup> For Bai, modernity signifies the societal transition from smaller kingdoms to large, bureaucratic states, along with the necessary social order adjustments accompanying such transitions.<sup>129</sup> He argues that the response of Chinese political philosophy which determined how people ought to conduct themselves in bureaucracies is similar to the

---

<sup>126</sup> Tabensky, P. *Rising from the Ashes of Cultural Devastation.*, p10.

<sup>127</sup> Tabensky, P. *Rising from the Ashes of Cultural Devastation.*, p10.

<sup>128</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: the political philosophy of the middle kingdom.*, p82.

<sup>129</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: the political philosophy of the middle kingdom.*, p19.

response of the Western thought. Bai concludes that these similarities result from the fact that the problem of modernity was more or less the same.<sup>130</sup> While South Africa remains a society with problematic attitudes toward AmaXhosa and other indigenous cultural groups, it has nonetheless undergone this form of modernisation.

The structure of modern South African society differs significantly from its pre-colonial era. While historians debate the precise nature of pre-colonial South African political systems, evidence suggests that distinct nations and tribes, each governed by their own kings and chiefs, maintained relatively autonomous existences with limited inter-group interaction. Contemporary South Africa, by contrast, operates as a bureaucratic state where diverse cultural groups fall under unified governance and presidential leadership. This consolidation has effectively merged previously separate societies into a single national entity. Consequently, modern South Africa's governmental structure struggles to preserve the cultural autonomy that different groups maintained prior to colonisation, making it impossible for distinct cultural practices to exist in their traditional forms.

Bai correctly argues that understanding a political thought of a given era requires first understanding the societal problems that define that era.<sup>131</sup> In recognition of this principle, we must advance an account of the societal challenges that are confronting culture in South Africa. While the dynamic nature of culture was examined in the previous chapter, it is now essential to revisit certain influential factors with a different purpose. The central argument of the previous chapter was that Bantu African culture continues to deteriorate in South African society. This argument implicitly acknowledges that this culture was once intact. By comparing the social conditions in which Bantu African culture formerly thrived with current conditions of cultural deterioration, I aim to illuminate the social problems defining contemporary South African society and propose a potential solution.

In the context of my question in this chapter, when addressing the balance between nostalgia and capitulation, we must examine the transformed social order of the contemporary South African society. Unlike the pre-apartheid and pre-colonial South Africa, today's society is fundamentally conditioned to be multicultural. Consequently, the role of each culture extends beyond serving its immediate members to establishing relevance within the mainstream or broader social framework

---

<sup>130</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p19.

<sup>131</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p16.

that encompasses all cultural groups. Bai's work is particularly significant here, as the culture of AmaXhosa and other indigenous South African cultures must now adapt to multicultural coexistence. Expecting these cultures to maintain their historical purity would be unrealistic given their increased interaction with other cultural traditions.

The transition from pre-colonial societies to our contemporary world represents a profound transformation in human organisation, extending far beyond mere technological advancement. While it may seem obvious to note our unprecedented capabilities in travel, communication, and interaction, these changes have fundamentally reshaped the social fabric and governance structures of societies worldwide. Bai offers a compelling analysis of these societal transformations, focusing on two critical shifts. Firstly, the intensification of cross-cultural interactions and, secondly, the evolution from localised kingdoms to expansive bureaucratic states. Central to his argument is the concept of 'social glue' which he defines as the binding mechanism that unifies diverse social elements of a country into one cohesive and functional entity.

In his examination of Chinese history during the State-and-Wars (SAWs) period, Bai identifies violence and its implicit threat as the primary cohesive force that maintained social order within smaller kingdoms. This coercive approach to governance represented the dominant model of social cohesion in pre-modern China, where authority was often maintained through direct force rather than bureaucratic systems or shared cultural values. This historical perspective invites us to consider how contemporary societies have developed alternative forms of social cohesion, replacing violence with more complex systems of governance, shared identity, and institutional legitimacy. The transition from violence-based cohesion to modern governance structures represents one of the most significant developments in human social organisation.

In his book, Bai examines the political thought of Chinese philosophers during a period when their society was transitioning toward multiculturalism. He argues that the formation of a bureaucratic state requires a new social structure to maintain its functionality as a unified entity. This structure depends on social values that effectively guide human conduct in ways that keep the large state operational. Bai refers to this essential social structure as a 'social glue.'<sup>132</sup> For Bai, modernity is characterised by the emergence of bureaucratic states and the search for appropriate 'social glue'

---

<sup>132</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p21.

to ensure their functionality.<sup>133</sup> A crucial development in this transition was the recognition that violence could no longer serve as an effective social binding force. The conditions of a larger unified state, as opposed to fragmented smaller kingdoms, made violence impractical and undesirable as a social glue, as it would ultimately cause more harm than good.

This historical example illustrates a broader principle that even without external oppression, changing environmental conditions may require cultural groups to adapt their organisational structures to meet their needs within new circumstances. Therefore, our challenge lies not in the fact that we are multicultural, but rather in how we approach and manage this multiculturalism. In the following section, I will proceed from a presumption that South Africa has modernised in accordance with Bai's conception of modernity. I acknowledge that South Africa transitioned from a landscape of autonomous kingdoms led by rulers such as King Hintsa, King Shaka, and King Bhambatha, and others to a unified state under a centralised governance. Drawing from Bai's framework, I argue that Ubuntu, the philosophical foundation that traditionally maintained social cohesion, must evolve to accommodate this new societal structure. Furthermore, Bai's perspective suggests that modernity does not inherently equate to Westernisation but rather represents a broadening of society and the development of novel mechanisms for maintaining unity and functionality within this expanded framework.

#### **4.4. Responding to the Modernity Transition**

When China transitioned to modernity, its citizens realised that the 'social glue' of violence and threats of violence that had kept the kingdom-state functional lost its relevance.<sup>134</sup> This prompted a search for a new societal cohesion mechanism. China needed to develop a social structure that would meet the demands of a bureaucratic state. This search yielded various proposals from classical Chinese philosophers, which shaped China's political schools of thought. Three of these proposals are relevant to the central question in this chapter and are discussed by Bai in his book.<sup>135</sup> These are Daoism, Confucianism, and Legalism. Daoism completely rejects modernity, while advocating for a return to the pre-modern era. The Confucian response involves ethical cultivation, which cautiously accepts aspects of modernity. Legalism fully embraces modernity and advances

---

<sup>133</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p21.

<sup>134</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p20.

<sup>135</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p21.

an understanding of human nature that could help address modernity-related challenges in South Africa. I will examine these responses in greater detail before elaborating on how they help address the question at hand.

Daoism proposed that a return to the pre-modern era as the only viable solution to the problem of modernity. For Daoism, this arrangement of the society is necessary for a second aspect that is at the heart of Daoism. This aspect is an attempt to get rid of the idea of making distinctions between things as either good or bad. In terms of the Daoist approach “human emotions and ambitions were not the solution but the root cause of the problems of the day”.<sup>136</sup> They argued that people should refrain from their attempts to better the world or its living conditions. They assert that people must commit to the Dao (the way) and follow wherever the way may lead. In the Lao Zi (also known as the Dao De Jing), the Daoist philosophical position is expressed with clarity in Chapter 80:

"Let there be a small state with few people. Let there be ten times and a hundred times as many utensils, but let them not be used. Let the people take dying seriously and not migrate far... Though neighbouring states are within eyesight and crowing of cocks and barking of dogs can be heard, yet the people there may grow old and die without ever visiting one another".<sup>137</sup>

While contemporary observers might dismiss this Daoist response as unrealistic or regressive, it accurately identifies the necessary social conditions required for a cultural group to maintain its traditional cultural integrity. The cultural homogeneity and continuity that many pre-modern societies experienced were predicated on precisely this kind of social fabric which is envisioned by Daoists – limited mobility, technological restraint, and deliberate isolation from outside influences. In our interconnected global society, with its mass communication, transportation networks, and cultural exchange, such conditions are simply impossible to recreate. Therefore, calls for cultural groups to return to “the good old days” of their culture simply misunderstand the environmental prerequisites that made those ways of being possible.

The Daoist response helps us to understand why returning to "good old days" is impossible. When cultural groups face modernisation, they are not simply being forced to Westernise. Rather, they

---

<sup>136</sup> Bai, T. (2014) *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p85.

<sup>137</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p102.

must realise that the social conditions that once made their traditional culture relevant, in its pure form, have fundamentally changed in the modern era. In Bai's sense of the term, the world has modernised and it is now globalising. Consequently, each cultural group must evolve to keep its culture relevant within the new social fabric of an interconnected world. Human nature drives us to socialise and develop adaptive strategies in diverse environments. Thus, modernity itself might be understood as a natural progression that compels all cultural groups to continuously refine their ways of living.

The response of the Confucian school of thought was that ethical cultivation forms the cornerstone of social organisation. According to this tradition, society should function through a hierarchy based on ethical development, where individuals progress from being ordinary human beings toward being virtuous ones.<sup>138</sup> Kongzi (Master Kong), more commonly known as Confucius, established this influential school of thought. Confucians believe that humans naturally possess good inclinations but must engage in deliberate learning and practice to cultivate these tendencies.<sup>139</sup> Kongzi taught that individuals must actively develop virtuousness through study and practical application. This creates a natural hierarchy where those who excel in ethical cultivation deserve authority to guide others. The Confucian ideal holds that governing power should be entrusted to the most ethically accomplished individuals. That is, it must be granted to those who demonstrate superior moral character through their actions. Thus, Confucian political philosophy advocates for leadership by the ethically virtuous rather than by hereditary right or force.

The Legalist scholar, Han Feizi, critiqued and disagreed with Confucian philosophy on how modern societies ought to be run. Bryan Van Norden elaborates on two fundamental points of disagreement between Han Feizi and his Confucian teacher, Xunzi, regarding effective governance. The first concerns the effectiveness of ethical education. While Xunzi believed moral instruction could transform human character, Han Feizi rejected this approach as naive and impractical given his pessimistic view of human nature. The second involves "the usefulness of tradition as a guide to the present".<sup>140</sup> Whereas Confucians revered ancient sages and their

---

<sup>138</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p31.

<sup>139</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p33.

<sup>140</sup> Van Norden, B. W. (2011). *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy.*, p187.

teachings as models for governance, Han Feizi dismissed such historical precedents as irrelevant to addressing contemporary challenges of a modern society. The legalist proposal was that society ought to be arranged such that the only way to cater towards self-interest would be to cater towards the public-interest or the society's interest.<sup>141</sup>

Van Norden highlights two critical concerns that Han Feizi raises regarding human nature. First, Han Feizi argues that humans are fundamentally self-interested beings whose natural aspirations are primarily directed toward self-benefit or private profit.<sup>142</sup> This perspective views individuals as inherently motivated by personal gain rather than collective welfare. Second, he contends that whatever aspirations humans might possess to benefit others or serve the public good are inherently weak and insufficient for cultivating effective governance. Since good governance is essential for establishing a well-ordered and properly functioning state, Han Feizi insists that these two problematic aspects of human nature must be adequately addressed.

The Legalist response, with its pragmatic understanding of human nature, offers valuable insights for enhancing the South African legislation as a mechanism for creating equality among cultural groups. Despite the international acclaim for the South African constitution, many indigenous South Africans question its effectiveness. If our constitution is truly exceptional, why has it not delivered meaningful change? The prevailing sentiment suggests the constitution excels in theory but fails in practice. Drawing on Han Fei's principles, I argue that the constitution is fundamentally flawed both in theory and in practicality, as a consequence.

While South African legislation and its Constitution does not explicitly define human nature, their provisions implicitly assume a form of natural goodness in its citizens. When reading the provisions of legislation, such as the Constitution, one could note that a successful implementation depends on the goodness of people, particularly their public benevolence. It expects to be implemented by public-minded officials committed to a societal benefit. This aligns with Confucian ideals of good governance. Han Fei, however, recognises that people rarely prioritise public interest. The natural inclinations of humans are directed towards self-interest. Thus, public benevolence is insufficient for effective governance. In this way, the Legalist principle that

---

<sup>141</sup> Bai, T. (2014). *China: The Political Philosophy of the Middle Kingdom.*, p189.

<sup>142</sup> Van Norden, B. W. (2011). *Introduction to Classical Chinese Philosophy.* p187.

legislation ought to be structured such that the only way to obtain private benefit is to act for public benefit becomes relevant.

#### **4.5. The Basis for Multiculturalism and Cultural Cultivation**

In chapter four of his book, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*, Bhikhu Parekh discusses ways in which human being could be conceptualised. In this regard, he discusses the concepts of human nature and culturalism with the aim to establish a basis for the necessity of cultural diversity. Parekh argues that human nature entails factors or features that are commonly shared by human beings. These include the physical and mental structures which we share as members of the same species. Culturalism, on the other hand, speaks to the difference or diversity between human beings. It encompasses the fact that human beings conceptualise, relate, and respond differently to the environments that we are situated in. It also encompasses that upon reflection we relate differently to our commonly shared features. What is important for Parekh is that both these concepts – human nature and culturalism – are limited and each one cannot fully explain human beings without the other.

Parekh explains that the concept of human nature is limited and subject to culture because it cannot explain the diversity in ways of life of human beings. In this regard, human nature only constitutes a part of what a human being is and cannot explain it fully. Culturalism, on the other hand, is also limited and subject to human nature. Parekh points out that culture is not created from nothing, and it does not exist in a vacuum. This entails that culture reflects the potentialities of the nature of human beings. Parekh concludes that when we understand this interconnectedness between the constitutive factors of human beings – human nature and culture – we neither presume that other human beings are completely like us or that they are radically different from us. In Parekh's words "we approach them – other human beings – on the assumption that they are similar enough to be intelligible and make a dialogue possible, and different enough to be puzzling and make a dialogue necessary".<sup>143</sup>

It is apparent that Culture, at its essence, is a standardised system of coordination which is built around the life circumstances of a group, and manifested through various cultural practices. This coordination system becomes vulnerable when life circumstances change significantly, potentially

---

<sup>143</sup> Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism.*, p124.

rendering the established system ineffective. In such situations, the cultural framework sways on the edge of collapse. If this system fails, the cultural group risks losing the foundation of their identity and meaningful existence. However, a look into the work of Fanon, Han Feizi, and Kongzi makes me realise that there are elements of the cultural system that are founded mainly in the potentials of a human being. These elements are human consciousness and human nature – here understood narrowly as a human inclination to act. Since potentials can mainly depend on the biological aspect of humans, it is unlikely that changes in social frameworks could devastate them beyond repairs.

In terms of cultural cultivation, we must examine the culture and find ways for a cultural group to have a meaningful culture beyond a point of cultural devastation. Thus, cultural cultivation is a way of coordinating around the contemporary circumstances of life. It is a strategy that reflects a neuroplasticity of cultural group whose way of life has been threatened by devastation or at least a group that realises the vulnerability of its ways of being. In terms of the first element, it is a group that is conscious, rather than sub-conscious about its ways of being and they find innovative ways to coordinate around their life circumstances. In terms of the second element, their conceptual world is structured such that a way to serve the interests of the individuals is to serve the interests of the cultural group.

#### **4.6. Aspects of Culture to be Cultivated**

AmaXhosa, as a cultural group, must recognise that the white community within their society has historically benefited from a social order that systematically oppresses and alienates them. This dynamic has persisted for generations, leading many AmaXhosa to internalise and adopt this imposed social order. Consequently, some have come to prefer Western cultural practices over their indigenous ways of being. Parekh and Kymlicka argue that authentic multiculturalism requires freedom as its foundation. This freedom includes the right of individuals to exit their cultural groups should they choose to embrace alternative ways of living. With this framework in mind, my analysis focuses specifically on those AmaXhosa who continue to find meaning and value in their traditional customs, and thus face oppression and alienation from a social order that compels them to engage with their mainstream society exclusively through Western paradigms.

Fanon deepens his analysis of the veil by introducing what he considers to be one of the fundamental laws of colonial psychology. This law states that it is the plans, strategies, and actions of the colonisers that determine the areas of life around which a colonised people will form their modes of resistance.<sup>144</sup> In his words “it is the white man who creates the Negro. But it is the Negro who creates negritude”.<sup>145</sup> In the case of AmaXhosa, the colonial action that must be addressed is the legacy of a Eurocentric social order that has been historically formed to elevate a cultural monopoly and suppress multiculturalism. This calls for a coordinated resistance strategy focused on healing the cultural devastation experienced during and after apartheid. There are two key objectives that ought to guide this coordination. The first one is developing the traditional and cultural practices of AmaXhosa to flourish within a globalised context while preserving their essence. The second one involves bridging the divide between the AmaXhosa cultural identity and meaningful participation in South Africa's mainstream society. This approach would enable cultural revitalisation while facilitating meaningful social integration on their own terms.

While analysing the practice of wearing a veil, Fanon contends that societies typically maintain uniform attitudes toward their cultural practices, with members understanding and responding to these practices in similar ways.<sup>146</sup> In his analysis, Fanon specifically examined homogeneous Arab societies. My analysis, however, focuses on multicultural South African society, where shared attitudes toward cultural practices exist within specific cultural groups rather than across the entire society. Nevertheless, Fanon's argument remains pertinent, as members of cultural groups often adhere to their practices with minimal criticality and examination. When confronted by the plans, strategies, and actions of the colonialists these cultural practices are challenged beyond what cultural groups would consider to be normal circumstances. Considering this phenomenon, Fanon argues that cultural groups must develop innovative modifications to their attitudes and the challenged practices.<sup>147</sup>

The realisation is that the living conditions of modernity are so complex and diverse that it is not only impractical but potentially counterproductive to impose a single coordinated response to the circumstances of life in this society. The modern society creates diverse social spaces where

---

<sup>144</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>145</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>146</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

<sup>147</sup> Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. p47.

cultural boundaries often blur and overlap. Mainly, different cultural groups live in close proximity and interactions with persons of different cultural backgrounds have intensified in both frequency and significance. It occurs daily in workplaces, educational institutions, public spaces, and digital environments. Furthermore, we regularly form communities and organisations with individuals whose cultural backgrounds is different from our own. Thus, we create new social formations that have a different fabric from our traditional cultural environments.

These multicultural environments typically serve purposes that hold profound importance to the participants, regardless of their cultural origins. Consider, for instance, a movement group of Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho individuals who are collectively advocating for their government to address issues of systemic oppression that affects them all despite their distinct cultural identities. Similarly, traditional leaders from various cultural backgrounds often unite to ensure their cultural systems of governance receive appropriate recognition within modern governmental frameworks. In workplace environments, colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds join labour unions that advocate for concerns that transcend cultural differences, such as improved working conditions, fair compensation, and dignified treatment.

The common purpose in each of these groups cause the members to develop codes of conduct such as communication protocols and decision-making procedures that maintain cohesion and functionality of the groups. These operational norms develop organically through convention, negotiation, and practice. Thus, they create a distinctive social system that is notably similar to what we traditionally understand as culture with respect to cultural groups. These social systems are dynamic and adaptive coordinated responses to the complex demands of the group's contemporary existence. Indeed, scholars from various disciplines increasingly recognise these emergent systems of shared purposes and practices as cultural formations in their own right.

This argument suggests that cultural groups are not defined merely by common lineage or heritage, but rather they are defined by a shared purpose – specifically, the need to coordinate similar life circumstances reliably. Each cultural practice is bestowed not on common lineage but in some form of advancement of life chances. Even when groups invoke common lineage, they typically highlight historical heroes who improved the living conditions for their families or communities. In *I Write What I Like*, Biko argues that no group, however benevolent, would willingly surrender

power and possessions to the oppressed.<sup>148</sup> Similarly, there is no cultural group, however committed, that would formulate the same modes of living for all its members despite them facing different life circumstances. Therefore, it is unrealistic to expect AmaXhosa and other historically oppressed cultural groups in contemporary South Africa to coordinate their lives strictly according to their traditional methods. This is because modern South African society has created such diverse life circumstances among members of the same cultural heritage that they can no longer reasonably maintain collective goals as a unified Xhosa people.

The flaw in contemporary South African cultural integration is similar to that which Biko criticised in white liberal proposals. It is an integration through assimilation, forcing African cultural groups to abandon their African ways of being and adopt European norms. The idea of an organised resistance against cultural devastation is not novel in South Africa – Biko's Black Consciousness movement addressed this alongside other liberation struggles. However, modern South Africa requires updated forms of resistance. While Biko didn't explicitly frame his work in terms of ontological vulnerability, his vision for a truly multicultural and multiracial South Africa remains valuable. He articulated this vision through his concept of a 'true humanity,' explaining that Black Consciousness never sought to eliminate white South Africans, but rather to achieve genuine integration between races based on mutual respect and cultural recognition.

Biko advocates for a form of integration that would preserve the foundational practices and cultural identity of the indigenous South Africans. More specifically, the integration he envisioned safeguards the ontological essence of indigenous peoples – their Africanness. To realise this vision, Biko argues that authentic cultural integration can only occur when all participating cultural groups have been afforded the opportunity to define and pursue their own self-determined identities.<sup>149</sup> Each cultural group must be able to express their unique ways of being without interference from or hindrance by other cultural groups.<sup>150</sup> This approach would enable each group to articulate their cultural expressions within mainstream society, a process that must continue until mutual respect is established between diverse cultural communities.<sup>151</sup> Biko concludes that genuine integration

---

<sup>148</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like.*, p91.

<sup>149</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like.*, p21.

<sup>150</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like.*, p22.

<sup>151</sup> Biko, S. (2005). *I Write What I Like.*, p22.

would naturally emerge from this foundation of mutual respect, resulting in a more meaningful fusion of different ways of life rather than the subordination of one culture to another.

#### **4.7. Summary**

The first chapter established the societal problem that persists in post-apartheid South Africa. That is, a mainstream society that continues to marginalise and suppress the culture and way of life of the AmaXhosa people, among other indigenous cultural groups. This context gave rise to a research question examining whether cultural groups such as the AmaXhosa can retain their cultural identities without either remaining nostalgically attached to a bygone past or merely capitulating to the mainstream culture that continues to alienate their cultural ways of being.

The second chapter identified various mechanisms through which the AmaXhosa and other indigenous cultural groups remain vulnerable to cultural devastation in South Africa. This devastation occurs when societal standards are structured in ways that render the continuation of particular cultural practices impossible, impractical, or unintelligible. Under such conditions, societal changes fundamentally alter and devalue the meaning, relevance, and accessibility of cultural practices for members of the affected cultural groups.

Our exploration revealed that the AmaXhosa, like other cultural groups, possess central practices that are culturally meaningful and constitute a significant part of what it means to be umXhosa — a member of the Xhosa cultural group. These foundational practices include Ubuntu, a philosophical framework that governs how life is understood and how individuals ought to conduct themselves within the Xhosa and the broader African society. Cultural medical practices, including ubugqirha and ubuxhwele, articulate how the AmaXhosa conceptualise health and the value of life within their cultural and traditional worldview. Ulwaluko, the male initiation practice, delineates the role of men in Xhosa society by outlining how masculinity is perceived, what responsibilities men bear, and how they ought to conduct themselves within their community. Finally, traditional education serves as the mechanism through which these practices are transmitted to and instilled in the youth of the society.

Mainstream South African society systematically marginalises AmaXhosa cultural practices through institutional structures that prioritise economic conformity over cultural accommodation. The country's work and educational institutions create environments where AmaXhosa people

cannot meaningfully practice their cultural traditions. While South African legislation ostensibly incorporates ubuntu as a guiding principle, its practical interpretation supports policies that favour European-derived cultural norms over indigenous African practices, effectively facilitating the cultural assimilation of AmaXhosa communities.

This marginalisation manifests in concrete institutional barriers. Most employers and educational institutions require a letter from Western-trained doctors rather than traditional healers when granting a sick leave. More significantly, the sacred practice of ulwaluko — a cornerstone of AmaXhosa male identity — faces severe temporal constraints. Educational institutions typically allow only 3-4 weeks of absence for students, while employers grant a maximum of 21 days leave. These limitations force the compression of a traditionally 3-6 month initiation process into a mere few weeks, resulting in the substantial loss of cultural teachings, practical wisdom, and spiritual guidance that form the foundation of Xhosa manhood. This pattern reveals a fundamental asymmetry in cultural accommodation: mainstream society expects indigenous groups to adapt their practices to dominant institutional demands rather than modifying systems to respect cultural diversity. Such forced adaptations come at considerable cost—the erosion of cultural practices and, ultimately, the weakening of cultural identity among AmaXhosa and other indigenous communities compelled to make these compromises.

Chapter three demonstrated how mainstream society's social framework leverages economic incentives to compel members of marginalised cultural groups to abandon their traditional practices in pursuit of meaningful societal participation and economic advancement. This dynamic creates a profound sense of cultural alienation among AmaXhosa individuals, who find themselves increasingly disconnected from their cultural identity. This alienation stems from two fundamental structural realities: first, mainstream society operates within a social framework of European origin, and second, meaningful participation in this society requires individuals to adopt and embody European cultural practices. Consequently, an inverse relationship emerges between Xhosa individuals and their cultural heritage. Consequently, the deeper their integration into mainstream society and adoption of European ways of life, the more attenuated their connection to traditional Xhosa practices becomes.

The final chapter addresses how to confront cultural devastation without succumbing to nostalgia for an irrecoverable past or capitulating to dominant European cultural norms. Scholars such as

Tabensky and Fanon would argue that Lear's concept of radical hope proves insufficient in contexts where European culture maintains systemic dominance. For cultural groups navigating between nostalgia and capitulation, distinguishing between modernity and Westernisation becomes essential. Modernity represents the transition from smaller kingdoms to larger states, while Westernisation involves assimilation into European culture. The modern state necessarily embraces multiculturalism, with cultural groups engaging in constant cross-cultural interactions. Consequently, these groups must evolve their cultural practices to remain relevant within the multicultural framework of an increasingly modernised and globalised world. Simultaneously, cultural groups must address European domination, potentially through legal systems that facilitate their meaningful participation in mainstream society.

## **Bibliography**

### **Books**

Bai, T. (2014). *China: the political philosophy of the middle kingdom*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Biko, S. (1987). *I write what I like*. Bowerdean Press.

Du Toit, P. (2022). *The ANC Billionaires: Big Capital's Gambit and the Rise of the Few*. Jonathan Ball Publishers.

Fanon, F. (2022). *A dying colonialism*. Grove/Atlantic, Inc.

Fanon, Frantz. (2004). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Kymlicka, W. (1995). *Multicultural citizenship: A liberal theory of minority rights*. Clarendon Press.

Lear, J. (2006). *Radical hope: Ethics in the face of cultural devastation*. Harvard University Press.

Marx, K., Engels, F. (1988). *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 Karl Marx and the Communist Manifesto*. Prometheus Books.

Parekh, B. (2006). *Rethinking Multiculturalism Cultural Diversity and Political Theory*. Palgrave Macmillan.

### **Articles**

Cakata, Z. (2023b). Ubugqirha: healing beyond the Western gaze. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 43(2), 93–97. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2023.2248716>

Dladla, N. (2017). Towards an African critical philosophy of race: Ubuntu as a philo-praxis of liberation. *Journal of African Philosophy, Culture and Religions*, 6(1), 39–68. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ft.v6i1.3>

Frankfurt, H. (1982). The importance of what we care about. *Synthese*, 53(2), 257–272. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00484902>

Ludsin, H. (2012). Cultural Denial: What South Africa's Treatment of Witchcraft Says for the Future of Its Customary Law. *Berkeley Journal of International Law*, 21, 62.

Ramose, M. B. (2002). I conquer therefore I am the sovereign: Reflections upon sovereignty, constitutionalism, and democracy in Zimbabwe and South Africa. *African philosophy reader*, 2.

Ramose, M. B. (2007). In memoriam: Sovereignty and the 'new' South Africa. *Griffith Law Review*, 16(2), 310-329.

### **Thesis**

Mndende, N. (2022). *Signifying practices: AmaXhosa ritual speech* (PhD thesis). University of Cape Town. Retrieved from <https://open.uct.ac.za/items/672b16dd-198d-4a68-8947-f8f3483>