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*Faith Seeking Understanding.
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Hermeneutica Quo Vadis: Crisis of Values in the Contemporary Age

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The reflection of *Hermeneutica Quo Vadis: Crisis of Values in the Contemporary Age* is of actuality. The general question is, “hermeneutics, where are you going (*Hermeneutica Quo Vadis*)? This reflection will focus on the specific question of the “Crisis of Values in the Contemporary Age.” On the one hand, “there is nothing so permanent as change.” On the other hand, a radical change can lead to the erosion of cultural and societal values. In our reflection on the crisis of values in the contemporary age, we will focus on Africa as part of the changing values in the “global village.” The movement of people and the Revolution of Information Technology, *inter alia*, have made the world like a “global village.” We are living in a global village, which tends to impose global cultural values and anti-values. In the global village, there is the co-existence of both the “cultural values of life” and the “culture anti-values of death.”

The theoretical framework, which will be like the backbone of our reflection, will be See-Judge-Act¹. Section one will be a general introduction. In the general introduction, we will situate our specific theme of *Crisis of Values in the Contemporary Age* in the *Sitz-im-Leben* of *Hermeneutica Quo Vadis*. We will give a roadmap for our reflection. We will define “crisis” and “value.” Crisis (Gk *krisis*, decision) is a point of departure. Etymologically speaking, a crisis is not necessarily a bad thing. Something good can come from a critical situation. Value (Lt *valor*, worth) is supposed to be something intrinsically good. However, there is a possibility for someone to consider an apparent good, or even an anti-value, as a value.

Section two will be a brief survey of the crisis of values in the contemporary age. We will highlight the different schools of values in the contemporary age. There has been a paradigm shift in values not only in Africa but in the world at large.

An evaluation of the crisis of values in the contemporary age will be discussed in the third section. It will focus on two aspects. The first subsection of this section will be the causes and effects of the crisis of values in the contemporary age. The second subsection will be the challenges and opportunities of improving values in the intracultural global village.

The fourth section will propose some suggestions to improve intercultural and intracultural values in the global village.

The last section will be a general conclusion of our reflection. This will confirm the roadmap which was highlighted at the beginning of the reflection. It will not be the beginning of the end but rather the end of the beginning of the “unfinished business” of the reflection on overcoming the crisis of values in the contemporary age in the “global village.”

¹Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1967), p. 348, 365; cf. Gadamer H-G, *Truth and method*, New York: Continuum, 1975; cf. Brigham, Erin M., *See, Judge, Act: Catholic Social Teaching and Service Learning*, Minnesota: Anselm Academic, 2018; cf. Doug Specht, *The Media and Communications Study Skills Student Guide*, University of Westminster Press, 2019, p. 84).

Reclaiming Human Worth: A Hermeneutical Re-reading of Values in the *Bhagavadgītā*

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The flourishing of AI is enigmatic, yet its rapid growth is causing the massive displacement of human beings from the workforce and workplace. The data on corporate layoffs in 2026 is enormous, causing significant economic, social, and psychological harm to individuals. This paper argues that this world problem is, in reality, also a deep philosophical crisis, ultimately raising questions about the meaning of life, self-identity, and diminishing human worth. Rooted in a philosophical analysis of these questions, the write-up seeks philosophical solutions while maintaining the *Bhagavadgītā* (*BhG*) as the primary resource text—encompassing the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, which carries practical and existential wisdom and forms an integral part of the Indian epic *Mahābhārata*.

Employing the hermeneutical methodology, as also found in the Indian Philosophical tradition of *bhāṣya-s*—living philosophical commentaries that renew meanings across time while legitimising the reinterpretation of ancient texts in light of conversation with the present crises, the paper identifies the work crises into three situations as interpreted and elaborated within *BhG*: (a)The first is *viṣāda*, standing for extreme despondency and grief that develops on dwindling of the meaning of life as in the case of Arjuna, and resonates with what the present loss of work produces at its deepest human thinking. *BhG*, however, places significance on *viṣāda* in the first chapter—*Arjuna Viṣāda Yoga* (*BhG*.1.28-47) which treats despondency-based anxiety with philosophical maturity, framing it as a necessity for genuine inquiry.(b)The second situation is *moha* (*BhG*. 1.2.3.5.7.18, many verses), which denotes the delusion arising from the formation of a false identity and parallels how modern work culture forces individuals to locate their worth in designation, function, and measurable output. (c)The third is a confusion between *kṣetra*, *i.e.* the field, referring to the body, desires, emotions, role, skill, etc., as observable and measurable externally and *kṣetrajña*, meaning the knower of the field, *i.e.* the conscious self that inhabits but is never reducible to any role or function (*BhG*. 13.1-2). This lack of clarity allows human beings to be evaluated and discarded as dust, assigning on them the instrumental value over their irreducible conscious selves.

To address the three situations, the paper identifies four values inherent in the *BhG* as possible philosophical responses. The first is *niṣkāmakarma*, *i. e.* desireless action—actions performed with sincerity but with detachment from the consequences/results (*BhG* 2. 47). The write-up argues that the intrinsic worth of human action is not dependent on the result, evaluation, social validation or any external judgment. The second response is found in the value of *svadharma*, *i. e.* one's own path, meaning the inner calling that arises from one's deepest nature (*BhG*. 3. 35, 18.47. 47). The write- up interprets this as human irreplaceability, which no machine/automation/AI can replace, because *svadharma* arises from *svabhāva*, *i. e.* one's innate nature—unique conglomeration of qualities, capacities and consciousness that makes each human being distinctly himself/herself. Thus, human consciousness stands beyond automation. The third response is found in the value of *yajña*, *i. e.* sacred offering, as understood as work not as a transaction but as a contribution to something larger than one's own benefit that doesn't bind the person (*BhG*. 3. 3.9-16), and its fruit, *lokasaṁgraha*, *i.e.* the holding together of the world as the moral responsibility of each person to sustain the human community through their actions. This is a portrayal of the restoration of the relational and moral embeddedness of human actions, which are damaged by transactional models of work. The fourth response is found

in the value of *kṣetra- kṣetrajñā viveka*—the discrimination between the field and the knower of the field, which is the philosophical act of distinguishing what one does from who one is (*BhG*.13). It provides an ontological ground for the argument that the conscious self stands irreducible to roles, outputs or functioning.

The paper then turns to philosophical counselling as a living response to the present crisis of work and raises the question of philosophy of education. It highlights how *BhG* stands as an important text of philosophical counselling which can offer the person affected by a work crisis through not career redirection but self-reflection (*ātma vicāra*). Basing itself in *BhG*'s notions of *svabhāva* and *svadharma*, it proposes that educational philosophy ought to reorient itself toward self-knowledge, toward the intrinsic ethics of actions (*karma*), and toward the cultivation of human beings whose worth and purpose are never determined by the job market's uncertainties and insensitive work demands. The paper, with its hermeneutical argumentation, attempts to redefine the meaning of work and reclaim the human worth that has been impoverished by the vagaries of modern work culture. The hermeneutical rereading of the *BhG* with philosophical seriousness can serve as an indispensable guide to this reclamation.

Quest for Peace and Justice in South African Correctional Centres through Indigenous Art Forms: A Music Perspective

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Utilising Indigenous music within South African correctional centres offers a compelling avenue for rehabilitation and social change, enabling inmates to reconnect with their cultural heritage, express themselves, and foster empathy and understanding within the correctional centres and beyond. Despite existing literature acknowledging the potential of Indigenous art forms in carceral settings, significant gaps persist, including a lack of in-depth examination of implementation challenges and empirical research on long-term impacts. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the potential of Indigenous music programs to promote peace and rehabilitation within South African correctional centres. Employing a qualitative research approach and desktop analysis, the study draws on the Restorative Justice Theory to argue that Indigenous music can facilitate healing, reconciliation, and cultural reconnection among incarcerated individuals. Findings reveal the significant rehabilitative potential of Indigenous music programs, fostering community building and social cohesion among inmates. Ultimately, the integration of Indigenous music within correctional centres holds promise as a transformative tool for rehabilitation, promoting cultural identity, and contributing to a more just and equitable criminal justice system in South Africa.

Keywords: indigenous art forms, music perspective, South African correctional centres, peace and justice, restorative justice, offender rehabilitation

DISCUSSION POINT 10: Hermeneutic change in education and cross-cultural pedagogy

Hermeneutic Change in Priestly Formation in South Africa: A Philosophical Analysis

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This paper examines priestly formation in South Africa through the lens of philosophical hermeneutics, arguing that priestly formation is undergoing a process of hermeneutic change shaped by contemporary digital and cross-cultural contexts. It argues that many established formative guidelines in seminaries were developed within historical contexts characterized by limited access to media and strong institutional regulation of personal conduct. However, contemporary seminarians now operate within digitally mediated environments in which access to information, entertainment, and communication is continuous and largely unrestricted, thereby challenging the effectiveness of earlier disciplinary frameworks.

From a philosophical hermeneutical perspective, these developments are interpreted not as a collapse of formation, but as an indication of hermeneutic change in the conditions of understanding. Drawing on the philosophical thought of Hans-Georg Gadamer (2004) and Paul Ricoeur (1992), the paper argues that formation is always situated within historically shifting interpretive frameworks. Accordingly, changes in context necessitate corresponding changes in how formative practices are understood and applied. Paul Ricoeur's theory of interpretation and narrative identity further supports the view that human formation is a dynamic process of self-understanding mediated through evolving social and cultural symbols (Ricoeur, 1992).

The paper argues that priestly formation should therefore be understood as a hermeneutical process rather than a fixed system of rules. In this process, both formators and seminarians participate in the ongoing interpretation and re-interpretation of formative practices in light of contemporary realities. The example of changing media consumption practices illustrates the necessity of re-evaluating formation models in ways that remain faithful to their underlying spiritual and moral objectives while responding realistically to current conditions. The central research question is: How does hermeneutic change shape the understanding and practice of priestly formation in South African seminaries within contemporary digital and cross-cultural contexts?

The study concludes that priestly formation in South Africa is itself a site of hermeneutic change, requiring renewed philosophical reflection on how tradition is appropriated within modern contexts. It proposes that a more context-sensitive approach to formation is necessary for sustaining its relevance and integrity in a rapidly changing technological environment.

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Hermeneutics and Realms of Meaning

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Human existence and world are a hermeneutical space. Understanding and interpretation are indispensable human qualities. This is because all human symbols, texts, and languages require some interpretation in order to make sense of them. In this sense, interpretation is transmission of meaning or transmission of one's understanding to others. While this might seem simple, in the reality, there are a lot of hermeneutical challenges in terms of "misinterpretation". The challenges arise when the same text, symbol or cultural reality is interpreted differently to the point of being contrary or contradictory. In this paper, I explore the relationship between realms of meaning and hermeneutics. I opine that any hermeneutical venture is influenced by the realm of meaning in which an interpretation is based. Besides, because meaning is a shared reality, hermeneutics is meaningful when the persons, cultures or contexts involved in hermeneutical enterprise are operating from the same realm of meaning. However, hermeneutical error arises when they operate from two different realms. To actualise my goal in this paper, I will begin by exploring meaning and its realms from Lonergan inspired perspective. In the second section, I will explore the conception of hermeneutics. In the third section, I will explore the relationship between realms of meaning and hermeneutics to show why an explicit attention to the relationship will help to curb hermeneutical errors.

Challenges in values of Indian families in the age of globalization

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Family system in India has been based on age old values and traditions which vary throughout different parts of India. With the advance of globalization, these family values in youths beginning with Gen X at the beginning of the new millennium and now in the next generation of youths and adolescents called Gen Z is becoming more and more diluted in emotional depth with other family members in each new decade. This article speaks about the problems in value system of Indian families in the age of globalization. It begins with an introduction of the value systems in Indian joint families before the advent of globalization. Second, it visualizes the gradual transformation of joint families into nuclear families by mass migration of educated youths into bigger cities for better employment opportunities. Third, it speaks on the problems occurring in the value systems of Indian families with progress of every new decade of globalization and the advancing of the new millennium. Fourth, it also briefly highlights on how the degradation in values of the new generation impacts the moral health of the individual nations and their societies and the international harmony and welfare of the world in toto. Last, it speaks about how a balance can be attained between the changing values of youths and the age-old values of their elders or their parental generation which starts ageing up.

The methodology used would be qualitative and analytical and would comprise a mixture of primary sources as well as secondary documents ie. articles in journals and magazines of sociology and value ethics.

Keywords: Family system, joint, nuclear, values, mass- migration, globalization, cities, youths, elders, generation, harmony, moral health, Gen X, Gen Z

What Comes after the Critique? An Investigation of the Proposed African Decolonial Hermeneutics

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Decoloniality has challenged Western interpretations in African studies and realities. This can be termed as the coloniality of interpretation. Decolonial scholars like Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni have argued for African modes of understanding and interpretation that should not be captured, controlled, and directed by Eurocentric hermeneutics. They have predecessors in the likes of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Kwasi Wiredu. These have centred their argument on language, linguistic and conceptual decolonisation. In this paper, I argue that decoloniality carries both ambition and illusions; I offer a metacritical study of decolonial theory and present it as maladaptive daydreaming, a movement that destroys the world order without anything to replace it. I then offer decoloniality existential hermeneutics that makes explicit what is implicit in relation to the African condition and the aspirations of Africans.

The Return of the Repressed: A Fanonian Hermeneutic of the 2026 “Xenophobic” Intimidation of Undocumented Migrants in South Africa

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This paper develops a Frantz Fanon-based hermeneutic for interpreting the wave of xenophobic intimidation and violence directed at undocumented migrants in South Africa during the first half of 2026. Drawing on Fanon's theories of colonial violence, Manichaean division, the pitfalls of national consciousness, sociogenic pathology, and the psychic economy of resentment, I argue that the anti-migrant campaigns of 2026 - epitomized by groups such as the erstwhile Operation Dudula and March and March - constitute not a rupture from South Africa's post-apartheid democratic project but rather its haunting return. The violence against fellow foreigner-Africans represents the displaced enactment of colonial trauma, the failure of national consciousness to transcend its narrow ethnic boundaries, and the scapegoating of the migrant Other for the unfulfilled promises of liberation. Through a hermeneutic reading of news reports, testimonies, and organizational statements from the period, this paper demonstrates how Fanon's diagnostic tools illuminate the deep structural and psychic pathologies underlying contemporary South African xenophobia, revealing it as a symptom of incomplete decolonization. How are we to interpret this phenomenon? Mainstream analyses typically frame it through the lenses of economic scapegoating, political opportunism, or social dysfunction. Migrants are blamed for unemployment - which hovers above 30 percent - and for pressure on public services. Political actors exploit anti-immigrant sentiment for electoral gain. Social media amplifies disinformation and hate speech. All of these explanations are valid and necessary, yet they remain incomplete.

This paper proposes that a Fanonian hermeneutic - an interpretive framework derived from the work of Frantz Fanon - offers a deeper diagnostic purchase on the 2026 xenophobic violence. Fanon, the Martinique-born psychiatrist and revolutionary theorist of decolonization, developed a sophisticated apparatus for understanding the psychic and social pathologies produced by colonialism and its aftermaths. His concepts - the Manichaean division of the colonial world, the sociogenic production of racialized subjectivity, the pitfalls of national consciousness, the cathartic function of violence, and the intergenerational transmission of colonial trauma - provide tools for reading the 2026 violence not as an aberration but as a symptom of unfinished decolonization. A hermeneutic, in the tradition of Paul Ricoeur and others, is an art of interpretation that seeks to uncover meaning beneath or beyond surface appearances. A Fanonian hermeneutic of xenophobic intimidation asks: What does this violence mean? What psychic and social wounds does it express? What historical ghosts does it channel? What futures does it foreclose?

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The Ethics of Survival: Rethinking Environmental Justice and Charcoal Use in Energy-Poor African Societies

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Environmental ethics has largely developed within contexts where environmental degradation is associated with overconsumption, industrial production, and economic excess. However, this framework is insufficient for understanding environmental challenges in many parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, where approximately 80% of the population depends on charcoal and other forms of wood fuel as their primary source of household energy. This paper argues that environmental ethics requires a new hermeneutics from an African perspective, one that takes seriously the realities of energy poverty and survival-based resource use.

The paper contends that wood fuel and charcoal consumption in energy-poor societies is not merely an environmental problem but a conflict between three competing forms of justice, namely, distributive justice, ecological justice, and intergenerational justice. So rather than asking the simplistic question, “Should people stop using wood fuel?”, the paper proposes a deeper philosophical inquiry which seeks to investigate how societies should distribute ecological burdens when human survival itself depends upon environmental resources.

The central philosophical problem arises from a distinction that is often overlooked in environmental discourse. In wealthy societies, environmental degradation is frequently linked to excessive consumption. In poor societies, however, environmental degradation may arise from survival consumption. This leads to what is called **survival-emission paradox** which simply argues that “*those who contribute least to global ecological destruction may nevertheless be forced into environmentally harmful practices in order to survive*”.

To address this problem, the paper draws on the political philosophy of John Rawls. Although Rawls does not explicitly identify energy as a primary good, energy in the contemporary world functions as a basic social good necessary for cooking, health, education, and meaningful participation in society. From a Rawlsian perspective, policies that prohibit charcoal use without providing accessible alternatives impose disproportionate burdens on the least advantaged and therefore violate the Difference Principle.

The paper further engages the work of Axel Gosseries on intergenerational justice. Gosseries argues that justice toward future generations requires a fair distribution of benefits and burdens across time. This perspective underlines the need to balance present survival needs with obligations to future generations who will inherit degraded ecosystems.

The paper concludes by proposing a new hermeneutic grounded in the tradition of the common good. For this tradition Justice should recognize that environmentally harmful practices may be morally permissible when necessary for basic survival, but only under conditions in which institutions actively work to create accessible and sustainable alternatives. Such an approach moves environmental ethics beyond blame and toward a more humane, context-sensitive account of justice in energy-poor societies.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Energy Poverty, Charcoal Consumption, Distributive Justice, Ecological Justice, Intergenerational Justice, John Rawls, Axel Gosseries, African Philosophy.

Brief Biography of Emmanuel Ichidi

Emmanuel Ichidi is a Catholic priest from Zambia and a lecturer in philosophy at **St Anthony's Major Seminary**, a constituent college of the **Catholic University of Malawi**. He holds undergraduate degrees in Philosophy and Theology, as well as graduate degrees in Political Philosophy from the **Pontifical Gregorian University** in Rome and Bioethics from **Anáhuac University** in Mexico.

Fr. Ichidi currently serves as the **Dean of Studies** at St Anthony's Major Seminary. His academic work focuses primarily on **Moral and Political Philosophy**, with broader interests in bioethics, African philosophy and social justice. His research explores the intersection of ethics, politics, human dignity, and contemporary social challenges, particularly within African contexts.

Artificial Intelligence and the Crisis of *Homo Sapiens*: Hermeneutics of (Sociocentric) Personhood in the Digital Age

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The contemporary technological age is witnessing the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence (AI), the emergence of which has already been compared to the Scientific and Industrial Revolution (Russell and Norvig). A transformative breakthrough in the technological paradigm, Large Language Models (ChatGPT, DeepSeek, Claude AI...), are especially revolutionary; not only with respect to the way they gradually reshape human endeavours, but also in virtue of the challenges they raise. One of these challenges is a growing sense of existential anxiety. The comparison of AI with the Industrial Revolution indeed suggests that just as machines once replaced human muscle; AI systems may increasingly replace human thinking and decisionmaking. The increasing capacities of artificial intelligence, especially its tendency to outperform humans in cognitive tasks, raise questions concerning the place of wo/man in a world in which s/he seems to be challenged by forms of externalised intelligence.

In this paper, we argue that the rise of artificial intelligence and its associated anxieties necessitates rethinking the concepts of person and personhood. We suggest that this hermeneutics of personhood in the new technological paradigm involves a twofold movement. First, it examines existential anxiety in the face of AI and interprets it as a product of rationalistic accounts of personhood that prioritize cognition, rationality, and productivity. This move will establish that AI itself emerges from technological and cultural frameworks shaped by these same reductionist anthropologies. In this sense, AI is not merely an external challenge to humanity, but also a historical product of modern understandings of intelligence, efficiency, and calculability. If, these rationalistic anthropologies are reductionist understandings of the human person, the existential anxiety will prove to be essentially a crisis of *Homo sapiens*, that is, the rational-calculative conception of the human person. The second movement turns to relational models of personhood, drawing on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutics of selfhood. While AI systems may simulate communication and forms of interaction, they lack the existential relationality constitutive of the human person. This perspective reveals that overcoming existential anxiety requires moving beyond narrowly rationalistic conceptions toward a relational understanding of personhood grounded in intersubjectivity and ethical concerns. The paper therefore suggests that the emergence of AI exposes the inadequacy of reductionist anthropologies and invites a reinterpretation of the human person as fundamentally relational and meaning-seeking.

Integrating Nature and Culture, Ancient Wisdom and Sustainable Technology

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Recent discoveries in the sciences, social sciences and neuroscience confirm that nations can and should integrate their indigenous, religious and spiritual traditions and ways of life with sustainable green technology. Our common humanity, our basic drives, are being deliberately exploited for profit. Aristotle's model of human flourishing explains how to integrate ancient views of wisdom with knowledge, science and technology.

In 2015, Pope Francis presented *Laudato Si*, arguing that people of faith must care for the earth. The Pope was present at the release of the U.N.'s seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In early 2015, 193 nations met in Paris to sign the Accords, agreeing to move their nations toward a sustainable future. In 2017, Francis convened prominent scholars from different branches of the world's largest religious traditions, secular humanists, and representative of nature-based traditions. They used Aristotle's model of virtue ethics as a starting point. "Ethics-in-Action for Sustainable Development" contains essays that show the traditions agree on basic virtues, they agree on an Aristotelian model of the common good and they agree on the importance of the SDGs. They also discussed corruption and the need for a new, humanistic economic system. They call for "a new virtue ethic" to account for advances in science and technology.

In 2014, Fritjof Capra and Luisi Luigi published, "The Systems View of Life: A Unifying Vision." They explain how views of nature and human nature during the Western Enlightenment have led us to the brink of destruction. They then explain the paradigm shift from modern Western science to the Systems paradigm. They explain shifts in physics, chemistry, biology and other sciences as well as the shift from Enlightenment views of psychology, social science and social systems. The shift is from the mechanistic worldview and the reductionistic, materialistic worldview of empiricism to the biologically-based systems view. On this view, spirituality and the world's religious traditions are compatible with seeing ourselves as part of the biosphere. Culture emerges from nature; the cultures we create need to be sustainable.

Many more recent scholars and professionals have exposed the corruption and self-destruction of the global pseudo-civilization created by a global economy that exploits both nature and human beings. Surprisingly, Aristotle's model of flourishing is their goal, without realizing how many others agree. The paper summarizes these books, "The Hacking of the American Mind," by Robert Lustig (metabolic disorders caused by processed foods); "The Myth of Normal," by Gabor Mate (toxic stress); Jonathan Haidt's "The Anxious Generation" (social media and teen mental disorders); Chris Hedges, "The Illusion of Empire" (celebrity culture, pornography, etc.), "Transhumanism" by Francis Fukayama (Aristotle and the Biotechnology revolution). Recently, the Pope has publicized an encyclical about A.I. using an Aristotelian framework. Christopher Olah, co-founder of Anthropic, sat on a panel with the Pope, confirming the need for an ethical framework for A.I. There is a working group at Oxford, "Why A.I. Needs Aristotle."

Ethical Hermeneutics and in the African Context: The importance of Conversation

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The question of “how we ought to live?” has generated centuries of normative ethics, yet the field remains stuck to prescribing rigid rules that ignore the actual complexity of moral decision-making. In this paper, we argue that genuine and unbiased conversation is indispensable to interpreting a people’s ethical beliefs and practices. Historically, to the present, Western anthropologists and other researchers interpret African values using Western standards and tools with the African’s voice completely muzzled. The outcome of this has been wrong, biased and to some extent racist and unjustified interpretations. In view of this, we argue that correct, fair and responsible interpretation can only emerge in conversation with members of the African cultural communities themselves. It is only through open and genuine conversation that one gets to know why a certain people believe what it believes and act the way it acts. Values cannot be fully and correctly interpreted or understood without paying attention to the context; and context can only be grasped in conversation with the group under study. The theoretical framework applied in this study is the Conversational Philosophy by Chimakonam – that redefines knowledge as knowledge produced through dialogue, criticism and complementarity between differing views, rejecting monologic and exclusionary patterns of producing knowledge.

Keywords: normative ethics, complexity, ethical hermeneutics, conversational philosophy, dialogue

Crisis of Values, Gynist Philosophy and Hermeneutic Reconstruction of Values

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Human communities no longer share a stable foundation for understanding right and wrong, true and false, or meaningful and meaningless. The contemporary political, economic, technological, and cultural order has fragmented the interpretive frameworks that once made moral life coherent. This paper argues that the crisis of values is not the absence of morality but a breakdown in how meaning is formed, shared, and sustained. Digital acceleration, algorithmic mediation, and global pluralism have disrupted inherited traditions without offering coherent alternatives. Drawing on Marie Pauline Eboh's Gynist philosophy, this study advances a reconstructive response grounded in relational ethics and dialogical reciprocity. Using philosophical hermeneutics, conceptual analysis, and normative reconstruction, the paper shows how Gynism purifies cultural distortions without erasing tradition. The nine Gynist principles, including accommodationist love, mutual respect, dialogue, complementarity, care, equity, and environmental sustainability, provide concrete pathways for ethical and social renewal. The paper further examines how globalist digitality reshapes understanding through surveillance, acceleration, and fragmented discourse. It proposes a digital hermeneutic that adapts traditional interpretation to algorithmically mediated environments. While Gynist philosophy offers a robust ethical foundation, sustained application across institutions, technologies, and educational practices remains necessary for systemic transformation. By positioning African philosophical discourse within global conversations on hermeneutics, digitality, and relational justice, this paper contributes a dialogical and humanistic framework for navigating civilizational crisis toward sustainable ethical reconstruction.

Keywords: Gynist philosophy, hermeneutics, cultural values, relational ethics, globalist digitality digital hermeneutic

From Empathy to Entertainment: The Consumption of Violence in the Digital Age

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The contemporary digital landscape has transformed violence from a social problem to a widely consumed form of media content. Across social media platforms, streaming services, news outlets, and digital networks, images and videos depicting assaults, gender-based violence, public humiliation, armed conflict, and other forms of human suffering are increasingly viewed, shared, and discussed by global audiences. While digital technologies have expanded access to information and increased awareness of social issues, they have also contributed to the commodification of violence, where human suffering is frequently transformed into content for public consumption. This phenomenon raises important ethical questions regarding the state of empathy, moral responsibility, and human dignity in contemporary society. This paper employs a systematic literature review to critically examine existing scholarship on the consumption of violence in the digital age and its implications for the crisis of values in contemporary society. Drawing on theories of moral disengagement, media desensitization, and Cultural Criminology, the review explores how repeated exposure to violent content can alter emotional responses to suffering, weaken empathetic engagement, and normalize violence within everyday digital experiences. The paper further investigates how digital platforms and contemporary media cultures encourage spectatorship, where individuals become passive consumers of violence rather than active moral agents responding to injustice. The study argues that the widespread consumption of violence reflects broader shifts in social values, characterised by increasing indifference to suffering, the erosion of communal responsibility, and the prioritisation of entertainment over ethical reflection. By examining the relationship between digital media, violence, and moral consciousness, the paper contributes to ongoing debates concerning the crisis of values in the contemporary age. It concludes by advocating for ethical media literacy, digital responsibility, and value-based educational approaches that foster empathy, critical reflection, and respect for human dignity in increasingly mediated societies.

Targeted Sanctions and the Reinterpretation of Universal Values in Global Politics

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Targeted sanctions are punitive instruments deployed either to enforce neutral norms or to advance geopolitical interests. As such, a great many studies on sanctions have focused on the formulation, application, monitoring, and, most importantly, effectiveness of targeted sanctions. This paper argues that the study of targeted sanctions should be understood as fertile ground where the meaning of universal values is not merely applied but continuously interpreted and contested in global politics. Drawing from a hermeneutic framework, this study seeks to demonstrate that targeted sanctions have become the medium through which universal values are being reinterpreted. Viewed through these lenses, human rights and democracy – two of the major reasons for sanctioning - as well as international responsibility, are not fixed instances or self-evident values. Instead, these acquire meaning through historically situated acts of interpretation by institutions, political struggles, and power asymmetries. This paper argues that targeted sanctions should be understood not only as foreign policy tools at governments' disposal for punishing belligerents but also as interpretive tools through which political actors continue to negotiate the boundaries of legitimacy and universality. In other words, targeted sanctions provide a platform for interpreting universal values, with some enforced while others are relegated to the periphery. The hermeneutic tradition allows one to explore the nuances between normativity and power in the sense that, on the one hand, targeted sanctions seem to defend universal principles, yet, on the other, they also reveal the complexity of how such principles are mediated by context, selective application, and strategic interests.

By situating targeted sanctions within a hermeneutic framework, this paper seeks to contribute to debates in international relations and global ethics in three ways. First, it seeks to reconceptualise targeted sanctions as interpretive rather than merely coercive foreign policy tools. Second, the study seeks to demonstrate that universal values in global politics are neither purely transcendent nor reducible to power but emerge through contested processes. Third, the paper offers a critical account of legitimacy, highlighting how claims to universality are sustained, challenged, and redefined in practice. Through this exploratory process, this study calls for a new way of thinking about targeted sanctions, departing from the basic understanding of sanctions as foreign policy tools and recognising them as sites where the meaning of the universal is politically at stake.

Keywords: Targeted Sanctions, Hermeneutics, Universal values, Power.

Artificial Intelligence as a Hermeneutical Limit-Case: Rethinking Personhood in African Philosophical Anthropology

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The development of artificial intelligence (AI) represents not merely technological innovation but a profound hermeneutic shift in how human identity is interpreted within contemporary culture. Systems capable of simulating reasoning, language production, and decision-making increasingly challenge cognition-based definitions of personhood. This paper argues that AI functions as a *hermeneutical limit-case* that destabilises reductive accounts of the human and compels a re-reading of African philosophical anthropology. Within many African traditions, personhood is understood relationally and dynamically rather than as an isolated rational substance (Mbiti 1969; Menkiti 1984). Yet modern technological culture has often privileged rational autonomy as the defining feature of humanity. The emergence of AI, which can approximate rational operations, exposes the fragility of such cognition-centred anthropology. If machines can simulate reasoning, rationality alone cannot ground human uniqueness.

Drawing on philosophical hermeneutics (Gadamer 1975) and Charles Taylor's notion of the socially embedded self (Taylor 1989), this paper situates AI within a broader interpretive perspective. AI does not rival humanity but reconfigures the conditions under which "the human" is understood. It reveals dimensions of personhood that resist computational replication: embodied existence, moral accountability, historicity, and participation in communal life. By engaging AI through African relational frameworks, the paper demonstrates that communitarian conceptions of personhood offer critical resources for resisting technological reductionism. AI thus becomes not a threat to human dignity but a catalyst for philosophical clarification. As a hermeneutical limit-case, it intensifies the question of what it means to become a person in an age increasingly mediated by intelligent machines.

The Eurasian aspect of the basic values of Russian society

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In the 21st century, the emergence of a society with a single (mostly Western) center of "domination" and the spirit of "global civilization," along with the introduction of Western paradigms into various spheres of life in non-Western societies, increases the risk of a crisis in their traditional spiritual, moral, and ethnocultural values. One challenge is free access to the virtual information space, which is plagued by distortions of ideology and important, established core values. This makes it crucial to understand that the cultural experience of every people, regardless of size, possesses universal significance and value. In this context, the philosophy of intercultural dialogue has acquired particular relevance: dialogue with the historical past; dialogue between religions to prevent interreligious conflicts; and so on.

Periods of value crises are natural stages in the development of any society. The causes of the crisis have been sought in disappointment with technological advances (Toynbee), the absence of value ideals (Camus), the loss of lofty ideals (Jaspers), and so on. According to Jaspers, the preservation of these ideals is possible primarily through internal contact with one's historical and cultural roots. This is important for modern Russia as a multinational and multi-confessional state. Contemporary threats to national security include a system of ideas and values alien to the peoples of Russia, which is instilled through psychological and ideological influence. Currently, there is a need for a more fundamental understanding of Russia as a Eurasian power.

The Baikal region of Russia has a centuries-old history of intercultural ties that have shaped the synthesis of the cultural and religious traditions of various peoples. Its territory hosted the spiritual centers of the entire Mongolosphere—the vast region of Central Asia—and witnessed cultural changes (from a nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle, modifications to stereotypes, and more). The indigenous peoples of the region developed a system of ethno-ecological principles over centuries, and their worldview was formed on a spiritual and value-based foundation, emphasizing the priority of spiritual culture over material culture. In the face of modern challenges, the need to address the values of cultural heritage, linked to the archetypes of historically established mentality and reflecting the fundamental ontological categories of worldview: Space, Time, Life, Destiny, and others, has become particularly pressing.

The Commodification of the Sacred: An Ethical Investigation of the Effects of the Ethnomedicine Trade on the Environment in Kinshasa Province, Democratic Republic of Congo

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In the City Province of Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), nature has long been viewed not merely as a material resource but as a living entity rich in cultural and spiritual significance. These indigenous belief systems have long informed models of environmental stewardship rooted in relationality and reciprocity. However, rising local and international demand for ethnomedical products has intensified the commercial exploitation of these natural resources. This has created a severe tension between traditional ecological values and capitalist market pressures.

The current paper ethically investigates the effects of this commercialisation on both the environment and indigenous value systems in Kinshasa. It asks: How can indigenous beliefs in Kinshasa Province be retrieved to address contemporary socio-ecological crises? Framing this problem through environmental hermeneutics, the paper examines how the commodification of nature alters traditional moral responsibilities toward the environment.

The paper uses a qualitative, exploratory case study design. Primary data were generated through semi-structured interviews with 12 purposively selected ethnomedicine sellers across Kinshasa Province. The findings reveal an ethical paradox: while Kinois sellers explicitly recognise that their harvesting practices, such as stripping bark, cutting rare plants, and gathering animal bones, cause ecological degradation, severe socioeconomic pressures, including poverty and systemic unemployment, compel them to continue to survive. Furthermore, although provincial government regulations exist to manage these practices, institutional enforcement has failed, shifting the burden of ecological care back onto local communities.

The paper therefore argues that the commercialisation of ethnomedicine has reduced sacred ecological spaces into mere economic commodities. By bringing environmental hermeneutics into dialogue with indigenous knowledge systems, the study shows that a sustainable future depends on recovering localised values of care, respect, and shared communal obligations. The paper concludes that retrieving these indigenous eco-philosophies offers an important approach for developing more inclusive, culturally grounded, and ethically responsive environmental policies in the DRC.

Naming, Identity, and Well-being: A Hermeneutic-Psychological Analysis of Changing Naming Practices in African Cultures

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Naming practices in many African societies have historically served as more than systems of personal identification; they function as cultural and psychological mechanisms through which communities transmit values, construct identity, and situate individuals within networks of meaning and belonging. Traditional names often embody communal histories, spiritual beliefs, ancestral continuity, circumstances of birth, and collective aspirations, thereby providing interpretive frameworks through which individuals come to understand themselves and their place in the world. However, contemporary African societies are witnessing significant transformations in naming practices due to the influence of religion, globalization, urbanization, and intercultural exchange. Increasing adoption of Christian, Western, and hybrid naming systems reflects broader shifts in cultural values and understandings of personhood, belonging, and identity. While these changes may create new forms of social and spiritual affiliation, they also raise important questions regarding the preservation, reinterpretation, or loss of culturally embedded sources of meaning. Drawing on hermeneutic theory, particularly the works of Gadamer and Ricoeur, and informed by perspectives from psychological wellbeing theory and narrative identity theory, this paper explores naming practices as sites of value formation and psychological meaning-making. Using data from African naming traditions, with particular reference to the Efik cultural context, the paper examines how names function as interpretive resources that shape identity formation, cultural continuity, and well-being. It further analyzes how transformations in naming practices reveal changing cultural narratives and evolving conceptions of the self. The paper argues that naming practices are not merely cultural rituals but hermeneutic acts that influence psychological well-being by shaping self-concept, belonging, cultural rootedness, and existential meaning. By bringing hermeneutics into dialogue with African psychology, the study contributes to contemporary discussions on value transformation, identity, and the role of cultural practices in fostering human flourishing in changing societies.

Keywords: Hermeneutics, African psychology, Naming practices, Psychological well-being, Identity formation

Professional Bio

Adie Gabriel-Mario Ugbong is a Counselling Psychologist currently working in clinical practice and mental health service delivery. He holds a master's degree in counselling psychology and is currently pursuing doctoral studies in the same field, with a developing focus on culturally grounded and context-sensitive approaches to mental health. His academic background also includes training in Philosophy, which informs his interest in meaning-making, interpretation, and the conceptual foundations of human experience. His research interests lie at the intersection of trauma psychology, African psychology, and culturally responsive mental health interventions. He is particularly engaged in exploring how indigenous knowledge systems, cultural narratives, and contextual realities shape psychological well-being and therapeutic processes in African settings.

Hermeneutic Transformations of Values in Wartime Ukraine: Godforsakenness and the Search for Meaning

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This paper explores how the experience of war in contemporary Ukraine transforms cultural values and ways of understanding human suffering, responsibility, and hope. Focusing on the writings of Victoria Amelina and Maksym Kryvtsov, it examines wartime literature as a space where people seek meaning in the face of violence, loss, and uncertainty.

Drawing on philosophical hermeneutics, particularly the insights of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer, the paper argues that war changes not only social and political realities but also the interpretive frameworks through which individuals and communities understand themselves and the world. Concepts such as dignity, memory, sacrifice, faith, and responsibility are reinterpreted through lived experiences of war.

Particular attention is given to the experience of divine silence or Godforsakenness. Rather than leading only to despair, this experience often becomes a source of deeper reflection on human responsibility, solidarity, and resilience. The writings of Amelina and Kryvtsov show how traditional religious and cultural symbols are given new meanings in response to the realities of war.

The paper contributes to discussions on hermeneutic change by showing how contemporary Ukrainian wartime literature reflects the transformation of values and cultural meanings during a time of profound crisis.

Patriarchy, Power, and the Crisis of Values: Understanding Gender-Based Violence in Contemporary South Africa

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Despite progressive constitutional protections, legislative reforms, and sustained public advocacy, gender-based violence (GBV) remains a deeply entrenched social problem in South Africa. Its persistence points to more than legal or institutional shortcomings, raising fundamental concerns about the moral and social values that structure gender relations. This paper examines GBV through the framework of the contemporary crisis of values, arguing that violence against women and other vulnerable groups is sustained by entrenched patriarchal systems that normalise inequality, domination, and the unequal distribution of power. Rather than viewing GBV as isolated acts of deviance, the paper situates it within broader socio-cultural and institutional contexts in which certain forms of violence are rendered acceptable, invisible, or justified. Methodologically, the study adopts a systematic literature review to synthesise and critically evaluate existing scholarly work on GBV, patriarchy, power relations, and value systems in South Africa and comparable contexts. The reviewed literature is analysed thematically to identify dominant patterns in how gender inequality is produced, maintained, and challenged. The analysis is guided by feminist theory, theories of patriarchy, and African communitarian ethics, particularly Ubuntu, which offers an alternative moral framework centred on human dignity, relationality, and social harmony. The paper argues that addressing GBV requires more than legal enforcement; it demands a transformation of the underlying value systems that shape gendered power relations. It concludes that reimagining social norms through value-based and culturally grounded frameworks is essential for fostering gender justice, ethical citizenship, and non-violent communities in contemporary South Africa.

Environmental hermeneutics of revaluation of nature: A critical theological reflection on ‘Laudato Si’

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Pope Francis, in his encyclical ‘Laudato Si’, left us a legacy of engaging directly with the deeper meaning of the gift of nature to humanity. The four pillars of Laudato Si’ have immensely enriched Theology and Development by providing environmental hermeneutics of faith and a justice-oriented framework for environmental action by moving ecological concerns and fears from the periphery of development to its ethical and theological core as an advocacy for a just, sustainable, and inclusive future for both people and the planet. The inseparability of social and environmental issues is at the centre of Theology and Development, particularly within African contexts. Laudato Si’ (Pope Francis, 2015) advocates for an integrated approach to ecological and social crises, yet African scholars caution against uncritical adoption of its Western theological frameworks. Katongole (2022) stresses the importance of incorporating African indigenous spirituality and cosmology to make ecological theology contextually relevant. Furthermore, Aina (2017) critiques the encyclical’s limited engagement with Africa’s complex political and economic realities that sustain environmental injustices. Critics like Montgomery (2015) also warn that policies inspired by Laudato Si’ may inadvertently deepen poverty by raising energy costs in low-income regions. Despite these concerns, African theologians such as Mugambi (2001) and Phiri (2009) argue that concepts like ubuntu offer valuable insights into human dignity, social justice, and ecological harmony. To achieve environmental justice in Africa, it becomes imperative to adopt a holistic theological response that addresses socio-economic inequalities, gender disparities, and the ongoing damages of colonial land dispossession (Terreblanche, 2002). Theological frameworks must therefore be grounded in African local realities, such as Izangoma and Izinyanga (African doctors), who depend on forest and rivers for their practices while engaging global discourses, ensuring that environmental ethics are both contextually meaningful and socially transformative within post-apartheid South Africa.

Keywords: Environmental hermeneutics; Laudato Si’.