

On Universalising and Indigenising the Meaning and Practice of Love post COVID-19

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The central argument of this scholarly work may be unpacked in terms of ontological, axiological and epistemological themes. Ontologically, it is argued that COVID-19 may well continue to be a required catalyst for planetary survival, interconnectedness and collaboration for health promotion and sustainable ecology. The axiological theme is that COVID-19 reminds humanity of the vital importance of the everyday practice of love, regarded as an ultimate human value in many wisdom traditions. Epistemologically, it is argued that knowledge of love requires both universalisation and indigenisation. The particular aim of this paper is to present indigenous isiZulu concepts for different types of love and to describe aspects of isiZulu culture, norms and practices in which these constructs have their deepest manifestations. In a specific attempt to contribute to the body of knowledge, and to universalise and decolonise love constructs by drawing on isiZulu culture, we explore the following question: What contributions do African, particularly Zulu, cultural views make to the theory and practice of love after COVID-19? We draw on two theories for our framework: Lee's (1976) colour wheel theory of love and the African renaissance. We adopt an autoethnographic lens through which we present rich and deep indigenous personal experiences and cultural narratives about various forms of love. We conclude that in addition to embracing classical Greek views of love such as *eros*, *storge*, *philia*, *ludus*, *mania*, *pragma*, *philautia* and *agape*, isiZulu cultural experience and expression provides meaningful depth and breadth for the theory and practice of love after COVID-19. In addition to ideal forms of love, particular provision is also made for its everyday value through such universal practices as respect (*inhlonipho*) and caring mutual, human relationships (*Ubuntu*).

Key words: *COVID-19, Practice of Love, Universalisation and Indigenisation*

Introduction

On 31 December 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) declared COVID-19 a pandemic requiring emergency management. There seems little doubt that, as collective humanity, global citizens of our parent, planet earth, we are responsible for the pandemic. News media are filled with accounts of corruption, crime, injustice, international terrorism. Freud invoked the concept of the death drive, Thanatos, to explain such endemic destructiveness. The equivalent isiZulu concept is *ubuthakathi* (Ngubane, 1977). It is a drive toward death and destruction which manifests itself through interpersonal conflict and behaviours such as aggression, repetition compulsion and self-destructiveness (Berne, 1975: 399–400; Segal, 1964: 12). All this occurs in an ecological context of global warming and shocking natural disasters. Overpopulation, inequity, unemployment, poverty and illness are the norm. Arguably inhabitants of planet earth have never experienced such stress, pathos and collective consciousness of their profound interconnectedness. In their editorial comment on “COVID-19: Lost opportunities and lessons for the future” Saqr and Wasson (2020) emphasise that a global pandemic requires global efforts. We opine that COVID-19 guarantees planetary crises and opportunities to advance planetary wisdom, survival, interconnectedness, collaboration, health promotion and sustainable ecology.

The origins and development of philosophy are surely deeply rooted in the involution and evolution of consciousness itself, especially via developing humanity’s wonder, intuition and exploration through various forms of meditation and related action. Human evolutionary genetics, as well as hieroglyphic linguistic evidence, indicate African early developmental sites (Jobling, Hurles, & Tyler-Smith, 2004). These regions certainly contributed towards the development of philosophy, particularly as later conveyed by the Greek etymological “love of wisdom”. As Obenga, (2004, p. 33) argues, original African philosophy was not only reflective, but engaged with love, desire and enthusiasm to investigate reality and build up a system of values such as “*maat*” the daughter and eye of Ra, fecund with holistic meanings such as reality, truth, justice, integrity and transcendent love.

This common theme and holistic values influenced many African philosophers such as Imhotep, Origen, Augustine and Plotinus. (Anakwe, 2017; Diop, 1981; Obenga, 2004, Wilber, 2000) and subsequent wisdom traditions, especially those that arose in nearby the Nile River Valley, Greece and Rome, then wider with the African diaspora. For example, Freud, Jung, Wilber and others would describe the life drive or drive towards survival of self and species as Eros (Freud, 1952; Jung, 1961; Wilber, 2000). This life drive toward the propagation of and ultimately the survival of the species counteracts the death drive or Thanatos. Arguing from a Taoist perspective, Reid (1998) opines that wisdom traditions converge on two basic beliefs. First, the energy, will and/or intention, that created the universe and all life, is guided by a set of primordial principles, often called wisdom or truth, that transcend all cultural definitions. Second, the universal energy of creation is motivated and accompanied by that compassionate

empathy for life called love. Reid (1998) further argues that the three inseparable virtues or forces of the universe, i.e. wisdom, love and power, require constant balance and harmony. Power without wisdom is destructive, power without love is cold, love without power is impotent, and wisdom without power is useless. Liu and MacDonald (2016:311) specifically argue for greater global consciousness, particularly knowledge of both the interconnectedness and difference of humankind, and will to take moral appropriate actions. (Küng, 1997) claims that the Golden Rule, treating others as oneself, in one form or another, is found in all world religions and cultural ethical systems. While Christianity's central focus is love, compassion finds greater emphasis in Islam and Buddhism. Benevolence, particularly as played out in unequal but complementary role relationships, is the glue that holds people together in Confucianism. The value systems provided by these different philosophies and religions, also include integral concepts such as compassionate love, Ubuntu, respect, empathy, social coherence and/or moral interdependence (Chiesi, Lau & Saklofske, 2020; Hlongwane, et.al, 2018).

Research questions

In order to contribute to knowledge, universalise and decolonise love constructs, with special reference to honouring indigenous African and isiZulu, cultural, we explore the following question: What contributions do African, particularly isiZulu, cultural views make to the theory and practice of love post COVID-19?

Theoretical Framework

In isiZulu culture, love (*uthando*) is understood as a natural function of the original Creator *uMvelinqangi*, working (*ukusebenza*) through the ancestors (*amadlozi*) (Berglund, 1976, Ngubane, 1977). Here the word *umsebenzi*, implies work, love and sacrifice. In this context, love is the evolutionary pinnacle of the creative instinct or life drive. In his autobiographical study, Freud (1952, p.64) wrote: "I have combined the instincts for self-preservation and for the preservation of the species under the concept of Eros and have contrasted it with an instinct of death or destruction, which works in silence." Sharing similar views are Jung (1961, p.387), who speaks of Eros as a "*kosmogenos*, a creator and father-mother of all higher consciousness" and Wilber (2000, p.128) who speaks of Eros as "Spirit –in-action" similarly to the way the poet Dante Alighieri sang mystically of "the love that moves the sun and all the other stars" (Assagioli, 1985, p.130). When we extrapolate our understanding of love in evolutionary, historical and socio-cultural contexts, we draw on two theories for our framework: Lee's (1976) colour wheel theory of love and the African renaissance.

Lee's (1976) colour wheel theory of love posits that love can be categorised into primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Primary love types include *eros*, *ludus*, and *storge*, whereas secondary levels entails *mania*, *agape* and *pragma* and the tertiary level has nine types of love,

all of which are combinations of the six types of love in the primary and secondary levels. In this paper, we intentionally limit our discussion to the primary and secondary levels of the color wheel theory of love. According to Lee (1976), the primary types of love are the foundation upon which the other types of love can be built. We pay particular attention to *eros*, with a small “e”, to connote instinctual, physical, sex, erotic and romantic love, as distinct from Eros, with a capital “E” to connote the more abstract form of this creative drive to life, love and light. As a philosophical movement, African renaissance was first described by Nkwame Nkrumah. The use of African renaissance as a theoretical lens through which we should observe our surroundings as African people was proposed by the Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop in 1946 (Mekoa, 2018). After the turn of the millennium, Thabo Mbeki, the former South African president galvanised the importance of African renaissance for African people. The essence of African renaissance is the rebirth, reawakening and rediscovery of the continent of Africa (Mekoa, 2018). In scholarly work, African renaissance represents an “idea, a philosophical world view and principle based on the experiences of African people” (Mswazie and Mudyahoto, 2013, p. 172). We argue that African renaissance, combined with the colour wheel theory of love, provide theoretical frameworks for an ideal vehicle through which epistemic emancipation can be achieved. This will emancipate African people to participate in a knowledge journey that they have for long walked on as consumers, rather than producers of knowledge, resulting in a legacy of an impoverished knowledge base. Reflecting the influence of colonialism, this knowledge base has also too often reflected Western paradigms of knowledge. We discuss this in detail in the next section.

Research premises

Our argument has five premises. First, converging lines of evidence from such scientific disciplines as genetics, linguistics, palaeontology and archaeology point consistently to Africa as the human cradle of civilization. *Homo sapiens* apparently evolved over a hundred thousand years ago and gradually emigrated across the Sinai Peninsula some fifty thousand years later. In addition to Eros, epi-genetics, vital factors such as consciousness, social relationships, bonding, communication, language, creativity, and intelligence seem to have ensured survival of our species (Jobling, Hurles & Tyler-Smith, 2004; Myers, 1993). Humanity’s African origins may well explain the homecoming feeling experienced by many on returning to Africa, after however many years. This feeling seems particularly strong among recent members of the African diaspora, who often remark on roots experiences and homecoming feelings when visiting or returning to Africa.

Second, the history of the largest Southern African ethnic group of isiZulu speaking people is immersed with that of the Bantu, the isiZulu collective noun for ‘people’, who emigrated from the forests along the Nile River Valley in today’s Egypt (Diop, 1981; Wiredu, 2004). It is this connection of isiZulu-speaking people to the Nile River Valley in which many Greek philosophers such as Pythagoras, Herodotus, Plato and Aristotle spent a considerable amount

of time being taught mathematics, science and philosophy by African philosophers and thinkers that has motivated the writing of this paper (Anakwe, 2017; Diop, 1981; Obenga, 2004). There are striking similarities on the interpretation of the construct of love and the centrality to life attached to the heart by both the Greeks and isiZulu-speaking people. which warrant a scholarly exploration. Perhaps, what is even more intriguing is how the Greeks describe the eight constructs of love in a manner that mirrors many of isiZulu-speaking people's culture, norms and routines in which similar concepts exist.

Third, equity and redress require universalisation of knowledge, irrespective of its place of origin and/or context. Constructs, such as love in this case, possess universal application, and unless researchers tap into alternative pools of knowledge creation and production, the application of the constructs thereof is incomplete. The concept of universalising knowledge is consistent with decolonisation and/or indigenisation of knowledge, which argue for the understanding of knowledge creation and production from its own socio-cultural, regional and national context. The lack of alternative voices and decolonised knowledge creation and production has been characterised as epistemic violence through provincialising certain regions, which in effect dehumanizes others (Msila, 2020).

Fourth, indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) across planet earth have traditionally honoured life as a deeply interconnected whole. Similar to other African communities, isiZulu people have long recognized that survival depends on harmonious social and ecological relationships. Myers (1993) has articulated ancient African fundamental philosophical assumptions. The main ontological assumption is a pervading spiritual energy as source of all phenomena. "Spirit" is known in an extrasensory fashion via energy/consciousness/ God and an extended Self-concept which includes ancestors, all of nature and the entire community. Prevailing logic embraces polarities yielding "both/and" conclusions, with axiology and ntuology respectively, emphasizing communal, human, spiritual networks (Myers, 1993, Ngubane, 1977).

Fifth, African ancestral consciousness and reverence for respected senior clansmen, living and dead, forms the essential foundation for most wisdom and cultural traditions. For example, isiZulu people believe that extended family kinship ancestors play a role of protecting the home, keeping harmony. Ancestral consciousness implies reverence, respect and care. Ancestral ceremonies bring a re-establishment of archetypal and psychodynamic harmony between humans and spiritual forces, providing balance between people in their individual, familial and/or collective unconscious and/or consciences, and ancestral heritage in the forces of nature on land, trees, rivers and seas (Edwards, 2011). Ubuntu includes transgenerational, human, social relationships, as poetically portrayed in the isiZulu saying "*umuntu umuntu ngabantu*". This saying literally refers to the fact that a person becomes a person through other people, including the mutually validating "only through you do I become an I" and "I am because we are". The saying has deeper implications of a shared sense of self in both temporal

and spatial dimensions that include the common ancestral heritage of contemporary humanity (Edwards, 2011, p. 343).

Africa has also readily embraced wisdom and cultural traditions from other continents and regions. As distinct from Northern Africa, which is primarily Islamic, in Africa, south of the Sahara, the colonial influence of Christianity is also apparent. The largest Southern African religious organization, the African Indigenous Church (AIC) movement, inclusively embraces both ancestral consciousness/reverence and Christianity. This movement, with religious roots in the African National Congress, founded in 1912, deserves special mention for its role in preventing violent civil war among warring political groups, during and after Apartheid struggles (Edwards, 2011).

In South African apartheid days many students self-referred for counselling, expressing the conflict that they were caught between ancestral consciousness and Christianity. The mediation solution was that Jesus is an ancestor - the greatest ancestor from the Christian perspective-along with all the other ancestral saints who continued to heal and guide humanity. Similar, inclusive, resolutions may be found for whatever conflict, e.g. many parasuicide situations, reflecting Moslem and Hindu cultural conflicts. From an integral psychological perspective, considerable theory (Wilber 2000), as well as practical experience, also teaches that solutions to physical, psychological, religious and political conflicts emerge spontaneously, or readily, if people are able and/or assisted to transcend and include earlier developmental stages, at whatever the level of impasse, intrapersonal, interpersonal, transpersonal and ecological.

Love as expressed through Zulu cultural traditions

Eros (erotic love as well as creative life drive): It is a type of love most akin to the modern construct of romantic love. In explaining *eros*, the former and late South African president Nelson Mandela recalled, "I cannot say for certain if there is such a thing as love at first sight, but I do know that the moment I first glimpsed Winnie Nomzamo, I knew that I wanted to have her as my wife." (Mandela, 2013, p 26.).

IsiZulu-speaking people believe that *eros* is provided by *Mvelinqangi* (The One who appeared or existed first before all mankind) and/or *uNkulunkulu* (the one who is greatest of all human beings) and *amadlozi* (ancestors) to ensure species' survival. Thus, *eros* in isiZulu culture is considered the foundation upon which the family unit is built. Young males and females are taught how to carry themselves so that when they come of age and they can engage in *eros*, it is done appropriately. Males and females are encouraged to maintain virginity or purity) before marriage (as in many other cultures).

Philia (affectionate or friendship love) typically develops naturally from such cultural tradition. The best characterisation of *philia* is in a romantic relationship whereby what starts out as *eros*

tends to gravitate towards *storge* in due course, once a couple has been together for some time. It is common to hear couples expressing fondness of their partners and referring to them as ‘friends’. COVID-19 has reminded humanity that we are a world of common problems and solutions which has invoked our charity and philanthropy (Satyarthi, 2020). There is a need to find compassion and love for a just and safer future and to break down boundaries between people, governments, countries, continents and humanity post COVID-19. We discuss how isiZulu culture embraces strangers as ‘friends’ under agape.

Storge (familial love): In more cases than not, *storge* is love expressed between parents and their children. This expression of *uzalo* (lineage) could best describe *storge* in isiZulu culture. Another expression of *storge* is found in the isiZulu proverb: *Asikho silima sindlebende kwaso* (the family unconditionally loves one of its own with all the flaws). During COVID-19 times, there have been many reported cases of xenophobia and stigmatisation of Asian people and those that test positive for the virus. Shortly after the World Health Organisation characterised COVID-19 as a global pandemic in March, Donald Trump, the President of the United States, used ‘Chinese virus’ in his online communication to refer to the virus which led to a surge in xenophobic incidents across the United States and Europe against Asian descendants. In other parts of the world such as South Africa, WhatsApp groups have openly shared the names of buildings and individuals that have COVID-19 cases to scare off people from those spaces and the said individuals. As a species, we belong to a common lineage, the human family, thus in terms of isiZulu’s interpretation of *storge*, we should embrace those that are affected instead of discriminating against them.

Ludus (playful love): *Ludus* should not be confused with *eros* as it is more compatible with *philia*. In isiZulu culture, the concept of *ukuzongolozela* (being infatuated) best describes this kind of love. The advent of COVID-19 has rekindled attachment and cooperation between human beings. Before the pandemic, social media, online and other communication channels had relegated our family members and friend to mere ‘contacts’. We have had to ‘reset’ as humanity, as love is what has enabled homo sapiens to survive and thrive. IsiZulu culture, which is predominantly communal, promotes interconnectedness between family and clan members. Post COVID-19, humanity needs to revisit interconnectedness as it very important for species’ well-being and continued existence.

Mania connotes obsessive love. While the concept of *ukudlula* or *ukudlulela* is not a direct translation of *mania*, it describe elements of obsessiveness observed in manic lovers. Thus, *mania* is *ukuthanda ngokudlulela* (loving obsessively). Accordingly, isiZulu cultural beliefs opine that post COVID-19, we need to love, show compassion and strive for harmonious social and ecological relationships. This could help harmonize and rebalance spiritual energetic sources of all phenomena as well as serve to avoid future crises and pandemics.

Pragma (enduring love): In ancient Egypt, *pragma* love was expected to last one's lifetime and to even continue in the afterlife. IsiZulu-speaking people also share a similar belief of enduring love here on earth and beyond. COVID-19 is ruthless with a reported 6% of patients suffering from multiple organ failure within 5 days of infection and, in most cases, dying a lonely death in intensive care (WHO, 2020). IsiZulu people believe in individuals having a full-on life after death as an ancestor (*idlozi*) that ensures the propagation of the species. With COVID-19, compassion and love to those that get infected and pass on should be demonstrated here on earth as well as in the afterlife through celebration of that life entrusted by *Umvelingqangi* and ancestors.

Philautia (self-love): At the heart of *philautia* is the mantra that says that "you cannot share what you do not have". IsiZulu-speaking people refer to *philautia* as *ukuzithanda*. *Ukuzithanda* in this context does not have any narcissist connotations. In isiZulu culture, to love oneself implies loving others before oneself. In Christian doctrines, the commandment; 'love your neighbour as yourself,' has relevance. Post COVID-19 one of the ways in which we could ensure the survival of the species is to love others irrespective of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.

Agape (universal love): In *agape*, love is free from desires and expectations and it is there regardless of the flaws and shortcomings of others. In the isiZulu culture, the concept of *ubuntu* both relates to and extends *agape*. IsiZulu speaking people live by and practice *Ubuntu*, and *ubuntu* finds expressions in many isiZulu proverbs and traditions. In one such proverb, '*isisu somhambi asingakanani, singangenso yenyoni*' (the traveller's tummy is not that big, it is as big as the bird's kidney), isiZulu people are encouraged to extend *agape* to strangers in the form of shelter, food and other amenities that they might need even if it means they are deprived of them. Another useful proverb is '*akudlulwa ngendlu yakhiwa*' (you never go past people building a house) which encourages the spirit of assisting those that are in any form of difficulty (such as in the case of those affected by COVID-19) or doing some hard labour. In fact, in olden days, when there was physical labour to be accomplished such as tiling of the soil or building a house, one could brew traditional beer and prepare some basic food and call on people from the village to assist in what is called *ilimo*. Nowadays, African people metaphorically practice *ilimo* in different forms. Since most isiZulu-speaking people do not have large pieces of land on which to farm, in the spirit of *ilimo*, people assist without expecting any pay. In some rural areas, it is common to find villagers standing together in their demonstration of *agape*. We would like to highlight one or two. First, when a villager is hosting an event, people assist by carrying out various chores such as cleaning, painting and carrying out menial repairs to prepare the household to host the guests without expecting any pay. They then provide gifts to help the host meet the financial and material demands of the event. COVID-19 poses various social and economic challenges to people. Specialised skills and knowledge are in demand. Financial support for many relief funds set up by different agencies and governments to alleviate hunger and poverty brought by sanctioned lockdowns and job

loss, are some of the limited examples of how agape could be extended to those affected by COVID-19.

Ancestral consciousness reverence and love.

Ancestors are experienced as living-dead continuing to care for descendants in an extended link from the Source. Such consciousness may ultimately bring awareness of all world inhabitants as being breathed by the planet. We may truly recognize the sea is our blood and the earth our body. We may receive authentic dream calls by recently departed ancestors and/or God. In isiZulu culture, such a calling leads to a spiritual rebirth experience, called *ukuthwasa*, which ends on completion of an apprenticeship under a qualified diviner (*isangoma*). Thereafter, the divine healer continues to experience being breathed by the ancestors and/or God during the divine healing process (Edwards, 2011). With their time honoured spiritual healing traditions, as evident in such *isiZulu* terms as *umphefumulo* (breath/soul) and *umoya* (spirit), divine healers essentially honour the subtle energetic functions of the breath as consciousness, psyche, soul and spirit, in both immanent and transcendent form. For example, during his initial *isangoma* apprenticeship, Credo Mutwa (2003) graphically describes his maternal grandfather's teaching as follows:

He taught me the art of breathing properly. He taught me the secret art of joining my mind to that of the great gods in the unseen world. He taught me how to sit still - very, very still – and eliminate all the thought from my mind and call upon the hidden powers of my soul. In short my grandfather taught me the Zulu version of what is called in English, “meditation.” How to breathe softly and gently like a whisper until you feel something like a hot coiled snake ascending up your spine and bursting through the top of your head – a fearsome thing that is known as *umbilini*. This *umbilini*, my grandfather told me, is the source of the *sangoma*'s powers. A *sangoma* must be able to summon this *umbilini* at will through the beating of the drum and through meditation, very, very deep meditation (p.13).

African healing includes and blends ancient and contemporary, indigenous and mainstream, popular and folk, Eastern and Western forms, For example, SHISO refers to an African meditation method developed around the concept *shiso*, an ancient *isiZulu* respectful term for a human being, which became an acronym for a particular healing method, standing for spirit (*umoya*), heart (*inhlizyo*), image (*umcabango*), soul (*umphefumulo*) and oneness (*ubunye*). The method combines invocation of spirit in a slow chanting dance, heart focussed breathing; subtle energy imaging; soul contemplation; consciousness expansion, interconnectedness and healing. The effectiveness of this method when presented alone, or as part of expanded integral life practice workshops, has been extensively documented. When compared to control groups, the workshops were associated with significant and meaningful improvements in integral, quantitative and qualitative dimensions of health and spirituality (Edwards, 2018).

Interconnectedness and Ubuntu

Indigenous knowledge systems throughout Africa have long recognized the profound interconnectedness of everything, where plants, animals, humans, ancestors and all creation interdependently coexist. Such knowledge seems to have been passed on by such giant scholars as Imhotep, Plotinus and Shankara. This paper focuses on Southern Africa, with special reference to isiZulu cultural groupings. While these groups are not representative of African or Southern African cultures in particular, the available evidence points to similar patterns in other indigenous cultural groupings (Gumede, 1990; Edwards, 2011). This is not surprising in view of obvious evidence that such traditional forms of indigenous knowledge provided foundations for all contemporary science. In an indigenous isiZulu context profound interconnectedness becomes especially evident in such themes as *ubuntu* (humanity in all communal and spiritual interrelationships), *ubudlelwana*, (interconnectedness), *masihambisane* (coherence), *indaba* (coherent communication), *ubunhlobonhlobo* (diversity in all its relatedness), emphasis on order (*uhlelo*), respect (*inhlonipho*), balance and harmony (*ukulungiso*), dignified movement and rhythm (*isigqi*), balanced ecological relationships and, ultimately, non-dual unity (*ubunye*). Ngubane (1977) and Gumede (1990) have extensively described how traditional Zulu cosmology is permeated with beliefs and practices related to ecological influences on community life. Families and communities have an ongoing responsibility to strengthen themselves in ceremonies against such ecological hazards as lightning (*ukubethela*) and various forms of social conflict, jealousy and sorcery (*ubuthakathi*). Indigenous healers, including diviners (*izangoma*), doctors (*izinyanga*) and faith healers (*abathandazi*) are extensively consulted in order to balance and order the environment (*ukulungisa endaweni*). Ordering and harmonizing ecological relationships are viewed as critical for preventing illness and promoting health. COVID-19 is a specific example of disordered environmental relationships, generically referred to as *umkhondo omubi* (ecological health hazard).

Human interconnectedness implies humanity (*ubuntu*) and respect (*inhlonipho*). Etymologically, *ubuntu* is the abstract form of the terms *umuntu* (a human being) and *abantu* (people), derived from the root *-ntu*, which has various connotations, such as African, way of life, human nature, language, one with human feelings and diaphragm (Doke & Vilakazi, 1972). In a recent South Africa workshop (Hlongwane, et al., 2018), the collective indaba experience revealed broad interpretations of Ubuntu converging around the goodness of the human heart, kindness of the human spirit, selflessness of humankind and togetherness in spirit, mind, and soul. For one participant, Ubuntu epitomized ideal humanity in the form of love, compassion, caring, consideration and genuineness. In the South African context, critical thought was expressed or implied with regard to behaviour lacking in Ubuntu, which included war, violence, crime, genocide, racism, jealousy, destructive competition, vengeance, retaliation, retribution and egocentric selfishness. The common experiential theme was that Ubuntu guaranteed an infinity of social promotion resources, that much has been achieved, much was possible, and much still needed to be done to promote social coherence. Furthermore



Ubuntu HeartMath workshops consistently indicated significant and meaningful quantitative and qualitative findings in improving psychophysiological coherence, social coherence and work spirit (Edwards, 2018).

Conclusion

Through its emphasis on essential humanity and human essentials, *Ubuntu* is ultimately concerned with fundamental structures of being human, without which our human species could not survive in its present form, that is the giving, receiving and sharing of human care, dignity, respect, support, companionship, help and healing. It clearly honours African indigenous values such as “*maat*” with its many more abstract connotations such as reality, truth, justice, integrity, beauty as well as the interconnectedness of everyday life, which requires extra compassionate care in present COVID-19 days.

We conclude that Ubuntu is the ultimate theme of all the caring, helping professions such as nursing, medicine, psychology, social work and theology. Embracing essential humanity, as well as love as an ultimate essential, it forms a foundation for most academic and professional disciplines, from biochemistry through law to sociology. We argue that if such knowledge has become too differentiated, specialized, and abstract, it needs to be revitalized and humanized again through the authentic practice of *Ubuntu*. In particular there seems great need for *masihambisana* (coherent communication and synchronous collaboration).

We conclude that in its true and deep form, *Ubuntu* holds even greater relevance today in a world where there are diminished levels of all forms of love through threats of a Third World War, nuclear weapons, rising levels of, conservatism, right-wing populism and incendiary rhetoric. Consequently we propose that true rediscovery of *agape* as *Ubuntu* could save the human species from ‘pressing’ a button of self-destruction. We also intuit widespread rediscovery of Ubuntu and all related practices such as appreciation, gratitude, care and love post COVID-19.

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