

An Afrocentric Analysis of Some Zimbabwean Proverbs and Sayings

by

Sambulo Ndlovu

matsilaneg@gmail.com

Department of African Languages and Literature
Great Zimbabwe University- Zimbabwe.

Abstract

This article avers that the intrinsic African values and ethos espoused by Afrocentricity, Africana Womanism and Ubuntu philosophies have been eroded in the face of colonialism and the globalisation of culture, and thus, metaphoric expressions that originate from contaminated African cognitive systems have evolved. Hence, the metaphors in question in this work are argued to be un-African in that they are built on and promote negative values such as selfishness, individualism, gender intolerance, corruption and taboo violation.

Introduction

Metaphor does not merely operate at the linguistic level of communication and expression, but it is a mental process that transfers images from one brain to another. Gibbs (1996:309) has argued that: 'metaphor is not merely a figure of speech, but is a specific mental mapping that influences people's thinking, reasoning and imagining in everyday life.' The mental mappings are done from experience, and the people's experiences are vital in metaphor construction. The African experience and worldview has been tampered with and undermined over the years prompting liberation reasoning such as Afrocentricity and the Black movements.

African scholars and luminaries have tried to move the centre back to Africa across domains. Thabo Mbeki, the former South African president, has been selling the idea of African renaissance, and Momoh (2003:51) has argued that: 'Thabo Mbeki's African renaissance has offered the specific political response to the challenge of Afro-pessimism. However, a cursory look at the thrust of that neologism shows that it is a mere cliché with only economic component and not social and political parts.'

While African people have been robbed by the west on the economic front the most dangerous robbery is that of the mind as evidenced by un-African mind products such as metaphoric expressions. Afrocentricity addresses the inadequacies within African people that were and continue to be orchestrated by western indoctrination and acculturation. Propagators of Afrocentricity such as Dei (1994:4) have sought to draw the boundaries of Afrocentricity, and he says: 'the notion of Afrocentricity I am advancing here asserts both that African indigenous cultural values, traditions, mythology, and history may be as a body of knowledge dealing with the social world, and that Afrocentricity is an alternative non-exclusionary, and non-hegemonic system of knowledge informed by African people's histories and experiences.' An Afrocentric metaphor is one that uses African history, values, and experiences in its cross domain mappings, and some latter-day metaphors in Zimbabwe exhibit lack of Africanness.

The question of language has been a central theme in Afrocentric struggle as the colonisers imposed their languages on African people. This paper avers that metaphors are part of language and that they are part of the languages debate in post colonial Africa. McLaren (1998:393) avers that: 'the question of language is central to both Afrocentricity and Ngugi's readjustment of the centre.' Using African languages to tell the African story as Ngugi does is part of the decolonisation agenda, but here the argument is that even within the African languages there is euro centrism that is exhibited through language generation. Metaphors are to be expressions of African integrity not western arrogance that flies in the face of African ethos. Boykin et al (1997:409) note that these: 'expressions of integrity are rooted in an African cultural legacy and that these Afrocultural expressions continue to help shape the contours and textures of the African experience.' Textures and contours of African experiences are laced with virtues such as respect, plurality, communalism, Ubuntu, and fairness. Some of the metaphors we see today in some Zimbabwean cultures defy conformity to the Afrocultural ethos.

While it is true that culture changes over time and that metaphors change as the culture changes the change towards western values is a violation of African culture. Using the west to derive metaphors is not a new thing, as Nyembezi (1963:1) asserts that: 'The proverbs in use are not confined, however, to the old expressions, because we may clearly discern some proverbs, which must have come into the language in fairly recent times, for instance, the expression, *wahambis'okwejuba lika Noah* (he went like Noah's dove). The Judeo-Christian religion is not the centre of African religion, and metaphors derived from this religion are un-African; they perpetuate colonial legacies in the brain and linguistic conduits that express thought. Ndlovu (2010:80) explains that: 'In the same way these wise sayings were derived from folktales, some have been coined from Christian bible stories; experiences in bible verses are used as a factor and foundation for idiomatic expressions in Ndebele.' The forced Christian religion in Africa has eroded African religious heritage, and today we see African people creating metaphors using borrowed histories as if they do not have their histories, experiences, and faith.

There has been colonial brainwashing and bleaching that turns African people against themselves; even western beauty concepts are used to define African beauty. Dixon et al (2009:349) say that: 'today, images that support a Eurocentric standard of beauty are perpetuated not only in media produced and featuring whites, but also in the African Americans portrayed in Rap music.' There is a need to reorient African minds to African values so that our thought processes are aligned with being African people.

African values are based on fairness and equality of humans and in some cases the equality is even extended to animals. Feminism and gender discourses are un-African preoccupations that are reactions to the unfairness of the western worldview. Western ideas and systems that undermine and exclude women have been inculcated in African minds, and we now see the emergence of metaphors that undermine women in society. The west's undermining of women has prompted Pan African theorists on women's issues to shun feminism for Africana Womanism. Hudson-Weems (2004:24) alludes to the fact that Africana Womanism is grounded in our culture as African people and that it is an African alternative to Feminist and Black Feminist theorising on African womanhood. All metaphors that exhibit negativity towards women and womanhood are un-African because women are respected and valued in the African worldview. Kairen in Hudson-Weems (2004:46) indicates that to African people women are very important and valuable since all human life passes through their bodies. Gambahaya and Muwati (2009:56) have described motherhood as transcending biological designations to a level of a life support for the community. However, in Zimbabwean African cultures we see traces of metaphoric expressions that undermine and downplay the role and strength of women, and this can only be a result of invading western values and ethos.

African values of fairness and hard work do not encourage uncouth ways of acquiring materials. People are expected to do their part for the development and sustenance of humanity, not to take advantage of other people and situations. P'Bitek (1986:25) has advised that if all members in African societies play their numerous roles fully there is no danger of societal or individual disintegration. Disintegration of African societies has seen some people take on western capitalist tendencies of abusing others to make profit, and this mind set has seen the emergence of corruption metaphors in African cultures. Selfishness and individualism are disdained in African cultural values, but the west has imprinted these in African minds-and today some Africans produce metaphors that encourage selfishness and individualism. Cobbah (1987:311) has noted that in the west: 'supererogatory acts are not required. They are performed as acts of charity and goodwill. Thus conservative U.S. constitutionalists argue that the concern for the needy falls under the heading of charity and has nothing to do with rights.' To African people, and in accordance to African values, there is no charity as Ubuntu dictates that I am because you are and your brother or sister's welfare is your duty. Boykin et al (1997:409-410) have averred that: 'communalism ... highlights the social interdependence of people ... [and is] embodied in this [Afrocultural] legacy [...it] is seen as central to the Afrocultural social ethos.' Some of the metaphors even cross taboo lines on conceptualizations of nudity, sexuality, and religious expressions, all of which are influenced by the west that has sought to de-taboo African cultural ethos.

Methodology

The research uses Fraenkel and Wallen's (1990) content analysis to analyse metaphor within the framework of Afrocentricity. They argue that content analysis has the advantage of obtrusiveness as the researcher can analyse without being observed. Metaphoric expressions were gathered from four Zimbabwean cultures, which are Tsonga, Ndebele, Shona and Venda, as these cultures were readily available to the researcher. Some of the metaphors are from literature: for Ndebele, Nyembezi (1963), Shona, Bhebe and Viriri (2012), and Tsonga, Junod (1990). Metaphoric expressions were also collected through interviews with speakers of the different languages, and participant observations and intuition were also sources of data on metaphors that deviate from the African ethos.

The African Centre

The concept of the centre is critical in African and Pan African theorising as it is the centre of power and influence that controls all faculties of the human body, and human aggregates. Africa was central to the life and experiences of the African people until such a time that African people were moved out of Africa physically through slavery and mentally through mind-bleaching systems such as religion, acculturation and education. The global centre is in Europe and the Americas; Dei (1994:4) avers that: 'there is a long history of *Euramerican* dominance of what constitutes valid knowledge and how such knowledge should be produced and disseminated internally and internationally.' This subjugation of the world to the west has seen movements such as Garveyism seeking to move the centre elsewhere to Africa. Campbell (1993:31) argues that: 'Garveyism was the profound response of the masses to racism, war, lynching, and the imperialist partition of Africa, colonialism and the economic consequences of white supremacy.' After Garveyism there has been a plethora of movements seeking to move the centre to Africa. Marimba Ani (1994:1) on her study of Europe says:

This study of Europe is an intentionally aggressive polemic. It is an assault upon the European paradigm; a repudiation of its essence. It is initiated with the intention of contributing to the process of demystification necessary for those of us who would liberate ourselves from European intellectual imperialism.

After Garveyism aggressive polemics on western superiority include Negritudism, Pan-Africanism, Black Feminism, Africana Womanism, Ubuntu, and Africentricity. Gocking (1993:46) has suggested the notion of Pan-Africanist Afrocentricity as alternatives and developments from and of the concepts of Afrocentricity and Pan-Africanism. All these movements are efforts at locating the centre for African people in Africa. The movements have not been without resistance from the west and its messengers who seek to perpetuate the centre in Europe and America. In their challenge of Ubuntu as a unique African approach to civilisation Enslin and Horsthemke (2004:548) note that: 'it is conceptually and practically associated with a long and profound tradition of humanist concern, caring and compassion, also prominent in western thought.'

However, to African people it is not simply caring and compassion that culminates in acts of charity and alms giving; it is a duty and expectation. What is found in the African centre of Ubuntu is the interconnectedness of beings, not charity as espoused in western thinking. Ngugi (1993) wrote a whole book on the concept of moving the centre from Europe to Africa and other deprived centres. Ngugi (1993:2) gives a note on his movement of the centre and says that:

This was the sixties when the centre of the universe was moving from Europe, or, to put it another way, when many countries particularly in Asia and Africa were demanding and asserting their right to define themselves and their relationship to the universe from their own centres in Africa and Asia.

While the oppressed of the west have come up with movements to change their societies African people are fighting for their land, their birthright, their history, their civilisation, and their centre. Asante (1987:8) sees: 'Afrocentricity as more inclusive than Marxism because it tries to reorient our worldview in ways that challenge social Darwinism, capitalism and most forms of Marxist theory.' Marxist thinking is western, and there is a need to move the centre from the west to Africa for the African person to reason within his/her domains. If the centre is moved to Africa the African cognitive prowess that produces metaphor will create metaphorical expressions that respect values of the African centre. Africana Womanism is another theory of the African centre. Pellerin (2012:76) claims that: 'Africana Womanism methodology is grounded in an African-centred approach to systematically investigate Africana women phenomenon.' With proper African centeredness African people will not create metaphors that are in violation of the tenets of Africana Womanism which operates within the African centre.

Metaphors That Undermine Women

African people according to Africana Womanism theory have respected each other across the gender divide, and both men and women have roles that complement each other. It was not until the movement of the centre that disparities emerged between men and women creating the need to adopt foreign theories such as Feminism to fight for women's cause. Mazuru and Nyambi (2012:592) have reasoned that: 'the history of the Shona/Africana women has been distorted due to the colonial misalliance between Africa and Europe.' Colonialism indeed brought reasoning and institutions that created differences and disadvantages for women, and this paper seeks to point out that the adoption of a colonial centre mentality affected the cognitive domain of African people which produces metaphor.

African traditional systems and institutions have always valued and protected women, and their Indigenous knowledge systems testify to this effect. Ndlovu and Ngwenya (2010) look at how the Ndebele taboo system protects women as they are the centre of life for the community.

The taboo system is one of the systems that embody values of communities and when Ndebele taboos highlight a world view that respects women, metaphor that undermines them can only be from a different value system. Ndlovu (2014) has looked at how western civilisation through the automobile industry has segregated African women in Zimbabwe. This affirms the assumption that colonialism created negativities towards women. The African woman is a strong, respected and lovable role player, not an object of insult, ridicule and sex. Muwati, Gambahaya and Gwekwerere (2011:2) have listed values associated with motherhood in African thought as: ‘nurturing, family centeredness, male compatibility, wholeness, flexible role playing, adaptability and strength, all of which are outlined and explicated in the theory of African Womanism.’ However, in some Zimbabwean cultures there are metaphors that go against these African values on women, and these are exemplified in table 1 below:

Table 1: Zimbabwean metaphors that undermine womanhood

Metaphor	Language	Gloss and meaning
<i>Ukuba ngumfazi/Kuva mukadzi</i>	Ndebele/Shona	To be a woman is to be weak
<i>Yindodanfazi</i>	Ndebele	To be a man-woman refers to a strong woman
<i>Nhwanyana i huku yo khomela vayeni</i>	Tsonga	A girl is a chicken reserved for visitors
<i>Wansati i mutsandza nandzu/vavasati a va na huvo</i>	Tsonga	A woman cannot decide on a case
<i>Mna ndi ndou ari muti muthihi</i>	Venda	A man is an elephant he does not feed on one tree type -polygamy

Metaphors in table 1 above are a disturbing development to African centred reasoning as they exhibit the west’s arrogance towards women and African people in general. Men are given a higher status in the European centre; when women do good or hard works they are metaphorically referred to as men, and when a man fails in life womanhood is ascribed to him. Women are also seen as people who cannot make decisions, and this paper avers that usage of such kind of reasoning to produce metaphor is influenced by the western alien centre mentality that has affected African people throughout the years of colonialism. Karenga and Tembo (2012:33) argue that:

The African-centred womanist tradition is a long, diverse and rich one with origins in Africa and concerns itself with the rights and dignity of women, their agency, their rightful relationship with men, and the vital roles they play in the construction, maintenance and development of family, community, society and the world.

In European reasoning women are created for an ancillary function to men according to Christian thinking and teaching. Muwati, Gambahaya and Gwekwerere (2011:4) note that: ‘motherhood is not merely ancillary to fatherhood as expressed in European cultural thought exemplified by the saying that “behind every successful man, there is a woman”.’

This is why some African people create metaphors that express the objectification of women as gifts that can be given to men as chickens, and to others they have to submit to the idea that they are inferior and that men need to be satisfied by many women. African womanist thinking seeks to create the Afrocultural base in African minds to enable them to generate language in a manner that reflects African values, and these include respect for women. Metaphors created on African values on women reflect African ethos such as the Shona metaphor *musha mukadzi* (a home is, because of a woman), and the Ndebele one *umfazi kalankosi* (a woman can advise even kings).

Off Centre Taboo Vehicle Metaphors

African civilisations across the continent and even in the Diasporas have controlled each other through the religious institution of taboo. Africa does not make use of the police and intelligence officers to control human behaviour in public and private spheres but makes use of religion to control social and environmental ills such as pollution, nudity, vulgarity, and blasphemy. In Africa it is taboo to talk explicitly of reproductive and excretory themes, and to create metaphor using such images is unthinkable by African standards of social purity and responsibility. When left to their centre African people through their value system would censure the production of explicit and vulgar metaphors, but the west has introduced its centre that prides itself in breaking the African taboo system – as a result we have metaphors that are vulgar, using taboo themes to express concepts.

In African philosophy as argued by Mbiti (1969:1) ‘religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it’. Taboos are part of the religious system in Africa and violating them in metaphors is going against the gods of Africa. Ndlovu et al (1995:194-195) identify some of the Ndebele taboos that regulate health, sexuality and religion. Bozongwana (1983) also categorises Ndebele taboos, and there is agreement that the taboo system employs fear in the religious realm to regulate physiological activity. Westerners have demonised the taboo system as stifling debate and freedom of expression and the press, and as a result most tabooed themes have been in a way de-tabooed, paving the way for un-euphemistic expressions in Africa that violate African values. The taboo metaphor in particular strikes African social order in the face and insults African intelligence, and in such a scenario Afrocentricity becomes an enabling tool to decolonise African minds so that they see vulgarity using lenses from the African centre and derive decent African metaphor, not western vulgarity.

In African civilisation being explicit is wrong and violates tradition and religion, yet Asante (1983:5) observes that: ‘power relations dictate so much of what is right, correct, logical, and reasonable. The limits are drawn by those who wield the economic, political, and cultural power.’ Through colonialism and slavery the west exerted political power over Africa, and through religion and education they introduced their culture and economy; as a result African people were moved from their cultural centre. A show of the west’s cultural power in Africa is exhibited among other things in the undermining of the African taboo system.

Ogunyemi (2007:04) says: ‘the stripping of taboo of its significance in western society has, in no small measure, promoted freedom of speech and, ultimately, of the press.’ However, this research has realised that stripping taboo of its significance has created bad speech instead, rather than free speech. Tabooed and revered gods of the African ancestral spirits *amadlozi/midzimu/vhadzimu/* Ndebele/Shona/Venda respectively are used metaphorically to express the concept of ugliness, a clear violation and arrogance towards the gods, and this is because the people have moved to the Christian centre. Most of the taboo metaphors are in the themes of sexuality and excretion, and a sample of these is given in table 2 below:

Table 2: Metaphors created on taboo

Metaphor	Language	Gloss and meaning
<i>Ateya mbeva murutsva haachatyi kusviba magaro</i>	Shona	The one who hunts mice in burnt areas does not care having dirty buttocks
<i>Tichaonana magaro pakuyambuka</i>	Shona	We will see each other’s buttocks when we get out of the water
<i>Imbga inorohwa payamamira</i>	Shona	A dog is beaten at the place it defecated
<i>Ziramba kusakara ganda rembutu</i>	Shona	Unrelenting like the skin of a vagina
<i>Ukwanda kwaliwa yikhondomu</i>	Ndebele	The condom does not want us to multiply. Used to express gratitude
<i>Eginya amaganu ngelomphumelo/umdididi omkhulu</i>	Ndebele	The one that swallows amarula has a big anus
<i>Ukuvala umdididi wengwenya</i>	Ndebele	To close the crocodile’s anus. To bribe

In Africa words for sex, penis, vagina, anus, buttocks, and such terminology are tabooed; rather, euphemisms are created for them. However, it is very light to say them in English because the English centre does not taboo them as much as the African people do. It is easy for an African person to switch codes from their language to English so as to express these concepts but not in their languages. Thody (1997:07) notes that:

Even on the BBC, it would be very difficult to find an 8-year-old child in the United States or in the United Kingdom who had not been exposed to discussions in the media about adultery, AIDS, contraception, homosexuality, lesbianism, menstruation, oral sex, the sexual abuse of children and venereal disease.

The use of tabooed terms in table 2 to express ideas metaphorically is derived from western centred thinking, not African. It is a symptom of colonialism to have minds that reason in ways that violate taboos. This paper argues that the use of even the euphemistic terms for these tabooed words would still be un-African; for example, if the Ndebele term *umdididi* for anus is replaced by its euphemism *umphumelo* the metaphor would still be violating African values because no one uses the anus to express themselves in Africa. What is tabooed is the anus in this case, and the taboo is extended to terms that associate with it. Any term that points to sex, excretion and reproductive health concerns is taboo and cannot be used to create metaphor.

The Corruption Metaphor

In the African cosmology human beings and animals are respected, and there is symbiotic relationship that ensures fair access to resources. Fairness is a religious concept in Africa, and one has to treat the next person in the way they would treat themselves. Our history and creativity as African people has always emphasised fairness and respect for one another. When people care and respect each other and the environment, social ills of a corrupt nature are excluded from their lives. The history and creativeness of African people through metaphor was without corruption metaphors until capitalism introduced exploitative tendencies from the western centre of reasoning. The fairness and respect in Africa ensures that ills such as poaching, deforestation, stealing, bribes, nepotism and slavery are excluded from society and from metaphor. However, today we have metaphors built on and for corruption because of our interaction with the capitalist exploitative western centre.

There is need to refocus African minds away from the corruption laden western centre to the positive history and creativity of Africa. Asante (1988:6) notes that: 'Afrocentricity is the belief in the centrality of the African people in post modern history. It is our history, our mythology, our creative motif and our ethos exemplifying our collective will.' Afrocentricity and Ubuntu philosophy complement each other in creating an honest African person who does not seek opportunities to disadvantage and rob others. Venter (2004:156) avers that: 'Ubuntu is a concrete manifestation of the interconnectedness of human beings-it is the embodiment of African culture and life style.' In Ubuntu, which is to say in African philosophy, people care for each other, and there is no negative competition; this is a value system that is expressed in metaphors such as *iqiniso lihle/ chokwadi chakanaka* (truth is good) and *chisirichako masimba mashoma* (you do not have power over what is not yours). In these metaphors telling the truth is an African virtue that opposes bribes and corruption, while on the second one people are advised not to take what is not due to them such as stealing from employers.

In the obtaining post colonial culture in Zimbabwe there is corruption that manifests itself in forms such as stealing, looting, poaching, nepotism, ethnocentrism, and bribery. These social ills of corruption are a result of capitalist competitiveness that pits women and men against her or his sister or brother for survival. Letseka (2000:183) has reasoned that: 'Ubuntu represents a more appropriate value system to promote in an African context than the typical westernised value system of competitiveness.' There are some metaphors that are created on and encourage corrupt activities, and these are exemplified in table 3 below:

Table 3: Some corruption metaphors in Zimbabwe

Metaphor	Language	Gloss and meaning
<i>Imbuzi idla lapho ebotshelwe khona/mbudzi inofura payakasungirwa</i>	Ndebele/Shona	A goat eats where it's tied- corruption/stealing/abuse
<i>Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa anehanganwa</i>	Shona	Eat what you get with relatives strangers forget-nepotism
<i>Ukusebenzela ekhaya</i>	Ndebele	Working for your home- nepotism
<i>Ku ba mati tingwenya ti etlela</i>	Tsonga	If you beat the waters the crocodiles sleep-bribe
<i>Isivala mlomo/vhara muromo</i>	Ndebele/Shona	Mouth shutter-bribe
<i>Imali yecoke/mari ye coke</i>	Ndebele/Shona	Coke money-bribe
<i>Chiwoko muhomwe</i>	Shona	Hand in the pocket-bribe
<i>Amanga mabi mahle epholiseni/ nhema dzanaka kumapurisa</i>	Ndebele/Shona	Lies are bad but good to the police-falsehoods/cheating

The proverb found in almost all Zimbabwean cultures that states that a goat eats where it is tied encourages people to steal from their employers, and others who do not work with cash or goods exploit people who are their clients. Those in government take bribes as a way of “eating where they are tied” while in some cases teachers justify abusing students using the same proverb. On Zimbabwean roads police are notorious for taking bribes even from drivers of faulty vehicles, and this has resulted in accidents and loss of life because Ubuntu is not the centre instead it is capitalist competitiveness that manifests in self aggrandisement. The money that is paid as bribe is metaphorically referred to as coke money or a mouth shutter, and such expressions are not sensitive to African culture. Asante (1983:7) argues that: ‘in its epistemic dimensions Afrocentricity is also a methodology for discovering the truth about intercultural communication. We have needed more culturally sensitive treatments for our analysis of reality.’ African values are opposed to corruption and unfair competition, and metaphors created to foster and perpetuate corruption are based on an alien centre. Dei (1994:4) says that: ‘Afrocentricity is about the investigation and understanding of phenomena from a perspective grounded in African centred values.’ This paper reasons that from an Afrocentric perspective metaphors in table 3 above violate African values and are influenced by western philosophy.

Selfishness and Individualism in Zimbabwean Metaphors

Afrocentricity as a theory that seeks to move the centre that was shifted through years of colonialism also highlights the interconnectedness of the African people. Opponents of African civilisation have reasoned that African theories are built on the fallacy of African unity, singularity and connectedness, but, Mamdani (1998:9) has indicated that: ‘oneness is not sameness.’ What is fundamental in Africa is the community and one’s responsibility to the other person. In fact, in Ubuntu philosophy one is responsible for the other; selfishness and individualism are disdained as part of the evil that displeases the gods. According to African values and ethos caring for another person is not an act of charity; it is one’s divine apportioned duty, and care is even extended to strangers.

Social isolation and exposure that is created by lack of resources is alien in the African centre as African values emphasise sharing. There are many African proverbs and sayings that encourage sharing and others that encourage cooperation. No one is to live as an individual and no one should think of themselves ahead of others. The African centre is a communal society that takes care of all its members and makes sure there is enough to even cater for strangers and travellers. Boykin (1983:345) argues that:

Communalism denotes awareness of the [fundamental] interdependence of people. One's orientation is social rather than being directed towards objects. One acts in accordance with the notion that duty to one's social group is more important than individual privileges and rights. Sharing is promoted because it signifies the affirmation of social interconnectedness; self-centeredness and individual greed are disdained.

The human rights discourse from the western centre is a selfish self centred approach to community that views other people as interfering with an individual rather than helping. The African cosmology is laden with metaphors that express communalism and cooperation as opposed to selfishness and individualism. In Shona, for example, proverbs such as *nzira vaviri munofambidzana* (a journey is two, you walk together), *tsuro yamutsva neruzhinzhi yatovanyama* (a hare hunted by many is as good as meat), and *chara chimwe hachitsvanyi inda* (one thumb cannot crush a louse) encourage working together, which is an African communal value, as opposed to individualism, which is a western concept of life. The Ndebele, on the other hand, have metaphors that encourage sharing without expecting the one to which you give to reciprocate the giving. Such metaphors are the likes of *longela nkomo uyaludla uchago* (even the one without cows eats milk) and *isisu somhambi kasinganani singangophonjwana lwembuzi* (the traveller's stomach is as small as the horn of a goat). The African Ubuntu value communicated in these metaphors is that you have to share and not expect a return favour. However, because of the alien centre operating in Zimbabwean African people's minds today there are metaphors that encourage individualism and selfishness and those that encourage giving so as to be given, and the contestation in this paper is that all these themes are un-African and express views obtained from the western capitalist centre. Table 4 below gives some of the metaphors of individualism and selfishness:

Table 4: Un-African metaphors for individualism and selfishness

Metaphor	Language	Gloss and meaning
<i>Eyomdeni kayingenwa</i>	Ndebele	Do not enter into family issues
<i>Ikhotha eyikhothayo</i>	Ndebele	A cow licks the one that licks it
<i>Imikhombe iyananana/Kandiro kanoenda kanobva kamwe</i>	Ndebele/Shona	Gifts are exchanged
<i>Asipo hapo nemuromo wake/Ohambileyo uhambe lomlomo wakhe</i>	Shona/Ndebele	The one who is absent is absent together with their mouth
<i>Mbeva zhinji hadzina marise</i>	Shona	Too many mice have no lining for their nest
<i>Nhamo yemumwe hairamirwi sadza</i>	Shona	Someone's grief will not stop you from feeding
<i>Vutomi a byi hanyeriwi</i>	Tsonga	You cannot live your life for another person

The anti-cooperation and anti-sharing in the metaphors in table 4 above resonates with western ideology expressed in their metaphors such as each man for himself and God for us all and too many cooks spoil the soup. While Mareva and Wasosa (2015:122) argue that proverbs that discourage cooperation speak against parochialism and dogmatism, and they leave room for personal judgement and creativity, this research argues that it is western individualism being preached instead. While metaphors such as *ikhotha eyikhothayo* (a cow licks one that licks it) and *imikhombe iyananana/kandiro kanoenda kanobva kamwe* (gifts are given in exchange) appear to encourage sharing, the reasoning in this paper is that this is not the African concept of sharing. In Africa you do not give in anticipation to be given back. The African concept of giving covers even the needy, as taking care of them is not a matter of charity but right and duty. Cobbah (1987:311) avers that: 'human rights ideas in international fora have historically been derived from a western natural rights perspective. This perspective indeed denies the existence of the needy's right to economic sustenance and society's obligation to satisfy this right.' Metaphors in African languages that encourage selfishness and individualism are contemporary creations from the western centre, and they do not reflect African values and ethos.

Conclusion

African cosmology is centred on a philosophy that emphasises respect for nature, and the philosophy is based on principles of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is a way of life that creates a responsible African person who shuns anti-social behaviour and way of life. The philosophy of Ubuntu has helped African people create their history, and from these experiences they have sought to understand and express reality through language. One of the ways of comprehending and expressing reality is through cognitive processes that use brain images to express concepts. In the heart of human cognitive expression are metaphorical expressions. Old African metaphors in Zimbabwean cultures express more than the concepts they map; they reveal Afrocultural values and ethos.

The African values include respect for women, fairness, anti-corruption, cooperation, euphemism, and sharing. Colonialism and its institutions of alienation and acculturation created an alien western centre in African minds that has influenced the production of metaphors that violate African cultural values and ethos. There are metaphors today that undermine women, and they express the ancillary position of women; there are some metaphors that encourage corruption, selfishness, and individualism. All these developments are examples of metaphors created from an alien philosophy, and there is need to move the centre that will in turn move the metaphor cognition to pro-African values. Africa is a religious civilisation, and taboos control societies; but, there have been developments of taboo metaphor—such taboo violations are associated with western rights discourses, and they violate being African people.

References

- Asante, M.K. 1983. The ideological significance of Afrocentricity in intercultural communication. *Journal of Black Studies*, 14(1), pp. 3-19.
- Asante, M.K. 1988. *Afrocentricity*. Trenton, New Jersey: African World Press.
- Bhebe, N. and Viriri, A. 2012. *Shona proverbs: palm oil with which African words are eaten*. Gweru: Booklove Publishers.
- Boykin, A.W. 1983. The academic performance of Afro-American children. In J. Spence (Ed), *Achievement and achievement motives*. Beverly Hills: Sage, pp. 323-371.
- Boykin, A.W., Jagers, R.J., Ellison, C.M. and Albury, A. 1997. Communalism: Conceptualization and measurement of an Afro-cultural social orientation. *Journal of Black Studies*, 27(3), pp. 409-418.
- Bozongwana, W. 1983. *Ndebele religion and customs*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Campbell, H. 1993. Pan Africanism and African liberation: The history and the challenge. *Social Change and Development*, 31.
- Cobbah, J.A. 1987. African values and the human rights debate: an African perspective. *Human Rights Quarterly*, pp. 309-331.
- Dei, G.J., 1994. Afrocentricity: A cornerstone of pedagogy. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 25(1), pp. 3-28.

- Dixon, T.L., Zhang, Y. and Conrad, K. 2009. Self-esteem, misogyny and afrocentricity: An examination of the relationship between rap music consumption and African American perceptions. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 12(3), pp. 345-360.
- Fraenkel, J.R. and Wallen, N.E. 1990. *How to design and evaluate research in education*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Gibbs, R.W. 1996. Why many concepts are metaphorical. *Cognition*, 61(3), pp. 309-319.
- Gocking, R. 1993. Afrocentricity: Implications for South Africa? *Africa Insight*, 23 (1).
- Hudson-Weems, C. 2004. *Africana womanist literary theory*. Trenton, New Jersey: Africa World Press
- Junod, H.P. 1990. *The Wisdom of the Tsonga-Shangana People, Tsonga proverbs*. Braamfontein: Sasavona Publishers.
- Karenga, T. and Tembo, C. 2012. Kawaida womanism: African ways of being woman in the world. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 36(1), pp. 33-47.
- Letseka, M. 2000. African philosophy and educational discourse. *African Voices in Education*, pp. 179-193.
- Mazuru, M. and Nyambi, O. 2012. Celebrating Africana Motherhood: the Shona Proverb and the Familial and Social Roles of Mothers as First Teachers, Cultural Bearers and Co-Partners. *International Journal of Asian Social Science*, 2(5), pp. 596-601.
- Mbiti, J.S. 1969. *African religions and philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- McLaren, J. 1998. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Moving the Centre and Its Relevance to Afrocentricity. *Journal of Black Studies*, 28(3), pp. 386-397.
- Momoh, A. 2003. Does pan-Africanism have a future in Africa? In search of the ideational basis of Afro-pessimism. *African Journal of Political Science*, 8(1), pp. 31-57.
- Muwati, I., Gambahaya, Z. and Gwekwerere, T. 2011. Africana womanism and African proverbs: Theoretical grounding of mothering/motherhood in Shona and Ndebele cultural discourse. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 35(1), pp. 1-8.
- Ndlovu, L. and Ngwenya, T. 2010. Taboos and the prenatal period among the Ndebele: An Africana Womanist approach. *Nawa: Journal of Language & Communication*. 4/5(2/1), pp. 104-114.

Ndlovu, S. 2010. Aspects of Ndebele idiomatic language change. *Zimbabwe International Journal of Language and Culture*, 1(2), pp. 77-87.

Ndlovu, S. 2014. Automobile-based gender discrimination in Zimbabwe. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 34(sup1), pp. 43-50.

Ndlovu, T.M, D.N and Ncube, B.S. 1995. *Imikhuba lamasiko amaNdebele*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Nyembezi, C.L.S. 1963. *Zulu proverbs*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter.

P'Bitek, O., 1986. *Artist the ruler*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd.

Pellerin, M. 2012. Defining Africana Womanhood: Developing an Africana Womanism Methodology. *Western Journal of Black Studies*, 36(1), pp. 76-85.

Thody, P. 1997. *Don't do it. A dictionary of the forbidden*. London: The Athlone Press.

Venter, E. 2004. The notion of Ubuntu and communalism in African educational discourse. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, 23(2-3), pp. 149-160.