

On the Need for Harmonization between Tradition and Modernity in Contemporary Burundi: Analysis of Values and Anti-Values for Sustainable Peace*

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Abstract

This article analyzes the problem of harmonization between traditional values and modern values, alongside the struggle against traditional and modern anti-values for the construction of sustainable peace in contemporary Burundi. It starts from a reminder of the historical events in Burundi which, from the advent of European colonizers and the confrontation on Burundian soil between Germans and Belgians, and the brutal accession to independence in 1962, have fundamentally caused the loss of axiological and cultural references, coupled with trauma experienced by Burundians due to the unprecedented violence of these events. The analysis of the traditional values of *ubuntu* and *ubutungane/intahe* makes it possible to show that Burundian society was based both on the virtue ethics and on deontological ethics which should urgently be rediscovered to reinvigorate democratic institutions. Rediscovering these values requires a corollary work of struggle against the anti-values of *uwawe* and *igihugu ntikiribw'ivu* which corresponds to the modern anti-values of ethnocentrism and capitalist greed. The article proposes that education of the Burundian people in the values cited above and against these anti-values be promoted as a solid path to the formation of a new leadership embodied by ethically committed leaders who can carry with responsibility the project of a new Burundi, peaceful and prosperous, which was the dream of the two national heroes celebrated every year: the Prince Louis Rwagasore, the father of Independence, and President Melchior Ndadaye,

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<https://www.burundifriendsofeducation.com/>; Most of the quotes are translated from French, and the sources cited are mainly from French-speaking authors.

the hero and martyr of democracy.

Keywords

Virtue Ethics, Deontological Ethics, Ethnic Diversity and Inclusion, Burundi, Bahutu, Batutsi, Batwa, Ubuntu, Social Justice, Sustainable Peace, Ethnic Justice

1. Introduction

The interest of this study lies in ethics applied to the construction of peace. Ethics is in philosophy (and in theology, when faith is involved), but the construction of peace mobilizes various disciplines of knowledge including anthropology, sociology, history, and political science. This study focuses on the question of the ethicization of social relationships and leadership which would involve the rediscovery of relevant traditional ethical values of Burundi (inventoried from data of historical and socio-cultural sciences of Burundi) to harmonize with ethical values resulting from modernity (whose fundamental roots were Judeo-Christian). This harmonization could foster the development of sustainable peace. Sustainable (or sustaining) peace “aims to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, address root causes, assist parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensure national reconciliation and move towards recovery, reconstruction and development” (UN, 2016). Ethics could play a fundamental role in the building of sustainable peace.

The context of Burundi following the peace process which culminated in the signing and implementation of the Arusha Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation (August 28, 2000), the persistence of the ethno-political conflict which worsened during the contestation of the third term of President Pierre Nkurunziza in 2015, require a thorough re-examination of the root causes of the deadly cyclical crises in Burundi, at least since the colonial era. This article intends to carry out this re-examination from the question of values and anti-values, which is an ethical perspective considering the problem of the encounter between tradition and modernity.

Ethics concerns the individual human person (the moral agent), at least in the approaches of virtue ethics and deontological ethics, in which we are interested here, before concerning institutions within the framework of procedural ethics as reminded by philosophers such as John Rawls (1921-2002) and Martin Blais (1924-2018). Just (morally good) institutions in the sense defined by John Rawls' *Theory of Justice* can remain a dead letter (including fundamental texts such as a country's Constitution) if the individuals or persons responsible for implementing them are not sufficiently committed to the spirit of laws of which Montesquieu (1689-1755) spoke, that is to say, if they locate their main interests elsewhere than in the principles described and stated in the texts of laws and regulations governing these institutions and are therefore not personally involved in

their concrete realization. For this, the ethical training of people, of people who can be leaders, proves to be the only way to ensure that the aspirations of the population, expressed verbally, and also through elections, are likely to be realized.

In the present study, the contemporary Burundian problem (after the Arusha agreement of August 2000), is analyzed from two first historical levels or roots in regard to what has just been said:

1) The first level is that of Burundians' brutal encounter with Europeans: the clash of civilizations through the irruption of the German colonizers and the war between them and the Belgians on Burundian soil, on the one hand, and, on the other, the advent of political power for which the Burundians were not really prepared after independence in 1962.

2) The second level, which is partly a consequence of the previous one, concerns the loss of the traditional axiological benchmarks constituting the *Murundi's* soul, and of the adoption of anti-values far from any valorization of moral agents, this adoption going hand in hand with the superficial acceptance of specific values of modernity, outright or under the influence of neocolonial processes, particularly in terms of unequal cooperation between the North and the South.

These two levels must be considered in the analysis of the paths of harmonization between tradition and modernity in Burundi with the objective of theorizing the educational paths of moral agents/builders of sustainable peace in Burundi. After presenting some historical data related to the first level, we will analyze, regarding the second level, on the one hand, the situation of two traditional values: *ubuntu* and *ubutungane/intahe* with their corresponding modern values: the sense of humanity and the dignity of the human person for *ubuntu*; the virtue of justice for *ubutungane/intahe*. On the other hand, two anti-values: the anti-values of *Uwawe* (against *umwansi*, *umwana w'uwundi*, *umuvyeyi atari so*), corresponding to the modern anti-value of ethnocentrism; and the anti-value of *igihugu ntikiribwa ivu* corresponding to the modern anti-values of economic corruption linked to capitalist greed leading to the exploitation of others and the individual or group appropriation of the common good.

From a methodological point of view, this investigation is theoretical (conceptual) and based on historical and ethno-cultural sources on Burundi under colonial and postcolonial regimes. The study uses the philosophical (ethical) method applied to the study of conflicts and their peaceful and sustainable resolution.

2. The Clash of Civilizations in Burundi: The Brutal Encounter between the *Barundi* and the Europeans, Then the Brutal Irruption of an Uprooted Modern Burundi

2.1. The Violent Irruption of German and then Belgian Colonizers

Burundian society suffered a civilizational trauma that has lasting consequences to this day. That trauma can be understood as a result of the "clash of civiliza-

tions,” to use Samuel Huntington’s term (Huntington, 1996). The Burundian human being traditionally had his values and his view of reality which were disrupted first by the violent irruption of the Europeans and by the war between the latter during the armed confrontation between Germans and Belgians; and then by Burundi’s equally brutal access to independence under the sign of modernity not yet clearly understood and on shifting ideological bases (notably due to cultural uprooting due to colonization, but also the rise of anti-values as a way of being *Barundi* and leaders).

Historians of the region provide us with precise information on this problem. Let’s quote the French historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien who recalls how the occupation of Burundi by the Germans was decided in Europe:

The former kingdom of Burundi had fallen under German control since the German-British agreement of 1890 which had organized on paper the partition of East Africa. It had been effectively occupied since the years 1896-1903 by the *Schutztruppe*, the colonial army of *Deutsch-Ostafrika*.¹ In 1906, the three districts of the Northwest of this vast Territory, namely those of Bukoba (on the west bank of Lake Victoria), Rwanda, and Burundi, were placed under a regime of indirect administration inspired by the English model in Uganda (Chrétien, 2016).

We know in what circumstances the *Mwami* Mwezi Gisabo had to agree to sign the famous *Treaty of Kiganda* on June 6, 1903, establishing the German occupation of the Kingdom of Burundi. As the *Burundian Press Agency* well recalls,

...since the arrival of the Germans on Burundian soil in 1896, Mwezi Gisabo remained intractable by refusing to bow to them and the Burundian traitors Kilima and Maconco. King Mwezi Gisabo inflicted several failures and attempts at submission against the Germans before it was impossible for him to sell off the sovereignty of Burundi [sic]. Captain *Von Bering*, through force, cunning, and diplomacy, decided to launch his army against the *Mwami*; it was April 27, 1903. Mwezi Gisabo and his army, the *Badasigana*, delivered certainly heroic but uneven resistance in the surroundings of *Muramya*, *Kiganda* and *Fota*, for a whole month. Finally, his army was definitively defeated during the Battle of *Gahondo* on May 24, 1903, before the German troops of non-commissioned officer *Federowski* and his auxiliaries. Despite this defeat, Mwezi Gisabo refused to surrender, preferring to take refuge to perhaps reorganize a counter-offensive, [...]. Under the advice of the *White Fathers* of Mugeru, King Mwezi agreed to sign, with death in his soul, the *Treaty of Kiganda* on June 6, 1903. [...] (ABP, 2023).

The colonial occupation was, therefore, from the start, brutal for at least two reasons:

¹Author’s note: “This colony, founded between 1885 and 1890, brought together the current states of Tanzania (except Zanzibar), Rwanda and Burundi.”

1) On the one hand, the kingdom of Burundi already existed as a sovereign and unified country with the *Mwami* at its head who, by virtue of one of the fundamental values of monarchical power, was called *Se Barundi* (the Father of the *Barundi*), was to lead the kingdom like a father of a family and ensure the unity of the *Barundi*. Considered by them as a sacred, and mysterious character who reigned over them without imposing himself by force, the *Mwami* constituted a very strong symbol of the identity of the kingdom. Submitting him in this way to foreign domination which he now had to obey, was unprecedented symbolic violence in the minds of the *Barundi*, mainly because the *Mwami* could no longer play his role as mysterious protector of the inhabitants of the kingdom:

The sovereign, a sacred figure, appeared so rarely that the fact of seeing him constituted, in itself, a remedy for eye ailments. According to popular belief, the character of the *mwami* carried within himself this curative effect for the eyes. Perhaps this is why no one could be satisfied with one description of the sovereign sketched by another, everyone wanted to see him, but few contemplated him. A popular saying goes: ‘*Amaso y’ uwundi ntakubonera umwami*’ (the eyes of others do not see the king for you). We have seen so many miracle-working kings in universal history, and this quality has consistently earned them unlimited popularity. The supernatural attributes of sovereigns have often justified the essence and very existence of their power (Nsanze, 2001).

This distant, mysterious or discreet character of the *Mwami* made it possible to create a space of freedom for his subjects who could freely go about their business in the country without being constantly followed and hunted down by the leaders. Power was exercised from the top to the base but, above all, based on values and principles deeply anchored in mentalities that the princes themselves had to strive to embody, at least in the eyes of those ruled. Hence the delegation of power by the *Mwami* to the Chiefs (the *Baganwa*) and sub-chiefs (the *Batware*). There was a saying: “*Umwera uva i bukuru ugakwira hose*” (Clarity comes from the leaders and spreads throughout everywhere). Subduing the *Mwami* from whom the *Baganwa* derived their authority was therefore experienced as a loss of national identity rooted in ancestral values.

2) On the other hand, the military confrontation between the *Mwami*’s army, the *Badasigana*, armed with spears and arrows, and the Germans armed with rifles, machine guns and cannons whose resounding and deafening noise caused terror and panic in the mind of *Barundi* accustomed to tranquility and peaceful existence on the hills of Burundi, constituted a traumatic experience which left lasting scars in the hearts of the *Barundi*. Barely ten years after the signing of the *Treaty of Kiganda*, the arrival of the Belgians, under the sign of the extension to Africa of World War I, was even more brutal if we consider the military confrontation between them, as recounted by historian Jean-Pierre Chrétien:

From July 1914 to May 1916, the Belgian and German forces observed each other, even if, quickly, several incidents caused the hopes of neutrality harbored in particular by the Belgians to fade away. The governor of *Deutsch-Ostafrika*, Heinrich Schnee, rather pacifist, wanted Africa to stay out of the [European] conflict. But the real leader of the colony, in this time of war, was the commander [of] the *Schutztruppe*, Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. The latter's program was to fix English troops in Africa so that they would not go to fight in Europe. [...] On the military level, German East Africa had fourteen companies, bringing together a total of 260 German cadres and 2472 riflemen. Rwanda and Burundi were initially well protected, with the 9th Company based at Usumbura (north of Lake Tanganyika) and the 11th Company at Kisenyi (north of Lake Kivu). But, under the Lettow-Vorbeck plan that we have just seen, the bulk of these forces were withdrawn shortly after the outbreak of war. [...]

In the spring of 1916, the balance of power was particularly unequal on the front of Lake Kivu and the Rusizi Valley. In the northern sector, the one which directly concerned Rwanda, the Belgians had 5,200 men, 32 cannons and 32 machine guns, while Captain Wintgens opposed them with 55 Germans, 600 askaris, 3 cannons and 5 machine guns. In the southern sector, that is to say, in the west of Burundi, the Belgians lined up 2500 men, 20 cannons and 20 machine guns, facing Major Langenn who had 36 Germans, 250 Askaris, 2 cannons and 3 machine guns (Chrétien, 2016).

The clash between these armies of European origin, the resounding of cannons, machine guns, and rifles, the stampede of the Germans who had to flee in the face of the military superiority of the Belgians aided by Congolese recruits, the rapes and pillaging committed by the latter mentioned in the same article, the forced and massive recruitment of Burundian men as porters by both the Germans and the Belgians, this whole traumatic experience was only the beginning of a loss of psychological and axiological and sociological reference points of the *Barundi*.

This loss of reference for identity will continue with the policies of Belgian colonization, in particular the famous administrative reform of 1925 which expelled all the *Bahutu* from the positions of responsibility they held in the country, the abolition of the national and annual sowing festival, *Umuganuro*, which was an important national cultural event of the kingdom, the forced labor and chicotte as humiliating corporal punishments, as well as the discriminatory policy in terms of access to education freshly introduced by the colonizers who favored the *Baganwa* dynasty and the *Batutsi* to the detriment of the *Bahutu* mass who only had religious schools (*yaga Mukama*) and the catholic seminaries as the only path to education thanks in particular to the support of the Catholic Missionaries.

Let us provide some details of two examples concerning the destruction of traditional Burundian society by Belgian colonizers: the dismissal from power of

all *Bahutu* chiefs and sub-chiefs upon racist justification; and the deletion of royal domains (*ibigabiro*). We refer here to what the Burundian historian Joseph Gahama says. Concerning the “*Bahutu: their ouster from power*”, this author writes:

More than the Batutsi, already hard hit, the Bahutu are the real victims of the reorganization. From 20% of the overall number of leaders in 1929, they fell to 7% in 1933 and 2% in 1937. In 1945, they were completely wiped out. [...] The *a priori* which led to this situation on the political level appear very clearly in the reports of the resident’s delegates, at the time of the 1929 investigation. This is how the Bururi delegate provided the following comment:

“It is certain that the Batutsi are in general much more intelligent, also indifferent, more brutal and more energetic [sic!] than the Bahutu. Their authority comes a lot from these qualities and defaults, their wealth in livestock helps a lot, it is very true... Placing an intelligent muhutu at the head of a chieftom in regions where this is possible is always risky in advance...” (Dersheid, 1929; Gahama, 1983).

Imagine being a respected leader in your community for a long time, everyone honoring you with gifts in your *igihutu* (the ruled territory and people), and then seeing your situation change completely from one day to the next, losing all material and moral advantages, and, what’s more, suffering the humiliation of belittlement in terms of moral, intellectual and physical qualities. Your family and those around you cannot quietly welcome this brutality and injustice except for fear of expressing themselves and being repressed. For the *Bahutu* chiefs of this era as well as their descendants, it was undoubtedly an unprecedented trauma who must have boiled over in frustrations, jealousy and even hatred against the class then privileged by the colonizers.

The other example is that of the deletion of royal domains. Joseph Gahama writes:

We still have in mind that the traditional political organization included *ivyibare*, directly dependent on the king and administered by *bishikira*. Still numerous in the center of the country at the start of the colonial occupation, they quickly disappeared from the map of Burundi. It seems that the young King Mwambutsa, perhaps because of his age, took little interest in his *ivyibare* [royal domains]. Already in 1920, he had not reacted to the disappearance of the royal domain of Ntunda, managed by Sebutzige in the south of the country, following the attacks by Mbakuye. The royal drums kept in a hut inaccessible to all fell into ruin, while the royal herd was seized to increase that of the chief Karabona (Mukuri, 1978). In 1922, Chief Ndarishikije appropriated Bulemera and Bukanga without firing a shot, in the mountains overlooking the lake, at Minago (Dersheid, 1929). Encouraged by these Baganwa initiatives, the Belgian governor set about waging a

real war on the *bishikira*². We will take two examples: one in Muramvya territory, the other in Usumbura territory. At Muramvya, the estates had survived because of Mutaga Mbikije's many servants and court diviners. The mwami Mwambutsa, because of the European influence which forced him to reside permanently in Muramvya then in Kitega [current Gitega], must abandon his *ivyibare*, remarkably studied by A. Nsanze, all the *bishikira bahutu* are chased away and replaced by two *Baganwa* foreign to these places: Mwezi Bagorikunda and Mutare Marimbu. Bagorikunda receives the administration of the lands of the *bishikira* Ntamakiro, Muheto, Ntawuryimara, Senjeje, Ntagirabiri, Mpitabakana, Kagomba and Kanuma. In total, the colonial authorities handed over the enclaves led by Ntarugera and his sister Inakayenzi. As for Marimbu, he inherits Tara and Rubirizi, formerly reserved for the ritualist Mukakiranga. To really take charge of new acquisitions, these chefs call on sous-chefs from their own region of origin. This is especially the case for Bagorikunda, who brings with him a large following of people from Kinyinya (Gahama, 1983).

These forced expropriations of the *bishikira* from the royal domains which they took care of and which supported their families but also ensured their social prestige by ensuring the liaison between the central authority of the *mwami* and the native localities, their replacement, appointed according to the criterion ethnic violence, by people coming from other regions of the country, undoubtedly constituted a symbolic violence which could not fail to demoralize the *Barundi* who thus lost their cultural and psychological reference points that constituted the basis of their nation. In addition to this was the expropriation of the *ban-yamabanga*, guardians of traditional religion and royal rites (*bapfumu*: diviners; *baganuza*: ritualists responsible for preparing the sowing festival, *umuganuro*) of the domains that the *mwami* had granted to them: "Christianity, with the consent of the colonial power, attacks [...] ancient cults and begins the hunt for ritualists treated as 'Wizards'" (Gahama, 1983). It was therefore not a question of evangelization by peaceful proposal of the Christian message to *Barundi* but of forced Christianization which will culminate in the deletion of *umuganuro* festival in 1929.

These examples are sufficient, for the purpose of this study, to affirm that the traumatic character of these facts was due their violent nature, not only physical violence but also symbolic and spiritual violence; and these cultural upheavals imposed by the colonizers did not fail to transform the soul and identity of the *Murundi* fundamentally and thus constitute the distant roots of what the *Barundi* continue to live today.

However, this transformation would perhaps have been less lasting if the independence of Burundi, acquired on July 1, 1962, had been followed by a re-

²The *Bishikira* (literally: those who arrive directly by themselves) were people, *Bahutu* and *Batutsi*, who had direct and privileged access to the court of the *Mwami* and who managed the royal domains (*ivyibare*), as representatives of the latter (see Feltz, 1985).

sumption of control of society on good foundations and by leaders still aware of the traditional values which constituted this soul and capable of fighting against anti-values. This was by no means the case.

2.2. Independence under the Sign of Brutality and Culture Shock

The Burundian society brutally entered modernity with its independence in 1962 which was proclaimed after the vile assassination of its promoter, Prince Louis Rwagasore, and with the abolition of the centuries-old monarchy and the proclamation of the secular Republic only four years later, in 1966, against a backdrop of profound political instability, assassinations based on ethnic extremism and hate, and the rise of a “politicized elite itself restricted and often of post-primary training, emerging from the cultural suffocation of the colonial period and barely discovering the world;” (Chrétien & Dupaquier, 2007) an elite which became rapidly militarized, ethnicized and radically regionalized, in only one decade, from 1962 to 1976, and which committed large-scale massacres (recently described as “*Genocide against the Bahutu of Burundi*” by the Burundi TRC³) under the pretext of suppressing an uprising or rebellion in the south of the country.

After the forced exile of Mwami Mwambutsa IV, Bangiricenge, followed by the assassination of his heir son, Ndizeye Charles, dethroned by the proclamation of the Republic after having himself dethroned his father in exile (in Switzerland), the installation of military powers without legitimacy neither popular (because held by three Presidents from a small ethnic minority, from a single clan, the *Bahima*, coming from a single commune in the country, *Rutovu*), nor democratic (because from military coups), Burundian society will be marked very negatively, to such an extent that the advent of a new democratic era in 1992-1993 will be experienced both under the sign of ethnicity and cruelty, which manifested itself with the election and assassination of the first *Muhutu* President, Melchior Ndadaye, and of a majority of his collaborators, followed by massacres of the *Batutsi* throughout the country by the *Bahutu* declaring that they were preventing the return to power of the *Batutsi's* army through the possible success of the coup of October 21, 1993.

The armed rebellions that followed, the signing of the Arusha Agreement in August 2000 and the ceasefire agreements will allow a return to the path of democracy without, however, bringing Burundi back on the path to a society solidly built on shared values, anchored in the training of people and leaders, a guarantee for sustainable peace and stability of a nation. The crisis of 2015, against the backdrop of a controversial mandate of President Pierre Nkurunziza (a *Muhutu*) after ten years of reign, the exile of many opponents, especially from the *Batutsi* minority, testifying to this fundamental failure of the peace process of reconciliation and democratization.

What is essential for us to explain here is how specific fundamental ethical values which constituted the soul of the *Murundi* (or its deep identity) were

³Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

practically relegated to the rank of a demagogic facade discourse, just as the great democratic ideals stemming from Western modernity, while both traditional and modern anti-values constitute the new accurate but disastrous way of being a *Murundi*. This aspect is addressed, of course quite briefly, in the following part of this study.

3. Two Values to Rediscover (*Ubuntu, Ubutungane/Intahe*); Two Anti-Values to Fight (*Uwawe, Ntikiribw'ivu*)

3.1. The Values of Ubuntu and Ubutungane/Intahe

3.1.1. *Ubuntu*

Traditional Burundian Virtue Ethics was transmitted from generation to generation through tales and sayings and through the encouragement of some actions deemed good, and reprimand of other actions deemed contrary to Burundian culture and good morals. An ethical aspect was also experienced in the mode of the forbidden or taboo (*kirazira*) which is a deontological approach to ethics. By following the “ethnocultural” approach of Adrien Ntabona (a catholic priest)⁴, we can briefly see the internal dimensions of each *ubuntu* value, and *ubutungane/intahe*. *Ubuntu* which can be defined as the sense of humanity and the dignity of the human person, was declined in several other subdivisions of values, the most important of which were notably the *good conscience of the person* who had to be cultivated: “*Akami ka muntu ni umutima wiwe*”: consciousness is the center of a human person’s life; “*umutima w’ubuntu*”: it is the consciousness of common humanity. Thus, this consciousness was considered to characterize, in a profound way, a human person (*umuntu*).

Ubuntu is not only a Burundian value, but also shared by all so-called “*Bantu*” peoples in Africa and is currently defined by certain researchers in universal terms. The South African Desmond Tutu (1931-2021) and the Senegalese Souleymane Bachir Diagne (1955-) define it as the “sense of common and shared humanity”:

“There is a Zulu proverb called Ubuntu that says: “I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours.” Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained it this way: “One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu—the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can’t exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness... We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity.” ([The Clinton Foundation, 2012](#))

“I conclude this first part of my remarks with an explanation of the expression that I use here: *making humanity together*. I’m there to see a translation of the word “*ubuntu*,” which has enriched universal thought today, beyond the borders of South Africa, beyond the *Bantu* languages to which

⁴In unpublished works.

the word belongs. To say that if the concept is precisely mentioned in reflections on the idea of transitional justice it is because Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu activated this word of language to charge it with the meaning, the energy, which carries the concept of *open soul*, to indicate that it is not a question of achieving the juxtaposition and the summation of tribes (which would have been to renew the meaning of apartheid) but of recalling that humanity is becoming and overcoming that we let's do some *with* others, some *by* others. Once again, it's not about expanding the tribe, it's about getting out of it." (Diagne, 2016).

The value of *ubuntu*, therefore, became a value universally recognized as essential, particularly after its popularization by Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu, who, within the framework of post-apartheid South African transitional justice, dared to propose a kind of justice focused on forgiveness and reconciliation rather than punitive justice to "*make humanity together*" between Whites and Blacks. *Ubuntu* aims at recognition and respect for the dignity of the human person, of every human person, beyond all differences (tribal, ethnic, racial, religious, national, etc.).

Ubuntu is, therefore, a notion which corresponds, without a doubt, to the concept of human dignity, as defined notably by the German philosopher of the Enlightenment, Emmanuel Kant (1724-1804) who formulated the idea of the moral duty of every human being (the categorical imperative) to respect and protect the dignity of the human person: "*Act in such a way that you treat humanity both in your own person and in the person of any other always at the same time as an end, and never simply as a means.*" (Kant, 1964):

Man alone is an end in himself because, without Man, no work of art would be an end for anyone; not only the work of art, but the whole world: 'Without humans, the whole creation would be a mere dessert, useless and without a final goal.' Because Man is the only being capable of giving meaning to the world. It is, therefore, because he can posit ends because he is "*the subject of all possible ends*" that Man is an end in himself. The Man in question here is, if we dare say, the Man being of quality: not the Man being of desire who ceaselessly pursues happiness impossible to human view, not the Man being of culture and society, but Man as he has a will, more precisely a will capable of obeying the moral law that he gives to himself, of being a "goodwill." (Reboul, 1970).

Goodwill and a good conscience, which characterize *ubuntu*, are not very different from this Kantian definition of the human person (Man) (*umuntu*). In this regard, we can recall that Kant thought that human beings, capable of using their reason, naturally have a moral conscience, even if the inclination towards evil could also manifest itself in an equally universal way among humans. In other words, the natural goodness of the human being ensures that the idea of goodwill, of a good disposition towards others, is concretized in the moral

commandments linked to hospitality, helping the poor and the weak, respect for the sick and the dead who are buried with dignity, and the like.

We can thus see that the value of *ubuntu* is part of the recognition of this common and good humanity, which must be cultivated, expressed through relationships with each other, beyond the herd instinct that Henri Bergson spoke about, which means that, spontaneously, we tend to identify more with people with whom we share family, tribal and ethnic ties, etc. This instinct can be overcome through reflection (use of the reason that Kant spoke of), especially philosophical reflection, which helps us understand that we share a common humanity. In this regard, the *Barundi*, and the *Bantu* in general, as Alexis Kagame clearly stated (Kagame, 1955), were capable of philosophical and even ontological reflection. The value of *ubuntu* is a moral value developed by philosophical thought that has equivalents in other philosophical systems, as a thought of the value of universal humanity.

The other value associated with *ubuntu* among *Barundi* is the concept of “*iteka*” (honour, dignity), i.e. *umuntu* (the human being) aware of his/her dignity and who respects others is also worthy of respect; the one who doesn’t say anything, who reflects before speaking, who is careful about what he does so as not to run the risk of being devalued. *Barundi* considered that a killer was no longer “*umuntu*”, they identified him with a brute: “*ni igikoko*.” This was expressed for example by saying “*Urya ntamuntu akirimwo*”, that is to say literally, “that one has lost humanity”, not that he/she has become an animal physically, but that he/she no longer behaves as a human being (*umuntu*), no longer demonstrates the awareness of human dignity which was expressed through other virtues such as those of truthfulness (*imvugakuri*), respect for a given word (someone worthy of trust, who does what he/she said to do) (*umwizigirwa*), etc.

The value of the “*ibanga*” (perpetual social role) is also derived from *ubuntu*. *Ibanga* is the awareness of being responsible, of assuming, without escaping, one’s responsibilities. Someone who does not take responsibility is no longer a full “*umuntu*”, he/she lost something of humanity, he/she became a coward. Because every true human being, in the Burundian anthropological conception, must assume his/her responsibilities and persevere to the end in the role. It was said: “*ibanga ribangirwa ingata*”: one must carry out one’s role perseveringly like one carries a jug on one’s head using an *ingata* (a twist).

Ubuntu is also “*ubuvukanyi*” (brotherhood) which is *ubuntu* on the family level. You don’t treat your family like you treat strangers. We have duties towards our family, the people with whom we share blood. On a social level: “*Ubuntu*” can also mean “*ububanyi*” (good neighborliness); sharing (*gutanga*); hospitality (the one who comes to your house to spend the night); the sense of dialogue with others... Traditionally, *Barundi* were known to be hospitable people. People could move freely, on foot, throughout the kingdom, without provisions, stopping in the evening at anyone’s house and asking to be accommodated to spend the night. The traveler was treated with a sense of human brotherhood, fed and housed free of charge, before continuing his journey without fear of se-

curity. *Ubuwukanyi* was, therefore, the expression of *ubuntu* in the sense of general and universal human fraternity.

As was said about Kantian thought, a parallelism of this Burundian or Bantu notion with modern Western thought exists. The value of *ubuntu* can undoubtedly be understood in the sense of respect for the human person, in oneself and in others, and for all aspects in practical terms attached to this notion, but also in the sense of hospitality and human brotherhood:

Something is owed to the human being simply because he/she is human. “The recognition of this “demand older than any philosophical formulation” (Paul Ricoeur) is of every era. It is discovered in all humans and in all cultures and becomes clearer as civilizations assert themselves (see Ricoeur, 1988, pp. 235-236). The most remarkable recognition is that which is immediately granted to the weakest and most deprived, the central place of leniency and respect towards the poor. In India, the *Laws of Manu*, of ancient origin, state unequivocally: “*Children, the old, the poor and the sick must be considered as lords of the atmosphere.*” Chinese wisdom places the “*ability to comfort others*” at the forefront. Respect for the poor in every sense of the word, for those who suffer, is, as we know, at the heart of Jewish and Christian traditions. The Qur’an mentions duties towards orphans, the poor, homeless travelers, the needy, and those reduced to slavery (Nanji, 1991, p. 108 ff.). Compassion is one of the two main ideals of Buddhism. Everywhere we seem to sense that it is in deprivation that humanity reveals itself most clearly and imposes, so to speak, its own nobility—that of its being, not of some asset—on consciousness. Among the Greeks, the words of old Oedipus, blind and in rags, practically abandoned, express it very well: “*it is therefore when I am nothing, that I truly become a man.*” (Sophocles, 1960, v. 393). [...] (De Koninck, 2017).

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* summarizes the value of human dignity and promotes its protection and respect throughout the planet. However, it should be noted that this notion, which dates back specifically to the philosophies of the Enlightenment, including the moral philosophy of Immanuel Kant, asserts itself in modernity under the sign of a liberal and democratic view of power. This was not the case in traditional *Burundi* which was governed by a monarchical regime, in itself based on a hierarchical conception of humanity and privileges conceived as natural.

However, if we go back a little further in European history, we can see that the concept of respect for life and the human person is not necessarily linked to a liberal conception of society: we can go back to the biblical religion which establishes a conception of the human being based on an inalienable dignity: the human being was created in the image of God. For this, the Ten Commandments, while recognizing the existence of a single God who must be the sole beneficiary of religious worship, require every human being to love their neighbors as themselves. Royalty, which also existed in Israel, is not incompatible with the

idea of respect for the dignity of the human person, provided that moral values, of which the idea of unconditional and selfless love embodies the quintessence, are integrated as the supreme virtue which must also animate leaders, even if they are of a dynastic and hereditary type.

Thus, Christian thought's concept of the dignity of the person could find a basis in the traditional concept of *ubuntu*, purified from certain egocentric and ethnocentric tendencies (the anti-values that we will see later) that also characterized the ancient *Barundi* but were balanced by other core values like *ubutungane/intahe*.

3.1.2. Ubutungane/Intahe

The second value or virtue which is particularly important when we talk about the existence and functioning of traditional Burundian society is *ubutungane* which can be defined as the value or virtue of justice. This virtue was particularly embodied by the *Bashingantahe* and the *Bagabo*. Let's take a closer look at what it was about.

Ubutungane/intahe, as a personal virtue, gave *itungane, umuntu w'itungane* (the just, the upright person). Traditionally, the *Barundi* knew how to distinguish good from evil according to their values, particularly that of *ubuntu*. Taking what belongs to others was punishable. A traditional institution called "*abashingantahe*" was responsible for arbitrating disputes fairly and impartially. "*Intahe*" was the idea of impartial justice, arbitrating disputes in a manner consistent with the value of justice (*ubutungane*). *Abashingantahe* were responsible for rendering justice (*gushinga intahe*). The *intahe* was represented by a stick because justice could also be punitive for the guilty. The expression "*intahe imukubite mu gahanga*," meant to be found guilty, fairly and credibly, of an offense, and liable to punishment. Thus, the idea of *ubutungane* and that of *intahe* were linked and constituted the foundations of the Burundian socio-political order that inspired confidence in all.

Those who were chosen to play the role of the *Bashingantahe* were also called the *Bagabo*. Literally the word "*umugabo*" (singular of "*abagabo*") simply means a male human being. In the sense of *umushingantahe*, *umugabo* was a courageous person, who could also be a woman (in some rare cases)⁵, taking the initiative to intervene to help settle an argument, even with people unknown to him, being also courageous to tell the truth and not be afraid of criminals in the name of respect due to justice (*ubutungane/intahe*). It is, therefore, not every male human being (men) who was *Bagabo* in the sense of *bashingantahe*. Only a few men chosen for their good character and often even ritually invested bore this title. The Mwami had to submit to the verdict of the *Bagabo* thanks to whom he could reign. A tale said: "*Umwami agirwa n'abagabo*" (the mwami reigns thanks to *abagabo/abashingantahe* who embody social justice); "*kananira bagabo ntiyimwe*" (Whoever resists *abagabo* is never enthroned as king). We can thus

⁵We can give the example of *Inamujandi* who a Burundian woman from the west of the country was (the current province of Cibitoke) who led, in the 1930s, a rebel movement fighting the Belgian colonizers.

say that the notion of *ubutungane/intahe* was linked to that of *ubuntu* by the requirement to defend the human being, in his property and his dignity, in an impartial manner, consistent with justice.

If we consider the Western definition of justice which dates back to the philosophies of classical Greece (5th and 4th centuries BC), taken up by philosophers and theologians of the Middle Ages such as Saint Thomas Aquinas (13th century AD), subsequently elaborated by contemporary philosophers in terms of human rights, justice firstly implies the recognition of the moral or formal equality of citizens among themselves. Secondly, recognition of human dignity in each person requires others to behave with respect towards their fellow citizens. Finally, the courts pronounce a ban on discriminatory behavior based on prohibited grounds such as age, sex, ethnic origin, religion, etc. (UNESCO, 2006).

However, how was it precisely defined? An ancient Roman jurisconsult Ulpian (170-223) defined justice as follows: “*usticia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus sumum copper tribuendi*,” (Senn, 1927) that is to say literally: “Justice is the firm and constant desire to render to each person what is due to him/her.” This concept fundamentally implies that something is owed to the human being, simply because he/she is human, in particular, respect for his person, which will later be translated by the term “human dignity.” Justice presides over the domain of actions that concern and affect others. The thing that the word justice evokes most spontaneously is the other, the other human being. However, the other, the one to whom something is owed, can be an individual or a community. This is why philosophers were able to distinguish particular justice and general justice. Particular justice is the species of justice that applies when the one who receives the thing due is an individual. Particular justice is divided into *commutative justice* and *distributive justice*. Commutative justice applies to exchanges between individuals. We only consider here the objects in question. *Distributive justice* concerns the distribution of resources common to the members of a community. Distributive justice aims to distribute the common good; it establishes a proportionate sharing and adequate use of resources. An unshared common good would only be common in its production and not in the enjoyment of the goods produced, which is, therefore, unjust. Distribution means that the total production is divided into shares given to individuals. Distributive justice is responsible for determining what, in the common good, belongs to each person. Traditionally, distributive justice has used *merit* and *need* as criteria. It seeks to establish equal opportunities between citizens, particularly in education, health, and work. The purpose of distributive justice consists of ensuring the means of a decent life for each member of the community.

Conversely, *general justice* is the type of justice that gives the community its due. Although the term general justice is no longer used, its content remains current. General justice encourages everyone to take the common good into account in the actions they take. It indicates each person’s contribution to the common good. This contribution takes the form of paying taxes, but not only.

Although it corresponds to the legal aspects that impose duties on all members of the community, general justice also encourages them to participate in building the common good through their work, their voluntary action, and their commitment to people who are experiencing difficulties.

It is interesting to note that the virtue of justice concerns both individuals and social institutions. There are just social institutions and just people. In his *Theory of Justice*, the philosopher John Rawls affirmed, following Aristotle, that justice is the first virtue of social institutions:

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions just as truth is that of systems of thought. However elegant and economical a theory may be, it must be rejected or revised if it is not true; likewise, however effective and well-organized institutions and laws may be, they must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust (Rawls, 1997).

Considering justice as a *virtue of people*, the philosopher Martin Blais affirms that justice is achievable when social institutions and citizens are just. Justice is inaccessible if citizens are dishonest, even in just social institutions:

A society is just when its institutions and laws are just. But, in such a society, injustice can reign if citizens, lacking the moral virtue of justice, paralyze institutions and circumvent the laws. This is why we must work on both levels: if the tax law is unfair, justice will not reign in this sector; if it is just, unjust citizens will circumvent it. For justice to reign, there must be both a just law and just citizens (Blais, 1994).

Therefore, the notion of justice as understood by Western thought and which has reached us in Burundi through colonization, modernization, and globalization, implies precise aspects linked not only to the *character of people* (just, virtuous individuals) but also to *the nature of institutions*. It can be seen that the *Barundi* had a high and similar sense of the notion of justice particularly in terms of personal virtue embodying *ubuntu* (*umushingantahe*, *itungane*) (a just and upright person), but also *collective aspects* which relate to the administration of justice by the *Bashingantahe*, who had to be reliable, honest and have a high sense of justice (giving everyone their due) (*intahe*) and honor (behaving in a manner worthy of a true Man) (*iteka*). These aspects concerned particular commutative justice, but we can also note that a form of *particular distributive justice* existed in ancient Burundi even if it was still marked by paternalism which was a fundamental characteristic of the royal economy of power (democracy and its egalitarian principles were a foreign concept to ancient Burundi):

In this Burundian society of the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, redistribution plays a big role. If we are to believe all the literature on demand and supply, it is decisive in vertical relationships. In this respect, the present case recalls the practices common to all societies with centralized power. [...] The authority indeed offers livestock, land, food, and equipment, but behind this redistribution hide practices of ac-

cumulation that often make people unhappy (Nsanze, 2001).

[...]

There is a general law that the authority observed in matters of redistribution: the *mwami*, like the prince or his counterpart, cannot afford, in normal times, to offer to a requester or an official, even if he is very close to him, more than one cow at a time. In a pinch, the happiest of the day, get a cow accompanied by her calf or a bull calf, but not two cows or two heifers. This limitation can be explained to the extent that the cow of proliferating age was conceived as the second-best gift that authority could offer to a subject. Therefore, the authority had to rely on its redistribution to widen the circle of faithful and customers as much as possible. This rule was valid both for day-to-day redistribution and for that which was much more organized and concerned several heads of cattle at the same time. It justifies the generosity of the aristocracy towards the beneficiaries, which the ideology wrongly generalizes.

Without going into the details of this system of distributive justice marked by paternalism (hence the term “*re-distribution*”), since the chiefs, the princes, and the *Mwami* had formal and informal means of accumulation for themselves (not for public interest) of goods a part of which they redistributed. It was said: “*Urakagira ivy’utanga n’ ivy’usigarana*”, literally: “May you have goods to distribute without exhausting your resources”, it must simply be said that there was still a fundamental injustice in comparison with the modern idea of distributive justice which presupposes rational laws defining what the common good is, as well as a fair and equitable distribution of rights and duties according to an egalitarian conception of citizenship. This was not yet the case in ancient Burundi, which was hierarchical and where the aristocracy and dignitaries had many privileges, conceived as hereditary especially for the *Baganwa* dynasty, even if the sense of distributive justice and a general justice based on the custom and religion of *Kubandwa* which played the role of sources of what can be called common law, existed and guaranteed social cohesion.

This gap between what we can call justice in the modern and Western sense, defined above (particular commutative and distributive justice, general justice) and traditional Burundian justice leads us to address the question of anti-values both in the Burundian cultural tradition and in certain characteristics of modernity. These anti-values must obviously be fought against for the harmonization between traditional values and positive modern values.

3.2. The Antivalues of *Uwawe* and *Ntikiribw’Ivu*

3.2.1. *Uwawe*

In traditional Burundi, *uwawe* meant several types of kinship ties, including clan and lineage ties. The Burundi took great pains to know the most distant relatives (*igisanira*) because this was the only strong and lasting basis of friendship, mutual aid, fraternity, and *ubuntu* in the most restrictive sense (although the gen-

eral meaning, extended to all humanity, also existed, as said above). *Uwawe* meant that the other considered as unrelated was the one to be wary of, he was “*murundi*,”⁶ that is to say, the one with whom we have nothing in common in terms of kinship and blood (*umwana w’uwundi, umuvyeyi atari so*) and the whole of society functioned based on these social criteria of identification which, in germ, already constituted the basis of *ethnocentrism* and the divisions that the Belgian colonizers will exacerbate by applying European racist theories which had not much to do with the Burundian concept of *uwawe* or *murundi*:

In the 19th century and during the first quarter of the 20th century, clan affiliation was, for Burundian peasants, the most common criterion of social and political identification. *Social* because each clan had to define itself, or even value itself in relation to other clans. *Political* because the *mwami* and the aristocrats labeled subjects by the names of their clans. When a conflict broke out between two or more people, each uttered the name of their clan if a fight between two individuals had the meaning of a pitched battle between two clans:

Jewe umwana w’Abajiji...! (Me, son of the Abajiji...!)

Jewe umwana w’Abahanza...! (Me, son of the Abahanza...!)

Jewe umwana w’Abenengwe...! (Me, son of the Abenengwe...!)

At the end of the brawl, the winner felt his victory both as a superiority of his forces and as a trophy taken by his clan. This was all the truer because if the vanquished was seriously injured, his lineage would only wait for his death to initiate a vendetta. They had to kill a member of the other lineage so as not to have a reputation for cowardice. Only a prince or the *mwami* could arbitrate the conflict to initiate a process of reconciliation. When a subject was required to perform work at the royal or princely court, his clan’s name enabled or prevented him from doing so. Compared to the dynasty, each clan had its fame and skills. It was only when there was possible confusion that another identification criterion was brought into play, ethnicity: *Muhutu, Mututsi, Mutwa*. One might wonder whether such a clan-based classification ended up somehow eclipsing that of an ethnic basis. From the start of the monarchy, in the 16th or 17th century, the king began to dominate the population by distributing responsibilities to the clans. [...] The clan-based classification in no way replaced that made on an ethnic basis; it was practical for a distribution of functions, but the selection in this distribution reflected ethnic specificities. The *Bahutu*, who represented a little more than 80% of the population, were, above all, farmers who combined this main activity with the breeding of small livestock. If some *Bahutu* had managed, by the nature of the function they exercised at the royal or

⁶This term needs to be clarified because it is written the same way as “*Murundi*” (the citizen, the native of Burundi). However, this last term begins with a capital “*M*” while the other term “*murundi*” which means the individual with whom one has no relationship, neither close nor distant, even if he lives close to one’s home, starts with a lowercase “*m*.” What’s more, the two words are pronounced differently. Using the accents (*ubwátuzo*) of Kirundi, we can write the two words as follows: “*Murúndi*” (or “*Muruúndi*”), and “*murúndi*” (or “*muruúndi*”).

princely court, to own a few animals [cows], their herds remained insignificant compared to those of the average *Batutsi*. As for the *Batwa*, they lived by hunting and specialized in pottery. The distribution of benefits reflected this picture, which was later promoted by the colonial power (Nsanze, 2001).

If we are to believe this Burundian historian, the anti-values of clanism, tribalism and ethnicism, although mitigated by the value of *ubuntu*, already constituted a negative breeding ground on which division and exclusion would germinate in the name of a “*hegemonic Tutsi ethnicism*” (Nizigama, 2015)⁷ whose defenders consider their ethnicity to be superior regardless of their clan affiliation (certain clans were trans-ethnic) and must, therefore, rule on the mass of *Bahutu*, and *Batwa*. Indeed, pastoral activity was valued as more important than agricultural activity, not to mention hunting and gathering. Pastoral poetry (*ibicuba*) exalted this activity and magnified the art of raising cows, milking them, drinking milk, etc. No specific poetry glorified agriculture, blacksmithing, and other trades.

In this respect, we can say that the European racist ideology brought by the Belgian colonizers found fertile ground and that the actions of the *Batutsi* leaders of the *Bahima* clan from Bururi province (Michel Micombero, Jean-Baptiste Bagaza and Pierre Buyoya) with perhaps a certain difference for Pierre Buyoya who initiated a policy of National Unity and who began to integrate the *Bahutu* into the government in terms of parity before the Arusha Agreement which institutionalized ethnic quota, were only a perpetuation of these traditional anti-values, exacerbated by anti-values from what we can call the “*other side of modernity*”⁸: Darwinian theory was indeed very influential since the publication of *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and *The Descent of Man* (1871). This is a modern theory according to which only the fittest races (human or animal) survive in the struggle for existence. The dominant (stronger) peoples, races, ethnic groups, and tribes, according to this theory, were destined by *Natural Selection* to survive and perpetuate themselves, if necessary, by crushing and deleting the weaker ones. We know that Nazism was inspired by this theory to theorize its ideology of the superior Arian race which was to enlarge its living space. This same concept was mobilized to race towards the conquest of colonies for their exploitation and their subjugation with a view of “*civilizing*” them. Pierre Ryckmans’ book, entitled *Dominer pour servir* (Dominate to serve), expresses exactly this ideology (Ryckmans, 1931). Competition and struggles of all kinds, using any favorable means, including lies, massacres, killings, genocides, and the end justifying the means, were the new bases of the socio-political action of the *Burundi* leaders, heirs not of the values of the monarchy, but to the *anti-values* of

⁷The French term “*ethnisme*” is wrongly translated in English by “*Ethnicity*” in most dictionaries. However, the correct translation seems “*ethnicism*”, as the term connotes an ideological or a psychological stance of the individual, not only the belonging to an ethnic group (which is the meaning of “*ethnicity*”).

⁸The side of modernity that is based not on humanism but on Darwinism. We are preparing an essay on this subject to be published soon by Éditions Traditions & Modernité Inc.

ancient Burundi and the other, non-humanist, side of Western modernity.

On the other hand, this anti-value is also embodied by the “*Revolutionary Hutu ethnicism of an extremist type*” (Nizigama, 2015): the herd instinct is expressed here through resentment and the spirit of change, not in idealistic terms, that is to say, by a desire to establish a more just and egalitarian socio-political order by abolishing undue privileges and promoting the generalization of the values of *ubuntu* and *ubutungane/intahe* in all their positive and universalist dimensions, but in terms of the *revenge of history* according to the adage “*You get out and let me get in!*” The instinct of this type of ethnicism is violent in essence because it perceives masters deemed unjust through the lenses of group belonging and not through the idea of individual accountability. What is more, the intended revenge can directly aim at the deletion of all members of the incriminated group, sometimes unfairly accusing them of not having full civic legitimacy. The paroxysm of this type of herd instinct developed based on the anti-value of *ab'iwacu*, which now means “*abo dusangiye ubwoko*” (those with whom we share ethnicity), appears in the attempt to physically eliminate all members of the incriminated group with the aim of definitively and physically eliminating the perceived problem, in today's terms defined as genocide (*ihonya bwoko*).

This type of herd instinct developed in violent ethnicism can also draw on the anti-values of the “*other side of modernity*”, the non-humanist one, nourished by racist theories stemming from Darwinism. The struggle for existence is a fierce struggle, like non-human and wild nature, where the strongest survive. The formerly dominated group can, therefore, give itself the means for its revenge and undertake an armed struggle in which traditional and modern moral values, including *ubuntu*, are simply put on hold if not simply relativized. All means are good to win (including lies, killings, massacres, genocides, etc.) as long as we manage not only to survive but also to carry out merciless revenge against the former dominators.

In Burundi, such an orientation materialized after the assassination of the *Muhutu* President Ndandaye Melchior by some *Batutsi* followers of hegemonic Tutsi ethnicism. The *Bahutu* resistance was divided into two orientations, one more idealistic and political embodied by some of the members of the Party founded by Melchior Ndandaye, *FRODEBU* (Front for Democracy in Burundi); and the other more militaristic which evolved from a revolutionary orientation in reaction against the holders of *Batutsi* military power whose members had organized against the failed and bloody coup of October 21, 1993, towards an ethnic-military radicalization without a clear political ideology, particularly as a result numerous internal splits in the CNDD-FDD movement.⁹ Massacres like those of the *Batutsi* displaced in Bugendanda (Gitega province, 1996), of the students of the Minor Seminary of Buta (Bururi province, 1997), the assassination of Mgr Johachim Ruhuna (Gitega, 1996), all despicable acts that could not

⁹Conseil National pour la Défense de la Démocratie-Forces pour la Défense de la Démocratie (National Council for the Defense of Democracy-Forces for the Defense of Democracy).

have a justifiable ideological agenda.

Contrary to popular belief, however, the place of PALIPEHUTU (Gahutu, n.d.) and its avatars do not seem clear to be included in this orientation of revolutionary Hutu ethnicism of an extremist type, notwithstanding the name of the movement referring explicitly to the *Bahutu*. It seems in fact, according to the ideology of its founder (Rémy Gahutu¹⁰) that the objective of PALIPEHUTU was rather to revolutionize Burundi and to establish an “*anthropocentric democracy*,” (Gahutu, n.d.) that is to say, a democracy respecting the dignity of the human person regardless of ethnic or clan affiliation. Such an ideology, which was consistent with *ubuntu* in its positive and universalist values, if implemented, could of course eliminate social inequality without leading to revenge and exclusion. However, there is the other anti-value of *Ntikiribw’ivu* which is very dangerous for any move towards sustainable good governance and peace.

3.2.2. *Ntikiribw’ivu*

Finally, let’s mention the second anti-value that we talked about: *ntikiribw’ivu*: literally, “*One cannot eat the land or the soil of it.*” In longer form: “*Igihugu ntikiribw’ivu*”: literally: “*One cannot eat the land or the soil of a country*”: “In the reality of things, the word *igihugu* covers a notional field difficult to delimit, where the economic, the political and the sociological interfere. In their conception of power, the *Barundi* do not express the country and the province—subdivision of the first—with different words. The sovereign (*mwami*) of the country is at the head of an *igihugu*, the kingdom, and each provincial chief is at the head of an *igihugu*.” (Nsanze, 2001). At the same time, each portion of territory where one was established as chief or leader constituted an *igihugu*:

In fact, the appropriation of territory covers two fundamental realities: on the one hand, the population that occupies it becomes a mass of subjects who owe services and royalties to the invested authority and, on the other hand, the control over geographical space translates into very tight control of the essential means of production in an exclusively agricultural country: the land. The population occupying a given political territory is, very curiously, also called *igihugu*, as if identifying with the territory itself. This second meaning of *igihugu* well justifies the dualism of political power and economic power to the extent that this population sees itself as nothing other than a workforce, in other words, a mass of people that the political leader will capitalize as he wishes since he received it as a gift. The gift of a territory is synonymous with the gift of a population that one will exploit to the best of his ability, that he will squeeze or, even better, that he will ‘eat’ (Nsanze, 2001).

If we add to this traditional conception of “*kurya igihugu*” (literally: “to eat a country”), colonial exploitation, with its share of inhuman treatment, cruelty,

¹⁰Born in Rutegama commune (former province of Muramvya) died in Tanzania in 1990, by assassination (poisoning) according to many testimonies.

zana amagi, zana amasoro (“bring the eggs, bring the cow’s butter”), as well as the poll tax (*ikori*) that the *Barundi* had to pay, we can understand that the perception of public property as a good to appropriate the best as the leaders can, has been making its way for a long time. Corruption is seen as normal. Quick and “illicit” enrichment of leaders is not perceived as an anomaly of political power. One must “eat the country,” *ntikiribw’ivu*. These anti-values can, therefore, also be aligned with the other side of modernity in terms of wild capitalism, colonial exploitation, and even slavery. It is often forgotten that the slavery of black Africans was largely motivated by economic reasons: expansionist aims within the framework of the infamous triangular trade.

The ideal of the common good, transparency, good governance, distributive justice, and the proper management of public affairs with a view to development, which goes hand in hand with democratization, has not found any real basis in the hearts of the *Barundi*, especially in the post-colonial era. Burundi is still struggling to establish this ideal to this day.

4. Conclusion

To build a new, harmonious, prosperous Burundi, where life is potentially good for all, without exclusion, it is urgent to act simultaneously on two educational fronts, all concerning primarily the *Murundi* as a person:

- To lead a merciless struggle, to discourage anti-values, particularly those of *uwawe* and *ntikiribw’ivu*, breeding grounds of ethnocentric exclusion and identity-based violence; and corruption and bad governance of the common good; as well as their correspondences on the other side of modernity (the Darwinian and non-humanist one).
- To promote, in a proactive manner (particularly in the recruitment of executives, in the approval of applications for positions of responsibility, at all levels), the fundamental values constituting the soul of the *Murundi* and compatible with those of humanist modernity, in particular, the values of *ubuntu* (sense of humanity and respect for the dignity of the human person) and *ubutungane/intahe* (justice, in all its meanings).

To use the words of Albert Camus, who criticized the European crisis after World War II, the fundamental problem of contemporary Burundi is simply neither ethnic nor political; it is a “*crisis of Man*,” (Camus, 1946) it is an anthropological problem, a problem of the “*umuntu*.” If Man changes, if he becomes better (in terms of positive values and personal convictions in terms of ideals) and takes personal responsibility, the whole of society and institutions will change for the better. Virtue ethics does not despair of humans, and it teaches that good moral dispositions can be acquired through education and exercise. It is urgent that the *Barundi*, especially the elites and leaders, take on this double problem of *umuntu* (the individual one and the institutional one) head-on. The harmonization between tradition and modernity in Burundi, whether in terms of faithful implementation of the spirit of the Arusha Agree-

ment or in terms of democratization, proves essential for sustainable peace when this problem of the crisis of *umuntu* is taken seriously into account.

Who would be responsible for the ethicization of social relations and institutions in Burundi? The answer is not simple, but we must straight away remember that building sustainable peace in the world constitutes one of the priorities of the United Nations in connection with the vision of sustainable development:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 25 September 2015, recognizes not only that peace and security are prerequisites for achieving sustainable development, but that sustainable development provides the pathway to peaceful societies. This new peace-centred agenda is inclusive and ambitious and could usher in a new spirit of global solidarity. With its five pillars of peace, people, planet, prosperity and partnerships, it opens a new era of development. Translating its 17 goals and 169 targets into concrete action on the ground will only be possible with the support and engagement of all major stakeholders, including Governments, civil society, business, academia, parliaments, and international organizations (Zannier, 2015).

The five pillars of peace, people, planet, prosperity, and partnerships necessarily involve an ethical component. We can therefore see that the commitment of governments, civil society, businesses, universities, parliaments, and international organizations is required for the education of people for sustainable peace, especially through the introduction of concrete programs of education in ethics and civism, for the case of Burundi, focused on traditional values harmonized with modern ones and on the struggle against traditional and modern anti-values.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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