

Traditional Akan Ethics and Humanist Ethics: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Since Traditional Akans are Africans, one can logically deduce that the former share in the notorious religiosity that characterize the later. This notwithstanding, it seems that religion is not the sole determinant of the ethics of the Akan people even though it is a sine qua non factor/source of Akan ethics. In addition to religion, the Akan Tradition is an important determinant of Akan ethics. Similar to Akan ethics, Humanist ethics is based on human reason, intellect and the experience of human society but unlike Akan ethics, Humanist ethics debunks religion and any supernaturalism. This study examines Akan ethics and Humanist ethics endeavouring to unravel how two different ethics can have many similar moral values despite differences in their respective sources.

Keywords: Traditional Akan, Humanism, ethics

INTRODUCTION

Traditional Akans are Ghanaians on the Africa continent. The ethics of the Akan people has several moral values that are similar to those of Humanist ethics albeit there are some differences in their respective sources and cultural milieu. It is worth noting that whereas Religion and the Akan Tradition serve as the sources of Akan ethics, reason, intellect and human experience are the sources for Humanist ethics respectively.

TRADITIONAL AKAN

Who are the traditional Akans? When we speak of “traditional” Akan people, “we mean the Akan who in spite of the inroads of western civilization and religions such as Christianity and Islam, have still not abandoned the indigenous religion bequeathed to them by their forebears.” The Akan form the largest ethnic group in Ghana. According to the 2010 census, the Akan represent (47.5%) of the total population of Ghana. They are in Ashanti and Brong Ahafo regions; Greater parts of the Western and Eastern regions; the whole of Central region except the Efutu and Awutu districts around Winneba; and a small area in the Northern part of the Volta region. They include the Asante, Bono, Denkyira, Twifu, Assin, Wassaw, Sefwi, Akwamu, Akwapim, Akyem and Adansi. The main languages they speak are Twi and Fanti.

TRADITIONAL AKAN ETHICS

Christian Abraham Ackah (1988), Peter Sarpong (1972: 41), and Joseph Buakye Danquah (1944: 3) are among the scholars that have written on the ethics of the Akan people of Ghana. Scholars, including John S. Mbiti (1989), Geoffrey Parrinder (1969: 28-9), Bolaji Idowu (1962: 146) and others affirm that “Africans are notoriously religious” and that the ethics of the African, is religious based. Ackah (1988), however, cites Danquah (1944) that religion is not the sole determinant of the ethics of the Akan people, albeit it forms an important aspect of Akan ethics. According to Danquah (1944), Tradition is also a strong determining factor of

what is right and just, what is good and done. Ackah (1988) therefore asserts that Danquah (1944) seemed to accept that social custom is also a very influential factor in the ethics of the Akan people of Ghana.

On the sources of the moral/ethical principles among traditional Akans, Opoku (1978) asserts that Moral principles and norms indeed influence the conduct of members of a society. These notions about right and wrong, good and bad usually have some force or forces behind them which compel people to accept and obey them. This force, in the life and thought of the traditional Akan people, is overwhelmingly a supernatural one - God, gods, ancestors and other spirits. It is because of this that those who go contrary to the moral and customary norms that are spelt out in the societal code of behaviour are severely dealt with.

Traditional Akans believe that if any of the codes of conduct is infringed upon, it affects the relationship between humans and the deities or spirits. This implies that among the Akan, morality has religious undertone.

Samples of Traditional Akan Ethical Values

Traditional Akan ethical values include the sacredness of human life, hard work, communalism, hospitality, respect for the elderly and authority. Traditional Akan ethics abhors laziness, individualism, abortion, suicide and mischief against fellow humans.

ABORTION

Traditional Akans abhor the destruction of innocent human life. In fact, abortion is a serious sin against *asaase yaa* (the earth goddess). Traditional Akan norms ensured that abortion was prevented. As Osei-Adu rightly asserts,

These traditional norms and rites were effective means of preventing premarital sex and teenage pregnancy in the society. According to traditional law no woman is allowed to get married without having gone through the puberty rites and every young woman must remain a virgin prior to this. These laws ensure that young women grow up disciplined enough to control their sexuality and to prevent them from premature motherhood and unwanted babies. So important are these laws that any woman who gets pregnant or breaks her virginity before the rites are performed is sometimes ostracized together with the man responsible for it.

It is worth-noting that traditional Akan society encourages early marriage especially among the females. Among the reasons that account for this fact is that giving birth to many children is cherished very much. In fact, for the traditional Akan, children are considered gifts and blessings from God, the gods and the ancestors.

SUICIDE

Similar to abortion, suicide is also detested among the Akans. As regards how deplorable suicide is considered among Akans, Sarpong (1974) states One who killed himself was assumed to have committed a heinous crime ... On who kills himself proclaims himself an enemy of everybody. He refuses to confide in anybody in times of difficulty. Suicide therefore is an anti-social act.

For the Akan, anyone who commits suicide cannot be regarded as an ancestor and his/her name will never be passed on to any child at a naming ceremony. The logical deduction is that if human life is a gift from the Supreme Being or deities or ancestors, then no one can take

away or terminate human life except the giver(s). To commit suicide is to bring disgrace and calamity upon oneself and one's family/community.

HARD WORK

The Akans place a lot of importance on hard work. Hard work brings about success. Therefore, the Akan youth is trained to work hard. The Akan expression: "Adwuma, adwuma" (Work, work) and its response "adwuma ye" (work is good) demonstrates that laziness is abhorred and rather hard work is exhorted in the society that one finds him/herself. In fact, the ethic of hard work is not only found among the Akan but also among Africans as a whole. Gyekye (1996), cites the rhyme that the Yoruba people employ to educate their children on the importance of hard work which states:

Work is cure for poverty
Be hard-working my friend
For one can become great
Only through hard work.
When we have no supporter
We may appear lazy
But in such a situation
It only pays to
Keep on working hard.

Actually a young boy or girl is trained to work hard from childhood. This is because for the Akan people, hard work is of great ethical value as Sarpong (1977) rightly affirms "It often happens that a boy is so hard-working that his mother, sister, and sometimes even his father, come to be dependent upon him for their means of livelihood."

COMMUNALISM

According to Gyekye (1995), communalism is "the doctrine that the group (that is, the society) constitutes the focus of the activities of the individual members of the society." Gyekye further reiterates that communalism lays "emphasis on the activity and success of the wider society rather than, though not necessarily at the expense of, or to the detriment of, the individual". For Gyekye (1995) "communalism as conceived in Akan thought is not a negation of individualism; rather, it is the recognition of the limited character of the possibilities of the individual, which limited possibilities whittle away the individual's self-sufficiency". Gyekye (1996) further affirms that

The African and the Akan society place a great deal of emphasis on communal values. For him, these values underpin and guide the type of social relations, attitudes and behaviour that ought to exist between individuals who live together in a social life and having a sense of common good.

The spirit of sharing that characterize communal life among the Akan is so remarkable that Ackah (1988) affirms that "for life to be worth living, it must consist of members of a community helping each other especially in times of difficulties".

In a further perspective, Bujo (2001) states that "Africans of which the Akan are inclusive do not think in 'either/or,' but rather in 'both/and' categories". According to Bujo, "for Black Africa, it is not the Cartesian cogito ergo sum ("I think, therefore I am") but an existential cognatus sum, ergo summus ("I am related, therefore we are") that is decisive".

HOSPITALITY

Another common moral/ethical value among the Akans is hospitality. In fact, Akan hospitality connotes generosity and it is very much interrelated with Akan communal spirit that has been discussed above. Sarpong (1974) confirms this by saying that The abhorrence of disgrace may well be the underlying rationale for the Akan sense of generosity, especially to strangers. The Akan may not like a person originating from a particular ethnic group, but this will never prevent the Akan from treating with kindness a guest from that particular ethnic group. Some ethnic groups in Ghana have been described as warlike, troublesome, bloodthirsty, yet they are, as we see them, among the most hospitable people anywhere in the world. It must be emphasised that among the Akan and Ghanaians as a whole, if a stranger is polite enough to “greet” and is not suspected of foul intentions, that stranger is given all the assistance he requires, including free shelter, food and sometimes money. This sense of hospitality is considered a duty and one cannot ignore it without losing face badly.

Gyekye (1996) describes the moral value of hospitality as the idea of human brotherhood. According to Gyekye (1996), in practical terms, the idea of brotherhood involves such social and moral virtues as hospitality, generosity and the like among the Akan people of Ghana and Ghanaians as a whole. For Gyekye, “brother” in the idea of brotherhood is not limited in scope to only blood ties but also to persons with whom there are no blood ties at all.

The Akan proverb “Ɔhɔhɔ nna abɔnten so” which literally means “the stranger does not sleep on the street” attests in a crystal way to the nature and magnitude of the moral value of Akan hospitality.

EGOISM

Albeit there is some modicum of individualism among traditional Akans, Akan ethics abhors egoism/selfishness. In fact, Gyekye (1996) rightly affirms that the “Akan community is a communalistic type but not individualistic.”

Akans have proverbs that express the negative effects of selfishness/egoism on community life. One of such Akan proverbs is “Onipa baako didi mee a ekuro mu nnyede” which literally means - if only one person has food to eat in a village, there is no joy in the said village. Hence, for the village community to experience joy, peace and harmony, members ought to share and care for each other. In fact, the abhorrence for egoism among traditional Akans demonstrates that human beings are interdependent and therefore egoism is ethically unacceptable.

RESPECT FOR THE ELDERLY

Among the Akans, respect has great moral value. One has to respect not only one’s parents but also other people’s parents, the elderly, chiefs, authorities and even one’s subordinates. For example, Sarpong (1977) describes the traditional education of the Ashanti (Akan) girl (and the boy is not excluded) as follows, “From her mother the Ashanti girl learns how to be... submissive to her father, brothers and any older person, and respect everyone....” Ackah (1988) affirms Sarpong’s view by saying “respect for and the obedience to the elderly are inculcated and observed in every Akan family.” Ackah buttresses his point by referring to the Akan proverb, “Esen w’agya tsentsen a, nna nnye wo pen bi a” which literally means “if you are taller than your father, it does not mean that he is your equal”. Ackah (1988) further asserts that this proverb is employed to educate Akans that however well off a person is in life, he/she has the moral duty to respect all those who are superior to him in age.

For the Akan, the moral value of respect, most especially for parents, the elderly (chiefs, old men and women, opinion leaders, family heads and their kind) is seen in how the elderly is treated in society. A few examples include how the elderly is the first to be offered a seat in the midst of a gathering; helping the elderly person when found carrying a heavy load and removing one's hat from one's head before greeting the elderly.

MALICE AGAINST A NEIGHBOUR

The idea of doing evil to one's neighbour is not endorsed by the traditional Akan. Traditional Akan ethical principles detest performing malicious act against a neighbour. Varied traditional Akan proverbs attest to the abhorrence of being wicked to one's neighbour among the Akans. The following traditional Akan proverbs are just a few examples:

"Otwe bebre, na obofoo so bebre" which literally means "the deer will suffer but the hunter will also suffer;" The deer in this proverb is the victim of the hunter and just as the deer runs away for its life and suffers from the attack of the hunter, the hunter also suffers by running after his victim to hunt it down. Thus, if one plots to do evil against a neighbor, the neighbor will suffer from the attack but the evildoer will also suffer from actualizing his/her evil plot.

"Wo fa wansena ho ebufuo a wo bere wo kuro" literally meaning "if you get angry with the house fly, you will worsen your sore." Flies like to prey on sores and if one plans to hit a fly to kill it, one may end up hitting one's sore and worsen the pain from the sore. Invariably, this proverb says, in doing evil to a neighbor, one may end up experiencing evil.

"Dee wo bedua no na wo bebu" which literally means "what you sow is what you reap in other words if you sow malice, you reap malice and if you sow goodness, you reap goodness." Hence, to avoid doing malice to others so that no malice will befall you is an ethical value of great importance among traditional Akans. According to the traditional Akan, if one does evil things against one's neighbour, the consequences of the evil will not only come upon the victim but also on the evildoer himself/herself.

Traditional Akans also employ taboos for the protection and preservation of the natural environment. Examples of such taboos, to mention but a few, include, not defecating along river banks; not walking across a river with one's footwear; not cutting trees at the river banks; not going for hunting in sacred groves.

HUMANIST ETHICS

Humanism is a democratic and ethical life stance which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape to their own lives. It stands for the building of a humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities. It is not theistic, and it does not accept supernatural views of reality (<http://www.iheu.org/amsterdamdeclaration>).

The American Humanist Association is of the view that "Humanism is a progressive life stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity (<http://www.americanhumanist.org>).

According to the Bristol Humanist Group, Humanism is an approach to life based on reason and our common humanity, recognizing that moral values are properly founded on human nature and experience alone (<http://www.nfuu.org/definitionsofhumanism.htm>).

Humanist ethics involves the values of right, wrong, good, evil, and responsibility according to the beliefs/teachings of Humanism. Humanist ethical principles include the following:

- Morality stems from our situation as social beings.
- The emphasis is on the human being and the here-and-now.
- The origin of morality/ethics is the human society without reference to any metaphysical or spiritual source.
- It is the society that determines the uniqueness of human beings.
- One can be morally upright without necessarily being religious.

Humanist ethics relies on reason and modern scientific method and does not have faith in prayer, divine revelation or a supernatural God for the solution of ethical or other problems. Unlike the ethics of Christianity and the Traditional religions, Humanist ethics is based on happiness in this one and only life and not concerned with a supernatural realm, immortality and the glory of God. Humanism denies the philosophical and psychological dualism of soul and body and contends that a human being is a oneness of mind, personality and physical organism. It can be deduced from the Humanist's concern for humankind, that international peace is a prime ethical objective. In working for peace, the Humanist again combines self-interest with altruism (Lamont, 1980).

The Humanist wants to preserve his/her own life as well as the lives of his/her fellow humans. It behooves the Humanist to make every possible effort for the successful functioning of the United Nations and for the permanent establishment of international peace. The ethics of Humanism incorporates whatever seems relevant from other philosophies or religions, even while rejecting their theologies. According to Corliss Lamont, at least four of the Decalogue, namely, "Thou shall not steal", "Thou shall not kill", "Honor thy father and thy mother", "Thou shall not bear false witness against thy neighbor" can basically be understood as principles of Humanist ethics (Lamont, 1980).

Humanist ethics also acknowledges that there is much ethical wisdom in the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus. For example, the Humanist welcomes the words of Jesus when he says: "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10). In another development, the teaching of Jesus that, "The truth shall make you free," (John 8: 32), is also in line with the ethics of Humanism. In fact, Humanist ethics claims that this quotation from Jesus can be made complete by adding that falsehood shall make you slaves (Lamont, 1980).

Another ethical imperative for Humanism is the support of political democracy and liberties. Humanists rely primarily on reason and scientific method for the solution of all problems. They necessarily uphold freedom of expression in all fields of human endeavor. Resort to threats or violence is ruled out as a method of settling disputes. The questions constantly asked: What exactly is the ethics of humanism? Can a society or person be moral/ethical without religion? According to Paul Kurtz, the answer is yes. In fact, Kurtz claims that morality is deeply rooted in the common moral decencies (these relate to moral behaviour in society) and the ethical excellences (Kurtz, 1988).

For Kurtz, the common moral decencies are widely shared. They are essential to the survival of any human community. They are handed down through countless generations. They are recognised throughout the world by friends and relatives, colleagues and co-workers and the native-born or immigrants, as basic rules of social intercourse. They express the elementary virtues of courtesy, politeness, and empathy so essential for living together. Indeed, they are

the very basis of civilised life itself. The common moral decencies are trans-cultural in their range and have their roots in generic human needs. Examples of the common moral decencies are as follows:

- a) Personal integrity involves telling the truth, not lying or being deceitful; being sincere, candid, frank, and free of hypocrisy; keeping one's promises, honouring pledges, living up to agreements; and being honest, avoiding fraud or skulduggery.
- b) Trustworthiness deals with loyalty to ones relatives, friends and co-workers, being dependable, reliable, and responsible.
- c) Benevolence is the third decency, which involves manifesting goodwill and noble intention, trustworthiness towards other human beings and having a positive concern for them. It means the lack of malice; avoidance of doing harm to other persons or their property. One should not kill or rob; inflict physical violence or injury; or be cruel, abusive or vengeful. This implies that, as humans, we have an obligation to be beneficent, that is, kind, sympathetic, compassionate and lend a hand to those in distress and try to decrease their pain and suffering and contribute to their welfare.
- d) The principle of fairness demands that one should show gratitude and appreciation to those that deserve it. A civilised community holds people accountable for their deeds, insisting that those who wrong others do not go completely unpunished and perhaps must make reparations to the aggrieved. This also involves the principle of justice and equality in society. Tolerance is also a moral decency; one should also respect other individuals' rights to their beliefs, values, and styles of life, even though they may differ from one's own. Each individual is entitled to his convictions as long as one does not harm others or prevent them from exercising their rights. Humans should try to cooperate with each other, seeking to negotiate differences peacefully without resorting to hatred or violence.

Humanism sees the common moral decencies as general principles and rules and individuals or nations may deviate from practicing them. In fact, the moral decencies provide are not absolute but general parameters to guide human conduct. Sometimes they may conflict and humans may have to establish priorities between them. They need not be divinely ordained to have moral force, for they are tested in the last analysis by their consequences in practice.

In the sexual domain, humanist ethics affirms that one should not force one's sexual passions on others. Rather, a sexual relations should be a mutual consent between adults. Humanist ethics allows sexual freedom, homosexuality, abortion, birth control and easy divorce of marriages.

THE ETHICAL EXCELLENCES

According to Humanist ethics, some of the ethical excellences are the following: Autonomy, intelligence and reason, self-discipline, self-respect, creativity, high motivation, affirmative attitude, joie de vivre, good health and exuberance.

- a) Autonomy: A person's autonomy is an affirmation of one's freedom. Some people find freedom a burden so they are willing to forfeit their right to self-determination to others, such as, parents, spouses, or even totalitarian despots or authoritarian gurus. A free person recognises that he/she has only one life to live and that how he/she will live it is ultimately that person's own choice. This does not deny that we live with others and share values and ideals, but basic to humanist ethics, democracy is regarded as an appreciation of the autonomy of individual choice.
- b) Intelligence and reason are high on the scale of values. According to this humanist ethical excellence, to achieve the good life, one needs to develop one's cognitive skills that can help the individual to make wise choices.

- c) Self-discipline: There is the need for self-discipline over a person's passions and desires. Albeit the individual must satisfy his or her desires and emotions, self-discipline involves moderation under the guidance of rational choice, recognizing the harmful consequences that imprudent choices can have upon the individual and others.
- d) Self-respect: This is vital for a human being's psychological balance. Self-hatred can destroy one's personality. This implies that there is the need to develop some appreciation for oneself as an individual and a realistic sense of one's own identity.
- e) Creativity: This is closely related to autonomy and self-respect. It highlights the fact that the independent person has some confidence in his/her own powers and is willing to express his/her unique talents. The uncreative person is usually a conformist.
- f) High motivation: A willingness to enter into life and undertake new plans and projects. A motivated person finds life interesting and exciting.
- g) Affirmative attitude: One needs some measure of optimism that what one does will matter. Although one may suffer defeats, one must believe that one will overcome and succeed despite adversities. *Joie de vivre*: The individual human being must have full appreciation for the full range of human pleasure - from the so-called bodily pleasures such as food and sex to the most ennobling and creative aesthetic, intellectual and moral pleasures. Good health: This implies that the individual avoids smoking and drugs, drinks only in moderation, seeks to reduce stress in one's life, and strives to get proper nutrition, adequate exercise, and sufficient rest, and to achieve sexual fulfillment and love.
- h) Exuberance: This is an active, not a passive, process of perfecting one's talents, needs, and wants. The end or goal of life is to live fully and creatively, sharing with others the many opportunities of life. Contrary to the biblical injunction in Genesis chapter three, Humanist ethics posits that this can be found by eating the succulent fruit of the tree of life and by living in the here and now as fully and creatively as one can.

Lamont (1980) summarises Humanist ethics into eleven main points which he describes as guiding principles not absolutes. They include the following: (1) Humanist ethics is concerned wholly with actions, ideals and values on this earth in our and only life. The utopia that is heaven must be built in this world or not at all. (2) Humanist ethics is an affirmative one of joy and happiness, repudiating the Christian idea of original sin in human beings and any sense of puritanism. (3) Humanist ethics holds a liberal view on sex relations, but insists on high standards of conduct and believes in the institution of marriage, with easy divorce and some latitude of sexual variety for husband and wife. (4) Humanist ethics relies on reason and scientific method in working out ethical decisions. There is no room for prayer or divine guidance by some supernatural being. (5) While Humanism believes in general ethical principles, most ethical decisions must be considered on an individualistic basis that evaluates the probable consequences and possible alternatives. (6) In the age-long dialogue on self-interest versus altruism. Humanist ethics sees a false dichotomy and claims that a man or woman can harmoniously combine relative self-interest and relative altruism in working for the community good. (7) The community good is one's family, one's state, one's nation, or all humanity; with the happiness and progress of the entire human race as the ultimate community good and the supreme ethical aim of Humanism. (8) It follows from ordinary self-interest and the Humanist's concern for fellow humans that international peace is a principal ethical objective. This is truer today than ever before in view of the terrible nuclear weapons that have developed and which threaten, if used in a war, the existence of all humankind. (9) Humanism is eclectic and incorporates whatever seems relevant from other philosophies or religions. For instance, many of the Christian precepts in the New Testaments have an

important place in the ethics of Humanism. (10) The support for democracy and civil liberties is an ethical imperative for Humanism, with complete freedom of expression in every field of human endeavor. (11) The Humanist ethics functions on the basis that human beings have true freedom of choice at the moment of making an ethical decision. Universal determinism that includes humankind would make any sort of ethics impossible and irrelevant.

COMPARING AKAN ETHICS AND HUMANIST ETHICS

For the Traditional Akans, the sources of their ethics include the Supreme Being, the lesser god/deities, the ancestors, the traditional norms and customs involving the taboos. The Humanists, however, claim that the origin of morality/ethics is the human society without reference to any metaphysical or spiritual source. This is worth-noting because can the Akan, being notoriously religious, have an ethics without any reference to the supernatural being as advocated by Humanist ethics? Obviously no!

Notwithstanding the aforementioned difference, similar to Humanist ethics, traditional Akan ethics stresses on hard work. Furthermore, just as traditional Akan ethics considers the fortunes of the hard-worker as a resource to be used for the common good (*bonum commune*) to benefit his/her family, clan, tribe or society, Humanist ethics also promotes a democratization of the world economy that can be judged by its responsiveness to human needs, testing results in terms of the common good. In fact, whereby some individuals are unable to contribute to their own betterment, humanist ethics endorses that society provides the means to satisfy the said individuals basic economic, health, and cultural needs.

Actually, Humanist ethics categorically affirms that Humanists “are concerned for the welfare of the aged, the infirm, the disadvantaged, and also for the outcasts - the mentally retarded, abandoned, or abused children, the handicapped, prisoners, and addicts - for all who are neglected or ignored by society. Practicing humanists should make it their vocation to humanize personal relations.” This Humanist ethical value is very similar to the nature of the traditional Akan communalistic spirit that treats helping the poor, orphans, aged and needy as an obligation or duty. In fact, for the traditional Akan ethics, one is morally obliged to help a poor or needy neighbour since the latter’s predicament can affect everyone in the entire family, clan, tribe or society. Hence, the Akan proverb: “*Kwasia na ose yede me yenko na yennde me*” literally meaning “it is only a fool that can say that somebody is in trouble/need not me.”

The common moral decencies such as personal integrity, trustworthiness and benevolence that are found in Humanist ethics are also common in Akan ethics. In a further perspective, the ethical excellences in Humanist ethics, namely, autonomy, intelligence and reason, self-discipline, self-respect, creativity, high motivation, affirmative attitude, *joie de vivre*, good health and exuberance are similar moral/ethical values that are inculcated into the youth during the *bragoro* rites or similar puberty/initiation rites.

Notwithstanding the above similarities between Akan ethics and Humanist ethics, there are dissimilarities worth-noting. These differences include the respective stance of Akan ethics and Humanist ethics on issues such as sexual freedom, abortion, suicide, life after death and the divine/supernatural role as source of moral norms.

Whereas in Akan ethics, sexual relation is reserved for married people, Humanist ethics advocates for sexual freedom. Furthermore, while among the Akans abortion and suicide are ethically wrong, Humanist ethics affirms the right to abortion and suicide. Another point of divergence is that while traditional Akan ethics is religious based, Humanist ethics does not accept any supernatural dimension. Furthermore, for traditional Akan ethics, a person’s good

life in this present life merits him/her to be counted among the ancestors in the life hereafter. For Humanist ethics, a person's goodness in this life ends in this life. There is no life-after-death according to Humanist ethics.

EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

Notwithstanding the differences on immortality, abortion, suicide, sex and in the respective sources of traditional Akan ethics (religious and traditional sources) and Humanist ethics (reason and intellect), there are several moral/ethical values that are commonly shared by both ethics. Both types of ethics, promote hard work, share common moral values such as communal life that involves sharing human resources, truthfulness, trustworthiness, caring for fellow members of the human family, respect for the aged and the specially challenged humans, working together to improve society, as well as using the environment wisely and sustainably through taboos (Akan ethics) or through environmental laws rationalized intellectually to be universally acceptable to benefit the human family (Humanist ethics). It seems clear that albeit there are obvious differences in their respective sources and a few issues, the moral/ethical values that are commonly shared by Akans ethics and Humanist ethics outnumber the differences.

In a further perspective, is it not possible that the dissimilarity in sources (as regards the supernatural factor), thus, ethics with or without God, accounts for the few differences between traditional Akan ethics and Humanist ethics. Most probably yes!

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