

# Preface

Ubuntu is a worldview and a way of life shared by most Africans south of Sahara. Basically Ubuntu underlines the often unrecognized role of relatedness and dependence of human individuality to other humans and the cosmos. The importance of relatedness to humanity is summarized by the two maxims of Ubuntu. The first is: *a human being is human because of other human beings*. The second maxim is an elaboration of the first. It goes; *a human being is human because of the otherness of other human beings*. John Mbiti combines those two maxims into, “I am because we are, and we are because I am.” Ubuntu worldview can provide insights about relationships with communities and the world that contribute to the meaning of Global Bioethics. Ubuntu can be described as involving several distinct yet related components that can be explored in relation to major strands of discourse in contemporary Bioethics. The first component of Ubuntu deals with the tension between individual and universal rights. The second component of Ubuntu deals with concerns about the cosmic and global context of life. The third component of Ubuntu deals with the role of solidarity that unites individuals and communities.

Ubuntu has a lot in common with current discourse in bioethics. It can facilitate global bioethics. It can inspire the on-going dialogue about human dignity, human rights and the ethics that surround it. It can inspire and be inspired by global environmental concerns that threaten the biosphere and human life. Ubuntu can critique the formal bioethical principles of autonomy, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence. Above all, Ubuntu can create a basis for dialogue and mutually enlightening discourse between global bioethics and indigenous cultures. Such a dialogue helps make advancements in bioethics relevant to local indigenous cultures, thereby facilitating the acceptability and praxis of global bioethical principles.

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