INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) AND THE ENHANCEMENT OF AFRICAN HUMANISM

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Abstract

This paper discusses the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in enhancing African Humanism. By African Humanism we mean people-centeredness, promotion of human values and the reconstruction of Ubuntu ethos which creates a moral community among Africans that shares a common vision for a better future. This paper presents an analysis of how ICTs have facilitated African humanism manifested through relationships of identity and relationships of solidarity via social network platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups. Another point advanced in this paper is how ICTs have facilitated the growth of a revolutionary spirit against dictatorship through civic engagement on social network platforms directed towards political issues. The paper finally contends that despite these positive attributes of ICTs, they have also facilitated cultural crisis and identity crisis in Africa.

Kewords: ICTs, African Humanism, Human Values.

LES TECHNOLOGIES DE L'INFORMATION ET DE LA COMMUNICATION (TIC) ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE L'HUMANISME AFRICAIN

Résumé:

Cet article traite du rôle des technologies de l'information et de la communication (TIC) dans le renforcement de l'humanisme africain. Par humanisme africain, nous entendons l'approche centrée sur l'être humain, la promotion des valeurs humaines et la reconstruction de l'éthique d'Ubuntu qui crée une communauté morale parmi les Africains partageant une vision commune pour un avenir meilleur. Cet article présente une analyse de la manière dont les TIC ont facilité l'humanisme africain manifesté à travers des relations d'identité et des relations de solidarité via les plateformes de réseaux sociaux telles que les groupes WhatsApp et Facebook. Un autre point avancé dans cet article est de savoir comment les TIC ont facilité la croissance d'un esprit révolutionnaire contre la dictature par le biais d'un engagement civique sur des plateformes de réseaux sociaux orientés vers des questions politiques. Le document soutient enfin que malgré ces attributs positifs des TIC, elles ont également facilité la crise culturelle et la crise d'identité en Afrique.

Mots-clés: TICs, Humanisme africain, Valeurs humaines.

Introduction

Post-modernism is a new paradigmatic philosophical shift which indicates that different peoples can take their place in the 21ˢᵗ Century without becoming Western; hence they have their own way of becoming modern through their traditions.[1]Post-modernism thus becomes a significant factor in the search for African Humanism, that is, African values that have something to offer to the global community through the process of trans-culture. At the same time, these values are to be the platforms for soul-searching and constructing African philosophical thinking and value system so as to guide socio-economic and political development in Africa.

The central theme of this paper therefore is to make an investigation into African Humanism in the context globalized by ICTs developments in Africa. The paper is divided into three parts. Part one is speculative and descriptive, thus mainly concerned with the clarification ofICTs (Information Communication Technologies) from Aristotle's philosophical perspective. I will rely on Aristotle's primary texts like *Metaphysics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*. Also, I draw insights from secondary sources especially an important work by Thomas Sherman article titled: "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today."The second part addresses Ubuntu as the foundation for African humanism. Here I focus more on Literature on Ubuntu from various African philosophers – Ifeanyi Menkiti, Kwame Gyekye, Kwasi Wiredu and Thaddeus Metz. However, I strongly agree with Metz' position that Ubuntu entails two distinct relational themes namely: relationships of identity and relationships of solidarity. Based on these two relational themes I make an investigation on the positive impact of social networking through ICTs gadgets. The third part critically constructs a judgment on how ICTs developments have contributed to the development of African Humanism – 'relationships of identity' and 'relationships of solidarity,' without excluding the negative impacts namely: facilitation of cultural crisis and identity crisis.

1. **Towards an exploration of information communication technologies from a philosophical perspective**

Information and Communication Technologies or ICTs, is often used as an extended synonym for Information Technology (IT), but is a more specific term that stresses the role of unified communications and the integration of telecommunications (telephone lines and wireless signals), computers as well as necessary enterprise software, middleware, storage, and audio-visual systems, which enable users to access, store, transmit, and manipulate information. Generally, ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) are human inventions that in one sense can symbolize man's giftedness and ability to advance or better the world.[2]

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[1]Cf. P. Glifford, "The Shocking Inequalities of Power of Diverse Cognitive Styles – and some Consequences." In *Chiedza: Lighting Africa* "Cultures of Power, Vol 15 No.2 December 2012, Journal of Arrupe College, 5-16.
[2]E. Ekuemeka, "Cybernetic and Emergent Personalities in the Wake of ICT in Africa," in Vol 15 No.1 May 2012.

When one philosophically considers the essence of the human being, one can actually turn one's gaze back to ancient history, and notice that Aristotle's conception of the human person as a being that engages in wonder and the desire to know, a conception that he renders explicit at the beginning of his *Metaphysics,* still contains a valid insight into how human inquisitiveness has led to the eventual propagation of the recent ICT revolution. Even Aristotle's conception of the human person as a social being widely expresses the necessity of ICTs in promoting interactions. Human well-being as Aristotle argues throughout his practical philosophy is the happiness achieved in the fulfillment – in the actualization – of ourselves as rational, social beings in a life of virtuous activity in political communities.[3]

1.1 Information: Philosophical Discourse

Aristotle helps us in thinking about the human significance of information. As is well known, for Aristotle, human beings are rational by nature; one piece of evidence for this rationality is our natural desire to know.[4] This desire seems unlimited: we want to know as much as we can; our horizon is all there is to know. Such a desire compels us to seek not only knowledge about who we are and the world around us but even knowledge of the ultimate causes of all there is.

Aristotle maintains that the more we come to know of ourselves, others, and world, the more alive, the more connected we feel ourselves to be with everything around us. Consequently, information is a form of knowledge that satisfies the human person's natural desire to know as a member of a community/ society. Information and its acquisition are naturally attractive for the human being. However, for Aristotle, that while all knowledge is in one way good (in so far as it is desirable) not all knowledge is necessarily morally good, that is, a good which when chosen actualizes our potential to become good human beings. Since for Aristotle human beings are naturally neither good nor bad; we become good or evil by our choices in life. We become good or bad by the habitual choices we make in our lives - choices which shape our soul either for good or for evil. Knowledge such as gossip (useless or even harmful knowledge of others), or pornography, etc. when chosen actually make us less good as human beings and when those kinds of goods are shared (chosen together with others) will result in our together becoming less good as human beings. So enhanced social technology is very much like what Aristotle thought of friendship - a powerful good (because it is a shared good) but a good that must be chosen for the right reasons otherwise this good will actually harm rather than enhance us as human beings - and harm our communities.[5]

1.2 Communication: Philosophical Insight

The epistemological notion of Communication is rooted in Aristotle's conception of man with a natural desire to know, thus leading to man'snatural desire to communicate that

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[3]Cf. Aristotle, *NicomacheanEthics,I, X and Politics VII.*My analysis of ICT from Aristotle's perspective dwells on an important work by Thomas Sherman titled: "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today," *Journal of Chiedza*, Volume 15 No. 1 May 2012, pp. 36-45.

[4]Aristotle, *Metaphysics 1*.1 960a22.

[5]This part contains insightful comments from Aristotelian scholar known as Thomas Sherman. Whose article "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today," inspired me a lot investigate on this topic.

knowledge with others. This desire is rooted in what Aristotle sees as our natural social nature, for we human beings are every bit as much naturally *Social (Politicos)*[6] as we are rational. In reality, for Aristotle we are by nature rationally social who live, move, and have our being in human community. This naturally rational social nature manifests itself in our desire to interact with others and sharing good things with others, especially what Aristotle calls goods of soul specifically rational, spiritual goods such as our thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams. When we share these specifically human goods with each other as in our experience in gaining knowledge we feel ourselves more alive as human beings in being more spiritually connected with others. Since knowledge as *Information* is one of these specifically human goods in our lives, in sharing information with others in *Communication*, we experience ourselves more alive as human beings, that is, as naturally rational social beings.[7] According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, the need for communication is embedded in social needs, which culminates into friendship and partnership.

1.3 Technology: Philosophical Approach

Besides these naturally human goods of *Information* and *Communication*, Aristotle sees technology also as a good which promotes an important aspect of human well-being. As naturally rational, human beings make or fashion things from the environment to meet every day practical as well as artistic needs. The knowledge involved in making things to satisfy our human needs, Aristotle calls it "productive knowledge" (*techne*).[8] From such knowledge we derive the familiar term "technology" to signify the product of this human activity. Meanwhile, Aristotle could not have dreamt of the kind of productive technological advances invented since his time. From Aristotle it is possible to recognize the importance of technology and the practical impact technology can have on human well-being.[9] St Thomas Aquinas and Aristotle conceive the term *techne* from practical virtue constituting of art and prudence which are concerned with man's active life involving reason, work and production of things so as to promote human well-being and eudemonia (happiness).[10]

Technology as the physical product of our productive know-how is an important aspect of human well-being. Today, Information and Communication Technologies are playing a fundamental part in promoting human well-being economically, socially, politically and for knowledge, thus Aristotle's insights offer a theoretical base and speculative understanding of ICTs.

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[6]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1.7 1097b12.

[7]T. Sherman, "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today," in *ICT in Africa: Creating or Fragmenting Communities*? *Chiedza: Lighting Africa*, Vol 15. No.1 May 2012, 37.

[8]Cf. Aristotle,*Nicomachean Ethics*, VI.4.

[9]T. Sherman, "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today," in *ICT in Africa: Creating or Fragmenting Communities*? *Chiedza: Lighting Africa*, Vol 15. No.1 May 2012, 37.

[10]T. Merton, *Art and Morality*, 865

2. The concept of "Ubuntu" as a reflection on humanity from an African perspective

The term *Ubuntu*is significant in classifying African Humanness. It connotes the recognition of human qualities which foster respectful and harmonious relationships where people's identity shines forth in solidarity with one another.[11]

The term *Ubuntu* comes from the intrinsically connected but different components of a *Bantu*[12]noun *U*, *Bu* and *Ntu*. The concept '*U*' is the Bantu definite article. Its English equivalent is 'The'. '*Bu*' is the state and act of being something, while '*Ntu*' means human, and in an ontological sense it refers to existence. Literally, *Ubuntu* is the state of being human.

Ramose articulates the etymology of the term *Ubuntu* thus:

> *Ubu*evokes the idea of being in general. It is enfolded being before it manifests itself in the concrete form or mode of existence of a particular entity. In this sense *Ubu*is always oriented towards *Ntu*. At the ontological level there is no strict separation between *Ubu*and *Ntu*. *Ubu*and *Ntu*are mutually founding in the sense that they are two aspects of being as a oneness and an indivisible whole-ness. *Ubu*as the generalized understanding of being may be said to be distinctly epistemological.[13]

The concept of *Ubuntu* as a progression into wholeness is the basis of understanding *Ubuntu* as an ethical concept and provides a foundation from which to understand African humanism which pertains to the sense of interdependence of people within community.

Based on the principles of respect for human rights, harmony, love, justice, peace, freedom and unity, indeed Ubuntu holds that no one can realize oneself as an individual all by oneself. Therefore, "UmuntuNg'umuntuNgabantu" means acknowledging that one becomes more fully a person through relationships with others.

Undoubtedly, these Ubuntu sayings suggest that it is in the nature of a human-being to lead a communal life of one form or another. In the same vein of thought, IfeanyiMenkiti, who belongs to the radical communitarian tradition, contends that "it is the community which defines a person as a person, not some isolated static quality of rationality, will or memory."[14] For Menkiti, a person to belong to a community is not an option: it is a must that they belong to one. He further explains that human beings become persons only after a process of incorporation, into this or that community.

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[11]T. Eliseu, "In Search of a Sustainable Political Order in Africa: A Hermeneutic of Julius KambarageNyerere's Communitarian Ethics," in *Chiedza: Lightning Africa*, 121-136.

[12]Bantu term was coined by the German scholar WilhemBleek for all the languages spoken in Sub-Saharan Africa because of their similarity among people whose philosophy applies to the negro-Africans of Sub-Saharan African excluding Afro-Arabic parts such as Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, and Tunisia which have more of Islamic and Arabic influence. Also, Madagascar is not considered in this category since it is populated by Austronesian people who have their own cultural features. Though there are diversities there is a common central metaphysical backbone that unifies African cultures of the Sub-Saharan Africa, and it is the belief that the individual is ontologically part of the community and that the community is ontologically prior to the individual.

[13]M.B. Ramose, *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare: Mond Books Publishers, 1999, 2001: paragraph 3.

[14]I. Menkiti, "On the Normative Conception of a Person," in *A Companion to African Philosophy*, 325.

Nevertheless, moderate African communitarians, like Kwame Gyekye, do indeed acknowledge the role and place of individuality. That is, human beings don't only belong to the community, they are also self-expressive individuals. They position themselves as individuals within a community. Hence the nature of a person in an African setting is "amphibious" – expressing aspects of community and individuality.[15] The Individuality/self "Mtu" of a person, - "I think" – entails the freedom to choose to enter into a certain community and share its ideals.

KwasiWiredu also highlights that the conception of community and personhood are based upon communication; personhood is only possible via community. Wiredu avers:

> No human society or community is possible without communication, for a community is not just an aggregation of individuals existing as windowless monads but of individuals interacting as persons, and an interaction of persons can only be on the basis of shared meanings. Indeed, without communication there is not even a human person. A human being deprived of the socializing influence of communication will remain human biologically, but mentally is bound to be subhuman.[16]

From the interaction of the human organism, i.e. the biological entity, with its surrounding community, that organism develops the function of mind, which is concomitant with becoming a person. This conception of personhood is taken from the traditional *Akan* (tribe in Ghana) understanding "that a human creature is not a human person except as a member of a community."[17]Wiredu, bases the ability for human creatures to create communities upon their shared biology. This biological similarity "makes possible the comparison of experience and the interpersonal adjustment of behavior that constitute social existence."[18]

This picture of human personhood developing through the interaction of organism and social environment is reminiscent of John Dewey's position that claims a "natural continuity between inquiry and the elementary form of organic behavior," to which Wiredu approvingly refers.[19]Wiredu's stance concerning the person's reliance upon the community for becoming a person shares a similar foundation to Dewey's position concerning community. Both provide humanistic arguments regarding the development of personhood, which entail the person coming into being through what Dewey refers to as "the give-and-take of communication."[20]

A person being a person through others mirrors the *Ubuntu*: '*umuntungumuntungabantu.*' What Wiredu has provided in addition to the proverb is a biological basis from which to understand the development of the human creature through community into person. The valuable nature of human being according to *Ubuntu* is the ability to relate with others. Hence, personhood is developed through other persons in communal or harmonious relationships with them, which Desmond Tutu calls the 'greatest good' for indigenous African

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[15] CF. K. Gyekye, *Tradition and Modernity: Philosophical Reflections on the African Experience*, 345.
[16] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*: *An African Perspective*, 13.
[17] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*: *An African Perspective*, 19.
[18] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*: *An African Perspective*, 19.
[19] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*: *An African Perspective*, 36-37.
[20] J. Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, 154.

morality.[21] The purpose of the community is to enable every member to share their way of life inspired by promoting humanity at large. This promotes humanity grounded on mutual relationships.

Another important scholar on Ubuntu is Thaddeus Metz. Metz asks a pertinent question: 'what is it that is valuable about human nature? How does one develop into a real person? Which behaviours are expressive of Ubuntu?[22]Metz indicates one of the key maxims from Ubuntu perspective, for which one is to realize personhood is 'through other persons.'[23] Then, Metz argues that according to the standard understanding, to develop personhood through other persons means to prize communal or harmonious relationships with them.[24] In order, to grasp the sort of communitarianism Metz mentions remarks from various African intellectuals about communion or harmony in regard to African humanism:

> Every member is expected to consider him/herself an integral part of the whole and to play an appropriate role towards achieving the good of all.[25]
> The fundamental meaning of community is the sharing of an overall way of life, inspired by the notion of the common good.[26]
> The purpose of our life is community-service and community-belongingness.[27]
> African values include – living a life of mutual concern for the welfare of others … Feeling integrated with as well as willing to integrate others into a web of relations free of friction and conflict.[28]
> Harmony is achieved through close and sympathetic social relations within the group.[29] (Mokgoro, 1998: 17).

From these remarks Metz suggests two distinct relational themes in *Ubuntu*. On one hand, there is a relationship of *identity*, a matter of considering oneself part of the whole, being close, sharing a way of life, belonging and integrating with others. Part of this kind of relationship is psychological, for example, thinking of oneself as 'we' and not so much an 'I', while another is behavioural, that is, interacting with others on a cooperative basis.[30]

Metz argues that one thing 'harmony' and 'togetherness' might essentially involve is a common sense of self, which includes at least the following distinct conditions.[31] First, a

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[21]D. Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*, 35.
[22]T. Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," 138.
[23]T. Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," 138.
[24]T. Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," 138.
[25]S. Gbadegesin, *African Philosophy*, 65. Quoted from Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approach to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu" at 138.
[26]G. Kwame, *Beyond Cultures*, 16. Quoted from Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approach to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," at 138.
[27]P. Iroegbu, "Beginning, Purpose and End of Life, 442. Quoted from Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approach to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," at 138.
[28]D. Masolo, *Self and Community in a Changing World*, 240. Quoted from Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approach to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," at 138.
[29]Y. Mokgoro, *Ubuntu and the Law in South Africa*, 17. Quoted from Thaddeus Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approach to Social Protection: From Capability to Ubuntu," at 138.
[30]T. Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to *Ubuntu*," 138.
[31]T. Metz, "Towards an African Moral Theory," 335.

given individual conceives of herself as part of a group. You refer to yourself in the first person plural, including yourself in a 'we.'[32] Second, the group that you consider yourself a member of also consider you to be a member of it. So, others in the "we" you refer to also include you in their "we."[33] Third, people share identity when they have common ends, if not also the same motives or reasons that underlie them. It is logically possible to be part of a group that does not do anything, but the relevant sort of group under consideration here is one that has some projects.[34] Fourth and finally, shared identity consists of people in the group coordinating their activities in order to realize their ends, even if they do not use the same means or make the same amount of effort.[35]

On the other hand, there is reference to a relationship of *solidarity*, achieving the good of all, being sympathetic, acting for the common good, serving others and being concerned for other's welfare. Here, too, there is a behavioral component, of doing what is likely to enable others to live better lives, as well as a psychological one, of doing so consequent to sympathy and for the sake of others.[36]

3. Judging the impact of information and communication technologies in Africa according to criteria derived from African humanism

3.1 Positive Impact of ICTs in Constructing Authentic African Humanism
3.1.1 ICTs and Enhancement of Social Relations

In the social arena, the development of Information and Communication Technologies parallels the dawn of globalization. Human relationships and sense of belonging have crossed oceans and assumed new connections; in actuality, ICTs have led to the emergence of virtual communities; social networks like Face-book, WhatsApp, Twitter, Linked-In andNetlog exemplify this kind of impersonal community. These social networks have made it possible to maintain communal ties, even if at a distance.

WhatsApp Chatroom and Facebook have brought individuals together into communities at the click of the mouse or at the touch of the screen. In this manner, ICTs have broken down the barriers occasioned by distance. It is no longer necessary to speak of communities based on geographical locations since all the communities have been brought together by means of a single computer-generated establishment. The relational philosophy of African humanismassumes new contours and parameters according to what has been engineered by ICT developments through social networks.

Quite understandably, the speed and ease with which new technologies can afford to reach out to others has reduced the remoteness of the "other". Since the "other" helps us learn and appreciate ourselves, it can be argued that ICTs destroy parochialism and replace it with a broader and fuller sense of a global human community. Today, by use of ICTs, we are able not only to hear but to see each other over what were once unimaginably immense distances of space and even time. In this way, the advance in ICT has enabled us to extend our physical

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[32]T. Metz, "Towards an African Moral Theory," 335.
[33]T. Metz, "Towards an African Moral Theory," 335.
[34]T. Metz, "Towards an African Moral Theory," 335.
[35]T. Metz, "Towards an African Moral Theory," 335.
[36]T. Metz, "Recent Philosophical Approaches to Social Protection: From Capability to *Ubuntu*," 138.

contact with each other, allowing us to be and to communicate with one another more extensively than before.[37]

Aristotle is of the view that the more we know, the more fully alive and human we become. In this sense, ICT has a role to play in the enhancement of humanity. In Africa, the relevance of ICTs cannot be over-emphasized. There are millions of Africans in the Diaspora who can easily communicate and relate by means of ICT to their families and friends back in their countries of origin. For this group of Africans, the words of the Scriptures, "[the] hills and mountains have been laid low and the valleys filled," come to fruition by the utilization of ICTs.

Information and Communication Technologies enhance mutual sharing. This is a fundamental indicator of friendship, and a significant feature of a human person *qua*human person humanity. For Aristotle, friendship is a human relationship of mutual love between people based on mutual choice; secondly, this chosen, loving relationship is based on an equality of the partners as friends.[38] He (Aristotle) suggests that friendship (*Philia)* is the basic human good every human being desires. No one, he avers, would want to live without friends, even if he or she had everything else that could make for happiness.[39]Aristotle, therefore, concludes that friendship (*Philia)* is an enduring human relationship of mutual affection, or love which motivates the friends to choose to share their lives with each other.[40]

The good things shared through friendship include conversation in which the friends communicate to each other spiritual goods, their thoughts, dreams and feelings or that which they hold dearest.[41]Undoubtedly, information and communication technologies play a pivotal role in meeting this feature of friendship: as matter of fact humanistic issues are widely discussed by means of communication technological gadgets such as the Internet. Social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, realize conversation and communication. However, there is the downside of social networks being addictive.

If we shift to a more critical viewpoint, we may deem it worthwhile to pose a challenge to those engaged in the "network community" – and to ourselves if we have many Facebook or Twitter friends –namely, to respond to a question that Aristotle would logically ask us about the types of friendships we are forming: Are they based on virtue, on utility, on pleasure? And if we seem to have many friends by reason of our membership to these sites, we ought to ask ourselves whether these are the kinds of friendships that promote human person *qua* human-person humanism.

Another important point is that ICTs through social networks have enhanced social relations and sense of relationships as argued by Ubuntu theorists especially Thaddeus Metz. As already shown Metz highlights two distinct relational themes drawn from Ubuntu.
Metz's two relational themes from *Ubuntu* are very important in this paper. Metz indicates relationship of identity as behavioral feeling of 'We' and not 'I'. This can be explained by formation of social groups on the social networks based on the shared identity of members. These groups range from familial relationships to other social groups. Social networks such as

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[37]T. Sherman, "Aristotle, Friendship and the Question of the Human Significance of ICT in Africa Today," 38.
[38]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics VIII*, 4-5.
[39]Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics viii*, 1.
[40]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics VIII*, 2.
[41]Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics IX.9 1170b8-15, 1171b33-1172a16.*

Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter facilitate the sharing of information and ideas which are constructive and educative. These social groups are formed based on interests of the members.

The second theme suggested by Metz is relationship of *solidarity*. Social networks make solidarity possible through members of a particular group sharing common interests. For example, by the power of social networks we witness social groups on platforms like WhatsApp helping each other. Some groups are created on social networks to address the problems of a particular society. Yet other social groups on social networks are created to mobilize funds to support the disadvantaged people in the society, the sick needing medical attention and even those affected by natural calamities.
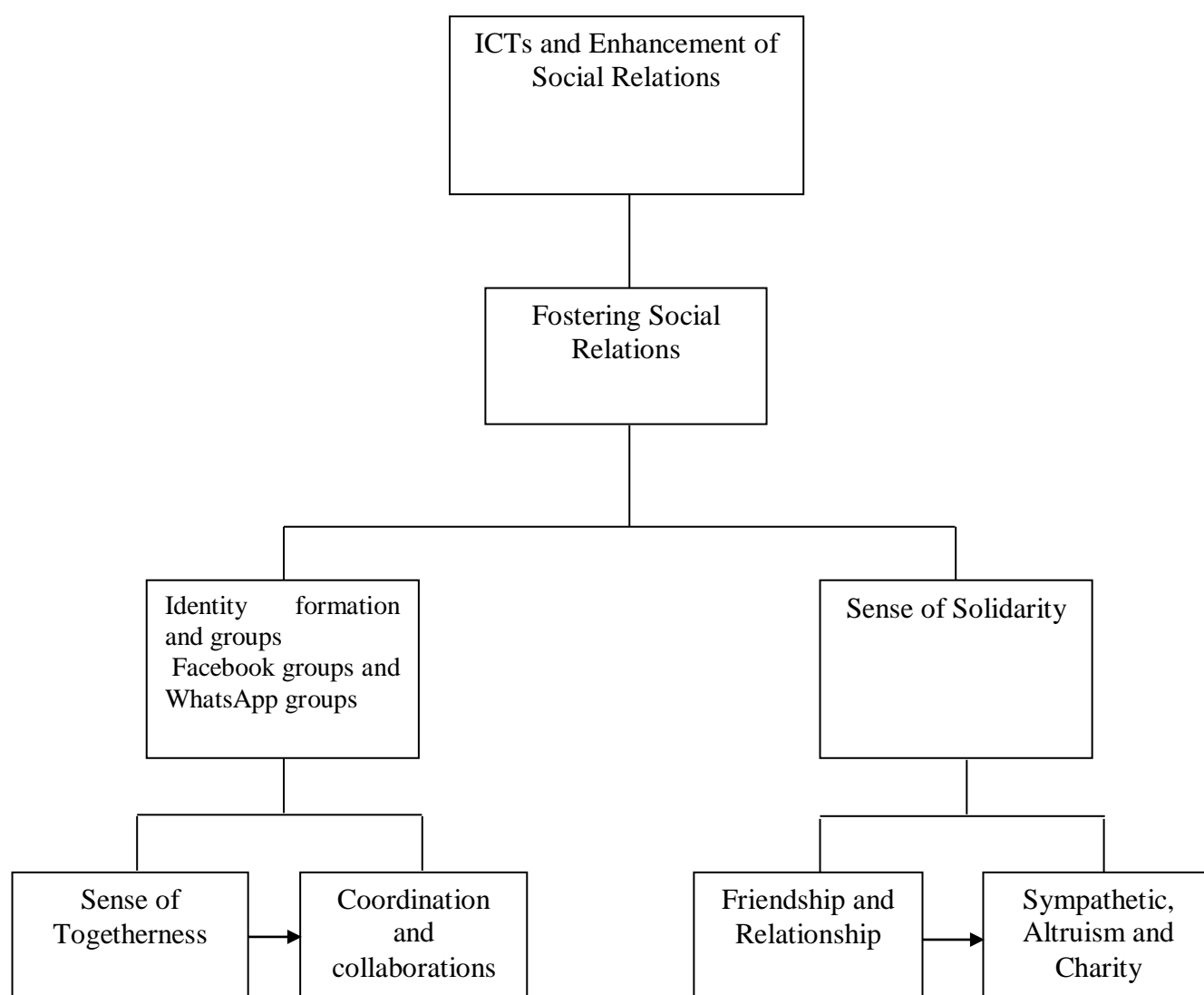
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Figure 1: Schematic Representation of how ICT enhances social relations

3.1.2 ICT Developments in Africa and their Effect on Political Life

The power of ICTs in Africa comes to vivid expression in the sphere of African politics. It is valid to ask: is ICT a viable tool for addressing the political conundrums of Africa? Or else, is it a tool for popularizing revolutions, which lead to political insecurities and sabotage? Does information technology propagate political revolutions in the good sense of the term "revolution" which aim at promoting African humanism?

Information technology constitutes a new powerful resource for Africa's poor masses. Information technology, more specifically,the internet and mobile phones are stimulating political changes in Africa, in areas, for instance, where there is poor governance and the consequent exacerbation of poverty for the masses. In fact, to some extent, the influence of ICTs in Africa have agitated for the elimination of "democracy deficiency syndrome" (DDS) in African countries.

According to Mr. Moindi, an ICT consultant in Nairobi, this battle is not being fought with guns and machetes but in the minds of the people; and it has to do with the way we receive and interact with information.[42]Moindi further adds that it is difficult to estimate how much of the economic boom witnessed in the past 10 years in Africa is directly attributable to the undersea cables connecting the continent to Europe, Asia, and the Americas. But every year, more Africans become more enlightened, as they connect with the rest of the world.[43]The more Africans become enlightened by the support of ICTs, the more they make their influence felt in their attempts to promote good governance, the kind of governance that aims at promotingauthentic humanism in Africa.

Social network groups like WhatsApp and Facebook groups have reconnected and reunited youths in the urban and rural areas as though they were in one place. This sense of oneness has increased the involvement of the youths in the society development programmes. Youths have used social media to come together to solve problems that affect them and that of the entire community.[44]For instance, in Opi, Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State, Youths Facebook Group, was opened by youths of Ndokwa West in Delta State to discuss mainly socio-political challenges faced by the youth in the area.[45] Social networks make civic engagement possible. Civic engagement is akin to citizen participation in community efforts which helps individuals in identity formation, teamwork, building and maintaining organizations, socialization, community building, and democracy and civic society.

It was real-time information, a product of the internet that conceived and brought to birth the Arab spring with its thaws and so caused the exit of such icy dictators as those that had been governing in Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. A typical example is the revolution in Tunisia which gathered momentum because of an organization of youths on Facebook. In his article on the Tunisian revolution, entitled "The Young and the Brave,"[46]Nicholas Norbrook

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[42]E, Moindi, "In Information Technology Lies the New Resource Power of Africa's Poor Masses," in *The East African Newspaper*, July 6-12, 2013.
[43]E,Moindi, "In Information Technology Lies the New Resource Power of Africa's Poor Masses," in *The East African Newspaper*, July 6-12, 2013.
[44]C. F. Asadu and J. G. Ayumo, "Facebook Groups and Youths' Facilitation of Self-Help Rural Development Programmes in River State, Nigeria," 23.
[45]C. F. Asadu and J. G. Ayumo, "Facebook Groups and Youths' Facilitation of Self-Help Rural Development Programmes in River State, Nigeria," 23.
[46] Cf. N, Norbrook., "The Young and the Proud e Brave," *The African Report*, No. 28 March, 2011

identifies Ahmad Talaat, a 22-year-old pharmacy student from Alexandria, who was the ring-leader for the group which in 2009 established a Facebook group named "proud to be an Egyptian". This movement was a part of the cyber effort to mobilize demonstrations. On his Facebook wall the same Ahmad Talaat jotted down that "All the parties are weak, we want real political life, we want parties, a strong party and to have a great election, we just want to be on the other side." So prays Talaat on his Facebook wall. In this context, social networks such as Facebook occasion new forces for political revolutions and for prayers, for everything that can promote betterment for those who govern and for all of humanity.[47]

In Tanzania, the power of ICTs widely facilitated constitutional amendment processes because citizens were able to express their opinions through the internet. Besides, some social networks such as the Jamii Forum in Tanzania have been designed to solicit opinions concerning social, economic, educational, political and cultural issues. Undeniably, such social networks and the internet in general aim at enhancing humanity in the sense we have been emphasizing: a basic human person *qua* human person African humanism. By way of summary, the power of ICT in Africa ensures analysis of political events by a broad range of people. Hence interpersonal collaboration among like-minded people in the world engenders solutions because they are people who have endured the same problems before and hence have perceived solutions that adequately resolve the problems. In this lies the potential for Africa, in this new context where institutions are forced to be more open, where the elite have to pause and listen, and where the disenfranchised poor are invited to speak and express themselves. It is all via ICTs.

Recently, the viral photograph of Alaa Salah, a Sudanese girl aged 22, a student of Engineering and Architecture at Sudan International Universitybecame the symbol of a months-long, nationwide uprising against the country's three decade ruler Omar Hassan al-Bashir, who was ousted on 11th April 2019, by Sudanese Armed Forces. On the iconic photos taken by photographer and musician Lana H. Haroun, captured the young woman chanting songs of freedom in front of a crowd of predominantly women protestors.

The image shows Alaa Salah standing on top of a car surrounded by a sea of protesters, keenly listening, most of them with their smartphones in hand, recording as she passionately delivers her message of revolution. She says: "I am very proud to take part in this revolution and I hope our revolution will achieve its goal."[48] Salah used her Twitter account to bring Sudanese together against poor governance. She twitted "the struggle for a democratic and prosperous Sudan continues."[49] Her message on Twitter account called the Sudanese to struggle against racism, tribalism, injustice, corruption, poor governance and injustice to women in Sudan. As she says: "I wanted to speak on behalf of the youth. I wanted to come out and say that Sudan is for all."[50]

The online community including those far beyond the boundaries of Sudan, has reacted to Ms. Salah's photos and messages on twitter, with many calling her a hero and an icon. For instance Kenyan Donald Kipkorir shared Alaa Salah's photo and wrote: "the unfolding revolution in Sudan against Dictator Omar al- Bashir 75, that didn't have leader has finally

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[47]P. Smith, - P. Musili, - G. Ware, "Egypt: The Tahrir Square Republic," *The Africa Report*, 23.
[48]Cited from *The Citizen*, "Alaa Salah, 'the Nubian Queen' who stood against Bashir," Thursday April 11 2019.
[49]Cited from *The Citizen*, "Alaa Salah, 'the Nubian Queen' who stood against Bashir," Thursday April 11 2019.
[50]Cited from *The Citizen*, "Alaa Salah, 'the Nubian Queen' who stood against Bashir," Thursday April 11 2019.

found one in a pretty and iconic Alaa Salah, 22 … History shows the most successful revolutions are led by such angelic leaders."[51]Women protesters used social media to disseminate information. WhatsApp groups were formed to make people aware of the revolution ideals and used to tell protesters to remain calm in protesting so as to oust Omar al-Bashir's regime. Also, during the protests, social networks were effectively used by medical doctors who were treating protesters who hadinjuries including those from gunshots. Doctors tried to ensure the fatal wounds were documented and sent to protest organizers through social networks to expose the brutality.[52]

Also, through ICT developments diaspora communities have influenced policies back home. They have initiated online discussions groups. For countries that have repressive media policies, diaspora communities have found ways around the barriers, to form groups through social networks as a forum for exchange of views and ideas.[53]Social networks supported by ICTs have enhanced solidarity among activists and people concerned with good governance leading to holistic development. These political activities through ICT and social networks in some places have led to improvement of policies and good politics which takes into account values of African humanism such as human flourishing and the common good.

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[51]Cited from *The Citizen*, "Alaa Salah, 'the Nubian Queen' who stood against Bashir," Thursday April 11 2019.
[52]J. Goldstein, "How Doctors Became Revolutionary Force Behind the Protest Movement," *The East African Newspaper*, April 27 – May 3. 2019.
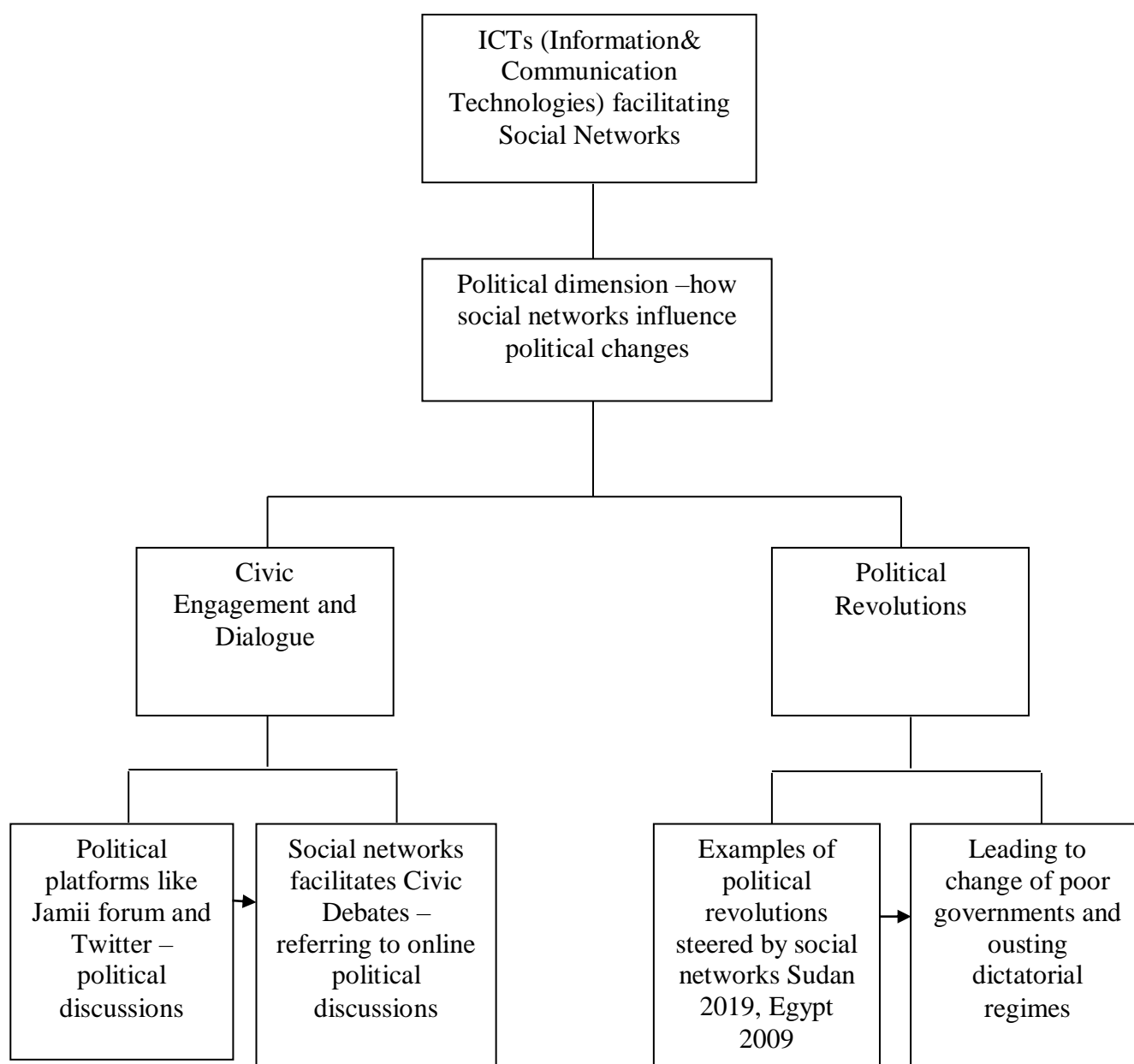[53]O. Mubangizi, *ICT for Innovation*: *E-Learning for Africa in the Cyber-Age*.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  ICTs (Information&          │
│  Communication              │
│  Technologies) facilitating │
│  Social Networks            │
└─────────────────────────────┘
              │
┌─────────────────────────────┐
│  Political dimension –how   │
│  social networks influence  │
│  political changes          │
└─────────────────────────────┘
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│   Civic      │  │  Political    │
│ Engagement   │  │  Revolutions  │
│ and Dialogue │  │               │
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| Political platforms like Jamii forum and Twitter – political discussions | → | Social networks facilitates Civic Debates – referring to online political discussions | Examples of political revolutions steered by social networks Sudan 2019, Egypt 2009 | → | Leading to change of poor governments and ousting dictatorial regimes |

Figure 2: Schematic representation of how social networks facilitated by ICTs steer political activities aiming at promoting the human flourishing

3.2 Identity and Cultural Crisis as a Negative Impact of ICT on African Humanism

In the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* culture has been designated to include language, customs, morality, types of economy and technology, art and architecture, modes of entertainment, legal system and religion. From this encyclopedic point of view, culture is "that which distinguishes one human group from another". Briefly put, culture entails the partnership and the sharing of a people's way of life in all of its dimensions and details.

Paradoxically, technological revolutions such as the ICT revolution and other cybernetic forms of technological innovation have made an impact in terms of extensity, intensity and velocity, which has been significant enough to change entirely the African integration of those

life and cultural values that have been responsible for the formation of an authentic African humanism. It is precisely for this marked increase in intensity that the new form of globalization under ICT influence has had such a profound effect on culture and personal identity.

For Peter Berger, ICT has led to the creation of a MC World Culture, which accentuatesthe pop culture that has captivated youths across the world. The pop culture accepts as a primary form of consciousness all the glitter and glamor that shine forth – superficially – from musicicons, sport personalities and movie stars who set the latest trends and fashions.[54]

As a matter of fact, private producers and distributors from California and New York (that cater to such personalities as Beyoncé, Wesley Snipes, Angelina Jolie, Shaggy, Russell Crowe, Zoe Saldana, and Denzel Washington), and from Hong Kong and Tokyo (who cater to Jet Li, Maggie Q, and Jackie Chan) have succeeded in exporting their cultures because private individuals have the resources necessary to make their Californian and East Asian cultural artifacts attractive and desirable. They contribute to the domination of the global communication networks and their militantly persuasive advertising campaigns. Their cultural artifacts are generally of a higher quality than those of other nations; it is sometimes their success that drives other, less successful individuals to use pornography and sexually abusive cultural styles in order to make their own sordid contribution to the internet cultural revolution.

Certainly, MC World culture promotes the ideal of individual liberty as an overriding value, almost leading to an exclusion of any other principle.[55] The value of individual liberty is a core aspect of MC World culture and is epitomized in the idea of the California/ Tokyo Dream, which embodies the promise of infinite possibility and gives currency to the post-modern yearning "to be whatever I want to be." Therefore, there is inevitably a huge attraction to this open invitation of California libertarianism to create a new African humanism and identity. Assuredly, the internet is the major tool for carrying this ideology.

There is also a proliferation of identities and values in the ICT age, where the internet is the most modern institution that constructs and disseminates polymorphic identities. Internet and more particularly the web is the most prolific engineer of these modern identities. Langman and Morris give a detailed analysis of how the modern internet has led to the spawning of hundreds of sub-cultures. Social networks, such as Facebook, My Space and Twitter, have provided young people today with the liberty to create and choose their own identities and values in an environment free from unwarranted constraints of a hierarchical society. Thus, the created subcultures have ignored African cultural and values systems; since there are fabricated sub-cultures thatprovide a cultural space for their self-expression in cyber-space, the space that otherwise would not have been available to them in a traditional society.[56] Sub-cultures, for instance, "Pro-Ana" groups on social networking sites that promote anorexia, "Pro-Ana Culture" on My-Space and the group "Get Thin or Die Trying" on Facebook. These sites function as a forum for anorexics, thus creating and legitimating the

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[54]P. Berger, "Four Faces of Global Culture," *Globalization and the Challenges of New Century*, 123.

[55]Cf. P. Berger, "Four Faces of Global Culture," *Globalization and the Challenges of New Century*, 123.

[56]L. Langman – D. Morris, *Globalization, Alienation and Identity: A Critical Approach*: August 16, 2013. <http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p106427>, index.html.Accessed; 04/10/2012.

anorexic identity. The authentic African humanism of human person *qua* human person has been widely jeopardized by these sub-cultures on the social networks.

The interactions with social networks have effects on the personalities that emerge. According to Aristotle, habituation is the key to moral life: "One becomes virtuous by performing virtuous actions." Behavioral psychology suggests something similar: continually reinforced behavior is going to increase the likelihood of that behavior. The intensity and purpose with which one uses social networks that the machines are designed to serve – day-and-night connections to messaging systems, and the continual receiving and sending of information – are habit forming and hence alter one's personality. Here in Africa, new trends of personality that emerge through the use of ICTs are as follows: Marketing and Second Life. These personality styles starkly disorient any African who seeks to cultivate the intrinsic values of African humanism by way of the human person *qua* human person. According to EvaristusEkuemeka, these technologically driven personalities that have emerged are all a manifestation of cognitive developments – or shall I say "anti-developments" – in the information age.[57]

The Marketing personality develops from interaction with virtually unknown potential "friends" who are seen as clients by the subject. The marketing personality operates on the premise "I will be whatever you want me to be for you." The key fact is that 'it reduces people to servants of the economy and of the machinery that their own hands build."[58] Eric Fromm argues that the marketing character means experiencing oneself as a commodity, and one's value not as 'use value' but as 'exchange value.' The living being becomes a commodity on the 'personality market. On social networks, how you market yourself on Twitter, Facebook, My-space, Google-Plus, Black-Berry and other social network media will determine how many millions of friends you have. The marketing personality wants to sell his/her "virtual self" to attract others to one's profile, to one's site and one's blog and ideas. Thus each one wants to be on demand through phone calls, email, social networks. Some would put pictures of others or as they wish to be. Therefore, the aim of the marketing character is complete adaptation, so as to be desirable under all conditions of the personality. The marketing character personalities don't even have egos. For they constantly change their egos, according to the principle: 'I am as you desire me.'"[59]

The second personality style is that of Second Life, engendered by the ICT revolution in Africa. Tom Boellstorff evaluates the effect of potentialities in the second life personality on one's character. He traces its origin to the Latin term *Persona*, "which referred to a mask. Masks originally de-individualized by reducing the wearer to an 'artificial role,' but eventually 'became synonymous with the true nature of the individual."[60]Second Life is a Web 2.0 technology, a virtual world, in which individuals or 'residents' as they are called create *avatars* of themselves, a house, a family and a social life. The second-life in African humanism is featured in various groups on-line as: 'users,' 'gamers,' or 'players' or 'achievers,' 'explorers,' 'socializers,' and 'killers.' The second life is opposed to actual or real

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[57]Cf. E.O. Ekwueme, *Emergent Probability, Computers and Insight as Information: Lonergan's Emergent Probability, Computer Aided Insights, and their Implementation on Development in African History*, 251.
[58]E. Fromm, *To Have or To Be*, 146.
[59]E. Fromm, *To Have or To Be*, 148.
[60]T. Boellstorff, *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropological Explores the Virtually Human*, 118.

life; therefore, it promotes the alienation of humanity. For those who become engrossed in this dimension of the cyber world, especially youth, they can assume virtual selfhood in a way that seems identical to actual selfhood.

Cyber Technology, according to JzuetanTodolov, has led to the establishment of the specific values of one's own society. Therefore, Africans can use this technology to make their values universal but this will only happen at the cost of great struggle.

It is critical to ask at this juncture: in the post-modern era, do African cultural values and the values of authentic humanism have any relevance for Africans? Is it possible to promote African Humanism given the dominance of cyber technology and ICTs controlled by the developed world? Do we have anything to claim on behalf of African humanism in this post-modern era? Pondering these questions leaves me skeptical whether African humanism and a concomitant renaissance are possible. What can eliminate my skepticism is an earnest attempt to adhere to what Denis Diderot,a French philosopher, says on universal morality and culture. He contends that "a morality and culture that are to govern the universal relations of men with one another can be based on no other foundation than that which makes man what he is based on his own specific culture." When an African is consciously growing, intellectually, socially, emotionally and morally, in harmonious integration with his or her cultural roots, African humanism and the needed African renaissance becomes possible.
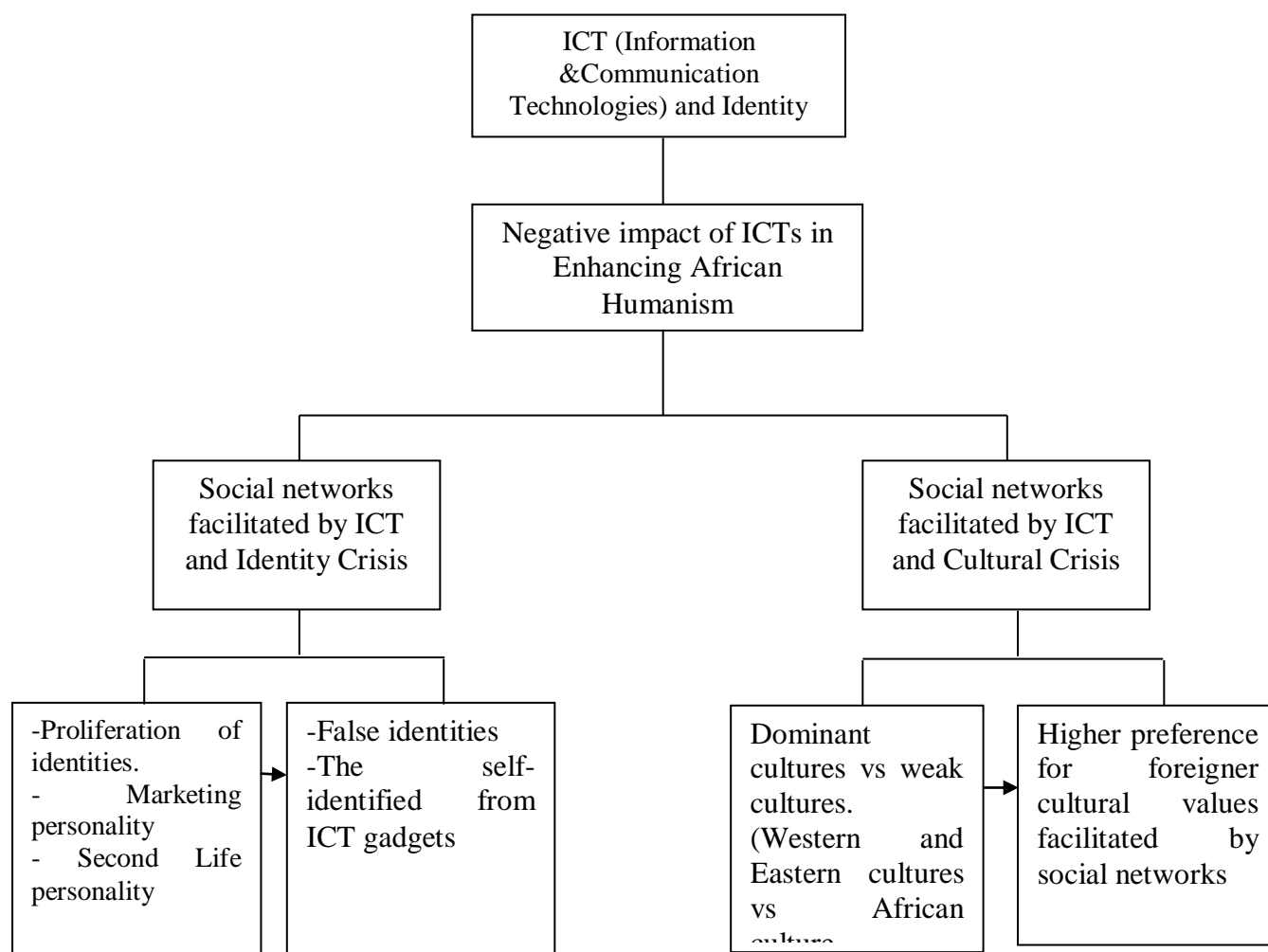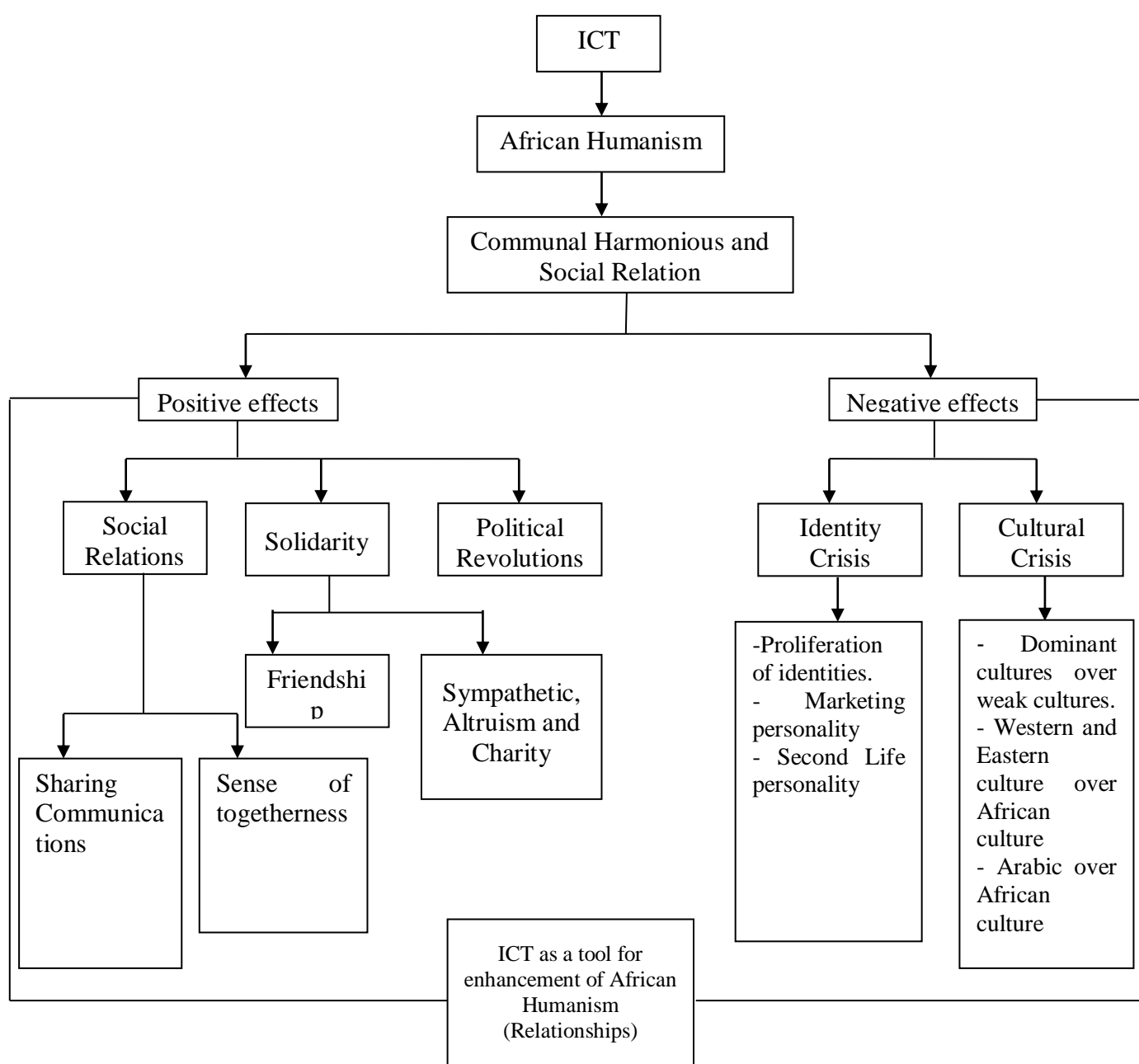

Figure 3: Schematic representation of how social networks facilitated by ICT have negative impact on African humanism: Identity crisis and cultural crisis

Conclusion

This paper has shown that ICTs have emerged as a critical actor in shaping world events.The paper has attemptedto critically evaluate the role of ICTsin promoting African Humanism.The paper has dwelt on the impact of ICT revolution on African Humanism expressed through the sense of relationships and solidarity. Thus the paper opens up a dialogue on how to critically evaluate the practical contribution of ICT and social networks on African humanism. The concept of Ubuntu has been identified in the article as a critical component of African Humanism that can be drawn upon in order to integrate the positive aspects of ICTs into the fight for the political, social, economic and cultural betterment of Africa.

Figure 4: Schematic representation of the entire paper

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