THOUGHTS ON XENOPHOBIA, DISRUPTIVE NATION AND "MAN ON GROUND"

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Abstract

Stories of Africans displaced by war taking high risks to get to an often inhospitable Western Europe are frequently in the news. But sub-Saharan Africa is the region which hosts the largest population of refugees in the world. Refugees who flee to sub-Saharan African countries are also frequently subjected to xenophobic exclusion and violence by people who sometimes claim to be defending rights and privileges associated with national belonging. My aims are to point out new avenues for novel insights into the interrelations between xenophobia, disruption and nation by giving attractive detail and depth to the discussion using Director Akin Omotoso's *Man on Ground* (2011); putting forward arguments against xenophobic stereotypes and violence; pointing out some pitfalls of nation-building; and by finding and imagining human ground amidst disruptive nationhood. What is offered is a new synthesis of philosophical insights that defies distinctions between African and Western philosophy. Going beyond nativism and xenophobia, this synthesis speaks of the need and possibility to craft common human ground that enables people to become the most they can be.

1.   Introduction

Stories of Africans displaced by war taking high risks to get to an often inhospitable Western Europe are frequently in the news. Readers of the news can be forgiven for forgetting that according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as of June 2015

the 4.1 million refugees in sub-Saharan Africa make it the region which hosts the largest population of refugees in the world (McConnel 2015: 2). Those refugees who flee to sub-Saharan African countries are also frequently subjected to xenophobic exclusion and violence by people who sometimes claim to be defending rights and privileges associated with national belonging.

While noticing how the nation-state has associations with nationalist violence, I will neither discuss this view critically nor will I assume an extreme view against the current and ongoing necessity of the nation-state. Instead I hold *a priori* that the nation-state has assumed the role of securing the safety and well-being of those who live within its legitimated boundaries, and that it plays a role in regulating interstate relations.

Pursuant upon recognising the disruptive forms of the nation-state, my aims are to point out new avenues for novel insights into the interrelations that bind xenophobia, disruption and nation by giving attractive detail and depth to the discussion using Director Akin Omotoso's *Man on Ground* (2011);[1] putting forward arguments against xenophobic stereotypes and violence; pointing out some pitfalls of nation-building;[2] to finally finding and imagining human ground amidst disruptive nationhood.

I will not pursue traditional philosophical 'family squabbles' about the nature and form of African philosophy, the role of government in building its citizenry, etc. Instead I am interested in the believable issues that affect everyday lives — issues that *Man on Ground* creatively portrays. What will materialise is a new synthesis of philosophical insights that defies distinctions between African and Western philosophy. There is something desirable, I reckon, about how such an outcome coheres deeply with my, arguably, cosmopolitan concern to recognise and make cultural gains from the materials our shared humanity gives us.

2.   Man on Ground

In *Man on Ground* action is set in the context of fictionalised xenophobic attacks in South Africa. The narrative follows the strands of experience of several key actors in a way that effectively relate how, even in the difficulties of their everyday hardships, people are actively engaged in strategically and tactically thinking, feeling, experimenting and negotiating right action. It takes place against the backdrop of xenophobic mob violence that has regularly taken place in South Africa. In fact the screen-

play is dedicated to the sad memory of Ernesto Nhamuavhe who was burnt to death by a xenophobic mob in South Africa. Referencing *Man on Ground* engrains attractive detail and depth to this discussion of xenophobic stereotypes and violence, pitfalls of nation-building and disruptive nationhood.

Its opening sequence introduces Femi, the main protagonist of the movie as a young student rights activist in Nigeria. He gets imprisoned, perhaps extra-legally, and is tortured by the military rulers of that country. He then somehow leaves Nigeria to enter with visible relief into the ostensive freedom of South Africa. Watching the movie in 2016, the initial framing which patently contrasts a Nigerian military state which undermines freedom with the fabled idea of a South Africa democracy which guarantees freedom is disconcerting. Recall: 2015 saw the eruption in South Africa of student unrest in which protestors called for colonial and *apartheid* injustices to end so that there is equal access to higher education. And 2013 saw police of the post-*apartheid* state gun down scores of workers who were picketing for higher wages at Marikana Mine.

What unfolds is a story that weaves together the experiences of *a* fairly common sample' of people as they try to evade the immense harshness and intense arbitrariness of life in an imaginable African setting. This setting is characterised by cultures of violence. While recognising that the language of sampling generally indicates a logic of possible representivity to an intended population, I say this is a fairly common sample of people to connote that the characters in the movie are not possessed of supernatural or extraordinary qualities at all. They are quite common in many ways that acknowledge the shared humanity of poor, suffering and marginalised Africans. This is important given how Africans are often essentialised and stereotyped in dehumanising ways. I speak of cultures of violence to appreciate how the story is set among sets of practices and systems that, as Galtung (1990: 291) notes, make "direct and structural violence look and even feel right or at least not wrong". I do this because I intend that readers consider how the nation-states in which the action is set are, at least in some respects, products of disruptive arrangements that inflict and normalise violence upon and between citizens and foreigners.

By weaving together multiple experiences the movie, however, does not elide the hurt, pain, hopes, aspirations and unease that individuals characteristically experience amidst the violence. Through an

adroit refusal to sensationalise or make a pornography of the dramatic violence the normalised and backgrounded hum of violence that is stitched into the performance of nationhood in Nigeria and South Africa viewers are shown how in harsh conditions individuals constantly find themselves in conflicted moral situations but the intersecting vulnerabilities that constitute structures of violence are not singled out. It is in this context that Ade, for example, is dramatically positioned as a person who falls from privilege into possible harm which he fortuitously escapes. *Man on Ground* reminds us that for many Africans the nation-state is a 'camp'. In it life is precariously survived between illusory dignity and ever present risks of being exposed to the hazards of reduced to what Agamben (1995) calls "bare life".

It is valuable to see that the African often survives in what Bauman (1989) described as the Western "modern garden culture", as an aberrant other, that is, as a weed that survives by not drawing recognition to how it secures access to valuable resources and competes for the accoutrements of human worth. Ade, a banker with a wife who works for an international multinational agency, first appears as an African living the fairly fluid life of what Giddens (2000) terms a "global tourist", that is, of a person who can cross borders easily and still live with a sense of equal belonging and alienation. Further developments then show that he is in fact just 'passing' as a flower in the modern garden. He is thrust into the unsettling reality of a violent riot. He is no longer a tourist who strangely belongs while being alien. Caught in a violent riot he simply slides back into normalised African states of vulnerability, disempowerment and victimhood. In seeking to reconnect with his brother, with the system of relations that concern him, he is 'fit' into the category of a weed, in danger of being exterminated. In the midst of the xenophobic rioting mobs, his survival initially depends on being hidden from sight and is eventually secured by being smuggled to safety.

Emptied of his unique merits and contributions, Ade is over-signified by his blackness, Africanness and foreignness as a weed to be attacked because his whole being is now defined as parasitically opportunistic and dangerous. In this way, *Man on Ground* manages to say clearly that xenophobic attacks, which are in this case mainly directed at the poor and marginalised in South Africa, are about reducing human lives, in an unjust but normalised way, to bare and vulnerable shells. Xenophobia as an attack on humanity — and its inalienable dignity and worth — succeeds by marking out the nation-state as a garden

in which certain people belong and others do not. A lesson from the Holocaust is that death visits those marked 'out of place' in the national *Lebensraum* (living space). But *Man on Ground* illustrates at the same time that amidst xenophobia, people are still able to be hospitable. Surrounded by marauding xenophobic masses, Timothi tells Ade to feel safe with him because, "As far as [he is] concerned, hospitality is sacred".

Faced with "wicked problems", that is, with problems which are difficult to define and direct and which require untenable moral choices of those who attempt to address them (Rittel and Webber 1973), stereotyping and violence against 'others' does not advance more hospitable communal arrangements. But perhaps I run ahead of myself in already saying this. What suffices for now is to say that today we have to work very hard to establish the kinds of communities that Afrocentrists say are typical of how Africans relate to one another (cf Tutu 1999: 29; Appiah 2010). Violence continues to estrange and dehumanise Africans. It is reasonable to proceed by going beyond stereotypes.

3.   Against xenophobic stereotyping and xenophobic violence

Before putting forward an argument against xenophobic stereotypes and xenophobic violence, it is worthwhile noting that the word "stereotype" is constructed from the Greek words *stereos* (meaning firm or solid) and typos (meaning "impression"). The idea is that a stereotype is formed whenever a strong impression is made onto a firm surface. So, in as much as stereotypes are descriptions of what is done to firm things, the stereotype is without the agency associated with "character" — a word which draws from the Old French *caractere* and from the Greek *kharaktēr* which reference 'a stamping tool'. The stereotypical African is stripped of the character by which people violently, roughly and smoothly etch individual paths into the shared firmament of the world. What remains are caricatures renowned for being afflicted inordinately with violence and for being home to moral philosophies that splendidly speak of friendliness and peace. The deep and complicated biographical and material histories that give or deny value to people and their actions are discounted.

Stereotypical South Africa plays and replays the base African caricature. On the one hand, South Africa is the epicentre of scholar-

ship and of narratives that represent the African moral philosophy of *ubuntu*, known to value harmony and reconciliation. On the other hand, it stands for the dehumanising colonial and *apartheid* history of segregation and violence. The frustration of those whose humanity is thus caricatured are given brief expression in a rare moment in which the meditative tone of *Man on Ground* rises to a shrill crescendo: A protestor, who is not named but who is importantly not made faceless, shouts out: "We are not a pig! We are a people!" These harrowing words, applying the second person plural "we" to the singular "pig", and the indefinite singular article "a" to the collective noun "people" are crucial to the construction of this a-grammatical synecdoche. The synecdoche expresses how the people in *Man on Ground* are, in Giddens's (2000) terms, "global vagabonds" — unwanted anywhere and therefore denied recognition and dignity. It expresses outrage at how the many and diverse people of South Africa are given a singular and offensive identity when they can justly insist on being treated as people — that is, as humans in the plural.

   With strong Christian and Islamic influences, in South Africa, pigs are prejudicially associated with dirt and disease. According to the prejudice, to name someone a pig is also to impugn upon them a lack of industry and intelligence. To find oneself constituted a pig is to be the subject of a xenophobic play, a veritable simulacrum or a Kafkaesque metamorphosis that puts paid to your humanity and degrades you to vermin. A lesson from Rwanda and other places where genocides have been perpetrated is that animalising 'others' is an important step aimed at dehumanising them in ways that intend to rhetorically reduce the moral barriers perpetrators need to negotiate when deciding to murderously kill (cf Longman 2010: 179). Xenophobic thought shares with nosophobia (that is, with fear of disease) the turn to metaphors and instincts of war. Both excite the will to attack invaders. Both involve the idea of protecting a pure body from invaders. They share the quality of being founded on the faulty ontological claim that there are clear and known bodies whose integrity is under threat from harmful invaders. Susan Sontag (1990) presents two wonderful treatises that go a long way in arguing for the challenging of the horrid distinctions between insiders and outsiders. An indication from this is that we should be weary of assertions and actions that go with easy claims of nativism and autochthony, as these hinge on people claiming to somehow be 'children of the soil' who belong in ways that foreign others do not. Yet the history

of *apartheid* has already produced "the normalization and routinization of exception itself" (Mbembe 2001: 9) so that it is not at all clear that insider and outsider have been imaginatively secured and stabilised to constitute a cohesive and productive nation-state.

In human history the nation-state is a recent eruption whose goodness is not guaranteed when one looks at the violence and disruption that are tied to its production, maintenance and sustenance (Renan 1990). We have already noted that the nation-state is disruptive (Baudrillard and Nouvel 2002). Notably nation-states are also the sites for the formative childhood dreams of belonging that enable people to negotiate the larger world into which they are thrown after childhood (Bachelard 1994). In South Africa, the history of colonialism and *apartheid* made many people "surplus" whose citizenship belonging and human rights were disposed of (cf Dubow 2014: 109-118). As a consequence, the grounds for imagining belonging was denied to the black majority whose lives remain, even today, characterised by cultural and ontological insecurity. After the fall of formal *apartheid* in South Africa, as elsewhere in postcolonial states, one of the main tasks of the government is to secure national belonging. To do this it has to enable denizens to imaginatively attach themselves to a secure 'inside' that is constituted by the state, which is hence distinguished from a vast 'outside' that is denigrated or otherwise othered (cf Bachelard 1994: 214-215). The nation-state fragments and interrupts human flows and interactions that have characterised human cultural evolutionary history. Assuredly in so doing discernible patterns of interrelatedness are made available to perception, imagination and can be sensibly enacted and acted upon as nation-states.

4.   Pitfalls of nation-building

Nation-building has high currency in African states which often regard it as a priceless good because it seemingly underpins the ability of the state to secure the prosperity and goods that are associated with the state (Mkandawire 2013; Chabal 2009). But there are significant pitfalls to nation-building. One of the great problems facing nation-builders arises from the nature of the nation-state. Nouvel (in Baudrillard and Nouvel 2002: 12) compares the nation-state and building with architecture: "One of the big problems with architecture is that it must both exist and be quickly forgotten". Unfortunately, anchored in modern inclinations to

think dualistically, this conception of the state has tied people to fallaciously even thinking of ants as forming cooperative, productive, xenophobic communities that regularly kill alien ants that enter their colonies (Bauman 2008: 3).

Xenophobes are horridly stuck in thinking that pure national bodies are either attainable or should be defended. But national identities are not natural things that can be taken for granted or that have permanence outside of the constant imaginative work of peoples who enact nationhood. The Westerners who brought the chimera of fixed national identities to Africa had themselves only developed something like modern nation-states only as recently as the fifth century AD (Renan 1990: 9). What makes national identity more difficult and problematic in sub-Saharan Africa is its linkage to the Western colonial demarcation of borders, imposed as part of a broader divide-and-rule tactic, and accompanied by other disruptive practices. The discussion of national togetherness in these contexts is mired in oppositional, separatist, anticolonial, colonial and other violent discourses that conduce to the kinds of hatred that fuel and accompany xenophobia. Anticolonial nationalism tries to unite people who were designated 'natives' by colonial legislative and governance arrangements. People who were tribalised to advance a 'define and rule' agenda that accentuates differences and exclusions. In this way it constructs some as 'natives' in a process that casts others as 'non-natives' (Mamdani 2012) in processes that sometimes justify violence against those labelled non-natives. It is not surprising that, as Fanon (1968/1990: 125) prophesised, postcolonial African states frequently pass from nationalism to ultra-nationalism, to chauvinism and violence against those deemed non-natives.

In Johannesburg, patently motivated by violent intentions against those deemed non-natives, municipal police frequently treat poor immigrants as parasites.[3] They often drive immigrants off makeshift trading posts established on pavements, claiming to be 'cleaning up' the streets. *Man on Ground* shows Femi and a local business partner operating as vendors at such a trading post. Cast as a public nuisance, these traders are frequently portrayed as people who disturb the productive flow of business life. But Omotoso rather reveals that these traders are often lively and rich contributors to the economic and social life of the communities in which they find themselves. They are not always parasitic, that is, they are not as Serres (cf 2007: 11) may have said, always 'interceptors or diverters'.

The simple fact is that human beings have no natural, or easy, or unproblematic, or 'unworked for' place of belonging that is free of interceptors and diverters. People constantly subscribe to membership of collectives. They are fundamentally caught up in streams of activities, choices and decisions that others co-construct. Nations are important forms of human collectives that are composed by people who imagine (cf Anderson 1983) a sense of solidarity based on a shared or common legacy that is tied to present and continuous consent to perpetuating an identity (Renan 1990: 19). They arise in human history as people compose race and tribal identities that regulate who gets what rights and privileges and who does not. So those who fight for the nation-state soon find that what they win is, as Fanon (1963: 148) despaired, just "a crude and fragile travesty of what it might have been". In postcolonial Africa they find out that nation-states perpetuate Western colonial boundaries that institutionalise racial and tribal indirect rule with its principle practices that divide people in order to rule over them.

Lamenting the unnecessity of the unjust divisions that separate persons from persons, in *Man on Ground* Ade says:

> I listened to an interview once with an astronaut who said that when in space one realises when gazing at the planet earth we have mistakenly constructed these narrow boarders of geography in order to mimic the narrow boarders of our minds. However when looking upon the planet earth from space the truth that this is our collective home becomes blatantly obvious. I only hope that we realise the labels "them" and "us" are one and the same.

To find that "them" and "us" are one and the same is to go against the prognostications of nationalists who, at least since the 18th century writings of Johann Gottfried Herder, have proclaimed that there are distinct human communities which need to achieve and maintain separate identities (see Berlin 1990a: 244). It is to find that humans have a capacity to realise and form relations beyond the pale assumptions of similarities and differences that community describes and prescribes. People are able to build common conceptual grounds, to work towards common goals — to generally commune with people who are different: "Intercommunication between cultures in time and space is only possible because what makes men (sic) human is common to them, and acts as a bridge between them" (Berlin 1990b: 11). This bridge on which people share common conceptual grounds is available on account of

the unique and unrivalled ability of humans, to altruistically discount differences to cooperatively and productively establish cultures that develop over time. Human communication is "a fundamentally cooperative enterprise, operating most naturally and smoothly within the context of (1) mutually assumed common conceptual ground, and (2) mutually assumed cooperative communicative motives" (Tomasello 2010: 6).

Disappointingly, in *Man on Ground*, it is quite clear that Ade, drunk on whisky and lost momentarily in the honeymoon phase of a new friendship with a stranger, is being whimsical and dreamy when he talks of going beyond narrow and destructive divisions. But the vision of human cooperation 'beyond narrow boundaries' merits being addressed soberly and seriously, just as Biko (1987: 47-48) does, when realising that Africans can rehumanise the world by finding ways to build cultures that enable everyone to be valued as an end and not as a means. So I am quite taken by the fact that Omotoso gets his drama to reflect that it is possible in the direst of circumstances to imagine human relations that are characterised by love and sacrifice. The love between Femi and Zodwa stands out in the movie. It has the sustained strength to bind the entire narrative of the movie to the tender possibility of people working to make each other the most they can be. Even in the instance where Femi and Zodwa appear to be in conflict, it is evident that what is being negotiated is a way to relate to each other in a way that values the self and the other. So when Femi announces to Zodwa that he is going to risk being attacked by xenophobic mobs by taking up work in District 29, it is evident that she understands and acquiesces, knowing that he takes the risk in order to provide for her and for their unborn child. So too, when Femi begins to woo Zodwa, her questions about him being too tall, too slick or possibly a drug dealer are uncloistered opportunities for them to know each other better, not for xenophobic hate. But theirs is not the only story of love in *Man on Ground*. The root metaphor at work here is that of the family.

Family and with it ethnic identity have been key to how constructions of community solidarity have been developed and valued by some Africans (cf Anta Diop 1981: 111-135). This idea shares something with the claims that family, tribes and nations are co-produced by the incest taboo and by related totemic relations (cf Freud 1989; Lévi-Strauss 1969). What is useful to take for the purposes of this discussion is that there are some, at least ancient Greek sources, that indicate that families came together for protection and prosperity to form nation-states

that invariably break into civil wars over resources and control (Agamben 2015). Drawing on the family roots of the nation-state, it appears that contemporary civil wars are an expression of unstable and contested family, political and economic relations (Agamben 2015: 14).

On the one extreme there are ideational forces that would depoliticise the nation-state and deny its place as a site of economic struggle by making out that the nation-state is just about homeliness and familial relations of solidarity. On the other extreme there are realist forces that intend that "everything that is unpolitical must be mobilised and politicised" (Agamben 2015: 23) so that the interests which bring people together may be acquired or safeguarded. Consistent with this view, *Man on Ground*, brings to the fore the well-known idea that people in economic distress often come together to fight politically for resources while challenging the right of some people to belong in the 'family'/community. But we must be careful. It is unreasonable to simply juxtapose and contrast building family relations with fighting for economic gains. Just see how in *Man on Ground*, Timothi stands apart from the perverse solidarity of marauding mobs by saying hospitality for strangers is non-negotiable. But it is also Timothi who sees that fires used to attack foreigners are "a call for people to listen" to the desperation which pushes the impoverished masses to commit heinous acts of violence against 'aliens' who are in their view threatening the economic and other interests of host peoples.

The state which is expected to facilitate commerce and to act as the guarantor or protector of social well-being for its members is often unable to achieve this goal. Drawing on data from the census of 2011, in South Africa — a middle-income country, 29 per cent of households were reported to be subsisting in the low-income category while 15.5 per cent had no household income (Statssa 2015: 14-17). Increasingly powerful forces of privatisation, of the increasing dominance of transnational corporations, and of multinational agencies have yielded a globalised "divorce between power and politics" (Bauman in Bauman and Bordoni 2014: 12). In South Africa one sees:

> [T]hin over-laps in the use of the term 'state fragility' with such other contested concepts as 'state failure', 'state weaknesses' and 'state crisis'. Some of the key measures of state fragility include susceptibility to crisis, inability to meet citizens' basic needs and expectations, failure to manage and accommodate change rooted in citizens' shift-

ing expectations, inability to provide human security and social peace, failure to maintain rule of law, justice and accountability, incapability of maintaining cordial state-society relations (social contract), vulnerability to internal and external threats and failure to meet many other indices of state capability (Ndlovu 2016: 63).

We have before us classic conditions of a legitimation crisis as the expectations of the national population are moored to the sinking powers of the nation state. Remember that the medical reading of crisis speaks of a condition in which the likelihood of system survival is seriously under threat. It is hence noteworthy that dominant modernist dualist thinking, stuck in scanning and managing threats that supposedly come from outside the system, lends itself to an increased tendency to attack the alleged 'parasitism' of singled out 'alien' vectors of harms. See how xenophobic violence against foreigners in South Africa is justified by claims about how these foreigners wrongfully acquire what would otherwise nourish the national body. All this happens even as the nationalist struggle to articulate an imaginable South African way of belonging continues (cf Chipkin 2007) and even flounders (see Qunta 2016).

 I take the position that whether or not it delivers prosperity and safety to denizens, along with all other 'architectural' or philosophical achievements, the nation-state is fundamentally disruptive (cf Baudrillard in Baudrillard and Nouvel 2002). For Agamben (2015) it is even reasonable to think that civil war is the paradigm that binds family to the state and politics. While proselytes believe nation-state communities provide freedom from fear and freedom to prosper, because of its "endemic brittleness", communities are known to secure dedication using force, coercion and militant means (Bauman 1994: 26). The violence used to produce and sustain national identity is often hidden from scrutiny by fantasies of innocent belonging (cf Vince and Mazen 2014; Zizek, 2008). So while sociology textbooks, for example, speak about class, family and deviance, what is typically left out is the military machinery that secures in-country compliance while maintaining border security to regulate external influences (Giddens 1985: 22). Humans cooperate and we do so in ways that embrace others whose different intentions, needs and capabilities are not only sometimes threatening, but are also sometimes of questionable value. This cooperation is strongest to the extent that is able to act as good grounds for other humans (strangers) to become productive and cooperative members.

5.   Finding and imagining human ground amidst disruptive nationhood

People are different. But the difference does not have to be the basis for failure to engage in right action. People are able to form grounds for cooperation that yields worlds in which each is increasingly more enabled to be the most he or she can be. The tagline used to market *Man on Ground* was: "We are from here". It became the basis for a Facebook campaign against xenophobia which was launched by Director Omotoso and key actors in *Man on Ground*. The statement "We are from here" is an overtly subversive response to the xenophobia that motivated the director to work towards this movie. The tagline objects to more than just the use of violence against strangers. On the surface it seemingly also objects to the unstated and assumed claim that there are people who belong (hosts) and others — strangers (parasites) — who do not. However, this surface reading is unlikely to be the most reasonable one given that the movie itself does not at any point contest the fact that people have different national and other differences. "We are from here" says something more profound: It presents the radical idea that to be human is always to start in your "here" — in your present for nothing else is uncontested — everything else is to be worked for. This is to read "we are from here" as an analogue of the existential aphorism: "We are thrown into the world".

Two sources of insight contribute greatly to my preferred reading. First, those who devalue "here" or "here-ness" are widely seen as people who are not well in Southern African cultures. Among the Shona of Zimbabwe, a long standing and insulting legend is about how the first Bantu migrants where often accosted by the original Khoi and San peoples of Southern Africa in the tall grass veld. The shorter original peoples would apparently ask: "Where did you see me?". If one replied "Here", this would apparently lead to a violent altercation as the Khoi and San apparently thought it to insinuate that they were not tall enough to be seen from a distance. The dismissive and offensive tone of the rather accusatory and self-serving cultural legend suggests that these Khoi and San could also possibly have been rather xenophobic in that they did not want to be seen "here" by the Bantu who were consequently being asked to keep their distance "there". Second, the Shona and many other Southern African Bantu peoples typically answer to the

question "How are you?" with a variant of statements that say "I am here" in order to declare "I am well".

The idea I am putting forward is that human wellness, holistically conceived, involves plot/ground forming and transforming relationships. Such relations are formed where people attain their personal greatness by performing the remarkable and paradoxical yet mundane act of reaching out to others who were previously seen as untouchables (cf Nietzsche 1928) in ways that layer altruism atop human selfishness to produce common conceptual grounds (cf. Tomasello 2010). This vision of society is believable. A wistful impression of how host nation-bodies can and do delightfully "take in" foreign inputs is briefly acted out in *Man on Ground*. It is tellingly one of few scenes in the movie that is filled with friendly humour. Set at their street-side store, that is located some-where in down-town Johannesburg, we see Femi and a South African business associate joking, smiling and selling hair pieces (notably called 'weaves') from all over the world (Brazil, China…). It is in this setting that Femi first meets Zodwa, the woman he is to marry and love — laying to rest any concerns of those who may have been unsure that Director Omotoso created here a device that moves audiences to know that quite normally (in everyday-regular, enjoyable and productive inter-actions), people from all reaches of society do *weave* together forms of living that attractively feed (alien) inputs into the host-bodies.[4] For example:

—   see a troubled Nadia save Femi from a murderous xenophobic mob. Also consider the relationship between Zodwa and Femi — which leads to their tragically upended love;

—   note the pivotal scene in which Timothi and an isolated and vul-nerable Ade, who is in need of protection from riotous xeno-phobes, share libations and thoughts;

—   see how the newly formed friendship between Timothi and Ade in-forms how Timothi ends up killing his long term friend Vusi in order to save Ade — a veritable stranger.

Beyond the violence and disillusion that the movie may engender among viewers beaten down by quite stereotypical stories about African problems of poverty and violence, the love that underpins these stories hints at possible alternatives for engaging in right interpersonal relations that conduce to mending divisive and destructive relations.

The point is, people who risk investment in human altruistic capabilities to cooperate with others can change their circumstances.

Humans are fundamentally selfish and must invariably make use of each other in the world. What makes us unique is that we are able to achieve a sense of a "we", an altruism that enables us to establish productive cultures unlike other animals have thus far manifested (cf Tomasello 2010). Even thugs must formulate mutual relations, in terms of which honour and trust are sacrosanct. It is remarkable how Vusi, the most thuggish of the characters in *Man on Ground*, trustingly tells Timothi secrets of his violent and murderous misadventures.

Human relations, which are invariably also always parasitically disruptive, are humanised by people valuing and acting-out productive cooperation that enables each to become the most he or she can be (Serres 2007: 7). While xenophobes fail to notice that not everything that causes disruptions is harmful. Refugees and other immigrants are often useful, if somewhat disruptive additions, to host nations. They come with new and different insights that are known to contribute to the creative eruption of disruptive innovations that create much value for host economies. We are speaking against nativism and for a cosmopolitanism by means of which everyone can be enabled to be all that they can be. Under this cosmopolitanism, people challenge the scourge of xenophobia boldly and quite paradoxically by declaring that home is everywhere or anywhere (cf Appiah 2005: 218), and demonstrate capabilities to practically overcome some features of what Baudrillard and Nouvel (2002) describe as the violence of the architecture of the world we live in. Authoring nationhood that is not xenophobic requires a communicative imagination that sees how all bodies are invaded by an endless flow of consumptive informational bits that re-structure and locate experience "within the vacant if omnipresent data banks of advancing transnational CAPITAL" (Pfohl 1992: 7). Cosmopolitanism requires jettisoning the vision of national purity and embracing the entry of so-called aliens into national space. It involves accepting that sharing the national habitat with people different from those we think are like ourselves is not an unusual threat, it is the norm. Cosmopolitan societies in fact normalise how national bodies are diverse, they are made up of individuals with unique biographical accounts of geographic, political, economic, social, historical and other dimensions — that frequently imply competing perspectives on the idea of goodness itself.

If xenophobia is to be contested in our era of globalisation, it ap-

pears necessary for Africans to construct new archives that ascribe and enable imagination of national identities that embrace flux, fluidity, diversity to 'make good' of the friction that change sometimes entails. It is useful to seek out and build up archival materials that bolster efforts to etch out yet newer and more inclusive national lives. "The real place of the nation, in South Africa as elsewhere, is not in the past, not even in the present, but in the future that your citizens will have to try to construct together … [using and constructing meanings that] will repose in an archive that remains to be written" (Appiah 2012: 108). Fortunately, for the willing, there are archival materials already available to be drawn on. A quick look at the historical archive will show that even the ethnicities and races that are associated with South Africanness are themselves inclusive, new and subject to change. Consider how the Zulu nation grew and was secured in the 19th century through acts of conquest and negotiation by which King Shaka's small kingdom grew in the 12 years of his rule to become one of the largest and most inclusive empires in sub-Saharan Africa. Shaka's Zulu practice of not discriminating against all denizens, so long as they were prepared to work for the collective, is powerful archival material for building a more inclusive South African state. The archive includes contemporaries who are producing films, television programming, sports fields, pavements, etc that memorialise and normalise possibilities for articulating a nation in which denizens feel safe and are enabled to flourish.

A valuable contemporary achieve of social innovation is being authored daily by poor and marginalised migrants who are networking to form close bonds of trust. These refugees and other immigrants are producing new texts of best practice that transforms often hostile socio-political and economic hard-lands into productive ground. The poor and marginalised often have to daily demonstrate a quite astounding ability to escape misfortune and to 'take a chance' — particularly by reaching out to form unlikely friendships, if only to survive. The point is that for the refugee and immigrant finding food, love, and achieving even the barest of survival involves managing a complex array of institutional, cultural and economic processes and structures. For the refugee and immigrant the necessary negotiations must often be undertaken from a position of weakness in which seeking to win at the expense of the other is often not a strategy that is reasonably likely to succeed. The refugee and immigrant must often learn to be accommodating and compromising. One of the consequences is that poor and marginalised

people such as refugees commonly display a cosmopolitanism. Amidst violent structural and cultural orders, refugees are often poor and marginalised people who develop heterogeneous cosmopolitan strategies that include tactical moves that work to achieve economic, social and political goals (Landau and Haupt 2007).

Tactical cosmopolitanism and other ways of reaching out to others that are associable with forming new common grounds are bound-up with notions of fluidity and movement that express the measure to which people use freedom to cross time, space and social distances to altruistically gift others with ethical recognition. Timothi, while sharing a narrow moment of friendship and hope with Ade, is driven to advise his interlocutor to "travel this country more" because he is convinced that it is possible to find happiness somewhere in South Africa. Dramatically he recalls going to Port St Jones once with his mother: "The only time I ever saw her smile". This points to an otherwise abject life that finds surprising joy in the exceptional instance. Interestingly, Timothi ties travel with finding happiness.[5] Just contrast the association of human freedom with ideas of movement, travel, cosmopolitan embrace of difference, etc with the will to stasis, stoppage, *apartheid*, dominance, colonisation and limitation that marks xenophobic endeavors. *Man on Ground* offers a rich representation of aspects: Femi is murdered by being burnt to death in the boot of a car — powerfully symbolising the idea that to stop human migratory practices is to stop a vehicle of transportation or of communication. This idea that communication and transportation are related has been well discussed in Western genealogies[6] of the transmission approach to communication (cf Carey 2009: 12). In Nigerian pidgin English, when people speak of a "man on ground" they refer to a person who connects them to others who are on the ground by carrying messages to and fro! The *Man on Ground*, is someone who enables communication to happen for the success of a project.

Away from wistful ruminations, when people come to South Africa these days as economic and political refugees it is noteworthy that the country has become less parasitic: It is no longer under the *apartheid* system which took many Africans in as economic migrants, only to return them to their lands of origin as poor and old unwanted labour. Internally, by ending the formal system of *apartheid*, South Africa no longer purses a system and ideology of "separate development" that sought to control in numerous ways how and with whom one lives and even eats. South Africans and Africans in general can overcome nativist and xeno-

phobic tendencies to imagine and practice community arrangements that can yield orders that better conduce to people becoming the most they can be.

6.   Conclusion

Xenophobia occurs as people go about securing or reclaiming what they imagine to be common grounds for productive national inter-actions. It happens when people fearfully think the grounds on which their hopes are pinned are being eaten away or otherwise destroyed by parasitic foreigners. From a purely conceptual point of view xenophobia is likely where horrid histories of *apartheid* and colonialism tore societies apart. After all in such torn societies communication itself and associated relationships between people are vitiated to the point where the central human capability to humanise the world can barely hold. For, as Biko (1987: 29) recognised, in the wake of colonialism and *apartheid* what are left are humans who are mere shells of what they could be.

The wicked problem is to fight colonial and *apartheid* legacies of marginalisation and division. Many resort to hatred of people who are seen to be different, blaming them for resource constraints and for the poverty that afflicts them all. In short, they attack foreigners for allegedly being parasites or weeds that take away their dreams of cultural and ontological security. What is wicked about the problem is that here humanity and the rights to dignity that it implies are themselves under attack. What is left of unique and deep humanity are shallow carica-tures supported by despicable stereotypes that dehumanise to the point of enabling people to attack and kill one another. Humanity is itself under assault with each machination that confounds the possibility of individuals undertaking right actions and forming right relations in which they communicatively value each other. For the quality of communica-tion or of relationships expresses the degree to which people are in-capacitated to be authentic, creative, productive and to flourish (cf Rogers 1961; Sen 1999; Seligman 2011). I think many aspects of the call to rehumanise the world by opening avenues for migration and for productive interaction are associable with cosmopolitan thoughts. But, amidst violence associable with the nation-state, my intentions to speak of human grounds for establishing firm relations for productive inter-actions do not require either giving or confirming a label to any modal-ities by which the world may be rehumanised.

Because disruptions attend the drawing and construction of the nation-states that people find belonging in, it is important that peoples choose with great care which boundary lines we build and maintain. There is important work still to be done to imagine anew how people can be and belong in productive relations that enable everyone, irrespective of origins and other differences, to be the most they can be. Perhaps part of this vision can be the re-imagination of the call to African unity, and of the role of new technologies in enabling anew, freer movements of peoples that conduce to more desirable social, political and economic communities in which people can be the most they can be. For any such possibilities to materialise it will be useful to stop thinking of others as harmful parasites. The re-establishment of human grounds for productive cooperative existence challenges disruptive nation-state arrangements, nativism and xenophobic tendencies. The possibility of success is historically affirmed by how human cultural evolution is characterised by strangers meeting and choosing to build common grounds on which to pursue individual and collectives ends.

Man on Ground plays out the unbearable fear and violence of poor, marginalised and frustrated black South Africans who blame foreigners for stealing what belongs to them or at least of stymying national growth and prosperity. The impression given is that whatever violence these poor people inflict on others is simultaneously a call for help by people who have been historically frustrated at many turns within violent structural arrangements that concomitantly form and inform their culture of violence. The poor and marginalised have heightened needs to know, recognise, value and even fear others and their orientations to things. Because they know their diminished capabilities to agentically act for themselves, the survival needs and dreams of flourishing of the poor and marginalised often entail finding a 'man on ground' who takes their concerns seriously and grants them ground on which to build productive cooperative relations. In this way, and in many others, *Man on Ground* does important groundwork for enabling the formulation of a creative set of responses to the problem of being in the world — sharing ground with others.

Endnotes

1. Philosophers frequently do offer scenarios which are believable. They use these to illustrate and draw out principles and problems. But where the norm

among philosophers is to make use of rather thinly sketched scenarios, I am doing something similar and more capacious by drawing on the very rich facility of Man on Ground.

2. The clear alternative — to speak for the nation-state does not seem to require urgent scholarly attention as a handsome body of work is constantly being presented in this direction.

3. The idea of an ethnically pure nation-state that perpetually persists in time and space is flawed in the manner of the medical thinking that says all parasites cause illness and come from outside the body. The human body is host to a large number of parasites that are native and often in symbiotic relations with the human body (Ulvestad 2007).

4. Humans are products of networked histories of migration and globalisation. "The nomadic urge is deep within us…/ (and … has produced, no doubt, much bloodshed and violence and suspicion, as well as much productive and friendly exchange)" (Appiah 2005: 215).

5. The drama is set in two African countries, often following the business-suited Ade as he seeks to find Femi, his adopted brother. It radially moves forward from the transience of rooms in the Southern Sun hotel in Johannesburg to places of memory (in Nigeria and South Africa) and of immediacy and urgency (in Johannesburg, South Africa).

6. Remember that in Africa too travel has a long tradition of being associated with entrepreneurial seeking of freedom; that the pre-colonial history of Africa is of nomadic migration that enabled groups to break off from dominant orders in order to secure forms of life that suited them. Africans have long sought to establish relationships through figuratively and practically travelling in search of increased freedoms. This is an important observation because it connects the numerous scenes of travelling that permeate Man on Ground with the pursuit of love that expresses choices realised in freedom.

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