

# ABSTRACTS AND SHORT BIOS

September 14, 2024, 15:00/3 pm (South Africa Time) and 14:00/2 pm (Nigeria Time)

## PART A

### 1. AI Discourse in Africa: Towards a Decolonial Understanding of AI Ethics

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) has been on the rise in Africa in recent years. However, much on the discourse of AI in Africa is influenced by Western ethical principles regarding its development and usage. This has undermined the contribution of the unique cultural, social, and ethical considerations from the continent of Africa. In response to this, I argue that there hasn't been much theorizing towards decolonial strategies in AI ethics in Africa. A Decolonial approach in understanding AI ethics will challenge and disrupt Western-centered ideologies and power dynamics that have shaped the development and use of AI. In doing so, a decolonial understanding of AI ethics, will consider the unique context of Africa while developing an inclusive AI policies that can account for varied ethical contexts, and contribute to the ethics of AI globally. The preceding will not only benefit the continent of Africa, but also shed light on the uniqueness and intersections in understanding the limitations of a Western-centered perspective on AI ethics given that Africans are users of AI and can also contribute to its ethics. Therefore, it is crucial to encourage a decolonial discourse on AI ethics in Africa.

#### Short bio

**Diana Ekor Ofana** holds a PhD in Philosophy from the University of Pretoria South Africa. Her research deploys the framework of decoloniality to interrogate pertinent issues in African philosophy. Her research interests are (and are not limited to) African Philosophy, African logic, decolonial gender studies, African and applied ethics, social and political philosophy, Conversational philosophy, AI ethics, and intercultural philosophy. Diana is a Research Associate at the Decoloniality Research Group at the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and a member of the elite Conversational Society of Philosophy (CSP) in Calabar, Nigeria.

### 2. AI Ethics in/for Africa: A Call for an Interrogation of the Indigenous Principle Perspective

I interrogate indigenous principle approaches to AI Ethics, and call for theorists working in the area to be more critical of approaches where the indigenous principle concepts like ubuntu are used as fashionable placeholders. My call to theorists is to be wary of one-dimensionality and rather to be open to other aspects of the very rich tradition of the interlinkage of ethical and aesthetic values that could be drawn upon in addressing questions in AI ethics and in the development of ethics charters.

## Short bio

**Catherine Botha** is a full professor in Philosophy at the University of Johannesburg (UJ), South Africa. She holds a PhD in Philosophy from Radboud University Nijmegen. Her research is focused on issues in ethics and aesthetics, including the ethics and aesthetics of artificial intelligence. Catherine was the winner of the UJ Vice Chancellor's Award for Best Young Teacher in 2014, and winner of the UJ Vice Chancellor's Distinguished Award for Best Teacher in 2020, a Top 5 finalist in the HERS – SA awards in 2023, an Erasmus + Teaching Mobility award winner in 2023 and winner of an Advance HE Fellowship in 2024.

## PART B

### 3. Extending Chimakonam's Conversational Account of Personhood to Accommodate Intelligent Systems as Persons

The success recorded in developing and deploying Artificial Intelligence is one of the significantly unique features of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR). This is a technology that arms machines and systems to simulate human thinking capacities. Some of these systems and machines could perform cognitive tasks even better than humans and are already being deployed to perform roles that were hitherto exclusively carried out by humans. This challenges traditional Afro-communitarian conception of personhood (that exclusively associate certain capacities with humans) and prompts us to reconsider some preconceptions. The current reality, that is AI, challenges us to create conditions within systematic African thought that account for extending moral relations to entities that new technologies bring about. Here, the question arises as to whether or not we can extend Afro-communitarian ethical thinking to accommodate AI as persons. While some scholars contend that autonomous intelligent systems may be recognized as person with attendant moral status, some argue on the contrary. In this paper, I lend my voice to the former, arguing, from an African perspective, that intelligent systems may attain personhood. I join the conversation through Chimakonam's conversational account. Within the purview of conversational thought and principles, I interrogate the conversational account and extend it to provide a plausible basis for ascribing personhood to AI. I propose the idea that intelligent systems as non-human entities, although, lack evolutionary and biological histories would nonetheless be persons on account of their ability to socialize, internalize and embody. This proposal offers us a conceptual space for recognizing non-human entities as persons if they demonstrate the capacity for meaningful social engagement and relationality.

## Short bio

**Zubairu Lawal Bambale** is a faculty member at the Department of Philosophy, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria-Nigeria. He obtained his Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) and Barrister at Law (BL) from Ahmadu Bello University and Nigerian Law School respectively. He also holds a Master of Arts (Philosophy) from Ahmadu Bello University. He is an alumnus of the University of Pretoria, where he got his PhD (Philosophy) in 2023. His PhD thesis was supervised by the renowned and multiple award-winning African philosopher Prof Jonathan O Chimakonam. With several

publications in the form of Journal articles and Local/International Conference Papers, his areas of research interests include Jurisprudence, Ethics, AI Ethics, African Philosophy and Hausa Studies.

Bambale won awards/grants, including a doctoral fellowship for 8 months at the University of Tübingen, funded by Baden-Württemberg-Foundation and the competitive University of Pretoria's Faculty funding award for promising PhD research. He is a member of the Conversational Society of Philosophy, the African Philosophy Society (APS) and the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA). He is also a fellow of Ife Institute of Advanced Studies. He is motivated by any project that affords him the rare opportunity of being in the midst of multitude of very competent intellectuals wherein various angles of intellect and culture are represented and freely espoused and shared. He combines teaching, research and legal practice.

#### **4. What do We mean by Human-centric AI?**

In the current debates, there seems to be a consensus that when building AI applications, they should be human-centric or human-centered. This focus raises philosophical and moral questions that go back to the very origins of philosophy and human reasoning about the meaning and origins of life, humankind and what makes us humans – apparently – unique. In this talk, first, I explore what is meant by human in classical philosophical considerations of *genus proximum* and *differentia specifica*. While traditionally the next genus were animals, the research, therefore, questions what was distinguishing us from them. Nowadays, the discussion raises questions about future (more or less dystopian) scenarios that would distinguish us from machines. Second, I will take into consideration what it means to standardize ethical questions. Drawing on the first part of my talk on whether human behavior and action and, therefore, moral and ethical concerns can be quantified, I will consider the following questions: Does the risk-based approach as suggested by the European AI Act actually avoid risks for all human-beings and is it enough to ensure that AI systems are human-centric? Wouldn't we rather need a rights-based approach in which rights are guaranteed for all humans equally, independent of their financial means and nationality? What if the human in or on the loop becomes a problem? Does human-centric AI actually mean that AI-applications should be value-centered, with values being – depending on the respective vantage point – “Western” or universal values?

#### **Short bio**

**Julia Monig** is the manager of the philosophical part of the KI.NRW-Flagship-Project "Zertifizierte KI" at the University of Bonn's Center for Science and Thought. Previously, she worked at the Institute for Digital Ethics (Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart), where she developed an ethical self-assessment for highly automated driving, and for the European Network of Research Ethics Committees (EUREC Office). She is a member of the Center for Ethics and Humanism of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel, holds a PhD in philosophy from Passau University and studied Philosophy, French and Educational Sciences in Wuppertal and Paris.

## **PART C**

### **5. A TWAIL Approach to Regulating Artificial Intelligence in Africa: Norms, Tensions, and Resistance**

This presentation explores the application of the Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) framework to the regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Africa, focusing on the interplay of legal norms, tensions, and resistance. As AI technology proliferates globally, African nations face unique challenges and opportunities in its adoption and regulation. Through a TWAIL lens, I'll critically examine how existing international norms and regulatory frameworks influence the development and deployment of AI technologies in African contexts. I will argue that these frameworks often reflect and perpetuate historical inequities, creating tensions between global regulatory standards and local needs and realities. By analyzing case studies from various African countries, I will highlight instances of resistance and adaptation, where local actors and communities challenge, reinterpret, and transform these norms to align with indigenous values and socio-economic priorities. This presentation aims to foster a deeper understanding of how AI regulation in Africa can be reimagined to promote decolonization, justice, and sovereignty. It will emphasize the importance of inclusive policymaking that incorporates diverse perspectives and addresses the unique socio-political landscapes of African nations. By doing so, I seek to contribute to the broader discourse on decolonizing AI and ensuring that technological advancements serve the interests of all rather than perpetuating existing power imbalances.

#### **Short bio**

**Jake Okechukwu Effoduh** is an Assistant Professor at the Lincoln Alexander School of Law of the Toronto Metropolitan University in Canada, where he teaches Technology Law and Society. In the last three years, he has served as the Chief Councillor of the Africa–Canada Artificial Intelligence and Data Innovation Consortium (ACADIC), mobilizing responsible AI and Big Data techniques to build resilient public health strategies in Canada and 20 African countries. He is also a Vanier Scholar and PhD candidate at Osgoode Hall Law School of York University in Canada.

He is a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Future Council on Frontier Risks and a Forum Expert on Human Rights.

Effoduh has held Fellowships at the Harvard Law School, Harvard Kennedy School, Mandela School of Governance (South Africa), and the Pan-African Lawyers Union (Tanzania). He served as an International Law Scholar with the Centre for International Governance Innovation (Canada), a Distinguished Hubert Humphrey Alum (U.S. Department of State), and a Distinguished Dutch Visitors Alum (Netherlands). He holds two master's degrees in law from the University of Oxford and York University and is an alumnus of the Abuja Hub of the Global Shapers Community, where he served as Deputy Curator and Curator, as well as led in the community-wide Equity and Inclusion Steering Committee of the Global Shapers Community.

## 6. The Danger of a Single Story: Implications of AI Development in Africa

*“The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Chimamanda Adichie).*

This popular assertion by Adichie against the dangers of a single story, is significant to the current landscape of AI particularly at this time when moves are being made towards the formulation of global legal standards that will inform the development, deployment and use of AI systems. As currently seen, most conversations concerning the issues that AI poses and the suggestions towards its regulation have been predominantly Western. There is an explosion of papers on the effects of AI on the society but more nuanced perspectives peculiar to Africa remains underexplored or has gone under the radar due to the dominance of Western voices, an issue that I might add is not peculiar to the AI discourse. It is important to note here that the issues that AI poses in Africa or will potentially pose spans from the angle of technology transfer and the implication of this is that these issues might be the direct opposite of what is being experienced in the West. For instance, rather the issue of data privacy, Africa might be embattled with the issue of lack of datasets that have negative influence on the progress made towards multiculturalism. Effective policy making requires a holistic grasp of the landscape hence it is imperative that we carry out an inquiry on pressing questions such as: What are the specific challenges that AI poses or potentially pose for Africa? Given the Western-centric nature of human rights and the seeming consensus about its application to AI global governance, what are the peculiar issues in Africa that fall under the cracks?

### Short bio

**Ibifuro Robert Jaja** is a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at Rivers State University, Nigeria, conducting her PhD research at the Centre for Philosophy and AI Research, Friedrich Alexander University, Germany. Her research interests lie at the intersection of AI and global governance. She is committed to exploring critical issues in AI ethics and governance, particularly from an African perspective.

## PART D

### 7. Generative AI and the Fragmentation of Community: Challenges to Interdependence and Solidarity

In this paper, I explore the negative impact of AI systems, particularly generative AI, on the Afro-Communitarian values of interdependence and solidarity. I argue that generative AI such as ChatGPT and Google Gemini promote individualism, undermining the fundamental values of Afro-Communitarianism of interdependence and solidarity. Generative AI allows individuals to access vast amounts of information on different issues. In addition, its interactive platform presents individuals with an alternative to actual social interaction with fellow community members. Generative AI users leverage the creative and interactive component of the technology in seeking advice and information on emotional challenges, economic hardships, marital problems, and health concerns among others. Individuals seem to feel empowered by Generative AI in ways that

promote behavior and attitudes that disrupt traditional Afro-Communitarian values. In the Afro-Communitarian value system, community members are encouraged to conduct themselves in ways that promote the good of the community and rely on the community in times of need. Solitude and independence, particularly when one would benefit from the community's support, diminish the community's primary role and societal structures that seek to serve community members. In the Afro-Communitarian socio-cultural context, the entrenched belief is that an individual cannot realize oneself and flourish in isolation. One is a person through others. The community supports one in attaining personhood and provides the necessary environment for the individual to acquire and practice virtues. The advent of Generative AI technology, with its immense potential to empower the individual with knowledge and artificial forms of social interaction, poses a serious threat to the value and belief systems on which African communities are founded.

### **Short bio**

**Manuel R. Kasulu** teaches Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Malawi. His research interests include AI ethics, Metaphysics, Phenomenology, and Existentialism.

## **8. AI Ethics in a Dysfunctional System and the Neoliberal Tragedies: Risks and Chances**

AI technologies offer great chances for Africa's future. It holds a great potential in its transformation. However, the dysfunctionality of the current social, political and economic landscapes in African countries makes AI a great risk factor. Hence, raising a primary question namely, what sort of ethical guidelines for the development and use of AI technologies will be adequate in a dysfunctional system? Furthermore, is a second-order question, whether applicable and functional ethical guidelines are at all possible. This is not a manifestation of pessimism, rather it is a necessary question. Instead of using corruption to describe the existing social, political and economic system in almost all the 54 countries of Africa, I will use dysfunctionality, since it embraces corrupt practices in different modifications as well as projecting African countries as a place where one can get everything right and still be wrong or get everything wrong and still be right.

Africa's social, political and economic system is dysfunctional, not simply because of the failure of governance but more importantly because of '*counterfeit modernities*' that has taken hold of postcolonial Africa. In this paper, I will discuss not the imperativeness of AI ethics in Africa, rather I will argue that the tragedies associated with neoliberalism and counterfeit modernity in a dysfunctional system increases the scope, intensity and the probability of risks which might override the potential of AI to transform African societies. However, it will argue for the chances to overcome those risks, only when it is clear, the sort of human beings Africans should become in the era of AI technological development.

## Short bio

**Christiana Calice Ngozi Idika (PhD)** is a lecturer at the Catholic University Mainz, a researcher at the University of Erfurt, Germany, and a visiting lecturer at the Center for Migration Studies Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka Nigeria. She is a member of the Young Researchers group: Theology, Tradition and Transformation Research, University of Erfurt; A research member Benedictine Academy, Salzburg, Austria. A member of the Decolonial Research Group and Research Associate University of Pretoria, South Africa. She holds a doctorate in social, moral and political philosophy. She has a Masters in International Peace and Security Studies from the United Nations University San Jose Costa Rica, a Postgraduate Diploma in Intercultural Communication from the University of Salzburg, Austria, Studies in Adult Education, from the University of Education Karlsruhe, a Bachelors in Philosophy from Imo State University Nigeria. Christiana Idika has taught at various universities in Germany. She is a philosopher, theologian, and a conflict manager by qualification and profession She is an Expert Consultant for Refugees and Asylum with Caritas in the State of NRW, Germany. Christiana Idika was a member of the forum for UN Reform 2008; 2-times NGO-Representative to UN-DPI/NGO conference in 2008 (Paris), 2011(Bonn) and 1-time NGO-Representative to Diaspora Ministerial Conference 2013 (Geneva). Christiana is an award winner for best Young Researchers Essays, Sponsored by German Bishops Conference, Germany. She has published journal articles, and book contributions. She participated and presented research papers on Eco-feminism, Philosophy of Education, Interculturality, Social Justice, Ethics of AI, Migration and Integration studies, postcoloniality among others. The author of Internormative Hermeneutics for Social Justice. She is a member of the religious Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Mother of Mercy, Umuahia, (DMMM) Nigeria.