

ANCESTRAL CONTINUITY AND THE CRISIS OF MODERN SEXUAL ETHICS: A BUJO-INSPIRED CRITIQUE

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Abstract

This paper examines Bénézet Bujo's concept of anamnestic solidarity as a transformative framework for sexual ethics, grounded in African communitarian principles. It posits that ancestral continuity—the preservation of moral and spiritual connections across past, present, and future generations—serves as a critical ethical criterion for assessing sexual practices. This study employs a philosophical analysis of Bujo's anamnestic solidarity, complemented by a hermeneutical interpretation of African communitarian ethics and critical engagement with contemporary sexual ethics discourse. In contrast to Western liberal sexual ethics, which prioritizes individual autonomy and present-moment consent, Bujo's approach, rooted in relational personhood, views sexuality as a communal act with profound spiritual and cosmic implications. Sexual practices, particularly procreation and marriage, are seen as sacred responsibilities that sustain the intergenerational chain, ensuring communal flourishing and cosmic harmony. The palaver model, a dialogical process of inclusive communal deliberation, integrates ancestral wisdom with contemporary challenges, enabling dynamic norm development while maintaining temporal continuity. The paper criticizes modern sexual paradigms, including non-procreative orientations, for their potential to disrupt ancestral vitality and examines the neo-colonial imposition of Western sexual norms on African moral traditions. By advocating for philosophical decolonization and pluralism, it affirms the legitimacy of African communitarian ethics in global discourse. Addressing objections, it defends the framework's coherence, adaptability to issues like gender equality, and respect for individual dignity within a communal context. Bujo's approach expands the temporal scope of sexual ethics, fostering a pluralistic dialogue that balances communal obligations with personal agency, offering significant contributions to global ethical conversations.

Keywords: Anamnestic solidarity, ancestral continuity, communitarian ethics, sexual ethics, African philosophy.

Introduction

The global discourse on sexual rights has increasingly foregrounded individual autonomy, consent, and personal freedom as the cornerstones of ethical sexual practice. This perspective, rooted in Western liberal philosophy, often stands in tension with African moral frameworks that prioritize communal responsibilities and intergenerational obligations. Within many African philosophical traditions, the concept of "ancestral chains," the enduring connection between past, present, and future generations, serves as a foundational ethical category. Yet, this notion remains conspicuously absent from much of contemporary sexual ethics discourse, which tends to privilege present-oriented considerations over temporal continuity. The philosophical gap between these approaches points out a pressing need to reconsider the temporal and communal dimensions of sexual ethics.

Modern sexual ethics, as it is commonly articulated, operates within a temporally constrained framework. The emphasis on individual rights and mutual consent, whilst undeniably significant, frequently overlooks the broader implications of sexual practices for future generations. This temporal myopia contrasts sharply with non-Western philosophical traditions, particularly those in African contexts, where ethical actions are evaluated not solely by their immediate consequences but by their capacity to sustain communal and ancestral continuity (Menkiti, 2018). The absence of intergenerational considerations in global sexual ethics discourse constitutes a profound philosophical lacuna, one that limits the discipline's capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse moral perspectives.

Scholarly engagement with African philosophical frameworks in the context of sexual ethics remains limited. While Western ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue ethics, dominate academic discussions, African communitarian perspectives are often marginalized or misconstrued as mere traditionalism (Gyekye, 2017). In particular, Bénédet Bujo's concept of "anamnestic solidarity," which posits an ethical obligation to maintain solidarity with past and future generations, has received scant attention in contemporary ethical scholarship. This concept offers a robust alternative to the atomistic tendencies of liberal individualism and the rigid prescriptions of conservative traditionalism. By foregrounding the intergenerational dimensions of moral action, anamnestic solidarity challenges prevailing sexual ethics paradigms and opens new avenues for philosophical inquiry.

This paper contends that Bénédet Bujo's concept of anamnestic solidarity provides a sophisticated philosophical framework for sexual ethics, one that extends moral consideration across temporal boundaries. By situating sexual practices within the context of ancestral continuity, Bujo's framework offers a communitarian alternative to individualistic paradigms whilst establishing intergenerational obligations as a legitimate criterion for ethical evaluation (Bujo, 2016). Unlike Western models that prioritize individual choice, this approach evaluates sexual practices based on their capacity to sustain the "ancestral chains" that bind communities across time (Okeja, 2018). In doing so, it addresses the crisis of modern sexual ethics, which often fails to account for the long-term consequences of sexual behaviour on communal flourishing.

The methodological approach of this paper involves a philosophical analysis of Bujo's ethical framework, drawing on his articulation of anamnestic solidarity as a principle of communitarian ethics. This will be complemented by a hermeneutical interpretation of African communitarian values, particularly those that emphasize intergenerational responsibility. The analysis will engage critically with contemporary sexual ethics discourse, highlighting its limitations and proposing Bujo's framework as a viable alternative. The paper draws on contemporary scholarship, including recent studies on African ethics and sexual morality, to ground its arguments in rigorous academic research.

The paper proceeds by first exploring Bujo's philosophical anthropology, which situates human beings as inherently relational and temporally extended. It then examines the implications of anamnestic solidarity for sexual ethics, arguing that sexual practices must be evaluated based on their contribution to communal and ancestral continuity. Finally, it applies this framework to critique contemporary sexual orientations that may disrupt intergenerational obligations, offering a balanced perspective that respects individual dignity and communal responsibilities. Through this progression, the paper aims to illuminate the transformative potential of Bujo's thought for global discourse on sexual ethics.

Bujo's Philosophical Foundation: Relational Personhood and Temporal Community

Bénézet Bujo's philosophical framework offers a profound reorientation of ethical thought, rooted in African communitarian principles and sharply distinguished from Western individualistic paradigms. His approach, grounded in relational personhood and the concept of anamnestic solidarity, provides a robust foundation for rethinking sexual ethics through the lens of intergenerational continuity. Bujo's philosophical anthropology explores the implications of anamnestic solidarity for moral community and examines its application to sexual ethics, highlighting the role of ancestral authority in shaping communal responsibilities.

Bujo fundamentally challenges the Cartesian dictum "cogito ergo sum" (I think, therefore I am), which anchors Western philosophy in individual consciousness. In its place, he proposes "cognatus sum, ergo sumus" (I am known, therefore we are), emphasizing that human identity emerges not from isolated self-awareness but from relational bonds within a community (Bujo, 2016). This shift from autonomous to relational personhood redefines the human subject as inherently interdependent, existing only through connections with others, both living and deceased. Unlike Cartesian individualism, which prioritizes personal autonomy, Bujo's framework situates individuals within a web of communal obligations that extend across time. This foundational difference profoundly shapes sexual ethics: where Western approaches often focus on individual consent and personal fulfilment, Bujo's perspective evaluates sexual practices based on their contribution to communal well-being and intergenerational continuity (Menkiti, 2018). Sexuality, in this view, is not a private affair but a communal act with implications for the entire moral community.

Central to Bujo's philosophy is the concept of anamnestic solidarity, which he develops through an engagement with Walter Benjamin's notion of anamnesis, or redemptive remembrance. For Benjamin, anamnesis involves recalling the "victims of history" to inspire ethical action in the present. Bujo expands this idea to encompass all ancestors, not only those who suffered but

also those who embodied ethical lives and strengthened communal vitality (Bujo, 2016). Anamnestic solidarity posits that memory is not a passive recollection but a constitutive act that shapes moral community. By remembering ancestors, the living reaffirm their ethical obligations to past and future generations, creating a temporal continuum that transcends individual lifespans. This concept points out the philosophical significance of memory as a moral practice, binding the community across generations and grounding ethical deliberation in a shared historical consciousness (Okeja, 2018). Anamnestic solidarity extends the moral community beyond the living to include the “living-dead” ancestors who remain active participants in ethical life. In African communitarian thought, the living-dead are not distant historical figures but presences that continue to influence the community’s moral deliberations (Mbiti, 2019). This temporal extension of moral community imposes responsibilities on the living to honour ancestral wisdom while ensuring future generations’ well-being. Ethical actions, including sexual practices, are thus evaluated not only by their immediate effects but by their capacity to sustain the moral and cosmic order across time. The living bear a dual responsibility: to uphold the values transmitted by ancestors and to act in ways that secure the community’s future, ensuring that the ancestral chain remains unbroken (Gyekye, 2017).

Ancestors hold a distinctive role in Bujo’s framework as moral exemplars, those who, through ethically upright lives, have “increased the power of life in the community” (Bujo, 2016, p. 190). Their authority is not absolute or dogmatic but dialogical, inviting the living to engage critically with their legacy. This distinguishes ancestral authority from blind traditionalism, which uncritically adheres to past practices without questioning their validity. Instead, ancestral consultation involves a dynamic interaction where the living interpret ancestral wisdom in light of contemporary challenges, ensuring that ethical deliberation remains responsive to changing contexts (Okeja, 2018). The ontological status of ancestors as living-dead further enriches this process. Unlike Western views that relegate the deceased to historical memory, African metaphysics posits that ancestors retain a vital presence, participating in the community’s moral and cosmic harmony (Mbiti, 2019). This metaphysical perspective imbues moral reasoning with a sense of continuity, where ethical decisions are made in dialogue with the living-dead, reinforcing the interconnectedness of past, present, and future.

The implications of Bujo’s framework for sexual ethics are far-reaching. Relational personhood recasts sexuality as an inherently communal act, not merely a private expression of individual desire. Sexual relationships are embedded within the broader network of communal obligations, carrying responsibilities that extend beyond the immediate partners to the entire moral community, including ancestors and future generations (Menkiti, 2018). Sexual practices are thus to honour or dishonour the ancestral chain. For instance, behaviours that prioritize individual gratification at the expense of communal continuity, such as those that disrupt procreation or familial structures, may be seen as ethically problematic (Bujo, 2016). This perspective does not negate individual dignity but situates it within a communal framework where personal choices are evaluated by their long-term impact on the community’s vitality.

The temporal responsibilities inherent in sexual relationships further underscore the connection between sexual ethics and ancestral continuity. Sexual acts are not isolated events but moments that ripple across generations, shaping the community’s future and its

relationship with the past. Honouring ancestors in this context involves adopting sexual practices that align with the values of communal flourishing and cosmic harmony, such as those that support family structures and intergenerational transmission of life (Gyekye, 2017). Conversely, practices that sever these connections by undermining procreation or communal stability risk dishonouring the living-dead and weakening the moral community. Bujo's framework thus offers a criterion for ethical evaluation that transcends present-oriented considerations, grounding sexual ethics in a temporally extended vision of human responsibility (Okeja, 2018).

By situating sexual ethics within the framework of relational personhood and anamnestic solidarity, Bujo provides a compelling alternative to individualistic paradigms. His emphasis on ancestral continuity challenges the temporal myopia of contemporary sexual ethics, inviting a reconsideration of how sexual practices shape communal and cosmic order. This perspective does not advocate a return to rigid traditionalism but calls for a dialogical engagement with ancestral wisdom, ensuring that sexual ethics remain dynamic and responsive to contemporary realities. The following sections will build on this foundation, applying Bujo's framework to critique specific sexual orientations and practices that may disrupt ancestral chains, whilst exploring the balance between individual freedom and communal obligations.

Ancestral Continuity as Ethical Criterion

Bénézet Bujo's ethical framework, rooted in anamnestic solidarity and relational personhood, positions ancestral continuity as a central criterion for evaluating sexual practices. This perspective reorients sexual ethics away from individualistic concerns towards a communitarian vision that spans generations, situating sexuality within a metaphysical and spiritual framework. This concept of ancestral continuity explores the metaphysics of generational responsibility, the spiritual obligation of procreation, the cosmic significance of marriage, and the crisis of ancestral disconnection, demonstrating how Bujo's philosophy offers a compelling criticism of modern sexual ethics.

Bujo's metaphysics begins with the understanding that life is a divine gift mediated through ancestral channels. In African communitarian thought, God is the ultimate source of life, but this life flows through ancestors, who serve as conduits of divine vitality (Bujo, 2016). This sacred process imposes a profound responsibility on the living to transmit life to future generations, ensuring the continuity of the ancestral chain. Sexuality, as the primary means of life transmission, is not merely a biological act but a sacred duty that maintains both cosmic and social order (Mbiti, 2019). Sexual practices that align with this responsibility, such as those oriented towards procreation within communal structures, strengthen the community's connection to the divine, whilst those that disrupt this flow risk undermining the moral and metaphysical harmony of the universe (Gyekye, 2017).

The concept of the intergenerational chain of being further illuminates the ethical stakes of sexual choices. Sexual practices either reinforce or diminish ancestral vitality, as they determine whether the community's life force is sustained across generations. Actions that "offend ancestors," such as sexual behaviours that preclude procreation or destabilize communal structures, are seen as ruptures in the chain of being, with ontological consequences

that extend beyond the individual (Bujo, 2016). For instance, practices that prioritize personal gratification over generational continuity may weaken the community's spiritual cohesion, disrupting the dynamic connection between the living, the living-dead, and the yet-to-be-born (Okeja, 2018). This metaphysical perspective underscores the gravity of sexual ethics, framing it as a matter of cosmic significance rather than mere personal choice.

In Bujo's framework, procreation transcends biological reproduction to become a spiritual obligation. It is an act of participation in divine creativity, through which new persons are brought into the ancestral community, perpetuating the life force that flows from God through ancestors (Bujo, 2016). This spiritual dimension elevates procreation beyond utilitarian concerns, linking it to the broader project of cosmic harmony. Fertility, in this context, is not only a physical capacity but a sacred responsibility that aligns human actions with the divine order (Mbiti, 2019). By bringing forth new life, individuals contribute to the vitality of the ancestral community, fulfilling their role as stewards of the intergenerational chain.

Individual sexual choices, however, are never purely personal; they carry profound implications for the entire clan community. The communitarian nature of African ethics means that sexual decisions are subject to collective scrutiny, as they affect the community's spiritual and social well-being (Menkiti, 2018). Individuals are expected to consider ancestral expectations, such as the imperative to sustain family lineages when making sexual choices, balancing personal desires against communal obligations. This distinction between desire and duty challenges Western notions of sexual autonomy, which often prioritize individual preferences over collective responsibilities (Gyekye, 2017). In Bujo's framework, ethical sexual practice involves a deliberate alignment with the community's intergenerational goals, ensuring that personal actions contribute to the flourishing of the whole.

Marriage serves as a cosmic nexus in Bujo's thought, a temporal convergence where "all members of a given community meet: the departed, the living, and those yet to be born" (Bujo, 2016, p. 192). This sacred institution is not merely a contract between individuals but a sacramental union that binds generations together, facilitating the transmission of life and values. The heterosexual nature of marriage, in this context, is seen as embodying gender complementarity, which is believed to mirror the cosmic balance of male and female principles (Mbiti, 2019). This complementarity is not reducible to biological roles but reflects a metaphysical harmony that undergirds the community's spiritual vitality. Marriage, therefore, is a privileged site for fulfilling the ethical demands of ancestral continuity, as it institutionalizes the communal and temporal dimensions of sexuality (Okeja, 2018).

Unlike Western conceptions of marriage as a punctual contract, Bujo views it as a dynamic process that evolves over time. The roles of fatherhood and motherhood precede the husband-wife relationship, as they directly contribute to the community's intergenerational mission (Bujo, 2016). This emphasis on parental roles reflects the communitarian priority of life transmission, where the success of a marriage is measured by its capacity to produce and nurture future generations. Moreover, marriage requires community validation, as it is not an individual undertaking but a collective endeavour that involves the living-dead and the living

(Menkiti, 2018). This communal oversight ensures that sexual relationships align with the ethical imperatives of ancestral continuity, reinforcing the social and cosmic order.

The crisis of modern sexual ethics, from Bujo's perspective, lies in its disconnection from ancestral wisdom. Many contemporary sexual practices, particularly those that prioritize individual autonomy or non-procreative relationships, risk severing the intergenerational chain, weakening the community's spiritual and cultural coherence (Bujo, 2016). The rejection of generational responsibility, whether through the normalization of non-procreative sexual orientations or the erosion of traditional family structures, carries profound spiritual consequences. By disregarding ancestral expectations, such practices disrupt the dialogue between the living and the living-dead, diminishing the community's capacity to sustain its moral identity across time (Mbiti, 2019). This disconnection also undermines cultural continuity, as the values and practices that define the community's heritage are eroded in favour of present-oriented priorities (Gyekye, 2017).

The impact of this crisis extends beyond the spiritual to the social, as the loss of ancestral continuity threatens the community's cohesion. Without a shared commitment to intergenerational obligations, the clan community risks fragmentation, as individuals prioritize personal desires over collective well-being (Okeja, 2018). This fragmentation is particularly acute in contexts where globalized sexual rights discourses clash with local communitarian values, creating tensions between individual freedom and communal responsibility (Menkiti, 2018). Bujo's framework offers a way to navigate these tensions, not by rejecting individual dignity but by situating it within a broader temporal and communal context. By evaluating sexual practices through the lens of ancestral continuity, his approach provides a balanced critique that respects both personal agency and the demands of intergenerational solidarity.

Bujo's emphasis on ancestral continuity as an ethical criterion reframes sexual ethics as a communitarian and metaphysical endeavour. Sexuality is not an isolated act but a sacred responsibility that binds generations together, maintaining the flow of divine life through ancestral channels. Procreation, marriage, and communal oversight serve as mechanisms for fulfilling this responsibility, ensuring that sexual practices align with the cosmic and social order. The crisis of modern sexual ethics, marked by its disconnection from ancestral wisdom, highlights the urgency of adopting a temporally extended perspective.

Criticism of Contemporary Sexual Paradigms

Bujo's ethical framework, grounded in anamnestic solidarity and relational personhood, provides a lens through which to criticize contemporary sexual paradigms. By prioritizing ancestral continuity and communal responsibilities, Bujo's philosophy exposes the limitations of liberal sexual ethics, challenges the compatibility of certain sexual identities with African communitarian values, highlights the neo-colonial dimensions of global sexual rights discourse, and emphasizes the need for a philosophically robust response that transcends religious conservatism. Drawing on Bujo's thought to articulate a model that respects African philosophical traditions whilst engaging with global ethical debates.

Liberal sexual ethics, rooted in consent-based frameworks, operate within a narrowly temporal horizon that prioritizes present-moment agreements between individuals. Consent theory, whilst valuable for ensuring mutual respect, confines ethical deliberation to the immediate context of the sexual act, neglecting its broader implications for future generations (Tamale, 2014). This present-oriented focus excludes intergenerational considerations, such as the transmission of life and values, which are central to African communitarian ethics (Bujo, 2016). The contractual nature of consent-based ethics further reduces sexuality to a transaction between autonomous agents, stripping it of its communal and spiritual dimensions. Such an approach, devoid of temporal depth, fails to account for the sacred responsibility to sustain ancestral chains, rendering it philosophically impoverished in the face of African ethical paradigms that view sexuality as a cosmic act (Mbiti, 2015).

The tension between individual rights and communal responsibilities lies at the heart of this criticism. Liberal sexual ethics exalt personal autonomy, framing sexual choices as expressions of individual freedom (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2021). This emphasis clashes with African communitarian perspectives, where personhood is defined relationally and obligations to ancestors and future generations take precedence (Menkiti, 2018). By universalizing individual autonomy, rights-based frameworks marginalize communitarian values, implicitly dismissing them as archaic or irrelevant. This marginalization carries echoes of cultural imperialism, as it imposes a Western conception of selfhood that disregards the philosophical validity of African ethical systems (Alumona, 2024). Bujo's framework, by contrast, situates sexual ethics within a relational context, where personal choices are evaluated based on their contribution to communal flourishing and ancestral continuity.

The emergence of LGBTQ+ identities poses a particular challenge to Bujo's vision of intergenerational continuity. Non-procreative sexual orientations, by their nature, diverge from the traditional reproductive patterns that sustain ancestral chains (Alumona, 2024). In African communitarian ethics, procreation is not merely a biological act but a spiritual obligation that connects the living to the living-dead and the yet-to-be-born (Bujo, 2016). Sexual practices that preclude procreation risk disrupting this continuity, potentially offending ancestors by weakening the community's life force (Mbiti, 2015). Whilst alternative forms of community contribution, such as caregiving or cultural preservation, may be proposed, their alignment with ancestral expectations remains contested, as they do not directly perpetuate the intergenerational chain (Baloyi, 2017). This tension raises profound spiritual questions about how such identities can be reconciled with the communitarian imperative to honour ancestral vitality.

The individualistic foundations of LGBTQ+ rights discourse further complicate its compatibility with African communitarian ethics. The global advocacy for LGBTQ+ identities often relies on a conception of autonomous selfhood, where personal identity and sexual orientation are self-determined (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2021). This contrasts sharply with Bujo's relational understanding of personhood, where identity emerges through communal bonds and intergenerational responsibilities (Menkiti, 2018). Moreover, the emphasis on individual self-expression challenges the principle of gender complementarity, which many African traditions view as essential to cosmic harmony (Ekemini, 2023). In Bujo's framework,

sexuality is ordered towards the communal good, and disruptions to gender roles or reproductive patterns may be seen as undermining the metaphysical balance that sustains the community (Bujo, 2016). This incompatibility highlights the need for a dialogue that respects both individual dignity and communitarian values.

The global promotion of Western sexual paradigms often functions as a form of cultural colonization, undermining African philosophical sovereignty. The universalisation of liberal sexual ethics, backed by international human rights frameworks, frequently disregards local moral traditions, framing them as obstacles to progress (Alumona, 2024). This imposition is not merely ideological but is reinforced by economic and political pressures, such as aid conditionality or sanctions, which compel African societies to adopt Western norms (Tamale, 2014). Such dynamics echo historical patterns of colonial domination, where external powers dictated cultural and moral standards, eroding indigenous systems of knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). By prioritizing individual rights over communal responsibilities, global sexual rights discourse risks silencing African voices that advocate for ethics rooted in ancestral continuity.

This process also leads to the erasure of indigenous sexual ethics, as African communitarian approaches are pathologized as backwards or oppressive. The global rights framework often portrays ancestral-oriented sexual ethics as incompatible with modernity, ignoring their philosophical sophistication and cultural significance (Gyekye, 2013). For instance, the emphasis on procreation and marriage as communal acts is misconstrued as mere traditionalism, rather than a coherent ethical system that integrates metaphysical, social, and spiritual dimensions (Bujo, 2016). This marginalization brings out the need for philosophical decolonization in sexual ethics, where African frameworks are recognized as legitimate alternatives to Western paradigms (Alumona, 2024). Bujo's thought provides a foundation for this decolonization, offering a critique that affirms African moral agency whilst engaging with global ethical challenges.

Whilst religious responses to modern sexual paradigms are common in African contexts, they often fall short of the philosophical depth required to address these issues. Many religious critiques rely on conservative interpretations of scripture or tradition, which can appear defensive or dogmatic (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2021). Bujo's framework, by contrast, transcends the binary of tradition versus modernity, offering a sophisticated philosophical engagement that draws on African communitarian principles without rejecting the insights of contemporary ethics (Maina, 2008). His approach avoids the pitfalls of religious conservatism by grounding its critique in relational personhood and anamnestic solidarity, which provide a universal yet contextually rooted basis for ethical reflection (Bujo, 2016). This philosophical rigour enables a sophisticated criticism of modern sexual paradigms, one that respects African moral traditions whilst remaining open to dialogue with global perspectives.

Bujo's framework reveals the temporal limitations, individualistic biases, and neo-colonial tendencies of contemporary sexual ethics, whilst highlighting the challenges posed by certain sexual identities to ancestral continuity. By foregrounding communal responsibilities and intergenerational obligations, it offers a compelling alternative to liberal paradigms that

prioritize personal autonomy. The criticism of cultural colonization deepens the urgency of philosophical decolonization, affirming the validity of African ethical systems in global discourse. Unlike purely religious responses, Bujo's approach provides a philosophically robust foundation for addressing the crisis of modern sexual ethics, paving the way for a balanced dialogue that respects both individual dignity and communal flourishing.

Palaver Ethics and Sexual Deliberation

Bujo's ethical framework, rooted in African communitarian principles, offers a distinctive approach to sexual ethics through the palaver model of deliberation. Unlike liberal discourse, which often prioritizes abstract rationality and individual autonomy, the palaver model fosters inclusive, existential deliberation that integrates communal wisdom, ancestral guidance, and contextual realities. This section explores the palaver model as an alternative to liberal sexual ethics, examines its role in the communal discernment of sexual norms, and considers its limitations and potential for inclusive dialogue in contemporary African contexts.

The palaver model stands in sharp contrast to the elite, rational discourse characteristic of liberal sexual ethics. Whilst Western ethical frameworks often privilege the arguments of educated or philosophically trained individuals, palaver is an inclusive process that invites participation from all community members, regardless of status or expertise (Bujo, 2016). Held under the metaphorical "palaver tree," this deliberation draws on the lived experiences, wisdom, and insights of the entire community, including elders, youth, and women (Maina, 2008). The process is not abstract but existential, grounded in the concrete realities of communal life and informed by ancestral guidance. In matters of sexual ethics, palaver ensures that decisions reflect the collective moral vision, integrating the sacred responsibility to maintain ancestral continuity with the practical needs of the present (Mbiti, 2015).

Ancestral voices play a pivotal role in palaver deliberations on sexual ethics. In African communitarian thought, ancestors-the living-dead remain active participants in the community's moral life, offering wisdom that guides contemporary decisions (Bujo, 2016). Consulting ancestral wisdom involves a dialogical process where the living engage with the values and practices transmitted by their forebears, often through rituals, storytelling, or elder mediation (Menkiti, 2018). This consultation is not a rigid adherence to tradition but a dynamic interaction that balances ancestral expectations with contextual realities. For instance, deliberations on sexual practices might consider how to honour the imperative of procreation whilst addressing modern challenges such as urbanization or changing gender roles (Alumona, 2024). This balance ensures that sexual ethics remain rooted in intergenerational continuity whilst adaptable to new circumstances.

The discernment of sexual norms through palaver is a collective responsibility, reflecting the communitarian ethos of African ethics. Unlike liberal frameworks, where individual rights or legal standards often shape sexual norms, palaver norms emerge through communal consensus, guided by the shared goal of communal flourishing (Gyekye, 2013). Elders and wisdom figures play a central role in this process, serving as mediators who interpret ancestral values and apply them to contemporary issues (Maina, 2008). Their guidance ensures that individual circumstances, such as personal desires or economic constraints, are integrated with

communal values, such as the obligation to sustain family lineages. For example, a young person's sexual choices might be deliberated in light of their impact on the clan's intergenerational chain, ensuring that personal agency aligns with collective responsibilities (Bujo, 2016).

Palaver also facilitates dynamic norm development through what Bujo describes as "spiral thinking," a process that creates new traditions through dialogue with ancestral wisdom (Bujo, 2016). Unlike static traditionalism, which clings to past practices, or liberal relativism, which prioritizes individual choice, spiral thinking allows sexual ethics to evolve whilst maintaining ancestral connections. This approach enables communities to address contemporary challenges, such as the rise of non-traditional sexual identities, by reinterpreting ancestral values in light of new realities (Alumona, 2024). For instance, a community might adapt marriage practices to accommodate economic pressures whilst preserving the sacred role of procreation, ensuring that ethical evolution remains anchored in the moral community's temporal continuity (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2021). This contextual application of ancestral wisdom makes palaver a flexible yet principled framework for sexual ethics.

Despite its strengths, the palaver model faces challenges in modern African contexts. Urbanization and globalization have disrupted traditional communal structures, complicating the organization of inclusive deliberations (Gyekye, 2013). In urban settings, where diverse populations coexist, assembling a representative palaver may be difficult, and ancestral traditions may vary across ethnic groups (Alumona, 2024). Additionally, the inclusion of marginalized voices such as those of women, youth, or sexual minorities poses a challenge, as traditional palaver processes have historically privileged elder male perspectives (Tamale, 2014). Adapting palaver without abandoning its core principles requires innovative approaches, such as incorporating digital platforms or inter-clan dialogues, to ensure that deliberation remains inclusive and relevant (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2021).

The question of including diverse sexual experiences, particularly those of LGBTQ+ individuals, presents a significant challenge for palaver ethics. The communitarian emphasis on procreation and gender complementarity may appear to exclude non-procreative sexual identities, which are often framed as disruptions to ancestral continuity (Alumona, 2024). However, the palaver model's dialogical nature offers potential for inclusive dialogue, provided certain conditions are met. Authentic dialogue requires that all participants, including sexual minorities, are recognized as members of the moral community, with their experiences valued in the deliberation process (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamrah, 2021). For instance, a palaver might explore how LGBTQ+ individuals can contribute to communal flourishing through non-reproductive roles, such as caregiving or cultural preservation, whilst respecting ancestral expectations (Bujo, 2016). This approach demands mutual respect and a willingness to reinterpret ancestral wisdom in light of contemporary diversity.

The potential for palaver to accommodate diverse sexual experiences lies in its existential and communal character. Unlike liberal discourse, which often abstracts sexual ethics into universal principles, palaver grounds deliberation in the lived realities of the community, allowing for context-specific solutions (Maina, 2008). By fostering open dialogue, palaver can

create space for LGBTQ+ participation, provided that the process avoids dogmatic exclusion and embraces the spiral thinking that characterizes Bujo's ethics (Bujo, 2016). Such dialogue might not resolve all tensions, particularly those surrounding procreation, but it can establish a framework for mutual understanding, where individual identities are negotiated within the broader context of communal responsibilities (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamrah, 2021). This inclusive potential positions palaver as a viable alternative to both liberal individualism and rigid traditionalism.

The palaver model offers a compelling framework for sexual ethics, rooted in inclusive deliberation, ancestral guidance, and communal discernment. By integrating the voices of all community members and balancing tradition with adaptation, palaver ensures that sexual norms reflect the moral community's temporal and spiritual commitments. While modern challenges, such as urbanization and diversity, require creative adaptations, the model's dialogical nature provides a pathway for inclusive dialogue, including the potential to engage with diverse sexual identities. Bujo's palaver ethics thus transcend the limitations of liberal discourse, offering a philosophically robust approach to sexual ethics that honours African communitarian values whilst remaining open to contemporary realities. The following sections will explore practical applications of this framework, addressing specific ethical dilemmas in modern African contexts.

Implications for Global Sexual Ethics Discourse

Bujo's framework, rooted in anamnestic solidarity and the palaver model, offers transformative insights for global sexual ethics discourse. By foregrounding ancestral continuity and communitarian values, it challenges the temporal and individualistic biases of dominant paradigms, advocates for the decolonization of sexual ethics, and proposes practical applications whilst acknowledging limitations. Bujo's approach enriches philosophical sexual ethics by expanding the temporal scope of moral consideration. Unlike liberal frameworks, which focus on present-moment consent and individual autonomy, Bujo's anamnestic solidarity integrates past and future generations into ethical deliberation (Bujo, 2016). This intergenerational perspective reinforces the philosophical significance of responsibility towards ancestors and descendants, framing sexual practices as acts with enduring communal and spiritual consequences (Mbiti, 2015). By challenging presentist assumptions of contemporary sexual ethics, which often neglect long-term impacts, Bujo's framework invites a reconsideration of how sexual choices shape the moral community across time (Alumona, 2024). This temporal expansion deepens the ethical discourse, offering a more holistic understanding of sexuality's role in human flourishing.

Bujo's communitarian alternative to liberal individualism further strengthens sexual ethics by integrating individual dignity with communal responsibility. Whilst Western paradigms prioritize personal freedom, often at the expense of collective obligations, Bujo's relational personhood situates individuals within a web of communal bonds (Menkiti, 2018). This approach does not negate personal agency but evaluates it in light of its contribution to communal vitality, such as through procreation or marriage (Bujo, 2016). The viability of community-centred sexual ethics lies in its capacity to balance personal and collective goods, fostering a moral framework that respects both individual worth and intergenerational

continuity (Gyekye, 2013). By advocating for philosophical pluralism, Bujo's thought opens space for diverse ethical perspectives, challenging the hegemony of individualistic models and enriching global discourse (Maina, 2008).

Bujo's framework contributes to the decolonization of sexual ethics by challenging Western philosophical universalism. The global dominance of liberal sexual ethics, often framed as universally applicable, marginalizes non-Western perspectives, perpetuating a form of cultural imperialism (Alumona, 2024). African communitarian frameworks, with their emphasis on rationality and ancestral wisdom, assert the legitimacy of alternative ethical systems, demanding recognition as equal partners in philosophical dialogue (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). This decolonization requires genuine intercultural exchange, where Western and non-Western traditions engage without presupposing the superiority of one over the other (Tamale, 2014). Bujo's approach validates African moral thought, demonstrating its capacity to address universal ethical questions whilst remaining rooted in cultural particularity.

The implications for international human rights discourse are profound, as Bujo's framework highlights the tension between universal rights claims and cultural particularity. Global human rights frameworks often prioritize individual autonomy, clashing with communitarian values that emphasize collective responsibilities (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamrah, 2021). For instance, the advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights, whilst grounded in universal principles, may conflict with African ethical priorities such as procreation and ancestral continuity (Alumona, 2024). Bujo's palaver model offers a pathway for more inclusive approaches, fostering dialogue that respects cultural differences whilst seeking common ground (Bujo, 2016). By promoting intercultural dialogue on sexual values, this approach challenges the imposition of universal norms, advocating for a pluralistic human rights framework that accommodates diverse moral visions.

Practically, Bujo's ancestral-oriented ethics could inform law and social policy in African contexts, particularly in areas such as marriage, family planning, and sexual education. Policies that align with communitarian values, such as supporting family structures or promoting reproductive health, could strengthen communal cohesion and honour ancestral expectations (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2021). However, implementing such ethics in pluralistic societies poses challenges, as urbanization and cultural diversity complicate consensus-building through traditional palaver processes (Gyekye, 2013). Contextual sensitivity is essential, requiring policymakers to adapt communitarian principles to local realities without imposing rigid traditionalism (Alumona, 2024). For example, sexual education curricula might integrate ancestral values whilst addressing modern challenges like gender equality or sexual diversity.

Despite its potential, Bujo's framework faces limitations that warrant further exploration. The palaver model's reliance on communal deliberation may struggle in fragmented urban settings, where traditional structures are weakened (Tamale, 2014). Additionally, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized voices, such as those of women or sexual minorities, requires deliberate efforts to reform traditional power dynamics (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamrah, 2021). Areas for further research include empirical studies of contemporary palaver processes, which could assess their adaptability to modern contexts and their capacity to include diverse perspectives (Maina, 2008). Comparative analyses with other non-Western sexual ethics

traditions, such as Indigenous or Asian frameworks, could illuminate shared principles and enrich global discourse (Gyekye, 2013). Moreover, developing intercultural sexual ethics methodologies combining African communitarian insights with Western or global perspectives could foster a more pluralistic approach to ethical deliberation (Bujo, 2016).

Bujo's framework offers significant contributions to global sexual ethics by expanding temporal considerations, proposing communitarian alternatives, and challenging Western hegemony. Its emphasis on intergenerational responsibility and relational personhood enriches philosophical discourse, whilst its decolonizing potential affirms the legitimacy of African ethical systems. By fostering inclusive dialogue through the palaver model, it addresses tensions in human rights discourse and informs practical applications, though challenges in pluralistic contexts remain. Further research into palaver processes, comparative ethics, and intercultural methodologies will enhance the framework's global relevance, positioning it as a vital voice in the ongoing quest for a pluralistic and equitable sexual ethics.

Addressing Potential Objections

Bujo's framework for sexual ethics, rooted in anamnestic solidarity and communitarian principles, invites scrutiny from various perspectives. Some arguments against the framework may raise concerns about cultural relativism, the erosion of individual rights, gender equality, LGBTQ+ inclusion, or the perceived primitivism of African thought. The first argument that might arise against Bujo's framework is that of cultural relativism, arguing that its emphasis on ancestral continuity is too context-specific to offer universal ethical guidance. However, Bujo's approach is better understood as philosophical particularism, which grounds ethics in specific cultural contexts whilst maintaining a universal concern for human flourishing (Bujo, 2016). Unlike arbitrary relativism, which denies objective moral standards, Bujo's framework upholds the intrinsic value of communal well-being and intergenerational responsibility, principles that resonate across cultures (Gyekye, 2013). The contextual application of ancestral wisdom through palaver deliberation ensures ethical coherence by anchoring decisions in a shared moral vision, rather than permitting arbitrary variation (Maina, 2008). This philosophical rigour distinguishes Bujo's ethics from relativism, positioning it as a principled contribution to global sexual ethics.

Concerns about individual rights and dignity are another potential objection, as critics may fear that communitarian ethics subordinates personal autonomy to collective obligations. Bujo's relational personhood, however, reconceptualizes rights within a communal framework, where individual dignity emerges through interdependence rather than isolation (Menkiti, 2018). Far from negating personal worth, this approach integrates individual flourishing with communal well-being, recognizing that a person's identity and value are realized through relationships with others, including ancestors (Bujo, 2016). The dichotomy between individual rights and communal responsibility is thus false; Bujo's framework balances both by evaluating personal choices, such as sexual practices, based on their contribution to the moral community (Alumona, 2024). This integration offers a nuanced alternative to liberal individualism, preserving dignity whilst honouring collective responsibilities.

Questions of gender equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion pose significant challenges, as Bujo's emphasis on procreation and gender complementarity may seem to exclude non-traditional identities or reinforce patriarchal norms. However, the palaver model's dynamic nature allows for ethical evolution, enabling ancestral ethics to adapt to contemporary realities (Bujo, 2016). The distinction between essential principles, such as intergenerational continuity, and contingent applications, such as specific gender roles, permits the reinterpretation of ancestral wisdom through communal deliberation (Chitando & Chirongoma, 2021). For instance, palaver could explore inclusive interpretations that recognize alternative contributions to communal flourishing, such as caregiving by LGBTQ+ individuals, whilst preserving core communitarian values (Amoah & Gyasi-Gyamrah, 2021). This potential for adaptation ensures that ancestral ethics remain relevant without abandoning their foundational commitments.

The accusation of philosophical primitivism, rooted in colonial stereotypes, may dismiss Bujo's framework as outdated or unsophisticated. On the contrary, African communitarian ethics demonstrates profound philosophical depth, integrating metaphysical, social, and temporal dimensions into a cohesive moral system (Gyekye, 2013). Bujo's articulation of anamnestic solidarity and palaver deliberation engages with universal ethical questions such as the nature of personhood and moral responsibility, whilst offering context-specific insights (Bujo, 2016). Its relevance for contemporary global discourse lies in its challenge to Western hegemony, advocating for a pluralistic approach that values non-Western perspectives (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). By moving beyond stereotypes of African thought as simplistic, Bujo's framework asserts its place as a sophisticated contribution to sexual ethics, capable of addressing modern challenges like globalization and cultural diversity (Alumona, 2024).

Bujo's ancestral-oriented ethics withstand objections by demonstrating their philosophical coherence, respect for individual dignity, adaptability to contemporary issues, and intellectual sophistication. Far from promoting relativism, it offers a principled framework grounded in universal human flourishing. By reconceptualising rights within a relational context, it bridges individual and communal concerns. The palaver model's flexibility ensures inclusivity, addressing gender and sexual diversity whilst maintaining communitarian values. Finally, its depth refutes accusations of primitivism, affirming African philosophy's relevance for global ethical discourse. These responses position Bujo's framework as a vital voice in rethinking sexual ethics, fostering dialogue across cultural and philosophical boundaries.

Conclusion

Bénézet Bujo's anamnestic solidarity redefines sexual ethics through African communitarian principles, prioritizing ancestral continuity and communal flourishing over individualistic paradigms. This paper demonstrates how Bujo's framework critiques the temporal limitations of liberal sexual ethics, challenges non-procreative orientations, and advocates for decolonizing global discourse by affirming African philosophical sovereignty. The palaver model ensures inclusive deliberation, striking a balance between ancestral wisdom and contemporary realities. Philosophically, Bujo's approach expands temporal horizons, integrating intergenerational responsibility into sexual ethics and enriching moral consideration through ancestral inclusion. It challenges Western hegemony by advocating for pluralism and legitimizing non-Western perspectives in global ethical discourse.

By foregrounding communal and intergenerational responsibilities, Bujo's framework offers a philosophically alternative to Western individualism, compelling global sexual ethics to embrace African communitarian insights for a more pluralistic and equitable moral vision.

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