



Eco-Justice Incongruous with other Social ills: An African Theological Perspective and Indigenous Epistemology

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Abstract

The objective of the article is to uphold a methodological orientation that seeks a genuine appropriation amongst indigenous and other systems of knowledge with reference to ecology. Based on the ecological catastrophe, the global world cannot dwell on one stream of knowledge production for eternity. Indigenous epistemology ought not to be side-lined but systematically instituted in the pool of knowledge production instead of a miscalculated biased episteme by the global north. This has resulted to a confusing terrain of the theological stance underlying indigenous ecological lifeworlds. This mishap further allows ideologically distorted forms of Christianity which harbours human alienation from the rest of the earth community and justifies Christian anthropocentrism. In a world torn apart by injustice, oppression, war crimes, invasion, segregation, and land degradation. Are we the first crop to read this story with such a sombre understanding of the destruction with which it begins in (Genesis 6:5-7), and such a sharp awareness of the vital importance of the promise of God with which it ends (Genesis 9:8-17). The same can be said for some of the forebodings of the early prophets and African indigenous people(s) who understood that living selfishly and alienating ourselves from the natural world will result to the ecological catastrophe due to human induced climate change and other social ills. This article develops a new methodology described as progressive ecological sensitive African and Christian ethics. It is progressive in the sense that it brings two ethical perspectives that are intertwined. The main purpose is to create a dialogue towards imagining and reconciling with African Indigenous knowledge lifeworlds that are ecological sensitive. As the earth community, it is imperative to inculcate a sense of moral responsibility through multi-disciplinary approach across disciplines to enhance an episteme in the global south without prejudice. Addressing social ills such as eco-justice without a developed inclusive theoretical framework is futile.

Keywords: Ecology, epistemology, indigenous, cosmology, Christian anthropocentrism.

Introduction

There is a huge gap in the knowledge production pool reference to human induced climate change which has resulted to the contemporary ecological crisis. The absence of indigenous knowledge lifeworlds and religiosity episteme in the global ecological conversation is dirigible. The marginalisation and alienation of indigenous wisdom knowledge systems was part of the colonial agenda using the Bible as a weapon of distraction and wielding power over the powerless. There is no debate that geographical displacement of communities by colonisers/settlers resulted to contemporary land degradation at the highest degree and it is



non-reversible. There is a deep embedded connection between land and cultural identity for the African people(s) across disciplines and faith-based communities. This interconnectedness is extremely difficult to comprehend for those formed by different cultures, religiosity, and worldviews, particularly those influenced by eurocentric theories and ideologies (Ngwena, 2021:28).

In the meantime, there wide gap between western epistemology and indigenous epistemology ought to be addressed due to the unbiased fact that western epistemology is dominant by design. It is not only systematic, objective, structural but analytical. The difference between knowledge production for instance indigenous epistemology, is for the global north to accommodate and acknowledge something unfamiliar in their worldview and to locate it in space and time. Moreso to consider it holistically as part of an overarching cosmic order in which individual persons, different communities, different world views and all of creation regardless of different characteristics are interconnected and interdependent (Kelbessa, 2011). The interconnectedness envelopes the Indigenous holistic theory which is multi-layered, and encompasses the spiritual, emotional, and physical elements of humanity including our past, present, and future endeavours. An important feature regarding indigenous knowledge systems is simply not static but evolve periodically. Most importantly it is composed of oral knowledge transmitted down to generations. Another key difference that stands out from this article, is that Western epistemologies are scientific driven and focus on data and statistics, whereas Indigenous epistemologies are not concerned with making judgements, criticizing, and labelling what they don't understand as not credible because it lacks scientific proof or validation. Knowledge production cannot be established from one pool of knowledge in a uniform pattern. We cannot solve the global ecological crisis and other social ills using one method and one epistemology in addressing injustice collectively.

From a theological perspective, custodianship to the Earth is our human foundational vocation and our cornerstone as complemented in African cosmologies. The notion of interconnectedness plays a major role in African cosmologies in relation to other vital forces in creation. This is because from an African perspective God is perceived as the Supreme ontological authoritarian of Creation. John Mbiti, sums it eloquently when he writes:

God is the originator and Sustainer of man; the spirits explain the destiny of man; man is the center of this ontology; the animals, the vegetation and natural phenomena and other objects constitute the natural world in which humanity dwells, provides a means of existence and if need be, humanity established a mystical relationship with the rest of creation (Mbiti, 1971:16).

The attempt from a global south episteme is to address differences as well as similarities of worldviews in the sense that concessions are made where tension exists between the two ethical perspectives, so that appropriations are made where tandems exist, or where epistemological tensions are negotiated. Evidently the Earth is in peril, and we are the inhabitants as Larry Rasmussen & Earnst Conradie presages that as habitants we belong, this is our home. We ought to take responsibility and safeguard the Earth. To inhabit a place with the desire to know it, to belong to it, is an intentional choice, and yet a choice that strikes at the deepest core of human identity. As Larry Rasmussen comprehends that such an earth-honouring faith rests on the conviction that we are born to belonging, and we die into it and our lives are braided into all that is (Rasmussen, 2023:26 & Conradie, 2005:34).

Systematic Creation Care

As much as humanity particularly in the global north systematically pollutes the land and air without a care, God has created all lifeforms and placed the earth community in his household 'Oikos' and duly assigned humanity to be custodians but, not to plunder, abuse and exploit the Earth and its resources. This means that our love of creation and our care for it is a matter



of obedience. Some may observe land degradation only as a social or religious poignant for the ecological sensitive communities and environmentalist. Nevertheless, for indigenes and African religious communities it is our cultural identity to embrace the land. It is instrumented in our convictions, as inhabitants we are called to replenish the Earth (Kaoma, 2013:28). We cannot have a full and complete relationship with the Supreme God apart from our relationship with creation. This is the African wisdom knowledge belief systems in its core signifying the lifeworlds of the African people(s) prior to colonialization and western Christianity negative subtle invasion disguised as enlightenment age or modernity. According to the Orthodox theologian, Timothy Ware, what we are witnessing to-date is no longer the ecological crisis, but humanities spiritual bankruptcy and aloofness. The fundamental difficulty lies not outside but within us, not in the ecosystem but in the human heart. The global ecology crisis is primarily a crisis not concerning lack of human ethics but relating to our human attitudes towards the natural world (Ware, 1997:23).

In this article, Indigenous Wisdom Knowledge Systems as experienced in Sub-Saharan Africa is presented as an alternative paradigm shift that is inclusive towards eco-justice among various inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary approach. Thus, the recognition of indigenous knowledge bestows or confer the enlightenment/developed world with alternative experiences with which to challenge conventional Eurocentric methods. To add a holistic dimension to the conception of indigenous knowledge systems, there is a need to mediate the conceptual quest for knowledge with instrumental considerations and fine-tune theoretical framework with technical efforts. Furthermore, a methodological orientation that seeks a genuine appropriation amongst indigenous and other systems of knowledge across disciplines should not be side-lined but practically instituted in the pool of knowledge production instead of a miscalculated episteme by the global north. Human induced climate change is rife and its impact in Africa is life-threatening. The ecological crisis clearly calls for moral discernment. It is a matter of justice since those who are most affected by human induced climate change have contributed least to the problem (SACC 2009:30). This is evident in climate change negotiations with differentiated responsibilities around mitigation and the allocation of funds for adaptation by policy makers conveniently excluding participatory decision-making allowing those most impacted in the global south to play a major role in the conversation.

From an African perspective, the relational bond between human beings and the natural/wild world is maintained religiously based on the notion of God, the 'Supreme Being' 'Mvelinqanti'. The relations between God, humanity and creation are profoundly interconnected and God is perceived spiritually as the 'Supreme Being', both in heaven and on Earth. Hence, western Christianity through Bible misconceptions translations, the first missionaries introduced an alien concept of God that placed humanity at the apex of creation in pursuit of disrupting African people(s) livelihood in the name of Christianity (Nantambu, 1996:17). Without a doubt in my mind, it is beyond debate that European missionaries and colonizers were completely misguided primarily by their own ethos. We cannot overlook the fact that based on religiosity, the African notions of God, embedded in equality of all creation, in the kindness, kith and kinship as illustrated in African indigenes lifeworlds of which contemporary are displaced and overthrown by the Eurocentric epistemology wrapped in Christian anthropocentrism (Ngwena, 2021:32). The missionary ideology of God was not based on a God who enables resistance towards injustice, rather on a God who enforces docility and passivity in the face of imminent exploitation and oppression. It is unfortunate that in our lifetime the epistemology of the south is still second guessed and subdued. Knowledge production cannot be obtained from one dominant source and expect different results: hence the ecological crisis and all other social ills be throttling all of creation.

Custodianship from a Theological Perspective

The core of the biblical perspective to custodianship stems from the belief that God owns all of creation and humanity has been entrusted to manage everything in a manner that will bring honour to God in awe and reverence and impact eternity. God's ownership of all can be



buttressed in the book of (Revelation 22:13 and Job 4:11). Thus, faith/religious based communities are commanded and have been commissioned into maintenance and judicious usage of the Earth resources that God has bestowed on humanity. Mutual custodianship stems from the very beginning of creation when God created man and woman in the same image and likeness with Him, depositing equal talents involving the same responsibility and expecting equal accountability. As equal image bearers of God, both men and women are called to equal responsibilities and custodianship of the Earth and all its resources on behalf of the Creator. The general responsibility of a custodian includes being faithful, wise, teachable, and responsible. Responsible ontological custodians are not to be found wasting or abusing the resources that have been placed in their care, but rather expected as a priority to exercise self-control and proffer solutions towards Earth degradation (Ngwena, 2020:32).

Land degradation is a foreign phenomenon and alien to the ethos of the African indigenes and religiosity based on African ontology and cosmology. An African philosophical principle upholds a clear consciousness that God is an original member of the community of life. The community is called a community of life because God is perceived as an ultimate source of its origin, its life, and the very life that is present in the intricacies of the community at large. What we need are eco-sensitive, integrated, and multi-productive solutions. Holistic and proactive measures that will ensure a sustainable future particularly for the poorer nations which are most impacted by the human induced climate change prevalent.

The historical background of custodianship from an African perspective derives from biblical expositions which expose the theology of responsibility. It enables total respect towards creation by human species within the earth community. Based on scriptures in the creation narratives humanity is portrayed as inhabitants that occupies a unique place in the earth community. These are created species playing a key role in God's plan and purpose to safeguard and replenish the Earth through its orderly institutions, namely religious communities, church, indigenous communities, learning institutions and various platforms including activism and advocacy. If we employ social theory approach towards eco-justice and other societal ills as suggested by Merawi to delineate the status of religion in today's globalized societies. Merawi argues that from his point of view, critical social theory globally is identified as an inescapable aspect of human existence, whereas religion serves as a platform for raising issues of universality against cultural difference, true heterogeneity, enforced homogeneity, and ideological oppression against emancipation (Merawi, 2019:12). Therefore, it is crucial and indispensable for humanity as the earth community to relearn how to articulate life in dialogue with the cosmos by finding an intricate balance between human intellect and creation. This is what will distinguish African ecojustice and theology from other contemporary ecological paradigms. In this way, African eco-theology has the potential for contributing immensely to the transformation of the ecological catastrophe reality, by deliberately creating a balanced earth community daring to integrate intuitive, spiritual, and rational forms of African wisdom knowledge, embracing both science and religiosity insofar as they enable collaboration that will result to ecological justice through multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach. Unfortunately, land invasion makes it impossible to create dialogue as the victims are perpetually persecuted by the wealthy aggressors wielding power over the powerless. Knowledge production across intellectual barriers need a complete overhaul to enable dialogue in an equal footing in deliberations between the global north and global south episteme.

Reading the Bible from an Ecological Perspective

Based on the notion of God's Covenant with creation for example, Noahic covenant makes strong reference against human ill practice towards creation. There ought to be reverence and that is the obligation humanity should adhere to. We are to hold and respect the intrinsic value to all of creation regardless of characteristics. From an African religiosity perspective, the reverence or respect is influenced by the notion 'interrelatedness' within the earth community regardless of origins time and space (Ngwena, 2020:56). The creation narratives in the book



of Genesis underlines an integral relationship probable to recognize between humanity and the rest of creation. This holistic interrelatedness is essential for inhabitants to comprehend as it influences our attitudes and allows us to boldly acknowledge how significant and relevant it is to be ecological sensitive in our lifeworlds across nations and man-made structural barriers.

The story of God's covenant with Noah has more relevance contemporary than it has ever had before. In outline, the Flood narratives illustrate the Creator's disappointment and is outraged by human ill-practise. He resolves to an Earth baptism action and spares one family that is obedient and entrusts Noah with creation care. Noah's household was trustworthy and obedient. Following the destruction and symbolic baptism of the Earth through immense flooding, God commits himself never again to take such drastic measures, and to persist in protecting and providing for Noah, his family, and all life on Earth. Ngwena observes that based on God's ecological covenant, it is imperative for the faith community and religious community to adhere to the ecological covenants. For example, the first Noahic covenant in (Genesis 9:8-17). The Abrahamic land covenant in (Genesis 17:4-9), and the third is the Sinai Mountain covenant in (Exodus 19:24). In all the covenants I have mentioned, the Creator established perpetuity with humanity as part of creation with a mandate to be custodians of the Earth as illustrated in (Psalm 104:32). Finally, we see the divine covenant between the Creator and creation symbolised as the rainbow. "*This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you, and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations*" (Genesis 9:17). Contemporary, while rainbows are a scientific, meteorological phenomenon, Genesis asserts that God is responsible for every scientific and meteorological extraordinary function (Genesis 1:1 & Psalm 19:1). God chose to cause rainbows to function as a symbol of His covenant promise. From a theological perspective, a rainbow sign upholds a divine symbolic meaning showcasing inclusiveness and diversity, and mostly an all-embracing image of love and relations across worldviews and ideologies.

In a world torn apart by injustice, oppression, war crimes, invasion, segregation, and land degradation, perhaps we are the first generation to read this story with such a sombre understanding of the destruction with which it begins (Genesis 6:5-7), and a distinguished awareness of the vital significance of the promise of God with which it ends (Genesis 9:8-17). The same can be said for some of the forebodings of the early prophets and African indigenous people(s) who understood that living selfishly and alienating ourselves from the natural world will result to the ecological catastrophe due to human induced climate change and other social ills.

As the Author of Genesis could foresee (Genesis 6:5-7 & Genesis 9:8-17), at this juncture we are literally swimming against the current. For those in the driving seat of pollution (the industrialised Americas and Europe) the African continent has been plunged to the deepest pit of no return. Societal comfort has been secured by doing the opposite instead of addressing the ecology crisis due to human induced climate change. Poor governance has succeeded in driving the poor into further poverty to the point where currently the marginalised poor populace in Africa lives on less than a dollar a day, where over a billion people elsewhere have access to water of drinkable quality, and where the demands we make individually on the natural resources varies depending on where and how we live. Africa remains at the receiving end due to poor governance as our politicians/dictators suffers from the 'miseducation' syndrome which capitalise in silencing voices of reason from the marginalised populace. Politicians have settled re-oppression of the masses and lack courage to break the man-made barriers and govern adequately instead of rule by terror. This can be achieved by translating the idea of leadership into proposition of service delivery (Woodson, 2009:42).

From an African religiosity perspective, relations to all of creation is based on the notion of God, humanity, and creation. The Bible proclaims that in the beginning God blessed the rest of creation and proclaimed that it was good (Genesis. 1:20-31). Several texts illustrate the value of creation in the eyes of the Creator. For example, (Psalm 19:1-6) reads, 'it exists to



praise and glorify Him'. Christ sustains all of creation and died to reconcile all of creation to God, (Hebrews, 1:3 & Colossians 1:16- 20). In Christ's future Kingdom the rest of creation will be transformed into a new earth, (Revelation. 21:1). Based on biblical accounts it is evident God values all of creation. On the same token the Bible proclaims that human beings have an important role and responsibility towards the natural/wild world of which African religiosity adheres to.

Among hindrance aspects resulting to our earthly demise to mention a few, is humanity lack of spirituality, religious commitment, Christian imagination, ecological wisdom, ethical discernment, and moral vision has contributed extensively to the global ecological crisis, and Africa is at the receiving end of the eco-brutality fuelled by the industrialised economic power-driven nations. As the faith community, we are faced with not only an ecological crisis, but a moral crisis and what is required is a radical paradigm shift in our orientation and long-awaited ecological repentance collectively. A genuine conversation across disciplines and inter-faith enables humanity to have a positive attitude towards creation. It was in 2005 when the 'Green Patriarch', the Ecumenical Bartholomew 1 of Constantinople warned the global community about human induced climate change. He spoke with utmost conviction and explained to the masses that:

Climate change is much more than an issue of environmental preservation. Insofar as human-induced, it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem. To persist in the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly. It is no less than suicidal, jeopardizing the diversity of the very earth that we inhabit, enjoy and share (WCC 2005:67).

Based on African cosmologies, everything holds together in creation. The concept of God, humanity and the rest of creation is intertwined. African cosmologies played a key role which enabled resistance against colonialism and missionarism. This is evident in the following resistance groups; the Mau-Mau appraising in Kenya; Impi yasesandlwane led by the Zulus in Kwa-Zulu Natal; the Imbokodvo Yemaswati Eswatini led by King Sobhuza 11; the first and second Chimurenga of Zimbabwe; the Maji-Maji uprising in Tanzania; Queen Dzinga of Angola; Queen Amina of Nigeria; religious movements/faith based communities; the Ethiopian resistance army led by Emperor Menelik 11 at the battle of Adwa; the Nyabingi cult of Uganda; and many other resistance groups against colonialism and missionarism. The African people(s) when addressing social ills incorporate religion and spirituality as their corner stone. For example, the late Samson Gitau and Kopya Kaoma, argues that African cosmologies are crucial in developing ecological ethics (Gitau, 2000:24 & Kaoma, 2013:19). Gitau's theology expounded within the framework in African anthropocentrism cosmology which views humanity as the custodian of creation. Kaoma's theological framework of Christian ethics highlights the concept of ancestors which unifies African cultures and religiosity which carries ecological overtones is upheld in African cosmologies.

The Vital Force in African Cosmology

The notion of 'vital force' or 'mysteries' validates the interconnectedness of creation. Vital forces cannot operate in isolation but duly expected to work together in ontological harmony. Being ecological conscious involves constantly wrestling with the dialectic that African cosmology insists that Earth is the sacramental universe of interconnected spiritual forces. The 'vital force' captures the participative interaction between the Life-giver 'Umvelinqanti' and the totality of reality within a vital dynamism that is at the core of being, apart from being understood to be at the focal point of life in its totality. In the Genesis narrative, according to Welker, God reacts to what has been created. Welker proposes that:

The creating God is not only an acting God, but also a reacting God who responds to what has been created. The creating God is open to being confronted by the independence, the originality, even the need for improvement of that which has been created. The creature's own activity



which is itself a process of production, is not only a consequence and result of creation that is already completed. Rather it is embedded in the process of creation and participates in the process (Welker, 2016).

In the first two chapters of Genesis, God's action is an activity that reacts to creation. God is traditionally understood as the One who exists, from whose divine nature all creation without certification and is intelligible only within Godself. In process theology, God is understood in panentheistic terms, transcending the polarities of immanence and transcendence. The process theology study was developed earlier by Charles Hartshorne in 1948, and later expounded by John Cobb; David Griffin; and Eugene Peters. Hartshorne theology became famous by this observation or articulation, he wrote: "That God exists is one with his essence and is an analytic truth ... but how, or in what actual state of experience or knowledge or will, he exists is contingent in the same sense as is our own existence" (Hartshorne 1948).

Constructed on pneumatology studies the vital force, also understood as Spirit, is relational and could be portrayed as the creating, life-giving, renewing, sanctifying Spirit of God. The Spirit's life-affirming movement in action and presence are elucidated under the rubric of theories of divine action in nature that transcend interventionistic views of God as articulated by Wildman in his essays honouring John Russell works, '*God's Action in the Nature*' (Wildman, 2013). The vital force, as the Spirit that holds the universe together, is seen as a forceful life affirming relational presence, not merely as an interventionistic force experienced as a nebulous transcendence. Therefore, from an African religiosity perspective, vital force brings to the fore the pervasiveness of the Spirit as the spring of life, on which the interrelated participation of all of creation comes together in unison.

Forced Immigration Populace and Ecology

Due to forced migration in Sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere, not only has this catastrophe resulted in ecological injustice but it has terminated community relations. The interconnectedness within communities is gradually depleted. We witness this fall within humanity at multiple levels. An increase in human population requires an increase in all life's spheres. Economic upheavals and basic needs such as, healthcare, education, employment, food production, transport, housing, and other basic needs cannot be met. Sadly, for Africa these basic needs are not met even for the immediate populace let alone the combination. The lack of basic needs coupled by forced migration has resulted to extreme poverty, community detachment, xenophobic attacks (particularly in South Africa) contemporary we are witnessing genocide and ecocide in the Middle East. According to Nash, there is a direct link between natural disasters and the unprecedented ecological catastrophe. For instance, floods, droughts, and famine due to human induced climate change which enhances the culture of economic migration in a state of survival (Nash, 1991).

The major concern for our world today is its rapidly increasing uncontrolled migration, has put pressure on the limited resources by the host countries is beyond expectation. Land is crucial for human habitation to produce food and other essentials bearing in mind that land is not a commodity but a sacred asset. The alarming depletion of material resources has brought disastrous consequences, if population growth on the one hand, and practices such as indiscriminate farming, deforestation, and urbanization, encroachment, and other means of forceful displacement on the other, are not monitored adequately by policy makers. Opening borders for both forced migration and voluntary migration at ease cannot be the answer. In addressing the influx problem, the Policy Makers/Authorities Agents rather than endangering and disempowering citizens of any given country experiencing forced migration and economic migration is not productive. Legislators ought to come out with sound informative economic polices instead of the grab and go policies. Too many treaties and UN declarations without morality inclined actors have been blindly signed by authoritative powers without implementation or conviction.



In this article, the author refers to the land as the 'household of God' based on the text in (Leviticus 25:13-17), where humanity is entrusted with custodianship of the Earth. The God given task to humanity is to religiously replenish the natural world for the present and future generations. The land cannot be commended for its instrumental value only, but for intrinsic value so that it may continue to sustain life. From an African perspective land cannot be bought or sold because it belongs to the commons. Forced migration and displacement have destroyed not only communality livelihoods but also ancestral ties. As African people(s) and indigenes of the land, we emphasise the importance of intergenerational links than conjugal ones which pay respect to the past, future and present relations as well as genealogical inheritance. The economic pressure faced by Africa due to human induced climate change enforced by the wealthy industrialised nations in pursuit of profit and self-gratification, has contributed immensely to food insecurity and disconnectedness in communities promoting avarice.

The concept of interconnectedness

African communities and society at large gradually are abandoning the concept of interconnectedness of which the ancestral phenomenon of '*Ubuntu*' and its ethic is rooted (Kaoma, 2013:38). The '*ethic of Ubuntu*', from an ecological African perspective strengthens relations with the entire cosmos. It acknowledges the interconnectedness in all of creation living no room for exploitation and abuse of the natural world. It is through applying 'the ethics of Ubuntu', that we can address ecological concerns and other social skills without prejudice across cultural barriers, discipline, and religiosity. When alienated from communality, humanity tends to suffer. Mbeki, summed it well at the United Nations University presentation in 1998 when he said:

The World is an inter-dependant whole in which none can truly be free unless all are free, in which none can be truly prosperous unless no one else where in the world goes hungry, and in which none of us can be guaranteed a good quality of life, unless we act together and protect the environment (Mbeki, 1998).

Evidently, like all other previous statements, declarations, and treaties from concerned parties and individual authors, warnings have fallen on deaf ears coupled with negative attitudes since humanity is relentless in destroying the Earth in pursuit of profit and self-gratification. The repulsive impact is felt by Africa where land degradation, extreme poverty, eco-injustice, famine, genocide, ecocide, xenophobic attacks, forced migration and economic migration has become the order of the day.

Land degradation and desertification due to forced migration constitutes a subset of ecojustice, that is, a reduction or loss of the biological and economic productivity and complexity of terrestrial ecosystems resulting from various factors including human induced climate change. Within the earth community, there is a glimpse of hope as we produce literature and advocacy as an attempt to overcome the plethora of planetary challenges contemporary. It is of great value and necessity to cultivate the wisdom of faith-based communities and indigenes in various places so that their indigenous wisdom knowledge systems including religiosity can be shared with the world.

African Philosophy and Tradition Reference to Ecology

Different philosophical traditions can assist in addressing some of the global challenges at heart. Relying on one knowledge production pool embedded in euro-centrism approach is not an amicable solution. African philosophy and African indigenous lifeworlds are among discourses that are side-lined in ecological dialogue across disciplines. Philosophy as a discipline enhances values (especially ethical values) and is, therefore, better suited in addressing human behavioural patterns towards ecology. Ethics attempts to answer the fundamental question of how we ought to live as the earth community (communal settings and



non-communal) and with other members of the natural/wild world per se regardless of characteristics.

Mogobe Ramose approach focuses on the notion of de-liberating Philosophy and affirming freedom episteme. He explains the concept '*de-liberation*', as hyphenated because it brings two interconnected meanings: one pertains to the challenge to liberate philosophy from its self-imposed bondage. Also, to the preservation of the dominance of one epistemological paradigm tending towards the world hegemony at the expense of the poor and marginalised nations (Ramose, 1999:12). According to Ramose, the double meaning of de-liberation poses a challenge to freedom. The unfolding and intricate relationship between African and Western philosophy is the focal point of Ramose's point of departure. He stresses that the liberation of philosophy through the affirmation of freedom must be anchored in a critical deliberation of cultural diversity and religiosity maintaining polylogue as the core meaning of philosophy. Without ambiguity, religion serves as an instrumental tool for raising issues of global concerns based on cultural difference, true heterogeneity against enforced homogeneity, ideological oppression against emancipation (Ramose, 1999).

The affirmation of freedom as Ramose proposes is also debated based on different views. According to Edward Alam's observation, ethical reflections in all situations explores the relationship between freedom and ethics. Alam posits an investigation into the history of the idea of freedom reveals that the modern notion of freedom has been progressively stripped of its profound meaning and reduced to mere human rights and individual gratification. Several philosophers including Friedrich Schelling and Karl Marx, both in their works have attempted to address this deficiency and reductionist tendency constituted by the modern notion of freedom. Schelling succeeded in overcoming this reductionist tendency by introducing theodicy into the discussion (Workiner & Dewo, 2022). Karl Marx and Aristotle's realism complemented Schelling's theodicy by offering an attractive alternative to the reductionist notion of freedom as a robust account of virtue-centred ethics. Such attempts uphold sound informative accounts of freedom that can be appropriated by all groups of peoples across disciplines and create meaningful dialogue.

This philosophical appropriation does not require multitudes to give up their unique cultural differences but, can augment these differences in the context of a rich complementarity and enable humanity to promote and accept realistic notions of freedom and emancipation. Otherwise, the world remains in bondage if we do not engage in epistemological emancipation. From a theological perspective, freedom allows us to choose our actions and proves to us that we are not bound by some predetermined plan for our existence. The creator liberated humanity from all kinds of bondage including knowledge production spectrum in all levels.

The Wisdom of Virtue Ethics in African Cosmology reference to Ecology

African morality is at times elusive to western epistemology, and the reason is because westerner's knowledge production seeks to identify and categorize African wisdom knowledge according to their own known schema. The traditions of morality in Africa are indeed not documented but the gist of our existence and it thrives on generic inheritance rather than assimilation. For example, we employ wisdom phrases that endorse and enjoin the following order, prudence, unity, obedience to rules, authenticity to oneself and others, humility which is often mistaken by those outside our peripheries as meekness particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa where humility is a norm. For the locale, as with many other African peoples, the wisdom of ethics, which influences our behavioural patterns, is embedded in proverbs, liturgy, folklore, poetry, songs, dance, culture, customs, myth, and taboos towards conserving biodiversity (Makwasha, 2010). According to Ngwena, the westerner's ideology brings to the surface the Eurocentric attitude to knowledge which is not compatible to African Wisdom Knowledge in terms of virtue ethics and morality. This inheritance wisdom episteme is more than a binary of western ecological knowledge, but a systematic practiced system by faith



based and religious communities over decades symboling the past, present and yet to come (Ngwena, 2021).

African philosophers historically do not claim the fame of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Rene Descartes, Michel Foucault, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and others. But their teachings and philosophies were preserved before the advent of lithography in Africa, with attention often being drawn more to their wisdom than to the persons who authored them. After the collapse of the totalitarian systems of Eastern Europe, liberation organisations in Africa were impacted if not seriously shaken which resulted to the dominance of liberalism (Ayoade, 1986). African scholars found themselves in the middle between socialism ideology and the communist ideology. Some defended the right, some the left and some remained in the centre. Names, such as, Julius Nyerere claimed that the African socialism is rooted in the African past and that modern African socialism can draw from its traditional heritage the recognition of society as an extension of the basic family unit (Nyerere, 1968). As for Kwame Nkrumah, he argued that if one seeks the socio-political ancestor of socialism, one must venture into communalism because in socialism, the principles underlying communalism are given expression in modern circumstances (Nkrumah, 1964). Based on Gyekye's scholarly work, it is evident that most African leaders betrayed their own social and political beliefs as they moved from a socio-ethical perspective characterised of African humanism, to a humanism that is economy-based. According to Gyekye, this later became the ground on which the liberal system was to rest (Gyekye, 1997).

Conclusion

Non-interventionistic theories of divine action posit God as being at work creatively and redemptively in and through the natural world to bring it to healing and wholeness in relational terms, not as a divine autocratic force that intervenes in the universe in an arbitrary fashion. In the African worldview God is perceived as One who created an emergent universe. Therefore, in African cosmology the Creator 'Umvelinqanti', (the Greater Power) is the ultimate source of all life and in whom all life holds together and is not at odds with biblical foundations and science. It thus contributes to Christian discourses on the ecological crisis and who lovingly relates to it, lives in, with and beyond it with utter respects and responds adequately to the limits of the ontological structure of creation. God's wisdom is entrenched in the natural/wild world. As exemplified by the first century agrarian society a world of mixed social categories representing aristocratic and peasantry both relying on land for livelihoods. Land invasion and displacement of people is the worst sin committed by imperialism in the African continent which has resulted to the contemporary ecological injustice due to communities' displacement and continued war crimes.

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