

The Application of Conscious Moral Disposition to Enhance Environmental Sustainability in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the conceptual understanding of Environmental Sustainability as it relates to human morality to maintain normal working of the ecosystem. The ecosystem is life itself, when it is busy by acts of indiscriminate human relationship with it especially, the whole natural arrangement will have to fall sick, then humanity will be very sick along side it. Then, there is a call to embrace and employ proper social and moral links between the conceptual consideration of humanity and/with the ecology. The latter houses the former; the former is met to promote and protect the latter. The whole cosmic systematic arrangement of natural events demands that human species and non-human species should be protected from avert environmental conditions which are detrimental to healthy living. This paper advocates that there is an urgent call for the respect of human rights and social justice via the adoption of moral and cultural principles as humanity relates with nature that is belong to everywhere, and this will engender a healthy environmental habitation which is the quest of any reasonable human being.

Keywords: *Ecological Development, Humanity, Morality, Environmental Sustainability*

INTRODUCTION

Now, the natures and types of development of which man seeks are greatly questioned. This is because there can be developments that are detrimental to the well-being of man, especially those ones that are associated with pollutions of common heritage of mankind, through radioactive emissions, gas inflammations and the likes, that cause human diseases, illnesses, and even natural disasters. These are violence against natures. According to Paul VI (1978) "violence is antisocial by reason of the very methods that allow it to be organized into group complicity, in which a conspiracy of silence forms the binding cement and the protective shield. A dishonouring sense of honour gives it a palliative of conscience. And this is one of the distortions, widespread today, of the true social sense, a distortion which clothes with secrecy and with the threat of pitiless revenge certain associated forms of collective selfishness." With these situations, humanity is in great danger that he imposes on himself. It is only when the environment is healthy that humanity will be healthy as well. Generally, when one talks about environmental and ecological development in the context of this paper, we are not trying to be one-sided in evaluation, but that the proper agitation

of it in application and consideration. Any development agitated for, must be for the common good of the people of the world. Anything contrary to it is a natural aberration. In this paper we explicate the need for the application of conscious moral disposition to validate human works, so that they may not be detrimental to his existence. From the etymological explanation by Imaekhai cited in Iroegbu and Echekwube (2005), the concept “morality” is derive from the term “moral” which is initially derived from the Latin word “*moralis*” which refers to “custom or way of life”. In a current usage, the term “moral” and “morality” refer to the conduct or the system of code that is upheld in any given society. A person is said to be moral if he does conforms to the approved standard of behaviour. In the word of Ekei (2001), “morality could be likened to an ocean of water which every Tom, Dick, and Harry is called to draw from, without prescribing a specific quantity. Since everybody does not know the ‘specific quantity’ more so does he need a certain inducer, or interest occasionally outside himself, which the “community” seems to supply.” With this, morality behoves on the individual to live in accordance with the communal or societal norms that agree with the sense of common goodness. Morality is always for the good of humanity, because, it is from the understanding of the natural law. Any situation, policy, dictate, regulation or command, contrary to the understanding of natural law or order is taken as an aberration.

According to Himmeifard (1968), morality refers to free decision and the values upon which it is based and not to the resulting act in itself. The moral life has to do with the very core of personal existence and not with the external and observable existence. The society presents before man what he will consider moral or immoral according to the norms and customs which he has already internalised in the understanding of natural order. The human being is so constituted, that, it is not all kinds of actions that befit his nature and lead to happiness and self-fulfilment, certain kinds of actions befit his nature, promote his general wellbeing and lead him to happiness and self-fulfilment (Omoregbe in Ndubuisi 2011). The understanding of the natural order of human affairs and actions is evaluated on the use of human reasoning in knowing what is good and then do it, and what is bad and then avoid it.

Environmental Sustainability: It is about the safeguarding of the environment for the all humans and non-humans. Humanity is a singular part of the ecology, and if it must exist environment that houses it must healthily exist, by committed cooperation of all. How can we create a healthy, enduring society? To achieve and maintain sustainability, we must integrate the ecology of biology and sociology with a new ecology of economics in finding ways to work and to live in harmony and balance with each other, other living things, and our natural environment. The health of the life-support systems - the ecosystems on our continent - is of paramount importance. Inherent in the efficient dynamics of those ecosystems is a vital profusion of biodiversity. Therefore, the Greenhouse of nature calls for a halt to the destruction of habitats, which are being sacrificed to unqualified economic expansion. We humans have a moral responsibility to all of our relations, many of which are facing extinction because we carelessly and permanently halt their long evolutionary journey. On this, John Paul II says:

Equally worrying is the ecological question which accompanies the problem of consumerism and which is closely connected to it. In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day. Man, who discovers his capacity to transform and in a certain sense create the world through his own work, forgets that this is always based on God's prior and original gift of the things that are. Man thinks that he can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to his will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which man can indeed develop but must not betray. Instead of carrying out his role as a co-operator with God in the work of creation, man sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him (John Paul, 1991, No. 37).

Today, we are confronted with growing evidence that contemporary, modern society is not sustainable. Industrialization, the dominant development paradigm of the past two centuries, is not a sustainable approach to development of either natural or human resources. Industrial systems are inherently extractive, exploitative, and are ultimately dependent upon finite stocks of non-renewable resources. Industrial systems eventually will degrade and deplete the resources upon which its productivity depends, and thus, are not sustainable. Industrialization is the physical manifestation of a specific philosophy of economics, a specific concept of science, and a specific worldview. Thus, if we are to develop a sustainable society, we must be willing to re-examine the conceptual foundation upon which our current unsustainable, unsafe, abridged society is built.

The Hinged Consideration

There is a great demand on humanity for the attainment of stable and healthy ecological living. The environment must be safeguarded from human errors. There are been visible challenges against the initial or original arrangement of the natural order which necessarily sustain lives with little or no human efforts as complementary forces of sustenance. The global case or situation calls for the institution of the culture of 'ecological humanism' where the human conscience is shaped towards the respect for human personhood, the lives of non-humans and the protection of the whole ecosystem, irrespective of what man is doing to define his essence. "This responsibility is a global one, for it is concerned not just with energy but with the whole of creation, which must not be bequeathed to future generations depleted of its resources.

Human being legitimately exercises a responsible stewardship over nature, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world's population" (Benedict XVI, 2009, No.50). In so doing, we must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction. There is need for what might be called a human ecology, correctly understood (Benedict XVI, 2009, 51). The big questions of sustainability are rooted in some of the most basic laws of nature. For example, the first law of

thermodynamics, the law of conservation of mass and energy, might seem to suggest that sustainability is ensured. Matter may be converted to energy and energy converted to matter, but energy and matter in total are conserved, and thus, remains undiminished. However, the second law of thermodynamics suggests that each time matter is converted to energy, or energy to matter, some of the “usefulness” is lost. This loss in usefulness is identified with the concept of entropy, “the ultimate state reached in degradation of matter and energy; a state of inert uniformity of component elements; absence of form, pattern, hierarchy, or differentiation.” So, the second law of thermodynamics might suggest that sustainability is impossible. With all these, natural order suggests the arrangements of purposes and interests for human growth and progress.

Everything surrounds the consideration of the human person, and though not fully understood because of his composition. The paradoxes of the human person point to two facts: the obvious fact that man is a child of nature, subject to its vicissitudes, compelled by its necessities, driven by its impulses, and confined within the brevity of his years which nature permits its varied organic form. The other fact is that man is a spirit who stands outside of nature, life, himself, his reason and the world (Udoh, Mbuk and Ejoigu, 2008). Even with these prospects, one can see that the world is sick and then man is equally very sick and ill. Its illness consist less in the unproductive monopolisation of resources by a small number of people than in the lack of brotherhood among individuals and peoples (Paul VI, 1969, No.66) especially as a result of man’s activities that lead to environmental degradations. This state of menace for man from what he produces shows itself in various directions and various degrees of intensity. We seem to be increasingly aware of the fact that the exploitation of the earth, the planet on which we are living, demands rational and honest planning (John Paul II, 1979, No. 15). All these are about the call for environmental friendliness, adaption and socialisation, and with the consciousness in sipping the importance in/of nature. It is about the change of human mentality toward positive and humanised development, therefore, we must be prepared to take on new functions and new duties in every sector of human activities and especially in the sectors of world society if justice and peace are really to be put into practice.

Sustainable development is the human moral response to think and act in the interests of themselves and their posterity, especially by protecting earth’s natural habitats. It is an approach to protecting natural environment, which is urgently in demand now for human continuity or perpetuity (Igwilo, 2009). When discussing environment what comes to mind is the condition of it. Thus the meaning of a ‘safe and healthy’ environment remains ambiguous. It can mean being in a situation where we are free from the threat of crime or from the threats of pollution. But when it is used strictly in the context of a right to safe and healthy environment it has now come to mean being free from a “particular set of threats” to human safety, namely those which stem from technological and industrial processes the disposal of sewage and wastes (Kusumalayam, 2008). It demands the collective conscience and positive symbiosis by whole humanity that she is part of the environment and it presses on her to protect it. The environment is a home which houses all that is therein. Peace is inevitable for development; this is because the effort one makes in correcting errors is

always greater than that of proper planning. A national strategic plan and war have something in common. Both have the capacity to change the face of the nation positively or negatively. A nation, which declares war without the political will to execute it, will lose. Similarly, you cannot get the full benefit of the strategic plan for a country without the political will to implement it (Onyekakeyah, 2008). United Nations' involvement and conscious commitment have shown that the attainment of peace and justice is possible, coping with the demanded cooperation from the members' States. It must be acknowledged, therefore, that the United Nations Organisation, even with limitations and delays due in great part to the failures of its members, has made a notable contribution to the promotion of respect for human dignity, the freedom of peoples and the requirements of development, thus preparing the cultural and institutional soil for the building of peace (John Paul II, 2004).

Though, the commission recognises that humanity today is in a new and more difficult phase of its genuine development, it needs a greater degree of international ordering (John Paul II, 1988, No. 43). Individual States or members must try to adhere to the dictates of the organisation. The demands of this cohesion of this international organisation and its members' States are on the elimination of conflicts and wars among nations, for political litigations and its monitoring, and economic diplomatic principles for the whole humanity that will foster the needed development as it encourages international partnership in technological, scientific, cultural, social and financial services. Then, Benedict XVI (2007, No. 28) asserts when he explains the necessity for responsible politics toward societal harmony, that; "Justice is both the aim and the intrinsic criterion of all politics. Politics is more than a mere mechanism for defining the rule of public life: its origin and its goal are found in justice, which by its very nature has to do with ethics. The State must inevitably face the question of how justice can be achieved here and now."

The Moral Value for Environmental Development

One does not talk about environmental development without recourse to the activities of man himself on whom the whole systems depend upon. The management of the arrangement belongs to him, and the benefits of the proper management of it are for his comfort and peace. One agitates for developmental peace in modern society in which we now live in, because the environment has been hampered heavily by the activities of human beings, which are not favourable to its design and purpose. Even, the ecological system has been affected greatly too. These have been a danger for the future generations that are to come to meet the deplorable state of nature which man has caused for himself. Even, the present generation is not left out in the suffering condition. We all have collective responsibility to the environment, for the benefits of human and non-human organisms.

Morality is the sole of humanity in questioning all its activities, using ethical principles. We know that "we have before us here a great drama that can leave nobody indifferent. The person who is trying to draw the maximum profit and, on the other hand, is paying the price in damage and injury is always man. The drama is made still worse by the presence close at hand of the privileged social classes and of the rich countries, which accumulate goods to an excessive degree and the misuse, whose riches very often becomes the cause

of various ills” (John Paul II, 1979, No.16). Man is allowed to use his God-given talents, not to exploit but to explore his environment, in order to derive comfort and joys in it all. In another light, man and nations should allow their freedom to be controlled by morality, spirit of common goodness, diplomatic interest and respect for local and international agencies’ policies, even in the name of military, scientific and technological advancements. It is a shared concern which must necessarily not think of by any and every individual, and nobody should think that his or her effort cannot be counted as a solution for change, especially when it is positive and pragmatic. This responsibility is a global one, for it is concerned not just with energy but with the whole of creation, which must not be bequeathed to future generations depleted of its resources. Human beings legitimately exercise a responsible stewardship over nature, in order to protect it, to enjoy its fruits and to cultivate it in new ways, with the assistance of advanced technologies, so that it can worthily accommodate and feed the world’s population (Benedict XVI, 2009, No.50).

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Environmental and ecological developments are the progressive change, which the potentials of the earth by the individuals and State’s authority make for the betterment of humanity. The issues of the provisions of basic amenities, such as, power, water, security, medicines and the likes, should be with principles of nature. It is the nature of man to seek positive development, not contrary, so the activities of the application of the tools of science and technology should be properly examined and monitored in fostering developments in the world.

CONCLUSION

After the examination of the value of ecological sustainability and the consideration of healthy moral principles that necessarily promote peace, justice and respect for human life and dignity, which are necessary ingredients of human and societal development, one has seen that the society in the name of every human community cannot be sustained if human values are not highly placed. "In order for individual men to discharge with greater exactness the obligations of their conscience toward themselves and the various groups to which they belong, they must be carefully educated to a higher degree of culture through the use of the immense resources available today to the human race" (Vatican II Council, *Guadium et Spes*, Rome, 1965, No.33). In the name of everything man does; including culture, human life, rights and dignity must be respected, promoted and protected, and then the ecological natural order will be sustained. The environment is humanity itself and it should be protected as such, otherwise both will lose their meaning and worth.

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