IN DEFENCE OF RELATIONAL ANTHROPOCENTRISM: TOWARDS A TOTAL FIELD IMAGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

I argue that strong anthropocentric values are antithetical to environmental ethics. Thus, strong anthropocentrism is responsible for the mistreatment of animals, environmental degradation, and depletion of resources. As an alternative to strong anthropocentrism this paper defends the idea of relational anthropocentrism which stands for the belief that a viable environmental ethics draws on the fundamental interdependence among human beings, animals, plants, and non-animate nature. This position draws on the conviction that human beings are members of the ecological community, and their well-being is inextricably bound to the safety of the animate and non-animate members of this community.

Keywords

Resumen

Sostengo que los valores antropocéntricos fuertes son antitéticos a la ética medioambiental. Así, el antropocentrismo fuerte es responsable del maltrato de los animales, la degradación del medio ambiente y el agotamiento de los recursos. Como alternativa al antropocentrismo fuerte, este documento defiende la idea del antropocentrismo relacional, que defiende la creencia de que una ética medioambiental viable se basa en la interdependencia fundamental entre los seres humanos, los animales, las plantas y la naturaleza no animada. Esta postura se basa en la convicción de que los seres humanos son miembros de la comunidad ecológica y su bienestar está inextricablemente ligado a la seguridad de los miembros animados y no animados de esta comunidad.

Palabras clave

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Environmental ethics as a professional discipline emerged out of concern for the environment created by Earth Day in 1970. There was also a growing dissatisfaction with the instrumental and anthropocentric arguments which put the accent on human use and benefit. The recent discourse on environmental philosophy seeks to dislodge the anthropocentric and instrumental environmental ethics and replace it with a non-anthropocentric and intrinsic environmental ethics. Thus, contemporary environmentalism is grounded in the belief that the root

cause of the current ecological crisis is inherently philosophical since it is deeply rooted in the ontological, epistemological, and moral assumptions of Western anthropocentrism (Hargrove 1992, 183). The quest for alternative theories led philosophers to explore non-Western systems of thought with a view to find an alternative sound environmental ethics. As a result, the study of the traditions and systems of thought of non-Western societies such as Native Americans, Asians, Australian Aborigines, and others has become timely and significant. These non-Western traditions recognize the intrinsic value of the natural world which lead to deep ecological values and principles. However, it should be born in mind that anthropocentrism is not a synonym for instrumental value (Hargrove 1992, 183–84).

In this paper I am trying to synthesize eco-centric or deep ecological values with anthropocentrism by taking the case of indigenous African thought and values. J. Baird Callicott is right to argue that "indigenous African religions tend to be both monotheistic and anthropocentric" (Callicott 1997, 157). But he fails to see the relational aspect of African anthropocentrism. I contend that a relational anthropocentrism revolves around human interests without losing sight of the complex cobweb of ecological relationships among the human and non-human environment. My purpose in this paper is to argue that the African worldview is grounded in relational anthropocentrism. Although Africa is a big and diverse continent, there are common values and traditions in sub-Saharan Africa discovered by an old anthropological tradition. Thus, African thought recognizes that human beings are interdependent and interrelated with the rest of nature. So, I argue that anthropocentrism should be tainted with moral responsibility towards the animate and non-

animate environment. The fundamental problem of the dominant environmental ethics, theories and perspectives is the moral standing of the animate and non-animate things. Thus, this article seeks to outline the underlying premises of African indigenous systems of thought concerning the environment with a view to suggest a relational understanding of anthropocentrism as a viable ecological principle.

The Phenomenological Approach to Morality

One of the major reasons for valuing the environment could be it is endowed with certain fundamental properties which need to be recognized, preserved, and respected. This understanding of environmental values as real properties of the natural world is associated with realist, biocentric or more exactly ecocentric view of the environment. O'Neill says that the proponents of realist forms of ecocentric ethics contend that the value of nature is an intrinsic and objective property of the natural world regardless of the existence of human beings who recognize these properties of the natural world (O'Neill 1997, 127). On the other hand, a strong anthropocentric ethics is liable to environmental risks. It is important to explain the difference between anthropocentrism and deep ecology. Anthropocentrism is a strand of environmental thought that focuses merely on human interests without paying due attention to the interest of other species and the well-being of the environment. So, anthropocentrism can be literally defined as human-centred environmental ethic that seeks to justify the worth of the natural environment in terms of its instrumental value for human beings. On the other hand, deep ecology is a strand of environmental thought that seeks to underwrite the intrinsic worth of the natural environment regardless of human interests and needs. Thus, my objective is to

demonstrate the overlaps between the above-mentioned environmental values through the idea of relational anthropocentrism.

I strongly believe that eco-centric and deep ecological values derive their appeal and significance from the human perspective that recognizes the moral worth of the animate and non-animate nature. Thus, the very belief in the moral worth and value of the ecosystem derives its origin from the enlightened and responsible human individual. That is, an anthropocentric argument is inevitable, but it is rendered weaker with the increasing recognition of interdependence and mutual founding of the ecological community. However, human beings have a distinctive role in this community in terms of setting norms and values that protect the underlying ecological balance. If anthropocentric ethics is understood to mean imposing human values on the natural world without due concern to the protection and reverence of the natural world, then a realist and ecocentric approach is more appropriate than anthropocentric values. Thus, deep ecological values underpin the relevance of animal rights and the rights of nature in general. But still, a plausible anthropocentric approach is useful to "provide a very great proportion of what many people hope to find in a realist and ecocentric approach" (*Ibid.*, 128).

The notion of relational anthropocentrism is deployed exactly for this purpose. The idea is that a realist approach to environmental ethics magnifies the negative aspects of the anthropocentric environmental ethics. Anthropocentric ethical theories include different versions of consequentialism, Kantianism as well as contractarianism which justify moral behaviour in line with human interests exclusively. It is argued that anthropocentric positions risk speciesism which is "a label for unjustified preference for the human species" (*Ibid.*). Thus, speciesism is criticized for its

denial of the moral standing of the environment including animals, plants, rivers and "abstract entities such as species, habitats and ecosystems, bio-diversity and the ozone layer" (*Ibid.*, 129). However, I agree with O'Neill that it is wrong to argue that anthropocentric values are totally committed to speciesism and are indifferent to the moral standing of non-humans as "many anthropocentric positions have benign implications for environmental issues, and specifically for the lives of non-human animals" (*Ibid.*). Utilitarianism is a good example to illustrate this point because it accords moral standing to all sentient animals since they can suffer.

O'Neill points out, "by taking sentience rather than ability to reason as the criterion of moral standing, utilitarians can show the ethical importance of animal welfare; some of them even aim or claim to justify a conception of animal liberation" (*Ibid.*). However, utilitarianism is also susceptible to speciesist interpretation because of John Stuart Mill's distinction between low and high pleasures. O'Neill says, "utilitarian reasoning about required trade-offs between different types of pleasure may demand that human happiness (of the higher sort) be pursued at the cost of large amounts of porcine misery" (*Ibid.*). The other problem with utilitarianism is that it heavily relies on subjective conception of value that accommodates sentient beings excluding "non-sentient beings or dispersed and abstract features of the environment: anything that is not sentient cannot suffer or enjoy, so is denied moral standing" (*Ibid.*, 130). It is also important to note that utilitarianism is highly selective allowing a trade off in terms of the principle of the happiness of the greatest number. O'Neill stresses that some anthropocentric ethical positions are less amenable to speciesism than utilitarianism since they have a more

comprehensive and coherent outlook towards the environment. For instance, moral theories that appeal to action as opposed to results are obviously anthropocentric, in that it is only humans who have full capacity for agency in the sense of complying with or flouting ethical rules and principles. He says, "act-centered ethics, in its many forms, seeks to establish certain principles of obligation, or certain rights, which are to constrain not only individual action but institutions and practices" (*Ibid.*, 131). On this basis one can assert that act-centered ethics is less prone to speciesism since it focuses on rights and obligations rather than results.

Most modern moral theories such as Kantianism, utilitarianism, contractarianism, and egoism have naturalistic assumptions in the sense of specifying "determinable fixed obligations." These obligations are independent of subjective desires, beliefs, and feelings (Brown 2003, 9). Modern moral theories appeal to "the notion of objectivity developed to support the realistic metaphysical interpretation of res extensa" (*Ibid.*). I think the application of this notion of objectivity to morality is questionable. The naturalistic notion of moral objectivity runs parallel with the natural sciences' underlying metaphysical assumption. This renders the right prior to the good in the sense that "such a schema fits the projects of power and control better than the simple desire to gain insight and wisdom and to practice tolerance and compassion" (*Ibid.*, 10). That is, naturalistic moral theory seeks to uncover fundamental moral principles or rules that guide human action without a human perspective, or it is a view from nowhere. This kind of approach neutralizes human lived experiences making them morally irrelevant. Thus, positive human emotions and feelings such as compassion and care remain unaccounted for in the naturalistic notion of objectivity.

A phenomenological and critical approach to moral philosophy gives considerable attention and respect to the pre-theoretical experience of traditional societies. Thus, there is a need to endorse a kind of moral pluralism in which multiple moral perspectives are entertained. The phenomenological approach to morality seeks to locate the essence of moral experience in "the irreducible domains of lifeworldly experience" (*Ibid.*). In our pre-theoretical experience, we find ourselves in a lifeworld infused with meaning and value. That is, we are morally satisfied or frustrated by the continuous flow of actions and events in the world. "Our everyday life is filled with moral sentiments that appear from a phenomenological perspective as instances of a pre-reflective axiological consciousness—that is, as an intentional and evaluative aiming at objects and states of affairs" (*Ibid.*, 11). In our everyday life values and meaning are forms of intentional consciousness in which the valuing subject and the object of value are given simultaneously. This is implied by the famous dictum "back to things themselves," and thereby acknowledging the primal unity of the valuing subject and the object of value (*Ibid.*).

The phenomenological understanding of the Good evolves through continuous reassessment of changing experiences. That is, certain actions are justified considering the intersubjective intentionalities which "experience something as good and desirable from one perspective and later experience that same thing as evil or undesirable from another" (*Ibid.*). The mere recognition of our dependency on the biotic community of our planet is a sufficient justification for the "massive and inescapable interdependency" of all species as members of an ecological community with shared goods (*Ibid.*, 12). Brown explicitly states,

"Our pretheoretical experience, infused with cognitive, evaluative, and volitional moments, is not the experience of

an 'objective world' but rather it is this meaningful order, provided by the presence, activities, and function of life that provides the deep context for the emergence of moral experience... This meaningful order of purpose and value is part of the unnoticed background of experience available for phenomenological reflection" (*Ibid.*, 13).

Relational Anthropocentrism and African Folk Thought

Traditional societies have their own indigenous values that constitute their pre-theoretical lifeworld and lived experience. The idea of Ubuntu/Hunhu/Botho is a value discovered through ethnological and anthropological inquiry into the foundations of indigenous systems of thought in Sub-Saharan Africa. The concept of Ubuntu is derived from "the moral beliefs and practices of those who speak Nguni languages, from which the term originated, as well as of those who have lived near and with them, such as Sotho-Tswana and Shona speakers"(Metz 2011, 535-536). The concept of Ubuntu was popularized during the fall down of Apartheid regime in South Africa and following the new developments with the end of the Cold War which led to increased sense of independence from colonial domination (Manrique Gil 2010, 14). Thus, more attention was given to the study of "the unnoticed background of experience" that engenders a critical reflection on the underlying premises of the background values of indigenous societies as in Africa.

I seek to discuss and explain the ecological implications of the concept of Ubuntu by outlining its underlying philosophical assumptions. The concept of ubuntu/hunhu/botho is not synonymous with humanism especially as it is understood in Western philosophy. Humanness is a better translation of the concept than humanism. Humanism implies the reification of human

identity in a set of principles or values whereas humanness implies openness to manifold human experiences without being aligned to a predetermined identity. Thus, the importance of the distinction between humanness and humanism lies in their implication for the development of human possibilities; humanness is akin to complementarity and relationality by being open to human possibilities whereas humanism prematurely restricts human possibilities by identifying humanity with certain predetermined qualities. The concept of humanness implies "openness or ceaseless unfolding" by which states of being and becoming are revealed at the same time. As a result, it is opposed to the reification of thought in the form an -ism including humanism to indicate openness or ceaseless unfolding in contrast to closedness and finality (Ramose 2005, 105). The fundamental difference between humanness and humanism pertains to two different conception of reality or being. Humanness implies the wholeness of the universe involving the complexity of the human and the non-human universe. This complexity by no means implies chaos but rather "the intrinsic order of the universe" (*Ibid.*). This idea illustrates the ecosophical element of Ubuntu for Ramose.

The concept of Ubuntu is defined as "to be human is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others and, on that basis, establish human relations with them" (Ramose 2005, 106). Thus, the core idea of the concept of Ubuntu is humanness or humanity in the sense of being respectful and polite towards others. Ramose uses the terms "mutual foundedness" and "complementarity" to describe the central idea of Ubuntu (*Ibid.*). Ramose says, "wholeness is the regulative principle here since what is asserted is that the single individual is incomplete without the other" (*Ibid.*). The relation between human beings and the non-human world is governed by the principle of wholeness. Thus,

human solidarity and harmony through care for one another involves care for non-human animals and the physical world. In the absence of this caring relationship, the interdependence between the human and non-human world is jeopardized. It is also important to note that human beings are constituted by physical nature despite their privileged status in it. Hence, caring human relationships involve care for physical nature. That means care and solidarity among human beings has positive ecological implications.

Ramose says, "the concept of harmony in African thought is comprehensive in the sense that it conceives of balance in terms of the totality of the relations that can be maintained between human beings amongst themselves as well as between human beings and physical nature" (*Ibid.*). Harmony among living and non-living things is the supreme ecological principle in African indigenous philosophy of Ubuntu. Reality or being is understood in terms of harmony or wholeness. Ramose says, "without motion, being as enfoldment cannot unfold" (*Ibid.*). The term wholeness as the representation of objects of experience is not susceptible to absolutism and dogmatism to assert its authority. However, the idea of wholeness as a linguistic concepts liable to dogmatism and absolutism to assert its authority because it leads to absolutist conception of truth that undermine all other ways of knowing by making the individual the center of cognition (*Ibid.*, 107). The concept "leads easily to the false idea that the speaker declaring a particular experience does so standing at the center of the universe" (*Ibid.*,107). Furthermore, placing the self at the centre of the universe risks evading the truth.

According to Ramose "there is never a final immutable whole but only enduring and transient wholes always governed by the principle of motion responsible for change" (*Ibid.*, 108). Thus, the African conception of being is

understood as wholeness in the sense of openness or ceaseless unfolding. This testifies to the idea that Ubuntu is humanness as opposed to humanism as a continuous process of unfolding or becoming without any finality or closedness (*Ibid.*). The central insight of the concept of Ubuntu is "the dignity and importance of the individual human being can best be understood in terms of relations with other human beings as well as relations with physical nature" (*Ibid.*, 109). I contend that the concept of relational anthropocentrism implies human dignity is contingent upon relations with fellow human beings and physical nature. Benez Bujo highlights the relational interdependence of human life and the whole of nature in African indigenous thought. He says, "the African is convinced that all things in the cosmos are interconnected. All natural forces depend on each other, so that human beings can live in harmony only *in* and *with* the whole of nature" (Bujo quoted in Behrens 2010, 469). African indigenous thought recognizes the non-instrumental good inherent in nature (Behrens 2010, 471). African thought is commonly understood to be communitarian in contrast to the Western emphasis on individual autonomy "Africans place a high value on the group: the family, the clan, the community" (*Ibid.* , 472). Thus, African morality is fundamentally relational. African environmental ethics is based on the idea of interdependence in the sense that "human beings are bound up in a kind of community with other living beings" (*Ibid.*).

There is some empirical evidence for Africa's worst environmental records on earth because of population density, poverty and unsustainable and traditional agricultural practices (UNEP 2005, p.4-5). However, one should not risk hasty generalizations. African indigenous communities such as the Oromos of Ethiopia have developed a robust environmental ethics (Kelbessa 2005, 21).

Although the Oromo environmental ethics is anthropocentric and pragmatic, it has also spiritual and moral dimensions (*Ibid.*, 21-22). Kalbessa says, "For them(the Oromo), land is not only a resource for humans' utilitarian ends, but also it has its own inherent value given to it by *Waaqa* (God)" (*Ibid.*, 22). It is important to note that both traditional and modern environmental values in Ethiopia are religious. However, Kalbessa notes, "the Oromo people critically reflect on and develop their moral rules through discussion and within the framework of their national assemblies, so as to maintain their contemporary efficacy under changing conditions, technologies and the modern world" (*Ibid.*). There is a concept of "Saffuu" which serves as the moral compass of the Oromo people. According to Kalbessa , "*Saffuu* is a moral concept that serves as the ethical basis for regulating practices in order to ensure a high standard of conduct appropriate to different situations" (*Ibid.*, 23). The concept of Saffuu encourages mutual respect in the form of respecting one another's spirit (or what the people call in their ordinary language called "Ayyanna"). Kalbessa explains, "According to the Oromo, *saffuu* is *ulfina* (respect). We need to show respect to our father, mother, aunt, uncle, and our mother Earth" (*Ibid.*, 24). In general, the Oromo traditional religion encourages establishing sound relationship between human beings and nature (*Ibid.*, 25).

African traditional thought is also vitalist, bio-centric and teleological which appeals to sentience. The concept of sentience refers to "the ability of any being to feel and experience pleasure, pain or consciousness" (Chemhuru 2019, 34). The idea of telos is a recurrent idea in the history of Western philosophy which is traced back to Aristotle. There are many overlaps between the Aristotelian conception of telos and the sub-Saharan African

understanding of telos as both conceptions associate the nature of being or existence with an ultimate purpose such as the good life. Scholars who studied the indigenous belief system of African communities such Placide Tempels attest to the existence of a teleological metaphysics in Bantu systems of thought. The African conception of being is not just metaphysical, it has also a teleological dimension. That is, "Reality is, within the African context, mostly explained in terms of whether, how, and why certain things are what they are and why they happen the way they do" (Chemhuru 2016, 43). This does not mean that African environmental ethics is indifferent to the inherent value of the natural environment. Rather the idea is that there is a teleological symbiosis between human communities and the natural environment (*Ibid.*). Aside from the teleological belief, there are pluralities of values in African environmental ethics such as biocentrism and vitalism. Although these values are not perfectly coherent, they are positive variables in the teleological African worldview as there is a symbiotic relationship between human and natural flourishing in a teleological ethics. This implies that the flourishing of all forms of life such as human, animal, and plant life is central to the African teleological ethics. Moreover, sub-Saharan African thought sanctifies all form of life. For this reason, the flourishing of all forms of life is considered to be the ultimate end of existence. Hence, this explains the biocentrism that resonates in African vitalism by way of promoting respect for all forms of life or vitality that exists in the natural environment (Chemhuru 2016, 45-47).

It is also important to highlight the idea that sentience is an "accurate shorthand for the capacity to suffer and/or experience" (Singer 2015, 38). The fact that a being suffers is a sufficient justification for moral consideration. Thus, some animals are worthy of moral consideration. However, it is

important to note that "when we do value, we value necessarily from a human perspective but not necessarily in terms of human instrumental interests ..." (Hargrove 1992, 202). So, it is impossible to avoid the human perspective from our moral judgement. But this does not mean that all moral reasoning is essentially anthropocentric rather both intrinsic and instrumental values are the products of human moral judgement. Thus, the term anthropocentric intrinsic value is more appealing conceptually than the term non-anthropocentric intrinsic value as the latter sounds redundant (*Ibid.*). I agree with Leopold that human beings are members of an ecological community of interdependent parts (Leopold 1949, 203-204). This idea is the essence of the concept of relational anthropocentrism in the sense that it highlights the fact that animals, plants, soils, and waters are interdependent and mutually reinforcing parts of the ecological community (*Ibid.*). Aldo Leopold rightly points out, "a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such" (*Ibid.*). Thus, economic rationality is not the sole motive for moral consideration as "most members of the land community have no economic value...yet these creatures are members of the biotic community, and if its stability depends on its integrity, they are entitled to continuance" (*Ibid.*, 210).

Deep Ecology and a Total Field Image of the Environment

Deep Ecology is a normative and Ecophilosophical as opposed to being ecological and scientific in the sense of using strict methods (Naess 1972, 98-99). It is important to note that an ecological principle cannot be devoid of a human perspective regardless of how deep it is. Some might

argue that we could think of an ethical perspective from an alien's point of view or God's point of view which is completely indifferent to the human perspective. But those points of view may not account for the human environment. That is, they are to be imagined in a totally different context from the one that human beings find themselves in. So, I contend that the attempt to undermine the human perspective through the mere notion of non-anthropocentric ethics is highly susceptible to criticism. I defend the idea of relational anthropocentrism[1] to account for this problem. That is, the idea of relational anthropocentrism is a version of intrinsic anthropocentrism that seeks to synthesise deep ecology and anthropocentrism. I contend that my attempt to sysnthesize relational ethics and anthropocentrism through the notion of relational anthropocentrism seems to reasonably cohere with Arne Naess' deep ecological framework. As deep ecologists are not as such against the human perspective understood from the moral point of view rather, they are against the central position of human beings in the world.

According to Naess, the first attribute of deep ecology is the rejection the central position of human beings in the environment in favor of "the relational, total field image"(Naess 1972, 95). This image of the environment considers all forms of life as "knots in the bio-spherical net or field of intrinsic relations" (Naess 1972, 95). The idea of intrinsic relations refers to the relationship between two or more things in which the relations constitute the very essence of the things in question. Thus, this understanding

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[1] A relational approach to environmental ethics is developed by some authors who write on African environmental values such as Kevin Berhens (2010, 2014). However, as far as I am concerned, little attempt is made to synthesize relational ethics and anthropocentrism in the form relational anthropocentrism.

dissolves the concept of man as the center of the world except for a purpose of moral communication (*Ibid.*). It must be noted that the idea of relational anthropocentrism is opposed to the central position of human beings in the environment by highlighting the fact that human beings cannot survive independent of the other members of the ecological community. But even this position requires human or anthropocentric moral decision without which it is of no effect.

The second attribute is bio-spherical egalitarianism in principle. The clause in principle implies the necessity of "some killing, exploitation and suppression" involved in realistic ventures. I think the necessity for some killing and exploitation seems to put a dark spot on the notion of bio-spherical egalitarianism and respect for all forms of life. However, the notions of respect and bio-spherical egalitarianism are anthropocentric values with ecological import. So, to realize these ecological ideals it may be imperative to engage in some killing and exploitation for the greater good of the entire members of the ecological community. The ecologist is tuned to respect and even revere all forms of life (*Ibid.*). The source of this respect and reverence for all forms life is the human feelings for fellow human beings and "for a narrow section of ways and forms of life" (*Ibid.*, 96). The equal right to live and blossom is an intuitively valid moral value for the ecologist. Thus, the sole application of this value to humanity breeds unrestrained anthropocentrism "with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves" (*Ibid.*), that is, the quality of human life is contingent on the "deep pleasure and satisfaction" we get from the company of all forms of life. Thus, the failure to understand our dependence on other forms of life by way of affirming our central position in the

universe has "contributed to the alienation of man from himself" (*Ibid.*).

The third attribute has to do with the principles of diversity and symbiosis. Naess points out that diversity is fundamental to the survival of all forms of life. So, the idea of the survival of the fittest must be construed in terms of the ability to maintain the complex ecological relations among different forms of life as opposed to annihilating and exploiting the other forms of life. Naess says, "live and let live' is a more powerful ecological principle than 'either you or me'" (*Ibid.*). Thus, speciesist dichotomies are liable for annihilating other forms of life and thereby reducing "the multiplicity of kinds of forms of life, and also to create destruction within the communities of the same species" (*Ibid.*). Ecologically sound attitudes protect "the diversity of human ways of life, of cultures, of occupations, of economies" (*Ibid.*). They encourage social justice, peace, and harmony among all forms of life as much as human tribes and cultures (*Ibid.*). The idea of relational anthropocentrism is committed to the notions of diversity and symbiosis because relational anthropocentrism draws on the philosophy of Ubuntu which focuses on complementarity, mutual foundedness and interdependence.

The fourth attribute is anti-class posture. The idea of anti-class posture draws on the recognition that the asymmetry among human species is due to planned or unplanned exploitation and suppression of one group by other groups. Although the exploiter seems to enjoy a comparative advantage over the exploited, both are deprived of their potentialities for self-realization. Thus, an ecologically sound human culture is premised on egalitarianism and symbiotic co-existence (*Ibid.*). The idea of relational anthropocentrism is premised on the realization of the complementarity and mutual foundedness of all forms

of life including human life. So, I claim that relational anthropocentrism has an anti-class posture.

The fifth attribute is fight against pollution and resource depletion. Naess points out that ecologists have found powerful allies in the fight against pollution and resource depletion, but they are forced to compromise on their stand. That is, activities aimed at reducing pollution risk the increase in other kinds of evils such as class disparity because rising cost of life with the increased use of eco-friendly technologies (*Ibid.*, 97). The idea of relational anthropocentrism encourages a safe and healthy environment for all species by fighting against pollution and depletion of resources because the ideals of complementarity and interdependence require caring for the safety and sustainability of the environment.

The sixth attribute is complexity, not complication. Complexity refers to "a multiplicity of more or less lawful, interacting factors may operate together to form a unity, a system" (*Ibid.*). The application of this concept to the human sciences has to do with division of labor as opposed to the fragmentation of labor (*Ibid.*). Thus, complexity favors economies in which a variety of activities such as industrial, agricultural, intellectual, and manual works are integrated and organized to run society efficiently (*Ibid.*, 97-98). It goes without saying that the very attempt to synthesize relational ethics and anthropocentrism draws from the observation of the complexity of the environment that we live in. So, the idea is borne out of a realization on the part of human beings about the interdependence and complementarity of all forms of life.

The seventh and last attribute is local autonomy and decentralization. It should be born in mind that an autonomous form of life is less vulnerable to ecological disequilibrium. This justifies the need for local autonomy

and self-government. Thus, decentralization of power is a democratic principle with sound ecological implications (*Ibid.*, 98). It must be noted that the attempt to synthesize anthropocentrism and relational ethics is intended for the purpose of formulating a moral theory that decentralizes the role of human beings in the environment by recognizing the intrinsic qualities of all forms of life. To sum up, it is important to note that the above principles and values are not logical inductions but rather they are suggested by ecological knowledge and the lifestyle of the ecological field worker inspired by the perspectives of the Deep Ecology movement. The Māori indigenous civilization is the best example for deep ecological beliefs and values because they have a lifestyle and civilization deeply embedded in the land and natural features(Boyes 2010, 3). According to Boyes(2010, 3), the Māori believe that human beings are members of a broader ecological family that incorporates the natural environment and humanity at large. The Māori legend of creation is based on the oneness of the environment, ancestors and human beings. Boyes says, "A commonly practised Māori tradition is to bury the placenta and umbilical of a new child on land of personal significance."(2010, 4) This implies that the Māori identify with nature and environment.

Conclusion

The foregoing discussion and analysis emphasizes the idea that human beings are members of the ecological community which comprises the animate and non-animate environment. This understanding is essential to highlight the interdependence of all species on our planet. Strong anthropocentrism is liable to ignore the mutual advantage entailed by the continuation of all forms of life on the planet Earth. On contrary, relational anthropocentrism recognizes

the interdependence of human beings, animals, plants, soils, and waters to sustain the complexity and diversity of the biotic community for the generations to come. Therefore, this paper defends the idea of relational anthropocentrism drawing on indigenous African values and belief systems such as Ubuntu in which the complementarity and interdependence of all forms of life are central ideas. It should also be noted that although indigenous African values are anthropocentric, they are cognizant of the interdependence and complementarity of all forms of life including human life. In this paper I argued that the best way to characterize African environmental thought is to synthesize relational ethics and anthropocentrism with a view to defend an African version of Arne Naess' deep ecological total field image of the environment.

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