

THE CONCEPT OF AFROECOSOLIDARITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT

Mark Omorovie Ikeke, PhD

Department of Religious Studies & Philosophy,

Delta State University, Abraka

ikeke7@yahoo.com

Abstract

The African environment, both social and natural, is degraded and polluted. The African environment is plagued by problems such as human-wild life conflicts, atmospheric pollution, deforestation, desertification, terrorism, wars and violence, etc. Various theories have been proposed in social and environmental thoughts such as biocentrism, ecocentrism, ecofeminism, and so forth in dealing with the environmental crisis. In spite of these theories the environmental crisis has continued and is raging on. This paper proposes a new concept that is deeply rooted in African beliefs and practices as a panacea to the environmental crisis in Africa. This concept is termed Afroecosolidarity. This term is actually the combination of three terms, Africa (Afro), ecological (eco), and solidarity. The paper argues that the African belief in interconnectedness, inter-relatedness of all lives and entities in the cosmos necessitated responding in relating with human beings and the natural world in a healthy and sustainable manner. This feeling and praxis of unity and concern is termed solidarity and because it not just for human beings but for all life, it is called ecosolidarity. Rooted in African thought system it becomes Afroecosolidarity. The paper will use critical hermeneutics and analysis to examine this phenomenon. What impedes its fruitful practices is also examined with how it can be fostered. The paper finds that there are indigenous foundations that ground the notion of ecological solidarity (ecosolidarity). The paper concludes that a practice of ecosolidarity informed by African value will help to curb the environmental challenges in Africa.

Keywords: Africa, Ecology, Solidarity, Ecosolidarity, Environment, Afroecosolidarity.

Introduction

In the year 2005 this present author proposed and developed the concept of “ecosolidarity” as a panacea to environmental problems. In the dissertation titled, “Redesigning an Ecosolidarity and Indigenously-Informed Education,” the author argued that all forms of educational curriculum in Nigeria both religious and secular need to be informed by environmental preservation themes and also be attentive to indigenous challenges such as the quest for socioeconomic and cultural rights. To the best knowledge of this author an explication of that concept was not available previously. There were definitions and explanations of the notion of solidarity. There were terms like “eco solidarity”, and “eco-solidarity” but a conceptualization of the term “ecosolidarity” for ecojustice, and socioeconomic and environmental harmony was lacking.

That theme of ecosolidarity is what this paper pursues further in this work. The environmental problem in Africa has continued unabated and Africa is still witnessing ethno-cultural struggles by her various peoples for their group rights have been trampled upon by colonial and global imperial forces. Tragically, both the human beings and environment in Africa are under serious siege. In terms of human and social welfare Africans are suffering under-underdevelopment precipitated by corrupt and inept leadership. Africa is grossly underdeveloped. Among the problems plaguing the continent are corruption, poverty, terrorism, forced and illegal migration, and unemployment. All these problems have negative impacts on the welfare of the human persons. Invariably they also affect both human and environmental health. The state of the African natural environment leaves much to be desired. The natural environment of Africa is degraded and polluted. Agbese (2008), Alokwu (2018), and Ndungu (2005), all testify to the fact that the African environment is degraded and polluted through such anthropogenic activities as deforestation, desertification, mis-management of solid waste, gas flaring, etc.

In this present work, this paper moves beyond the concept of ecosolidarity to speak of Afroecosolidarity. The aim is to present an African foundation and provide a basis for the philosophy of ecosolidarity. It is grounding the concept of ecosolidarity in African indigenous ecocultural thought and practices that this paper calls Afroecosolidarity. In pursuing this goal of the paper, the critical hermeneutic, and analytic methods are used. The major concepts that ground this paper such as Africa, ecosolidarity, Afroecosolidarity, and environment are examined. Ecosolidarity is concerned not just for the natural environment but also the social environment in which human persons live. Both the social and natural environment are inter-connected and should not be separated from one another.

The features and problems confronting the praxis of Afroecosolidarity will also be explicated. The implications and applications of the Afroecosolidarity will not be left out. And before the paper concludes there will be a look at ways and channels to promote the philosophy of Afroecosolidarity.

Conceptual Analyses and Clarifications

Important concepts that pervade this paper are Africa, solidarity, ecosolidarity, Afroecosolidarity, and environment. The concept of Africa adopted here is that of continental Africa, as distinct from the other continents in the world. The continent of Africa is the second largest in the world and is considered the birthplace of human civilization. Before the advent of the Whiteman to Africa, the peoples of the continent have their indigenous beliefs, cosmologies, worldviews and practices. These beliefs and practices were by and large undiluted by western beliefs and practices. The advent of the Whiteman to Africa brought foreign beliefs and practices that have impacted African indigenous beliefs. In spite of this, there are still many places in Africa and in the African diasporic world where indigenous beliefs and practices still predominate. By Africa in this paper the focus is on continental Africa though by implications, the ecological values derived from Africa have global implications.

Another key concept in this paper is solidarity. When the term solidarity is mentioned the minds of some immediately goes to the radical political movement called Solidarity that arose in Poland in 1980 led by Lech Walesa to fight communism. This movement successfully brought about the fall of the Communist powers in Poland. In that movement the people stood together in unity to struggle against the evils of the Communist power. Harper (2021) states that the term solidarity is etymologically derived from the 1829 French word, "solidarite," which means "communion of interests and responsibilities, mutual responsibility." Harper states further that it is a coinage of the 1765 Encyclope; "Die" from the word, "solidaire" (interdependent, entire or complete). Solidarity is a dynamic and action word. It is interactive communion of interests linked in a mutuality network. Solidarity speaks of unity and togetherness. Hobgood (2007) states that: "Solidarity is grounded in the reality that all human beings, their welfare, and the social structures in which they live, are interrelated" (p. 1306-1307). Writing further, Hobgood (2007) argues that: "Solidarity is engagement in concrete socio-political struggle that responds to the analysis of interstructured oppression as understood by liberation theology and ethics" (p. 1307). Writing from a social perspective, Jary and Jary (2000) enunciate that it is the degree of

integration shown by a social group and it can be based on kinship, shared values or mutual relations. Murithi (2006) explaining social solidarity writes that it is recognition of the humanness of other human persons, sharing in fostering human wellbeing and welfare, promoting safety, security and inter-connectedness. At this point is it important to emphasize that solidarity is deeper than human interrelatedness. It goes deep to intricate interrelatedness and connections between/among all that exists including plants, animals, and all entities in the cosmos. This idea is well stated by Francis (2015) when he writes that: "...everything is closely interrelated," for nature cannot be separated from human society. The environmental crisis is also a human crisis.

By its very definition, the term solidarity already implies ecology, for it speaks of the inter-connections and inter-relations and inter-actions of all beings in the cosmos. For the term, "ecology", it comes from two Greek words, "oikos" (household or home) and "logos" (study or discourse). Davila (2007) describes it as "the study of the multiple relationships of coexistence, production, and consumption in environments composed of living and non-living things" (p. 388). Mayhew (2009) opines that: "The study of the interrelationships between organisms and their surroundings, outer world; the study of animals and plants in relation to each other and their habitats" (p. 147). Allison (2009) describes three ways the term ecology is used: (1) intellectual study of interactions among living things in their environment; (2) the system of interactive relationships among species; and (3) a political moral programme of actions aiming to promote the health of ecosystems and humans. A very good definition of ecology is given by Francis (2005) when he enunciates that:

Ecology studies the relationship between living organisms and the environment in which they develop. This necessarily entails reflection and debate about the conditions required for the life and survival of society, and the honesty needed to question certain models of development, production and consumption. It cannot be emphasized enough how everything is interconnected.... Just as the different aspects of the planet – physical, chemical and biological – are interrelated, so too living species are part of a network which we will never fully explore and understand (p. 79).

The term environment is often used in some cycles interchangeably with ecology. This is how they will be used in this work. Francis (2005) states that:

When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it. Recognizing the reasons why a given area is polluted requires a study of the workings of society, its economy, its behaviour patterns, and the ways it grasps reality (p. 80).

The environment refers to all that surrounds an organism. It is inclusive of the air, water, land, etc. The natural environment refers to nature, the social environment to human interactions in their environment. The concept of African environment means the natural African landmass made of water bodies, the atmosphere, plants, animals, etc. You cannot speak of the African environment without speaking of human ecological footprints or interactions with the natural world. As will be discussed later the human impact on the natural environment in Africa has often been malevolent, and also human to human interactions are also riddled with many social evils in Africa.

This paper revolves around the concept of Afroecosolidarity. Ecology and solidarity shortened in this work as ecosolidarity is the notion that the human response to the earth, the home in which human lives and carry out their works, should be that of feeling affinity and standing in concerted solidarity with the entire ecological world. The human person should not stand aloof of the environmental or ecological problems that human beings have plunged the world into. The human is to work to free the earth and the entire universe from all harms and evils. Solidarity with the earth, ecosystems, the environment is ecosolidarity. Ecosolidarity is solidarity with and for the earth. It is both an attitude and action paradigm. Afroecosolidarity or its like terms- Afroecosolidarity or Afroecosolidarity, or African ecological solidarity stands for the reality that ecosolidarity is an African value and indigenous way of life. Standing in solidarity with the earth is not foreign to Africa. To name a value as African does not mean it is practiced only in Africa, but it is to state the reality that the value is dominantly experienced and practiced in African cultural life. That value of ecosolidarity (standing in solidarity with the earth or ecological world) does not mean there are not ecological deficits in Africa. For despite the value there are people in Africa who live contrary to the ideal value. Africa have this value but there are Africans who out of greed pollute and destroy nature as they fell down trees and kill wildlife for selfish purposes. Every entity in nature stands in need of other entities for survival, whatever affects one invariably affects others. Whatever harms or

injuries done to any aspect of nature, no matter where it happens, affects other aspects of nature. Everything needs one another. Human beings are the highest form of consciousness in the created universe. As the highest form of created consciousness in the material world, human beings have the responsibility and capacity to stand in deliberative and intentional solidarity and union in preserving all creation. This is a serious implication of ecosolidarity. Ecosolidarity is standing for the mutual interests and wellbeing of the entire ecosystems collectively or the entire natural world. It is opting and standing for human cum environmental health.

Afroecosolidarity and the Resolution of the Human-Environmental Crisis

The concern in this section will be to explicate further what is Afroecosolidarity and the African indigenous ideas that ground it? How it can help to resolve the crisis will also be described here. Pervading this paper is the notion that ecosolidarity is a panacea to the African natural and social crisis. There is also the idea that ecosolidarity is akin to traditional African philosophies and theologies. African ideas that ground ecosolidarity are: Ukama, Ubuntu, Ujamaa, humanism, etc. Paul (1995) asserts that: "African cultures have an acute sense of solidarity and community life. In Africa it is unthinkable to celebrate a feast without the participation of the whole village." It is difficult to think of Africa without thinking of solidarity. The notions of Ujamaa, Ubuntu, Ukama, humanism are all various ways of describing solidarity with humans and non-human creatures. The term Ujamaa was first used and popularized by Julius Nyerere. Ujamaa is a concept that means brotherhood/sisterhood. It is shared family life and existence. Family here is beyond the nuclear family and extends to the entire kindred and beyond. Onwubiko (2001) citing Wehr notes that the root of Ujamaa is *jama'a* which means unite, combine, bring to whole, gather. Though the concept of Ujamaa seems anthropocentric, the fact is that this acting in communal concert of friendship made persons to come to the help and support of one another. As people act in concert they act for the good of the community which includes earth care and preservation. It is human beings who consciously stand in solidarity not only for human interests but for African values, of which one of those crucial values is Ukama and the recognition of the earth as mother, and giver of life.

Ukama is an African notion that means, "I am because of the entire cosmic web." It is an expansion of the notion of Ubuntu. Ubuntu affirms that: "I am because we are." Ubuntu is togetherness. One's life is tied with the life of others. Your existence only has meaning because of others. The idea of Ukama is grounded in

the notion that all life, that of human persons and non-human persons are inter-related and affect each other. The implication is that human actions are not neutral. What you do even to fellow human beings affects the plants, animals, stones, etc. Ukeh (2016) quotes Madubuko to show that human interactions with other beings can either weaken or strengthens them. Francis (2015) citing Benedict XVI writes that: "Every violation of solidarity and civic friendship harms the environment" (p. 81). The African belief is that human beings have affinity with other entities in nature. By this affinity he shares in participation and solidarity. Human beings can share, be in solidarity with other beings and entities in creation/nature for in the African cosmological paradigm other entities and beings have life and are not dead. Mbiti (1990) rightly asserts thus: "...animals, plants, land, rain and other natural objects and phenomena, describes man's environment.... some of these objects and phenomena are attributed with life and personality, so that strictly speaking, 'nothing is essentially) dead or devoid of life (being)'in the sight of African peoples" (p.90). Writing of tribal societies, Stoutzenberger (2006) reveals that they believe that all of life, including plants and animals are permeated by sacredness. This informs tribal people cultivating and taking from nature in humility and gratefulness to the maker of all things. This informs standing in unison with all that exists.

Ubuntu was a call that whatever would hurt your neighbour and the social community is to be shunned. Corruption, greed, lust, stealing, arson, murder, and immorality offend against the value of Ubuntu. Desecration and depletion of environmental resources for selfish gain were to be avoided. The environment was to be protected so that every other human being will be secured in their food and health. Taking from nature was to be done in a gentle and minimal manner while taking into consideration the unborn and young children. Traditional Africans lived keeping in mind the security of the children who will grow up to become adults. Strengthening the spirit and bond of Ubuntu can inspire in today's Africans the vital need to work for human rights and secure environmental resources. Theories and beliefs drive action and practice. The theory of Ubuntu does not automatically translate to environmental protection and human security, but it can if enforced through various public policies and laws. Many human beings often will not act for what is right unless it is enforced. Think of the many environmental laws in the African continent. In Nigeria for instance there are many environmental laws such as environmental sanitation. In spite of all these some people still dump garbage in streams and in the streets, some don't observe environmental sanitation days. In African traditional societies, there were

communal regulations to guide people's actions. A strong aspect of Ubuntu was the recognition of human bondedness, belonging and union. In Africa, every child was the community's child. People sought the welfare of others.

All these notions ground the reality that the completeness and wholeness of life is constituted of human welfare and human harmonious relationship with all entities in nature. The African cosmos is one in which all beings, things, realities, entities and organisms are interconnected and interrelated. All things are tied together in solidarity. Each aspect of nature enriched itself by depending on others for mutual symbiosis. No being in nature can survive by living a solitary life apart from others. To use the words of Shorter (2001) Africans had a cosmic consciousness that believed in an organic universe in which the physical environment was seen as sacramental as through it Africans communicated with spiritual realities. Shorter writes further using the words of Joseph Goetz that the African cosmology was a "cosmobiology" (p. 47). The universe is filled with life and all forms of life interacted with one another. The concept of solidarity is not just a stagnant reality. Solidarity involves interactions of life. Even in the human community, when human beings don't interact and commune they cannot be said to be in solidarity. Tempels (1959) explains that this African notion is that of vital force. For Tempels, God is the source of vital force that permeates and influences all beings and realities in the cosmos. The beings in the universe stands in solidarity with one another as they influence one another and depend on other forces outside themselves to enrich their vital force. Humans make use of things in nature to enrich their vital force, animals depend on plants to enrich their vital force. In the cosmic hierarchy of beings, life is shared and enriched. He (Tempels) writes thus: "All creatures are found in relationship according to the law of hierarchy...Nothing moves in this universe of forces without influencing other forces by its movement. The world of forces is held like a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network" (p.41).

The ecosolidarity attitude-action paradigm is one to use the words of O'Murchu (2007) that for millions of years of human emergence on earth recognized interdependence of all creation, not domination. The notion of human conquest, control and domination was not there from the beginning. Margulis (1998) argues that from the study of microbiology there are indications that the primary orientation that exists in nature is that of cooperation among organisms not that of competition. From the beginning of human consciousness in Africa and in the course of the evolution of African religion, African primal ancestors knew of this

reality. Ecosolidarity is the ground of all cosmic existence. To cite O'Murchu (2007) again, "We belong integrally as do all others. It is in our sense of belonging, not in our isolation, that we come home to who we really are. Our interdependence, and not our self-centered independence, is the doorway to survival and fresh meaning" (p. 31). In traditional African cultures, offerings and sacrifices are given to nature, water bodies, and other landscape in acknowledgement of human reliance on them. It is a well known fact that outside the almighty, the supreme being; Africans do discard gods they perceive are not functional in meeting their needs. All of life in Africa is interlinked and "web-together." This is why Ubuntu and Ujamaa should not simply be read in humano-centric paradigms. Human solidarity with one another extends to solidarity with other creatures.

The notion and practice of communalism cannot be separated from that of Afroecosolidarity. They are mutually inclusive. The African understanding of the human person is that the human being is a being with. There is interactive solidarity among all that exists. Recognize that other realities in nature outside the human person are not technically in African ontology of being, "non-living things." All realities including non-human realities are infused with vital force. By the fact of that force their force influences and rubs on others beings in the universe. All nature with human beings inclusive are a complete whole. Human beings are not complete without nature. Ecosolidarity is the completeness and totality of all cosmic forces and entities and their mutually depending on one another for life and survival in the African hierarchy of being. Writing of African communalism, Agbakwuo (2013) asserts that:

Communalism is central to African ontology, concept of person and socio-anthropology. Any behaviour that negates it is ethically wrong. Integral to the African understanding of communalism are human participation and solidarity. They are the characteristic elements of communalism. Africans do not see themselves as individuals living independently, but rather as people living in a community interdependently, with communal responsibilities. The web of interdependence and inter-relatedness is intrinsic in the African hierarchy of beings (p. 161).

Peterson (2004) indicates that African communalism implies the bondedness of all life and entails responsibilities to fellow human beings and the planet. Communalism is not a neutral or stagnant reality. Communalism is another way of expressing solidarity. It is possible to speak of an African ecocommunalism or Afroecocommunalism. For the African notion of communalism does not only

speak of mutual life and assistance among humans but includes human obligations to live in communion with spiritual and other metaphysical beings and organisms in the universe. Adeola (2008) rightly notes that: "The sacred view of nature by Africans makes them to have a relationship that is bio-centric and not anthropocentric and this had its impact on them as much as it has on nature. According to traditional African worldview, one remains healthy in a holistic sense only by living in harmony with the whole creation" (p. 27).

The African indigenous value for ecological solidarity can help in resolving the human and environmental crisis in Africa. For one thing, the value of Ubuntu helped Africans to recognise the importance and value of each other human being. There was the radical awareness that the human being is not a solitary being. Your humanness comes from others. You have a duty to serve the welfare and wellbeing of others.

Afroecosolidarity is a wakeup call to human solidarity among humans equally. There is no doubt that if Africans stand in concerted and active solidarity they will be able to confront the socioeconomic and political problems plaguing the African society. In unity in the various countries they will fight oppression, bad leadership, poverty, exploitation of environmental resources, terrorism, banditry, and all the developmental problems in the continent. Solidarity with the earth has little meaning unless it also implies solidarity with fellow human beings. In African traditional thought the human person was seen as the centre of all things as all things are created to foster his welfare. African anthropocentrism is different from the western notion. That things are created and humans have to sustain their vital force by making use of environmental resources does not mean they can pollute and degrade nature. There is anthropocentric responsibility to the natural world. A strong practice of ecosolidarity can help to foster human and earth care.

At the core of the theory of Afroecosolidarity is that the human person has responsibilities and duties to the ecological world. The human being must stand in solidarity with all beings. Agbakwuo (2013) propounds that:

In the African category or hierarchy of beings – Supreme Being, spirits, human beings, animals, objects – one mode of existence presupposes all the others, and a balance has to be maintained to avoid a drift from one mode to another. There is peace and harmony in the community when the balance is maintained. This ontological harmony is very decisive for a peaceful co-existence and consistence of the society. An imbalance is very catastrophic to the living and the eco-system. A spill of the blood of an innocent person

or a relative, for instance, could disrupt the harmony. Even violating the laws of the land or a taboo could cause a drift in the eco-system. At the centre of this system and order of being is the human person who tries to maintain a harmonious balance. Mbiti argues that in addition to the five categories there seems to be a power, energy or force that permeates the whole universe (p. 23).

Ethical living in shunning vices and social ills is beneficial not only for human beings but also for all other earthly beings. When human beings live in shunning greed, stopping natural resources exploitation, ending wanton destruction of plants and animals, and avoiding polluting the streams and land; they help to protect the ecosystems. Ethical living is a vital way to promote the values of Afroecosolidarity. The environment will continue to experience a crisis and human welfare will be gravely vitiated if human beings live unethical lives. Think of the fact that if human beings live out the value of Ujamaa, they will support one another. There will be a life of sharing of resources and this will put less pressure on environmental resources. A recognition and practice of Ubuntu will make Africans equally assist one another and see to the welfare of one another. There will be less conflicts. This will help to preserve the earth. Human beings cannot survive without depending on the resources of nature. But this dependence should be done in a humane, humble, peaceful, kind, and simple manner that is aimed at sustainability. That from an African trado-ecological perspective Africans feel a sense of moral obligation to care for the earth should not be in doubt. Ejeh (2008) argues rightly that:

The desire to maintain peaceful and harmonious relationship with the rest of creation is the basis of a sense of obligation for responsible stewardship of creation that Africans have. There is in every African culture, certain unwritten guidelines of how to deal with the land, air, water and vegetation because there is strong belief that any misuse or abuse of nature directly incurs the wrath of the spirits and divinities who dwell in them and consequently a bad omen for human beings (p. 195).

While it is a fact that one may not agree with every African belief the reality is that genuine ecological practices that help to protect the earth should be recovered and integrated into government policies. Beliefs themselves do not immediately transform to eco-preservation. Beliefs have to be put into action.

Furthermore, what are more imports of solidarity? Iroegbu (2000) explicates the implications of solidarity to human society in various manner. Solidarity he argues

means that people stand in togetherness in doing good, co-operate in projects that benefits all, harness their talents, wisdom, love, values, in fostering mutual assistance to uplift humanity. In solidarity people seek the welfare and wellbeing of the other. Solidarity fosters peaceful co-existence and communal services. Ecosolidarity is seeing and acting not simply for human solidarity among humans but also for the wellbeing and cosmic good of the entire universe. It stands for the health of ecosystems and harmonious human relationship with the earth. Afroecosolidarity is ecosolidarity that is grounded in African indigenous ecological values. A mind-set of Afroecosolidarity works to overcome social, economic and problems plaguing human society; while also attentive to environmental promotion.

Factors Impeding Afroecosolidarity Values

There are many factors that have impeded and continues to impede African values of ecosolidarity. A primary factor that has impeded African values, including that of earth care and communal care for human welfare is that of the advent of the Whiteman to Africa. Coming to Africa, the Whiteman arrogantly devalued and condemned African values. Prime (2010) notes that Europeans negatively represented the African culture. The Eurocentric worldview saw African values as inferior to European values. They named African worldview as pagan, dark and evil. The words of Wallace (2005), are applicable to Africans, Africans believed that the earth is sacred, holy and to be revered; but the Whiteman renamed African towns and villages and landscapes with their own names as if African names were not valuable. For some Western missionaries, conversion to Christianity means total abandonment of African culture. Today it is well recognized through the theology of inculturation that there are many good aspects of African culture and they need to be reclaimed. The Whiteman plundered African forests and resources as they looted them to Europe and beyond. They carted away African works of arts with which our ancestors expressed their links to the divine and expressed their communalistic values. There was a high misrepresentation of African history. Hegel (1956) erroneously argued that Africa has no history and that the absolute spirit has not even moved in Africa. Makumba (2007) cites Kant who saw Africans as inferior to Whites. But Makumba notes that Kant is flatly wrong. Makumba (2007) also cites Levy-Bruhl who saw Africans as primitive and pre-logical. European cultural imperialism impacted all aspects of African life including ecological beliefs and practices. Beliefs about the intrinsic value of the earth coded in religious language of perceiving the earth as having divinized dimensions where all condemned as barbaric. The African worldview of perceiving divine

values in nature is not essentially different from what eco-centric Western scholars now call natural intrinsic value.

Negative forms of missionary Christianity have also affected gravely the African social and ecological beliefs. Many missionaries often condemned almost everything that was associated with African beliefs and culture. They saw African beliefs about the land, birds, animals and rivers as totally evil. For them becoming a Christian implies abandoning in its entirety the beliefs and cultural practices of one's ancestors. The doctrinal impact of negative forms of missionary Christianity are still prevalent today especially in some forms of Pentecostalism. African forests are often seen as evil and the habitation of witches and other evil beings. To cleanse a village, the trees are felled and destroyed in the name of deliverance. This has led to a great deal of deforestation in Africa. Prayers for deliverance can actually be done without cutting down the trees. People that are perceived to be influenced by evil spirits have prayers done for them without them being killed or destroyed. If need be the trees should be prayed over without cutting them down. After all, it is the negative spirits that are the problems not the trees.

Some Christian beliefs have also been misconstrued and misused to exploit the earth. In African these misconstructions have affected African based ecological beliefs. Parochial understanding of pneumatology, soteriology, Christology, eschatology and ecclesiology have all contributed negatively to denigrating of African ecocultural values. It is wrongly taught by some Christians that the Holy Spirit only dwells in human beings and so non-human creation lacks intrinsic value. It can be exploited for human good. In both soteriology and Christology, it is taught that Jesus Christ came to save only human beings and so the rest of creation has lesser value. Ecclesiologically, the concern of the church they argue should be human salvation and not showing concern for earthly things. In terms of eschatology, the concerns of human beings should be how to go to heaven. Christian songs such as, "This world is not my own, I am just passing through..." have made some Christians to neglect social justice and political concerns. Patriarchal beliefs and practices also influence people's practices. The domination and oppression of women has made some to equally believe the earth is simply an object to be dominated and it exists for human utilitarian purpose. Adeola (2008) writes that anthropocentric dominionism rooted in a mis-reading of Genesis 1:21ff have made people to despise the created world and treat it merely as an instrument to gratify the insatiable needs of human person. This dominionism amounts to a mastery over nature attitude which, Ndungu (2005) notes some scholars have argued is responsible for exploitation of nature.

Westernization has also contributed to marginalization of African social and ecological values. With western influence coming through satellite television and the internet some Africans have abandoned the study and learning about their cultural values. Many young persons are more interested in learning the songs of western musicians, playing western games, etc. The educational curriculum in much of Africa is still filled with western contents. Much of the history, political theories, philosophy, economic thoughts, and environmental ethics that are presented in the classrooms are those of Europeans and North American scholars. Maffi (2010) citing Eldredge rightly notes that a predominant notion prevalent in Western philosophy wrongly sees human beings as separate from nature and not part of it. This view informs what African children are taught in schools especially in the biological and physical sciences. With such notions they hardly see anything that is valuable in nature as they grow up with the mind-set to conquer and exploit nature.

The forces of globalization often tend to be negative on indigenous cultures, Africa inclusive. Anti-globalization protests have taken place in many areas in the world denouncing the evils of globalization. These evils include: desecration of local cultures, heightening of ethnic identity politics, uncritical acceptance of western norms. Though there may be some benefits from globalization it remains an ambivalent force that should be morally confronted.

It is difficult to exempt capitalism totally from the plight of the planet. The powers of capitalism have affected almost every part of the planet. Capitalist values influence and inform the lifestyles and consumption patterns of many people in Africa. Rubinoff (2004) argues forcefully that environmentalists know and many others know that “the excesses of consumerism and industrial society” have plunged the earth into an ecological crisis (p.11). When society is ruled by the spirit of consuming more resources from the earth and there is no strive to live prudently and wisely on earth, then more trees and other resources will be taken from the earth. People ruled by the values of consumerism will rarely give time to the African values of ecological solidarity. They will see it as depriving them of pleasure and material delights.

Some Ways to Reclaim and Promote Afroecosolidarity

Africa has a contribution to make to the global environmental crisis. The African value and ideological standpoint of Afroecosolidarity is also useful to healing Africa in this crisis. The United Nations (2007) rightly notes in articles 12 to 15 that indigenous peoples of which many Africans are have a right to manifest and

propagate their cultural heritage including ecological and spiritual wisdom. In terms of recovering African values that have been bastardized by western forces, the movement for mental decolonization has not fully accomplished her goals. There are still many Africans suffering from mental inferiority and who see little or nothing good in Africa. Bob Marley rightly sang that Africans need to emancipate themselves from mental slavery. The educational curriculum need to be decolonized and Eurocentrism need to be dethroned. In article 14, the United Nations (2007) declares thus: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning." There is vital need for re-education of Africans unto indigenous African eco-values. The educational systems in most African countries have to be re-created to emphasize Afroecosolidarity themes.

Related to the above is that the role of an Afrocentric ecological education should not be despised. Education continues to carry great power in the transmission of cultural and social values. Education enlightens and motivates people. No true social mobilization of people can be done without one form of education or the other. People need to be empowered with ideas. The formal education curricula in schooling in Africa should be thoroughly re-written so that it is grounded in African indigenous ecological values. African ecological ideas such as that of ecological solidarity should cut across the curriculum.

There is a place for ecological politics in promoting the values of ecosolidarity. Mayhew (2009) defines ecological politics as "advocacy for, work towards, protecting the natural environment from degradation or pollution" (p. 147). Actions to promote the values of ecological solidarity are necessary. This can be done in various ways. Individuals should live by ecohabits such as proper disposal of domestic waste, resisting from felling downs trees without a necessary cause, practising agricultural friendly methods, prudent use of energy (electric power), avoidance of domestic waste, etc. On a corporate level, businesses and companies should avoid industrial pollution of the land and rivers with solid waste and poisonous chemicals, oil mining companies should stop gas flaring, and practice environmental sustainable ways.

The law through environmental and social regulations is another important instrument to regulate human conduct. The notion of Africans standing in solidarity to fights social evils and environmental ills should be framed in laws. This is already done in many African countries. What is needed more is the

enforcement and implementation of the law. There are laws against air pollution in Nigeria; yet oil companies flare gas since they are simply only required to pay a fine, which they are willing to pay. There are laws against poaching of wild life in some East African countries. Yet there are many persons that poach and go scot free.

Ecological conversion or eco-moral rearmament also has a role to play in promoting the values of Afroecosolidarity or ecological solidarity no matter where it is practiced. People will generally only commit themselves to ecological preservation when they know of its importance and are willing to live by ecovalues.

The practice of environmental or ecological citizenship grounded in African eco-ethical values is also of great importance. Vigorous propagation of African based ecological or environmental theologies and philosophies. These theories among many others are: ecowomanism, beliefs of African earth keeping churches, etc. The propagation of all these can be done through conferences, seminars, symposia, books, journals,

With regard to recommendations on how to promote Afroecosolidarity, there is need to see ecology from an integrated perspective and there is need to see solidarity in a holistic manner. Ecology is not just about ecosystems excluding human beings. Humans are an integral part of ecology. Human beings are part of the planetary home. Their presence should not be seen as an intrusion or unnecessary. Though their presence should be benign not malevolent. The tendency to radically separate human community from the natural community is unAfrican. Drawing insights from Bookchin (1990) the two extremes-separating human society from nature, and the other that sees no distinction between nature and human society are unacceptable. Boff (1996) points out that: "Ecology has to do with the relations, interaction, and dialogue of all living creatures (whether alive or not) among themselves and with all that exists. This include, not only nature (natural ecology), but culture and society (human ecology, social ecology and so on)" (p. 7.). Living creatures here should not be understood in the sense of western biology that speaks of some things as living and some as not living. In African radical ecotheosophy, the entire universe is alive and nothing in the truest sense is dead or without vital force. The African ecotheosophical belief on all nature as alive is akin to most other indigenous world view. McKay (1994) opines regarding this that indigenous spiritualities see the world in terms of relationship

and dynamic interaction of love for human and non-human creatures that are seen as relatives

Human perspective matters and informs attitudes and practices towards the earth and even the peoples of the earth. This paper though proposing an Afroecosolidarity approach to protecting the environment, both natural and social, does not ignore the fact that often people do not practice the ideals and norms. There are many places in Africa that are polluted or degraded as a result of poor environmental practices by Africans such as careless dumping of domestic and industrial waste, poor implementation of environmental laws. In many places in Africa there are also corrupt and inept leaders who have failed to live out the values of solidarity. Failure to live by the ideal and the law should not lead to abandonment of the ideals or the law. Rather, this, all the more calls for environmental education and creation of eco-awareness rooted in Afroecosolidarity consciousness.

Conclusion

The paper has examined the theory of ecosolidarity and Afroecosolidarity. It also looked at the implications and imports of this theory for the African environment, both social and natural. A conceptual clarification of terms that ground this paper was also done. It was shown that solidarity implies that human beings recognize their wholeness and inter-relatedness with fellow human beings and the entire earth community. This recognition and acting in love and compassion for fellow humans and other lives amount to ecosolidarity. This notion of ecosolidarity was argued above as deeply rooted and akin to African values such as Ubuntu, Ukama, Ujamaa, and communalism. Ecological solidarity or ecosolidarity is a truly African indigenous value. When practiced it can help to ameliorate the African social and ecological degradation.

This piece also showed that the value of Afroecosolidarity was threatened by different factors such as: negative forms of western missionary Christianity, the advent of the Whiteman to Africa, westernization, and negative forms of capitalism. These problems the author argued can be combatted through a renewed ecological education grounded in indigenous ethical values, re-invigorated ethical living, re-awakening of African-based ecotheories, etc. If the negative forces examined above can be successfully combated through the ways proposed it will greatly promote Afroecosolidarity to foster a sustainable African environment.

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