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Tackling Environmental Problems from the Root: An *Ibuanyidanda* Perspective

Rozwiązywanie problemów środowiskowych u źródeł – perspektywa *Ibuanyidanda*

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Abstract: There are series of reports in the media, books, conferences, symposia, et cetera of the deplorable condition of our natural environment. This crisis afflicting the environment occasioned by increasing human activities has reached the level that, the survival of the human species itself is threatened. Urgent remedies, therefore, need to be sought for. Though, many attempts have been made to remedy the situation, unfortunately environmental crisis continues to deepen, because the root problem (defective mindset) has not yet been fully tackled. This article presents an ethic from Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, which sees realities as missing links and argues that this ethic can guide human actions toward environmental sustainability. What could be garnered from Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy is that environmental problems could be traced to defective mindsets that human beings are imbued with. Thus, unlike most other environmental ethical theories that aim at controlling human actions towards the environment, *Ibuanyidanda* theory believes the present environmental crisis could only be resolved if the root cause (the mind) is tackled. This is because, it is better to tackle the root cause of our negative actions (mind) than to concentrate on the actions themselves. When a change of our present divisive and hegemonic mindset, is thoroughly affected as prescribed by *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy, environmental sustainability instead of degradation would become the byproduct of our development.

Keywords: environment, *Ibuanyidanda*, ethics, noetic propaedeutic, values, development

Streszczenie: Temat złego stanu środowiska naturalnego jest obecnie powszechnie omawiany w mediach, publikacjach, na konferencjach czy sympozjach. Kryzys środowiskowy spowodowany wzmożoną działalnością człowieka, osiągnął poziom, który zagraża przetrwaniu samego gatunku ludzkiego, co wymaga wdrożenia pilnych środków zaradczych. Choć podjęto już wiele prób w celu przeciwdziałania obecnej sytuacji, kryzys ten nadal się pogłębia. Wydaje się, że przyczyną takiego stanu rzeczy jest fakt, że do tej pory nie udało się rozwiązać problemu leżącego u jego źródeł, czyli w umyśle ludzkim, innymi słowy, w niewłaściwym nastawieniu człowieka do przyrody. Niniejszy artykuł zarysowuje założenia etyki ontologii komplementarnej sformułowanej przez nigeryjskiego filozofa, Innocenta Izuchukwu Asouzu, wywodzącej się z filozofii *Ibuanyidanda*, która postrzega różne rzeczywistości jako brakujące ogniwa. Zakłada się, że etyka ta może nadać kierunek ludzkim działaniom na rzecz zrównoważonego rozwoju. Opierając się na założeniach filozofii *Ibuanyidanda* Asouzu można wnioskować, że problemy środowiskowe wynikają z niewłaściwego nastawieniem człowieka do środowiska. Zatem, w przeciwieństwie do większości innych teorii etyki środowiskowej, których celem jest kontrolowanie działań człowieka wobec środowiska, teoria *Ibuanyidanda* głosi, że obecny kryzys środowiskowy można rozwiązać jedynie wtedy, kiedy uporamy się z jego pierwotną przyczyną tkwiącą w naszym sposobie myślenia. Metoda ta będzie bardziej skuteczna, ze względu na to, że lepiej jest zająć się pierwotną przyczyną naszych negatywnych działań (mających swoje źródło w umyśle

ludzkim), niż koncentrować się na samych działaniach. Gruntowna zmiana obecnego sposobu myślenia, ukierunkowane go na podziały i hegemonię, na sposób myślenia zgodny z założeniami filozofii *Ibuanyidanda*, doprowadzi do stanu, kiedy to produktem ubocznym naszego rozwoju będzie zrównoważony rozwój środowiska, a nie jego degradacja.

Słowa kluczowe: środowisko, *Ibuanyidanda*, etyka, propedeutyka noetyczna, wartości, rozwój

Introduction

Right from the history of human beings, the environment has been and is still the object of exploitation and massive plundering. The world forest is waning at an alarming rate and in the near future may disappear altogether (Bisong 2018a). According to Wilson (1988), by the year 2030, if the ongoing deforestation is not stemmed down, there would only be 10% of our world forest remaining, with another 10% in a degraded condition, while 80% will have been lost. Species are getting extinct at a rate unsurpassed in history. Larsson (2001) reveals that the present rate of extinction is estimated at 100 to 1000 times higher than the historically typical rate of extinction. Biodiversity is slimming down. The sea level is rising. Many aquatic animals and plants are dying because of the increasing oceanic acidification. The ever-increasing human population has continued to increase the pressure on the environment, which implies that environmental health is worsening day by day. If nothing is done to halt this dangerous trend, the environment in the nearest future may reach her breaking point (Bisong and Apologun 2014).

This work with the help of Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy wishes to provide a solution to this problem. This does not mean that other attempts by various scholars have not already been made as theories, such as biocentrism, ecocentrism, anthropocentrism and others, have been proposed to regulate human actions towards the environment. However, the ever-increasing exploitation of the environment is a testament to the fact that the root cause of the environmental crisis

has not yet been sufficiently addressed. This is because most of these environmental theories concentrate on the negative actions of humans and not the cause of the actions. *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy believes that all negative actions could only be curbed or reduced to the barest minimum if the root cause is tackled. *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy "represents an attempt to redefine, refine, reconstruct and free our system of thought from all bifurcating and polarizing mindsets that make the mind tend to exalt its existence over and above that of others" (Bisong and Etta 2015). It assumes that the bifurcating and polarizing mindset which human beings currently operate with must first be obliterated before positive actions towards the environment would begin to occur. This work, therefore, argues that existential conversion must first occur in the minds of human beings, for a positive change in the handling of the environment to be effected. This means the bifurcating and hegemonic mindset of humans must be changed into an egalitarian one that sees reality in terms of missing links.

The work is divided into four main parts. The first part discusses the problems and challenges facing the environment and some of the attempted solutions. There are many problems bedeviling the environment. The work for the purpose of space, concentrated only on the very important ones. The second part exposes *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy. The major themes that have bearing on our thesis are highlighted and exhaustively discussed. The third part applies *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy to the environment. Here an attempt is made to build an ethic of human actions that could resolve

the present environmental challenges and consequently save mankind from impending annihilation.

1. Environmental Problems: Causes, Effects and Proposed Solutions

Environment, according to Symons (1979), encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally on Earth or some region thereof. The environment contains natural resources which could be classified into renewable and non-renewable resources. The renewable resources are reproducible and in principle could be maintained perpetually. These include forests, animals, and water. The non-renewable resources on the other hand cannot be restored or the restoration takes place so slowly that it will not increase significantly the stock of resources in any reasonable time span. These include oil, gas, minerals, and so forth. The unwise use of these non-renewable resources leads to depletion and other environmental problems. These problems generally take the form of pollution of water, air and soil; deforestation, global warming, overfishing et cetera. The causes of environmental problems are both natural and man induced. Examples of natural causes are erosion, leeching, earthquake et cetera. Examples of human activities that cause environmental problem or degradation include agricultural practices, energy/ industrial activities, transportation activities, overpopulation, war, genetic pollution, over-exploitation, particulates, pollution, et cetera (Calswell 1984; Redcliff 2005; Cunningham and Cunningham 2006; Bisong and Apologun 2018; 2020).

Environmental degradation has a lot of harmful effects. The effects include biodiversity loss, global warming, ozone depletion, land degradation, deforestation, rise in sea level, ocean acidification, flood, tsunamis, hurricanes, pollution, acid rain, melting of iceberg, increase in ocean noise et cetera. A lot of methods and ideas have been proposed to arrest environmental crisis, those include:

- Climate change mitigation – climate change mitigation covers the various actions taken, to combat the long-term global warming induced by it. It usually involves reduction in atmospheric emissions of greenhouse gases (e.g., switching to low carbon energy sources, such as renewable and nuclear energy), increasing the capacity of carbon sinks, (e.g., through reforestation), improving energy efficiency (e.g., through improving the insulation of buildings) (Levine et al. 2007).
- Birth control – methods employed to prevent overpopulation.
- Reforestation – restocking of existing forests that have been depleted.
- Ecological restoration – “intentional activity that initiates or accelerates the recovery of an ecosystem with respect to its health, integrity and sustainability” (Griffith et al. 2004).
- Waste minimization – the process and the policy of reducing the amount of waste produced by a person or a society.
- Biodegradation – use of micro-organism metabolism to remove pollutants.
- Phytostabilization – plant-based remediation technique that stabilizes wastes and prevents exposure pathways via wind and water erosion; provides hydraulic control, which suppresses the vertical migration of contaminants into groundwater; and physically and chemically immobilizes contaminants by root absorption and by chemical fixation with various soil amendments (Sharma 2018).

There are also various movements that have evolved in attempt to combat environmental problems, those include:

- Hard environmentalism – it kicks against economic growth. Adherents of this group see economic growth as the reason why the environment is depleted and thereby campaign against it.

- Humanistic environmentalism – it argues that social practices which have an adverse effect on the environment should be changed because they will eventually give rise to adverse effects on humans (Asuo and Enyimba 2012).
- Biocentric environmentalism – this takes as their aim the preservation of the entire biospheric community. They believe that the biosphere needs to be preserved at all cost.
- Evangelical environmentalism – a movement which emphasizes the role of humanity as steward and caretaker of creation according to biblical doctrine. The movement argues that the biblical mandate to Adam to care for the Garden of Eden also applies to evangelicals today.

All these attempts at mitigating environmental crisis and movements campaigning against it have brought beneficial effects; at least they have succeeded in making Sustainable development to become a byword. However, the fact that the environment is still constantly being destroyed shows that there is much more to be done. This research wishes to provide that much more through Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy. As it will clearly be visible in the following section, the existing attempts failed because they could not tackle the problem from the roots – the main cause.

2. An Overview of *Ibuanyidanda* Philosophy

Complementary Reflection or *Ibuanyidanda* philosophy is a philosophy developed by Innocent Asouzu from Nigeria. The philosophy sees complementarity as a fundamental principle of nature. Everything that exists shares a complementary horizon which must be maintained and upheld for an individual to have a meaningful existence. Asouzu is of the belief that ontology cannot be articulated properly, without a clear and stable conceptual framework upon which that ontology could be built. He argues that the failure to provide this framework has

been the root cause of the failure of most ontology in the past. He chose the Igbo aphorism *Ibuanyidanda*, as the framework, upon which his philosophy is anchored (Asouzu 2013). *Ibuanyidanda* is a composite of three Igbo words: *ibu* (load), *anyi* (insurmountable for) and *danda* (a species of ant). These three words “*Ibuanyidanda*,” etymologically translate to “no load is insurmountable for danda the ant.” The nearest English equivalent of the synthetic-analytic construct (*Ibuanyidanda*) Asouzu (2013) avers is complementarity.

Complementarity in the sense of *Ibuanyidanda* is not limited to the world of atoms as in Niels Bohr. Neither is it limited to the world of humans as in ubuntu. It is very comprehensive, capturing three main categories of relationship. These are:

- Intra-personal complementarity (complementarity in a human person). Asouzu (2004) believes that “a human person can never be conceptualized in a fragmented mode but as a complementary unit that forms a whole”. For him, the human person is a complementarity of the diverse elements, which must work together harmoniously and complementarily to ensure the continuous existence of the human person. This is how to understand his argument that substance and accidents must be grasped in a mutual complementary relationship, for any of them to stand a chance of being grasped.
- Interpersonal complementarity (complementarity amongst humans). Asouzu (2004) avers that individuals remain indebted to other members of the society for the services they receive from them, because of their relativity and insufficiency. Thus, no achievement, invention or idea, he argues is thinkable outside a complementary network of relationships. This is how to understand his assertion that “to be, is not to be alone but to be in a mutual complementary relationship of joyous service” (Asouzu 2013).

- Inter-being complementarity (complementarity of the whole of reality). Asouzu (1990) avers that all reality forms an all-encompassing complementary whole, where all units form a dynamic play of forces, which completes and support one another. This means that, no being exists in isolation, but in a complementary relationship with others. This is how to understand his assertion that “everything that exists serves a missing link within the framework of the totality” (Asouzu 2013).

Asouzu’s idea of complementarity is anchored in his doctrine of missing links or principle of integration which states that “anything that exists serves a missing link within the framework of the totality” (Asouzu 1990). Missing link, according to Asouzu (2007a), is the “mode through which being can be grasped within any given framework of finite determinism, as it can only be grasped through relations.” Missing links are all conceivable ways being expresses itself in history and all possible future mode of expression of being as far as there can be grasped as forming a complementary whole. Thus, all modes of expression, existence and experiences of being in history according to Asouzu are missing links which, maintain their being so far as there can be conceived in complementary relationship. This means, missing links could be understood and explained, when they are conceived in a complementary future referential, whole and comprehensive manner. Though being expresses itself in a fragmentary way, it could only be grasped fully in a complementary comprehensive whole and future referential dimension. No missing link, therefore, can uphold and affirm its being in isolation, implying that to be is not to be alone but in a complementary whole. This is because, each missing link is insufficient and relative and therefore expecting the best service from other missing links.

Each missing link serves each other to complement the mutual insufficiency of each other. If they fail to give the best

service to each other, they lose their meaning and can thereby tear each other apart. To serve a missing link of reality is similar to taking the position of a bridge. Serving a missing link therefore implies serving as a bridge to others imperfection. Thus, every missing link bridges the insufficiency, relativity and imperfection of each other and thereby giving each other the capacity to have full meaning and authentication. The denial of service, therefore, could be seen as a deep incursion to the character of being and an indirect way of negating all things that have existence (Asouzu 2007a).

Thus, whenever humans deny service to others, they indirectly deny service to themselves, since they owe their being to this mutual complementary service. Asouzu (2007a) describes this as the ontological boomerang effect, “all acts that have the character of the negation of the right of mutual service in complementarity always boomerang.” When humans negate the right of mutual complementary service to others by negating their being, it boomerangs on them, because they indirectly remove the bridge that could lead them to full realization of themselves. An act directed at an individual indirectly boomerangs on the self, because all share the same complementary horizon. Thus, those who act in a manner that is aimed at harming others, invariably put themselves at risk of getting a rebound of their actions, because of the interconnectivity in service of all missing links. This is why, Asouzu cautions that we should “never elevate a world immanent missing link to an absolute instance” (2007a). Any mind that elevates itself to absolute instance leads to strife, discontentment, prejudices and dysfunctional conflicts in interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup and interstate relationship. To overcome this is to be in control.

Being-in-control, for Asouzu, entails all the requirements needed to grasp being within a complementary comprehensive framework. Thus, when the mind grasps being in its complementary framework, it

is said to be in control of all its existential conditions. A subject is being-in-control if he/she is in charge of the ambivalent tension laden existential conditions and-the phenomenon of concealment. To be in-charge here means more than being a boss or a dictator, who lords it over others, dictating for them in the form of an all-powerful being. It is rather the capacity of the mind to be aware of the fact that it shares the same horizon with other missing links. It refers to the consciousness of the mind of the mutual relationship that exists between/among all missing links in a future referential dimension. This consciousness leads the mind to affirm the *Ibuanyidanda* imperative “allow the limitation of being to be the cause of your joy” (Asouzu 2013). The limitation of being is not a cause for concern for a mind that is in control, because it is aware that all that exists serves a missing link and therefore other missing links would serve to complete its limitation in a mutual complementation. A subject is said to be in control, if he/she affirms the right of others to be and understands that he/she can only affirm his/her existence by affirming the existence of others and by understanding the right of other missing links (Asouzu 2007a).

Asouzu argues that every human being (educated and uneducated, religious and irreligious) is subject to an ambivalent tension which, is occasioned by our rationality being torn apart by our instinct of self-preservation. This means that the world presents itself in double capacity. For instance, humans have the capacity to be good and bad, to do and undo, to tie and untie, to preserve or to destroy, to smile or to frown, et cetera. However, because of the operation of *ihe mkuchi anya* (phenomenon of concealment) Asouzu argues, we are blinded from seeing the world in this double capacity. Rather we see the world in a unilateral mode instead of the bilateral mode it presents itself; and thereby we fall prey to irrational judgment of our experiences, interests, choices, et cetera. This is why, according to Asouzu, people tend to pursue

only those things that interest them, concealed to the fact that those that do not interest them are also important and could impact negatively on them if not attended to. The phenomenon of concealment would blind some politicians to loot public treasury to foster their prized interest, ignoring the ambivalent side (negative impact) of this action to themselves.

Asouzu believes that the moment humans are conscious of the fact that their being has both a relative and absolute determination is the moment when, virtues like tolerance, truth, justice, patience, love, kindness, mercy, peace, honesty etc. would be cherished and aspired for by humans (2007b). He argues that the moment they realize that reality presents itself in ambivalence and understands the operation of the phenomenon of concealment that is the moment they would begin to see each other as sharing the same horizon of meaning. He however, argues, that this does not come by chance but through a noetic propaedeutic pedagogy. The constraining mechanism (the ambivalences of human existential conditions and the phenomenon of concealment) that beclouds the mind impeding and distorting it can, therefore, be removed through this process of noetic propaedeutic pedagogy. Noetic propaedeutic is a self-imposed act of conscious experience of realities as missing links (Asouzu 2013).

It is a form of positive personal awareness of the capacity of the constraining mechanism to inject fear in an individual regarding the dangers we are facing and thus instigating the instinct of self-preservation to lead the mind in a one-directional and polarized manner. Noetic propaedeutic therefore, subsists in the efforts we make to affirm the mutual complementary relationship of all existent beings. It subsists also in the consciousness of the boomerang effect of our actions – the realization that when we undertake actions that harm or hurt others, we are indirectly hurting ourselves. Noetic propaedeutic opens our eyes to see the world in a broader way, by becoming

aware or the risk our ambivalent existential condition is capable of leading us into. Thus, through the process of noetic propaedeutic, an individual is better equipped to overcome the tension laden ambivalent condition of our existence which, is concealed from us by the phenomenon of concealment (*ihe mkpuchi anya*). Through noetic propaedeutic pedagogy “our power of circumspection is rekindled and revitalized, thus igniting the flame for more-positive action towards all missing links of reality” (Asouzu 2013). It opens the mind-eye to the limitless opportunities that would accrue to it, if we were to act in complementarity.

3. An Ethic of Sustainable Environment

Inspired by Asouzu, I see the many environmental problems as a function of the constraining mechanism (the ambivalent conditions of our existence and the phenomenon of concealment). The ambivalent existential condition and the phenomenon of concealment blind us to the negative side of pursuing our interest at the expense of the interest of other beings who share the ecosystem with us. There are two sides to the divide – our interest and the interest of the environment. The phenomenon of concealment blinds the instinct of self-preservation to pursue development for the ultimate benefit of humans, without putting the interest of the environment at heart. This phenomenon is the root cause of anthropocentric commitment where stakeholders hold to those they see as closest to them, even when it means doing so would violate the rights of those who are not-so-close. It is the root cause of the irrational adherence to the dictate of the super-maxim “the nearer the better and safer.” Here the humans see themselves in the light of this super-maxim – they are the nearer and safer. The other part of the environment is not included in this super-maxim bracket and thus its interest cannot be upheld by humans. It is those bifurcating and polarizing tendencies occasioned by the constraining mechanism that have led to class consciousness, hierarchies’

development, ethnocentric reductions, and other forms of exaltation of differences. It is also those bifurcating and polarizing tendencies that have also been transferred to human relationship with the environment. It is evident from our attitudes and actions that the environment is seen in the light of inferiority while humans are the superior and the Lords. And in the situation where the winner, the superior, the greater takes all as is evident in our societal relationship (our relationship with other human beings) without minding what happens to others; it is the same reason why the environment is ruthlessly being plundered after all the weak needs to be dominated by the stronger.

This logic of domination is counter-productive, because the stronger would not exist, without the weaker. The stronger needs the weaker as the weaker also needs the stronger in a complementary relationship of mutual complementation, if either of them must stand a chance of affirming their existences. The strong maintains its existence because of the continuous existence of the weak. When the weak ceases to exist, that is the moment the strong too loses its being. This is because “strongness” precludes weakness and weakness too precludes “strongness.” That is, for one to be considered strong there must be one that is considered weak that he is measured against. When an individual, therefore, negates the weak in order to affirm his superiority, he is indirectly negating his superiority, for he cannot continually affirm his superiority without the continuous presence of the weak. It therefore implies that, for an individual to continually affirm his superiority, he must also jealously preserve the weak in existence. It means also that, for an individual to maintain and affirm his rights, he must also affirm and maintain the rights of the other. It follows also, that for humans to maintain and affirm their right to existence, they must invariably affirm the right of existence of the non-human part of Nature. This is, because all beings as Asouzu envisages share a common

horizon of being. The environment needs us to sustain it in meaningful existence, and we need the environment to sustain us in existence. Any party that negates this mutual complementary relationship in service and tries to exist in isolation, gets itself extinct.

Those environmental theories that approach environmental issues with a bifurcating and divisive mindset run the risk of not contributing meaningfully to the resolution of the environmental crisis that is threatening to pull the world down. A sound theory would not conceive the world in bi-polar modes, they would instead see the world in the light of missing links serving each other in mutual complementation. Here differences are not seen as signs of inferiority but as an external part of the self, that helps in the affirmation of the existence of the self. Nonhuman beings are therefore not to be seen as inferior based on their differences, but as an important part of the complementary horizon (*Ibuanyidanda*) without which the self itself ceases to exist. This is because negation of nonhuman Nature is indirectly tantamount to negation of humans. Harm done to Nature is tantamount to harm done to humans. Humans and nonhuman being to share the same complementary framework, and thus dislocation of one aspect of this complementary web, boomerangs on other members of the whole. Because all reality shares a common horizon (*Ibuanyidanda*), no action could be creditably performed without proper consideration of other missing links with which we share this intrinsic belongingness. Any action performed without such consideration necessarily bounces back on the subject – this Asouzu calls the boomerang effect. Thus, the pursuance of one's interest in the total negligence of others has an indirect repercussion. Pursuance of growth and development by humans in total negation of the interest of the environment would boomerang on the humans.

This boomerang effect is also evident in our relationship with the environment. If

we rob and loot the environment for our selfish gains, it implies we are robbing ourselves, because when we do this, the environment will lose its generative ability which means the end to the existence of humans. Continuous robbing and looting of our forest trees would in a short while completely render the forest extinct. When the forest is completely gone, so too would the services the forest offers us. When the forest completely disappears (as it would soon be the case if urgent actions are not put in place), the atmosphere would be enveloped by excess carbon dioxide and thereby lead to an increase in the global greenhouse gases. Too much greenhouse gases would lead to a global warming that our bodies may never be able to adapt to – this would foretell end to human existence on the planet Earth. Destruction of forest may also increase cases like tsunami, hurricane, drought, flood et cetera, because forest trees also render the service of wind breaking. Destruction of forests may also reduce global oxygen, because trees are the major oxygen emitters to the atmosphere.

Looting and robbing the forest that at firsthand may appear as a wise and smart thing to do, may in the long run show that it has been negative wisdom after all. It is negative wisdom, because it is counterproductive. Wanton felling of forest trees may appear to be a booming business for those involved, but as it is already evident, global warming is increasing, causing the sea level to rise, which is responsible for the increasing flooding occurrences in the world that have taken a number of lives and properties. The riches made from destruction of forest trees are indirectly paid back to the environment through flooding, tsunamis, hurricanes, droughts et cetera – this is the boomerang effect of our actions.

Any action, therefore, that disturbs the balance of the nonhuman Nature has a way of pushing itself back to the humans themselves (Bisong 2018b). The reverse is also true, positive actions towards the environment yield positive dividends to humans.

Authentic wisdom, therefore, has to consist in striving to maintain a balance in the ecosystem, so that humans themselves would also experience this balance. When the quality of the environment improves, the quality of human life also improves. When humans take care of the environment, the environment would take care of man. When man is friendly to the environment, the environment would also be friendly to man. It is a case of “you can never eat your cake and have it.” The relationship between humans and nonhuman Nature is a symbiotic one. The two exist in a mutual complementary relationship of service to each other. All missing links are deficient, and thus needing others to satisfy these defects. They need others to complement their defect in a mutual service. Thus, every missing link expects the best service from one another, in order for it to have a meaningful existence. The environment, therefore, as a missing link, expects the best of services for it to have a meaningful existence. And man in turn expects the best of services from the environment, for him to have an authentic existence. Man, therefore, owes the environment best of services, in order to get served in good measure.

Development of humans begets development of other beings. Any claim to development that deprives other beings of the opportunity to be developed also puts a knife to the link that joins us in a holistic web, and thereby will amount to negative development. Asouzu (2007b) is of the belief that the moment the mind is in control of its existential tension laden ambivalent conditions of life, that is the moment virtues like respect, justice, love, kindness, care et cetera would crop up. This however, he argues like Aristotle before him, does not come by chance. But unlike Aristotle who prescribed forced training, through habituation (Ushie, Bisong and Odok 2015), Asouzu prescribes a training of the mind; he calls this training “noetic propaedeutic pedagogy.”

Asouzu believes that the mind is naturally imbued with transcendent categories like

fragmentation (relativity), unity, totality, universality, comprehensiveness, wholeness and future reference. These categories he argues are the natural forms of the mind, through which it perceives reality. This means that the mind naturally does not capture reality in absolute mode but in a relative, comprehensive and future referential dimension. It is, however, the ambivalent tension inherent in our existential situation and the influence of the phenomenon of concealment that plague the mind distorting it and shielding it, and thus making it to perceive reality in a divisive and bifurcating mode. The noetic propaedeutic pedagogy is simply a process of removing these constraining mechanisms that thwart the mind, inhibiting its categories or forms.

Noetic propaedeutic pedagogy is, therefore, a process of redirecting the mind’s transcendent categories and thereby making them positively active. This is absolutely necessary because the problem of subjugation and domination of the environment by humans as well as other problems on interpersonal, inter-organizational and international mode originate from the mind’s inability to perform ultimately because of the inhibiting and constraining effects of the ambivalent existential condition and the phenomenon of concealment. Since the problem is the mind problem, Asouzu believes the solution too needs to start from the mind. When the mind is cleared of all the cobwebs that render its categories hegemonic, then it would stand a better chance of grasping the reality from the preceding conditions of its interrelatedness and mutual dependence.

This clearance of the mind of all the cobwebs that entangle and hold it bound, is the process of noetic propaedeutic. It does not happen arbitrarily; it is rather a self-imposed act of conscious experience of being as missing links of reality (Asouzu 2013). It is the personal effort we make to affirm the mutual complementary relationship of all existent entities. It subsists in the personal awareness of the capacity

of the constraining mechanisms to instigate the instinct of self-preservation to seek its interest even when this negates the interest of others. This process of noetic propaedeutic culminates in the “complementary transcendent existential conversion.” When transcendent existential conversion takes place in an individual, the subject experiences an instant harmonization of the mind with the transcendent categories. With existential conversion taking place, the mind ceases to relate to the world in absolute fragments and starts relating to it in a framework of comprehensiveness and universality.

When this is the case, the mind realizes the limitation of the super-maxim. It would realize that the nearer is not always the better and safer, fighting for the interests of members of a particular set of the environment is not always the best; polarization, divisiveness, spitefulness, aversion, intolerance, et cetera do not maintain the intrinsic relationship that binds all missing links in a whole future referential dimension. When noetic propaedeutic pedagogy culminates in existential conversion, the intrinsic relationship that humans share with its co-tenants in the ecosystem would be affirmed and upheld. Here, the human-environment relationship would cease to be seen in absolute divisive poles like inferior – superior, irrational – rational, sentient – insentient, et cetera. Rather, it would be clear to the mind that inferiority and irrationality are intrinsically connected to superiority and rationality respectively. The two respective features cannot exist apart, when one disappears, the other necessarily disappears. When inferiority disappears, superiority also disappears, because there is no superior without inferior – the two are tight to a mutual complementary relationship – this is the natural way the mind perceives them, the tendency to perceive them in polarized mode is a function of a defective mind, held bound by the ambivalent existential tension and the phenomenon of concealment.

Conception of being this way is a sure sign that existential conversion is yet to take

place in an individual. When it has taken place, the mind sees accident and substance, rationality and irrationality, superiority and inferiority as respectively sharing the same horizon of meaning and thus must be captured in mutual complementation, if any of them would stand a chance of authentically and truly being grasped. Also, humans and nonhumans in spite of their differences would be captured as forming the same horizon of mutual sharing and complementarity.

Conclusion

Due to the centrality of the mind in any attempt to resolve the environmental crisis, this article along with Asouzu advocates for a conscious training of the minds of humans to discolour it of the constraining mechanisms. This is absolutely necessary because the way the mind perceives the reality informs the values it formulates and follows. A bifurcating and divisive mindset necessarily follows hegemonic values like intolerance, aversion, spitefulness, stereotyping, cheating, greed, competition, et cetera. An equilibrated mindset favours global totalizing values like truth, honesty, justice, love, respect, care, mercy, et cetera. Tackling the environmental issues from the mind, therefore, connotes tackling it from the root.

A problem that is tackled from the root dies off, just like any tree that is cut from the roots. Other attempts to solve the environmental problem that do not take cognizance of this fact, are only pruning the problem, leaving it unsolved, in fact allowing them to grow bigger. A change of action necessarily follows a change of values, which also follows a change of the mindset (Bisong and Apologun 2014). If the mindset is not reset, then new values that would give birth to new set of actions would not emanate. Therefore, a constant call for change of actions that is witnessed in the world today has been like pouring water on the back of a duck fowl, because a corresponding change in the mind had not been pre-effected. Theories, symposia, conferences, promulgations et cetera

calling for a change in the way the environment is handled has been a clanging gong because the bifurcating and polarizing mindset humans are plagued with has not been obliterated and equilibrated. It is the contention of this researcher, that no matter how hard, scientists, philosophers, sociologists, governments and other stakeholders try, the environmental crisis may not wane, because of the mindset on which these pleas are poured on – it is like talking to deaf ears. The ears must first be made sound before they can hear. The mind must first be cleared of the distempers that plague it before the dictates and pleas of these theories and promulgations would be internalized. It, therefore, has to undergo a noetic propaedeutic pedagogy before it could imbibe the proper values that would shape its relationship with the environment.

Noetic propaedeutic pedagogy opens our mind-eyes to the complementary relationship existing between and among missing links. It would open our minds to the realization that to be, is not to be alone, but to be in a complementary relationship. Thus, it would be better placed to affirm and uphold the existence of others as a necessary prerequisite for the affirmation of its own existence. It would be better equipped to affirm and uphold the existence of the nonhuman part of the environment as a necessary prerequisite for the affirmation of the self. It would recognize the total, comprehensive and ultimate foundation (*Ibuanyidanda*) that gives legitimacy to the existence of all missing links. It brings to the understanding that any action that does not take into consideration the universal, total and comprehensive dimension of being is not authentic. It understands that a right action is not the one that negates the other, it is rather the one that embraces the other in its otherness and sees the other's differences not as a sign of inferiority or weakness but as a uniqueness peculiar to it, put in place by Nature to make the world a perfect and beautiful place to be. The difference in the nonhuman nature is not a weakness

to be exploited but a design of Nature to perfect the world in beauty. Negation of the other therefore, is a negation and destruction of the beauty of the world.

When the mind is converted and begins to see the intrinsic relationship that exists between it and the whole of creation that is the moment the cry for sustainable development would begin to flow naturally. This would be so because, that mind that sees reality in mutual complementarity would naturally evolve positive values that would brew up actions that would, in turn, foster the sustainability of the environment. Symposia, conferences, regulations, et cetera, on the environment would do better if there were directed at education of the mind of man to view reality the way it truly is – complementary. When the mind begins to see the reality as existing in complementary mode that is the moment respect would begin to be accorded to the rest of Nature as an important part of the complementary whole. It is at this moment that exploitation of nature would give way to tenderness, appreciation and care for the environment. It is at this moment that Nature would no longer be conceived as existing to service human needs but as a co-tenant of the ecosystem, needing service from humans as well – it does not exist for humans, rather both exist for the sake of each other – both possess intrinsic values in themselves as well as possessing instrumental values when considered in their relationship to each other.

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