STUDIA ECOLOGIAE ET BIOETHICAE

In Praise of Cultural Environmental Ethics

Pochwała etyki środowiskowo-kulturowej

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Abstract: It is now very clear to many that environmental health has degraded to such a degree that it requires urgent attention. Most scholars have understood that the failing health of the environment is mostly due to the wrong way it is being handled by human beings. This realization has necessitated various calls for an environmental ethic that would inspire positive human actions towards the environment. In response to these calls, many environmental ethics have been proposed, most of which are global ethics of human behaviour. While commending these efforts, we argue in this work that global standard setting ethics would not be as effective as relativistic ethics in handling environmental challenges. This is because, it is difficult to set a global ethics that would satisfy all cultural values as to be justifiably binding on all human beings. Culture inspired ethics would most likely provoke more positive activities towards the environment than any global totalizing ethics.

Keywords: global environmental ethics, environmental ethics, values, culture, environmental health, cultural environmental ethics

Streszczenie: Świadomość, że dobrostan środowiska uległ pogorszeniu do tego stopnia, że wymaga pilnej uwagi, zdaje się być dzisiaj powszechna. Większość naukowców przyznaje, że pogarszający się stan środowiska naturalnego wynika głównie z niewłaściwego podejścia człowieka do natury. Uświadomienie sobie tego faktu zaowocowało licznymi głosami nawołującymi do stworzenia etyki środowiskowej, która inspirowałaby pozytywne działania na rzecz środowiska. W odpowiedzi na te apele zaproponowano wiele rodzajów etyki środowiskowej, z których większość dotyczy globalnej etyki zachowań ludzkich. Doceniając wagę tych wysiłków, autorzy niniejszego artykułu przedstawiają stanowisko, że etyka oparta na wyznaczaniu globalnych standardów stanowi mniej skuteczną odpowiedź na wyzwania środowiskowe niż etyka relatywistyczna. Przyczyną takiego stanu rzeczy jest to, że trudno jest wypracować na poziomie globalnym etykę, która byłaby zgodna z wartościami kulturowymi przyjętymi i uznanymi przez wszystkich ludzi na całym świecie. Etyka inspirowana kulturowo przyniesie prawdopodobnie więcej pozytywnych działań na rzecz środowiska niż jakakolwiek totalizująca etyka globalna.

Słowa kluczowe: globalna etyka środowiskowa, etyka środowiskowa, wartości, kultura, zdrowie środowiskowe, etyka środowiskowa kulturowa

Introduction

Although environmental ethics is a relatively new discipline, it is quickly gaining commendable momentum because of the shocking realization of the deplorable state of the natural environment. Aside from alarms raised in the media, symposia and conferences regarding the risk of mishandling the environment, experience too has shown that the climate is changing rapidly, the globe is getting warmer and natural disasters are on the rise – pointing to the fact that all is not well with the environment (Bisong 2024). This also points to the possibility that the presently contrived environmental ethics are defective and thereby unable to direct actions aright.

Since all human beings depend solely on the environment for their survival, it is understandable why frantic efforts are made by environmentalists and other scholars to provide ethics that would organize activities on the environment with wisdom, in order to improve the health of the environment. Unfortunately, almost all the proposed ethics of the environment are geared towards binding all human actions. This we feel is a weakness that should be corrected. Grand ethical narratives surely have their own strengths but for an ethic to be effective in inspiring actions, it must take into cognizance the cultural values of the people and no global totalizing ethic could actually do this. By global totalizing ethics, I mean, those ethics that tend towards the universal and have the goal of ruling all the actions of human beings in the world.

This work believes that though Universalist ethics help in creating universal standards, the best ethic of the environment must be relative to cultures. The research objective of this work is therefore, to show why culture-based ethics of the environment would impact more positively on the environment, than grand totalizing ethics. The importance of culture to the development of the different aspects of human life cannot be overemphasized. Culture has an impact on educational development; it has an impact on scientific and technological development, and it definitely has influence on environmental development. Culture of a people could affect the environment negatively or positively. A good environmental ethic should be geared towards upholding the good cultures and suppressing the negative ones. Since cultures differ from region to region, environmental ethics that aligns with regions would be more effective. Thus, more efforts should be channelled towards the construction of cultural environmental ethics. Cultural environmental ethics here refers to an environmental ethic that is contrived and built upon a given culture. Its aim lies in identifying and bringing to the fore those aspects of a given culture that have a positive impact on the environment and repress the ones that affect it in a negative way.

This work is organized in four main sections. The first section gives reasons why environmental ethics is important and calls for urgent attention. The second part dwells on establishing the need to move from a global ethics of the environment to culture based ethics of the environment. The third section is dedicated to establishing the link between culture and the environment. This will give way to the crux of this work, which provides arguments in favour of ethics contrived from different cultures of the world. This section also shows why this ethics is better than the global totalizing ethics.

1. Need for an Ethic of the Environment

Environmental ethics is a discipline in philosophy that deals with the moral relationship of human beings with the environment, and also with the "value and moral status" of the environment and its nonhuman part. Though nature has been the focus of most nineteenth and twentieth century philosophers, contemporary environmental ethics, emerged as a distinct academic discipline in the 1970s. The rethinking and questioning of the moral relationship of human beings with the natural environment over the last fifty years was influenced by the concept

formulated in the 1960s that the late twentieth century faced a "population time bomb" and a serious "environmental crisis". Among the works that drew attention to the possibility of an environmental crisis was Thomas Malthus' "An Essay on the Principle of Population as it Affects the Future Improvement of Society" (1798). This work raised the initial question of how many humans could be sustained by the planet Earth in the face of the geometric increase in population against the arithmetic increase in natural resources. This alarm was increased by Cunningham & Cunningham, (2006), who postulated that every second, about 2.3 million children are born in the world. Due to the galloping increase in human population, the pressure on the environment has increased tremendously, leading to the increase in the world Earth's surface temperature – referred to as global warming (America's Climate Choice, 2010). Nielsen (2006) also estimated that due to human recklessness about half of the world forest that inhabited the Earth until 1947 has been destroyed. As captured by Wilson (1988), by 2030 if nothing is done to halt the present rate at which the forest is destroyed, only about 10% of the world forest will remain. This recklessness in the handling of the environment according to Gabriel (2013) has caused extinction of animals and plants – in 2050 over 30% of species will be extinct and even a greater number will be in danger of extinction.

Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" (1963), also raised the world to the consciousness of the dangers of harmful pesticides that are used in agriculture. Lynn White, in an essay "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" published in 1967, argues that the "main strands of Judeo-Christian thinking had encouraged the overexploitation of nature by maintaining the superiority of humans over all other forms of life on earth, and by depicting all of nature as created for the use of humans". Also, very influential in this kind of thinking, was an essay by Aldo Leopold (2001) titled, "The Land Ethic", in which

Leopold claimed that the roots of the environmental crisis were philosophical. Many other writers like Paul Ehrlich, Garett Hardin, Barry Commoner, Karen Warren, etc. have contributed variously to carrying the environmental message to the world.

The calls by these writers for a basic change of values "in connection to the environment initiated the need for the development of environmental ethics as a new sub-discipline of philosophy" (Bisong and Apologuin 2014). A response to this call brought about a lot of works by philosophers which include: Paul Taylor's "Respect for Nature"; Holmes Rolston's "Environmental Ethics"; Mark Sagoff's "The Economy of the Earth"; and Eugene C. Hargrove's "Foundations of Environmental Ethics". J. Baird Callicott created a collection of papers, "In Defence of the Land Ethic." Bryan Norton wrote "Why Preserve Natural Diversity?" followed by "Toward Unity among Environmentalists" (http://www. cep.unt.edu/novice.html) and many other works are popping up daily. We have had anthropocentric centred ethics, life centred ethics, eco-centric theories and many other environmental ethical theories emerging as a result of these writings.

In spite of all these efforts, environmental degradation still continues, which is a clear sign that the scholarly works aimed at stemming the tides of negative actions on the environment are not taking serious roots. This is an indication that something new needs to be tried.

2. Impossibility of an Effective Global Environmental Ethics

This is an era, where almost all regions, especially ones that were oppressed, are making frantic efforts to break with the past. There are moves to totally erase the damaging effects of colonialism and slavery. Thus, anything that bears a resemblance to colonialism, neo-colonialism and imperialism is suspect. This is one reason, why most scholars do not want to hear the word, globalization (Sack 2002; Beck 2001; Parker 2017; Gazleh

2001). They see this as a new form of colonialism – for it is the rest of the world that would be globalized by a few, so called, first world countries. This current intellectual and social disposition would make it less likely that any global totalizing ethics will be accepted by all cultures – it will be viewed as another case of powerful countries dictating their self-interested ethical principles to the less powerful. This sentiment was echoed by the Panelist of United Nations High-level Panel on Global Sustainability in their discourse on planetary boundaries. In their words:

> Planetary boundaries are still an evolving concept that should be used with caution… The planetary boundaries question can be divisive as it can be perceived as a tool of the 'North' to tell the 'South' not to follow the resource intensive and environmentally destructive development pathway that rich countries took themselves… This language is unacceptable to most of the developing countries as they fear that an emphasis on boundaries would place unacceptable brakes on poor countries (United Nations High-level Panel on Global Sustainability 2011).

Reacting to the discourse on planetary boundaries, Clark seemingly shares the same view with the panellist, for him "tipping points in the earth system are dense, unpredictable… and unlikely to be avoidable through early warning indicators. It follows that … 'safe operating spaces' and 'planetary boundaries' are thus highly suspect and potentially the new 'opiates." (Clark 2001).

As captured by Redcliff (2005), even the sustainable development drive is considered by many as an oxymoron, because, on a planet where 20% of the population consumes 80% of the natural resources of that planet, a "sustainable development" cannot be possible for this 20%. The anti-sustainable movement accuses the first world countries of instituting sustainable development in order to set limits on the developing world. Sustainable development impedes growth,

they argue. Sylvie Brunel (2024) shares this viewpoint. She thinks that "the core ideas of sustainable development are a hidden form of protectionism by developed countries impeding the development of the other countries." Sustainable development, she believes "serves as a pretext for protectionism," she avers emphatically, "I have the feeling that sustainable development is perfectly helping out capitalism." According to her, therefore, sustainable development benefits the first world countries.

All these statements and the ones we hear through interactions with people are reflections of the mindsets of people towards grand directives and ethics. Unfortunately, the leading global ethics available (normative environmental ethics, sentientist ethics, biocentric ethics, ecocentric ethics and eco-feminist ethics) are originating from Western and Northern perspectives and experiences. This is possibly the reason why they are not taking roots and guiding actions towards sustaining the environment. The key attitude now is, self-assertion and total independence devoid of neocolonial influences, which implies that grand ethical narratives would be difficult to be embraced.

Even if global ethic is embraced by all societies, it would still hit a rock, because it would not fit well with the cultures and traditions of all societies. Thierry Veherlst made a similar point in a book titled: *No Life without Roots*. He believes the crisis in Third World societies will deepen if the developmental ethics of the West is being followed hook, line and sinker. He argues that the sustenance of the environment, which is an essential part of a country's development plans, cannot be realized by Third World countries if they mimic the western paradigm, which is aimed at conquering nature instead of reconciling with it (Verherlst 1987).

Lastly, as it is going to be shown in the next subheading, culture and environment have a strong relationship. Environment influences cultures and cultures impact on the environment either negatively

or positively. Thus, any ethic that does not aim at positioning culture in such a way that it would be able to impact the environment positively, cannot be a good environmental ethic. This implies that environmental ethics must be diverse and relative to places and time, since cultures are diverse and relative – this is the reason, this work argues for cultural environmental ethics.

3. Link between Culture and the Environment

As has been alluded to already, culture and environment affect each other. Understanding this unique relationship in a great way establishes clearly the need to bend towards cultural and relativistic environmental ethics. The concern of this work is majorly to show how culture affects the environment, but before we do that, it is imperative to briefly reflect on how the environment influences cultures.

1. Influence of landforms on Culture: Physical geography determines the cultural patterns of the people. The landform of a location like valleys, plains, rivers, forests, minerals, island, etc. determines the kind of agricultural practices, the sort of housing, languages spoken and also the economic, political and even religious lives of the people. For instance, societies surrounded by water are mostly fishermen and those in fertile grounds are mostly farmers. Knowing the topography and landform of an area could easily translate to guessing the kind of culture prevalent in that place.

2. Climatic conditions of an area determines the lifestyles of people: Climatic conditions significantly shape cultural practices and ways of life of people. For instance, the climate of the region determines the kind of crops planted and, consequently, the dietary culture of the people. Climate also influences the dressing tradition, housing styles, recreational activities and even spending patterns of a people. Some climates do not favour some crops or livestock, which implies that planting and rearing such crops and livestock respectively would not be cultural practices in such regions. The sort of dressing and housing necessary to survive well in the tropical region would not be the same needed in the temperate regions.

3. Environment influences cultural traditions. Almost all cultures have oral and written traditions which reflect deep respect and connections to the environment, the nature of the environment also influences the traditions and cultures of the people. For instance, the environment influences the sort of art works created by a people and also their ceremonies. In Boki of Nigeria, for instance, their cultural ceremonies like the New Yam festival and the Cassava festival are directly hinged on the fact that their environment yield yams and cassava. Such celebrations would not be found in environments that do not produce these crops. Hunting and fishing skills are also directly proportional to the kinds of animals and fishes found in a different environment.

The impact of culture on the environment is high and varied. These impacts include:

1. Culture modifies the environment. A culture that is development minded embarks on several activities that change the face of the environment; activities like roads and house constructions, establishment of industries, mechanized farming, etc. have a severe impact on the environment, such as: habitat loss, fragmentation of land, deforestation and pollution. Human activities powered by technology has led to severe habitat loss, which is the most important extinction threat for a variety of species. Over the years, humans have transformed billions of hectares of forests and grasslands into croplands, roads, towns,

cemeteries, etc. These activities destroy the habitats of many species thus rendering them extinct or endangered. Fragmentation which results from construction of roads, farming, housing, etc., has tended to reduce habitat into small and isolated patches. This reduces biodiversity, because many species, such as bears, lions, elephants and large cats, require large territories to exist. Other species would reproduce only in deep forests far from the edges. To these kinds of species, fragmentation poses an existential threat; it also opens up preys to predators and also increases pollution. Fragmentation of land for sceptic tanks, waste disposal sites, etc. greatly impacts negatively on the environment. It is estimated that in the "United States alone, about 4.5 trillion litres (1.2 trillion gallons) of contaminated water seep into the ground daily. This comes from septic tanks, cesspools, municipal and industrial landfills and waste disposal sites, agricultural chemicals and wastes" (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2006). It is also estimated that 1.5 million Americans fall ill from infections caused by faecal contamination which costs billions of dollars per year. Also 6 million metric tons of plastic bottles, packaging materials and other pollutants are thrown into the oceans from ships every year, where there choke seabirds, mammals and fishes. Chlorinated hydrocarbons, such as DD, PCBs and dioxins released during industrial activities are believed to be capable of weakening the immune system of animals and thereby making animals vulnerable to infections. It is also believed that lead also kills between 2 and 3 million waterfowl every year (Cunningham and Cunningham 2006).

2. Beliefs of population affect the environment. A lot of scholars (Neurath 1994; Malthus, Ehrlich 1968; Knudson 2006) have made it clear that population growth exerts much pressure on the environment. Most cultures (especially in Africa) see many children as a blessing and as such encourage it. Most Christians for instance, discourage all forms of artificial birth control method. This, according to Bisong & Besong (2021), is "built on the belief that God gives children and thus it would be wrong to abort or hinder God's gift through the use of contraceptive." High population exerts much pressure on the environment and puts it at risk of collapsing. Human population growth is a real threat to biodiversity. With increasing population, there would definitely be an increase in the harvest of timber, fish, fossil fuels, animals, water and expansion of cities. These would impact on the environment and threaten the survival of many species. It is believed that the population is galloping upward and, thereby, the overall ecological support system which all living beings depend on for survival is threatened. As a result of this, most scholars are in agreement that there is a need for population control. However, even among cultures that agree with the idea of population control, there is still disagreement as to the methods to be used for control. The method(s) chosen by a given country is normally influenced by the religious and cultural beliefs of the area. Thus, while a particular population control method may be legal in one place, it could be illegal or restricted in another. For instance, abortion which is one of the most effective methods of birth control is illegal in Nigeria but legal in some parts of the USA – indicating the controversy surrounding this topic of human population control. A lot of philosophers have debated on the issue of population control – some arguing for and others arguing against it depending on their cultural backgrounds.

3. Religious beliefs influence the environment. Some cultures consider some places or terrains to be sacred which conditions the handling of such areas. For instance, in Africa, some forests and rivers are considered sacred, and consequently, no tree is cut down, and no fish is farmed there respectively. This greatly helps in the conservation of the environment. Religious beliefs and their interpretations have been shown by various scholars to have diverse impacts on the environment. In many cultures, the environment carries spiritual connotations, and a particular or some species or landscape may be linked to a sense of spiritual identity and meaning. For instance, in Obudu in Cross River State of Nigeria, there is a certain mountain, that is believed to be the dwelling place of God. People with different problems are often seen going there for prayers and other religious activities. In Eket in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria, there is a stream that is believed to carry spiritual powers; water from that stream if sprinkled in the compound of a man who has harmed you in anyway, is believed to be capable of bringing retributive justice to that wicked person. The impact of religious beliefs on the environment has been widely acknowledged by many scholars (White 1967; Mbiti 1970; Markel 2024; Deen 1990; Bisong and Besong 2021; Schopenhauer 1998). Commenting on the impact of Christian beliefs, Schopenhauer (1998), avers with respect to the handling of animals, that because Christian morality leaves animals out of account, "they are at once outlawed in philosophical morals; they are mere things, mere means to any ends whatsoever. They can therefore be used for vivisection, hunting, coursing, bull fighting, and horse racing, and can be whipped to death as they struggle along with heavy carts of stone. Shame on such a morality that is worthy of patriarchs,

Chandalas, and Melchas and that fails to recognize the eternal essence that exists in every living thing". According to White, the Christian belief that man was created in the image of God, encouraged the mishandling of nature and influenced the way modern science sees and manipulates the environment. Modern Western science, according to him "was cast in the matrix of Christian theology, therefore it too inherited the orthodox Christian arrogance towards nature" Bisong & Besong (2021) accuse Religion in its entirety of impacting negatively on the environment through the many buildings and much noise pollution produced by it. Religious houses which are "increasing everyday deplete forest trees and consequently lead to deforestation and its attendant effects." There is, therefore, no gainsaying the fact that, without religion, the environment will be less degraded. Noise pollution according to Mendie and Eyo (2016), Okafor and Osim (2018) and Bassey (2020) not only causes stress and other problems in human beings, it also contributes to the alarming extinction of animals and plants. According to Fletcher (1960), "long term exposure to noise could lead to excessive stimulation to the nervous systems of animals and thereby results in chronic stress that is harmful to the health of wildlife species and their reproductive fitness." Noise chases animals out of their habitats, which greatly affects plants as most of them depend on these animals for pollination and the spreading of seeds.

4. Consumption patterns have a great impact on the environment. Mahatma Gandhi once made a famous declaration; "Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." Most cultures are more consumer minded than others. According to estimates, "if everyone on earth consumed the same amount as the average

US citizen four-planet earth would be needed to sustain us" (McDonald 2020). Fortunately, an average human does not consume as much as an average American. However, as captured by Bisong (2020), although an average African does not consume as much as an American, in the nearest future, he/she may consume more. That will happen, when the inhibiting factor, i.e. poverty, is removed. This assertion, he believed, is true considering the fact that Africans like to show wealth, through fleets of cars, clothes and ostentatious living. Ikegbu & Bisong (2015), Ekwuru (1999), Inoka (2003), share the above view and believe the summon bonum of an average African is simply material acquisition. This culture contributes to overharvesting which Gandhi describes as greed. Overharvesting, for instance, caused by overconsumption sends some species into extinction. The American Passenger Pigeon, for instance, which used to be the most populous bird on earth in 1970, has now became extinct, with the last one killed in 1990 (Cunningham & Cunningham 2006). This increase in biodiversity loss could have a lot of adverse effects on humans and other living beings; for instance, biodiversity provides crucial "support for drug discovery and the availability of medicinal resources" (Mendelsohn 1995). This is, because a great percentage of drugs are derived from biological sources. Biodiversity loss would also affect the industrial sector, because many industrial materials like fibre, dye, rubber, et cetera, come directly from biological sources. These include fibbers, building materials, rubber dyes and oil. Other activities, such as hiking, gardening, bird watching, specimen collecting and fish keeping would strongly be affected by biodiversity loss. It is estimated that "Americans spend 104 dollars every year on wildlife related recreation which is much more than the 81 billion dollars spent each year on new automobiles" (Cunningham & Cunningham 2006).

5. Attitude to life influences the environment. People have different attitudes towards the environment, i.e., some see it as their responsibility while others do not. The viewpoint of the individualist for instance, is mostly considered to be anthropocentrically inclined, while that of the collectivist is biocentric or ecocentric, implying that individualistic societies tend to exploit the environment more than communalistic ones. A study conducted by Komatsu et al. (2019) reveals that people in individualistic countries tend to have a lower level of "anthropogenic perception". This means, they do not feel responsible for environmental problems and tend to exert greater impact on the environment. Echoing this sentiment, Ann Coulter (2014) claims: "God gave us the earth. We have dominion over the plants, the animals, the trees. God said, 'Earth is yours. Take it. Rape it. It's yours'". The attitudes as well as the values held by a people greatly affect the environment and inhibit sustainable development goals. Asouzu (2007) accuses those with divisive and polarizing mind-sets as the main cause of environmental problems and other interpersonal and intrapersonal conflicts. This divisive mind-set that leads to negative handling of the environment boomerangs on humans in terms of global warming, flooding, acid rain, etc.

4. Arguments for Cultural Environmental Ethics

Given that environmental concerns are global, and that cultures are diverse, it is imperative that environmental ethics be grounded on individual cultures so as to evoke any significant adherence. People generally respond more to what is familiar. People would respond and adhere more to an ethic that promotes a familiar culture

than to one that preaches a strange culture. An ethic that demands a drastic change of one's culture as most grand totalizing ethical theories do, is most likely not to succeed. For instance, anthropocentric ethical theories would hardly motivate a typical African, because of the peculiar ontology prevalent in Africa, which tends more towards biocentrism. Cultural environmental ethics would be built on familiar values and ethos and thus would appeal more. Grand ethical narratives could appeal to reason but what motivates actions more is what appeals to emotions. Thus, while we encourage universalistic environmental ethics for their rational appeal, most often what inspires behavioural change more is ethics built on familiar cultures.

A cultural environmental ethic would bring to the fore the positive cultures of an area as it relates to the environment and fans them to flame. While in the same measure, it would dampen and discourage the negative ones. The Africans for instance, believe strongly in reincarnation, which could be a foundation of an environmental ethic. An ethic that builds on this belief could encourage better handling of the environment, so that in the next life it would be met in a healthy state. This sort of ethics that is built on the cultures of the people have the chance of being understood easily and consequently adopted. For instance, a belief in interconnectivity of all beings and the danger inherent in breaking the link that connects things is well understood by Africans, implying that any ethic warped around this would easily be understood and appreciated.

An ethic of the environment that would appeal to the consciences of a people must be developed from the traditional cultures of the people. If an African, for instance, is asked to handle the environment properly because destruction of the environment is tantamount to breaking the link that holds all realities and would attract boomerang effects, his/her conscience would be pricked.

Every culture has a folk ethic, value systems and axioms which could be used to fashion out an environmental ethic for the people. Environmental ethicists could sieve out these axioms and value systems from different cultures and built cultural environmental ethics that would be effective in controlling human actions towards the environment. Since culture, as has been shown above, has a direct impact on the environment, an effective ethic of the environment would need to aim at either promoting or suppressing a culture. This implies that to salvage the environment, positive cultures need be instituted and negative ones uprooted. Ethics that breathe directly on these cultures would be the elixir that would cure negative cultures – thus the need for cultural environmental ethics. For instance, a cultural environmental ethics targeted at saving the forest and preserving endangered species, for the Igbo tribe of Nigeria could leverage on their belief in evil forest. The Igbos believe some forests are evil, which means it is suicidal to enter there and fell trees or kill animals. This belief helped the traditional Igbos to preserve the forest and animals, but unfortunately, this belief is waning. A cultural ethics that could justify and reinforce this belief could work magic, in terms of restoring environmental health. We are of the opinion that this belief and similar ones are waning because there is no systematized ethics to justify and protect them.

Cultural ethics would not just be more effective in handling environmental challenges, it would also provide us with the platform to learn and appreciate the epistemological and ethical merits of other cultures (Mathews 2024). Most people with hegemonic mindsets do not believe anything good could be found in other cultures, but by the activities of cultural environmental ethicists, the beauty of these cultures would be brought to the fore, which would make them more understood and appreciated. Levy-Bruhl, Hegel, Hume, Kant and others who doubted the logicality, rationality,

spirituality, etc. of Africans would perhaps have had a different view, if the culture and reasoning pattern of Africans was well known to them. The tendency of the more advanced countries to impose views on others would also reduce if the beauty of other viewpoints was well known and celebrated. Cultural environmental ethics is thus capable of ending all forms of intellectual colonialism, imperialism and impositions.

Cultural environmental ethics would also give some people a sense of belongingness. Every state now seeks independence not just physically but intellectually and in other spheres of existence. Thus, an ethic that is home bred would give the people a more special sense of satisfaction than the one that is imported. The best way to be independent in reality and not just in name, is to be able to order your lives by yourselves. Cultural environmental ethics would make this possible and thus should be encouraged by all environmentalists.

Conclusion

It is the belief of the researchers that cultural environmental ethics, if promoted, would have a greater impact on environmental sustainability than grand ethics of the environment. The link between culture and environment is too direct and thus cannot be ignored when drafting an ethic of the environment. Since one grand ethic cannot take into cognizance all cultures, relativistic ethics are encouraged. This, however, is not to disparage grand ethical narratives, for they have their roles in the scheme of things – cultural ethics would have a more direct impact on human actions and thereby transform ethical behaviour more.

Cultural environmental ethics aside from its ability to inspire positive actions more readily, also has the advantage of giving people a sense of intellectual and moral independence, which is actually the craving of most modern societies. Cultural environmental ethics would also help people to understand and appreciate the epistemological as well as the moral import of other cultures, which would help cultivate the virtue of tolerance in people.

We would be attempting to formulate an ethic for Boki tribe of Nigeria in our next research. We recommend that other environmentalists and ethicists look inward in order to develop ethics of the environment from their individual cultures. This is the best way to resolve the environmental challenges that are threatening to collapse the whole world.

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