

## HUMAN FREEDOM AND THE THEISTIC VALUATION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

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### Abstract

*The thrust interest of this paper is based on the indispensable relations between the employment of human actions in freedom and the belief in the presence of God in human affairs for the management and sustainability of the environment as a common home. With humanistic conceptualization of development, the environment remains as a gift from creation that cannot be monopolised but it demands to be commonly valued and managed for the realization of the common good and solidarity as principles of the sustainability of human generations, even in an imposing age of scientific and technological civilization. The developmental concerns for the environment demand that human persons, irrespective of their colour, religion and any other social, cultural, economic and political convictions and beliefs, should think and act rightly and ethically in advancing the world around them for the purpose of common living, survival and salvation, especially with reference to the values of creation. Adopting the phenomenological method of analysis, the paper concludes that, through the developmental consciousness for the realization of integral humanism, the community of the human person can sustain the environment that has been entrusted to him or her by the creator, God. This consciousness for integral humanism is simply by recognising the presence of God in every facet of developmental policies and objectives of the peoples, and by responsibly exercising one's actions in true freedom and genuine charity in truth.*

**Keywords:** God, Ethics, Integral Humanism, Human Freedom, Development, Environment,

### Introduction

We can objectively project the social, political and religious conditioning of the factors of development that are environmentally-deterministic, and they necessarily resonate their impacts on the world which can be both situational and global, as far as the human person remains who and what he or she is everywhere and anytime, especially as a rational agent of development and as a subject of lived experiences.

With human experiences, we make histories, and all histories happen within the existence, valued employment and developmental influences of the environment (Cf, Idemudia and Tenebe 2021: 90; Isanbor 2021<sup>a</sup>: 43, Isanbor 2021<sup>b</sup>: 210). With such objectivity on the knowledge of the human person in relation to his or her environment, we fight viruses that vitiate our health and well-being in re-emerged environment on the one hand, and we face the incursions of aggravated climate change on the other hand.

With the generations of truth and hope for the realization of integral humanism, the contemporariness in the environmental changes is to be associated with our social, political and economic diplomatic development and policies demand that we collectively protect, promote and preserve the environment as our common home and heritage in order to sustain the generations of persons through ecologico-theistic valuation of human interests and ideologies. It is on this conviction that the Fathers of the Pontifical Council for Peace and Justice posit that:

If humanity today succeeds in combining the new scientific capacities with a strong ethical dimension, it will certainly be able to promote the environment as a home and a resource for man and for all men, and will be able to eliminate the causes of pollution and to guarantee adequate conditions of hygiene and health for small groups as well as for vast human settlements. Technology that pollutes can also cleanse, production that amasses can also distribute justly, on condition that the ethic of respect for life and human dignity, for the rights of today's generations and those to come, prevails.

Within the quest for integral human wellbeing, we talk about holistic development which promotes the totality of the human personhood. We should be readily convinced that, peace necessarily facilitates such a condition for development, understandably that, peace is development itself. It owes that human rights are inevitable to their nature demand progressive change and growth. These cut across all facets of all state's legislation and policy formulations. For the sake of social order and justice, the consideration of development remains a responsible duty for every individual and the state, especially of the environment that houses the individual and the state. The state works to alleviate the conditions of the individuals of the state, which is regarded as 'pragmatic development.' It is the factual presupposition of integral development in relation to the protection and promotion of human rights and dignity. This demands the social, political and theological concern for human rights and dignity which inevitably signifies that the human person is created and indispensably needs to be very responsible and morally authentic. For Udoidem (2011), considering the philosophical foundations of contemporary environmental consciousness, asserts that;

The most urgent need therefore at the present time, is for the reorientation of the human venture toward intimate experience of any natural phenomena. Our rediscovery of the mystique of the Earth is a primary requirement if we are to establish a viable rapport between human and the earth community. Only in this context will we overcome the arrogance that sets us apart from all other components of the planet and established a mood of conquest rather than admiration. Humans must make a hermeneutical return to the origins and rediscover that first sense of bewilderment and wonder that wonder that gave impetus to both religion and science as philosophical dispositions.

Ontologically put, naturally gifted or endowed with the sense of rationality and morality, the human person stands at the centre of the ecosystem and with the right to development in defining his or her authentic and subjectivity through rational and responsible actions on the environment (cf, Idemudia and Tenebe 2021: 92; Isanbor 2021<sup>a</sup>: 45, Isanbor 2021<sup>b</sup>: 214). As ethically observed, the contemporary currencies of scientific, technological and economic values and development have tended to create a divide between generations, and our current environmental crises show that the present generations may be very concerned about themselves from the antecedents of their actions and their exploitation of natural resources, all to the detriment of the future generations (see, Alcoforado 2021: 69; Enebo 2021: 60; Idemudia and Tenebe 2021: 89). With the influences, greed, avarices and selfishness for personal values rather than common collective values of development, basing life on materialistic convictions and achievement, such conviction has been leading him or her to a state of economic exploitation of the earth's resources, based on the feeling of superiority and domination. Hence, the social and economic conditions of industrial, scientific and technological productions are mainly on the power to exploit others based on the values for private property, and such greedy and selfish consciousness of personal and lopsided developments promoted social, political, spiritual and economic covetousness representing the destruction of the ontological relationship between the human persons and the environment.

Methodologically put, the paper is aimed at the indispensable developmental relations that exist or that should ethically exist between the employment of human actions in freedom and the belief in the presence of God in human affairs for the management and sustainability of the environment as a common home. It owes that, the developmental concerns for environmental sustainability demand that the human person should think and act rightly and ethically in advancing the courses of safe and healthy environment for the sustainability of human generations. The human person is to employ the sense of values in creating orderliness in every possible disordered and chaotic situation through the principle of common good that recognises the presence of God in creation and responsibly exercising his or her actions in true freedom and genuine charity in truth.

### **Human Freedom and the Ethics of the Environment**

The social conceptualization of human freedom is centralised on the capacity of any individual to be free in exercising his or her values, creativities and interests. The ethics of the environment is said to be premised on the some level of one's freedom in the management of human actions and valued choices (See, Nwaigbo 2011: 54). Everything regarding human actions and valued choices is indispensably situated on the operations of human freedom. The human person is free by virtue of his or her rationality. It demands that our sense of integral humanism situates that we have to be free in making valued choices and decisions, and in acting through which the developmental conditioning of human authenticity and subjectivity are duly valued. Hence, Mondy (1991: 119) views the holistic and dualistic implications of human's freedom, by saying that;

With freedom, man is not just only simply the master of his own acts, but also of himself: he is the master of his own becoming, more precisely, of that which he will become: an honest citizen, a laborious worker, a generous woman, an earnest mother- or instead, an individual closed in himself, an egoist, miserly quarrelsome, proud, lustful, invidious, or arrogant.

Therefore, the ethics of the environment demands the proper and conscientious management and employment of our freedom; otherwise, we will be doomed by our actions and valued choices on our environment (Cf, Idemudia and Tenebe 2021: 92; Isanbor 2021<sup>a</sup>: 48, Isanbor 2021<sup>b</sup>: 216). The values of development are dependable on the responsible exercises of true and authentic freedom. Such freedom is needed to properly manage the environment in order to avoid the emergence of chaotic and conflict-driven world. According to Onebunne and Ikechukwu (2021: 233-234):

The current and accelerating scale with which the global ecological crisis rises; has resulted in species extinction, global warming and ocean acidification to climate change, radically threatening life on this planet. There is a crisis and we are the cause. Mankind has fallen into a mess of global problems (into a global ecological crisis) which endanger not only its welfare, peace, and development but its survival and mere existence as well. The Earth was created and beautified for man to live comfortably and enjoy nature. Unfortunately, the activities of man in his environment has severally affected and endangered him. The increase in different technologies and inventions has its own contribution to the ecology. Global warming has already had observable effects on the environment, such as shrinking glaciers, earlier break up of ice on rivers and lakes, increased droughts, intensifying extreme weather and plant and animal ranges shifting, output of the sun to the effects of volcanoes. Without effective action to halt the burning

of fossil fuels and reduce the levels of greenhouse gases released by human activity, humans and wildlife worldwide face an unwelcoming future. There will be increased disruptions to society from extreme weather, with more frequent flooding and storms, more severe droughts and heat waves, rising sea levels and warming permafrost. In many regions, the effects of water shortages and extreme heat will adversely affect agriculture and the effects on the natural world will be severe with a major loss of coral reefs as oceans warm and to tropical forests as fires become more frequent. These impacts will also be felt enormously in economic terms. The cost of doing nothing and continuing our trends will severely oppress world.

With environmental changes resulting from environmental pollution and degradation, we are rapidly experiencing changing realities in socialization and civilization, and then increasingly patterning of behavioural orientations of our world and societies. We have been accustomed to hearing scientists conceive of the world in terms of its experimental values rather than its ontological values. We are today witnessing a new “Big Bang” conceptualization of social and religious values that mainly centred on what the agitations of human rights can be achieved, and these readily provoked and then provoking a virtual implosion of our world, breaking down its large dimensions and distance, without morality to curtail human excesses by the exercises of his or her freedom and ingenuity. The conceptualization of values is challenging commonly accepted distinction and shrinking our world into a global village, or more accurately, into a global family, with the environment to house our global consciousness due to relativistic, nihilistic and hedonistic values being exercised on the same environment. As understandably recognised by Pope Francis (2015: no. 105) that,

Our freedom fades when it is handed over to the blind forces of the unconscious, of immediate needs, of self-interest, and of violence. In this sense, we stand naked and exposed in the face of our ever-increasing power, lacking the wherewithal to control it. We have certain superficial mechanisms, but we cannot claim to have a sound ethics, a culture and spirituality genuinely capable of setting limits and reaching clear-minded self-restraints.

Such ethics of the environment is that of common development which defines the communality of persons, that is, the ontologised *ethics of living*. This demands common values of development which command common sense of survival, and owing to the indispensable fact of development that the human generations continually demand for the sustainability of the whole creation (see, Olatunji and Ujomu 2021: 1-2). With global consciousness for industrialization and urbanization,

there is the need for true freedom in exercising human creativity and innovation virtually in all aspects of living, especially through trans-biology and other aspects of artificial intelligence. But there should be indispensable limitations to the exercises of lopsided, debased and secularised freedom when the intentions of such creativity and innovation are to dehumanize the human person and the society.

Such common consciousness of development in the management of human freedom is to be developed by us all. It is never selective and particular, but general as the human person remains who and what he or she is anytime and anywhere. With such complexity of development, “the decision can never simply be made for us in advance by others, if that were the case, we would no longer be free. Freedom presupposes that in fundamental decisions, every person and every generation is a new beginning. Naturally, new generations can have experiences of those who went before, and they can draw upon the moral treasury of the whole of humanity” (Benedict XVI 2007: no. 24). From the contents of inventions through the exercises of the freedom of intellect and will, we question our moral treasury which should have determined what we invent or produce in the name of creativity and innovation (cf, Ifeakor and Chinedu 2021: 101; Vallainatos 1997: 197). Our moral treasury when fully invested in our creativity and innovation should be the basis of human and societal development, thereby achieving environmental sustainability. In freedom, the courses of environmental management and sustainability are basically on the operational values of justice and peace in human society. These two qualities of development really give more meaning to what true freedom is to the human person in relations to his or her actions on the environment. According to Pope Francis (2022: no. 2),

We need only think of care for our common home. The environment, in fact, is on loan to each generation, which must then hand it on to the next. We ought to esteem and encourage all those young people who work for a more just world, one that is careful to safeguard the creation entrusted to our stewardship. They go about this with restlessness and enthusiasm and most of all a sense of responsibility before the urgent change of direction required by the challenges emerging from the present ethical and socio-environmental crisis.

Such social and ethical commitment towards the environment demands the mastery of nature rather than exploiting it, through knowledge of development being exercised in true freedom. Just as Benedict XVI puts it in his *Spe Salvi*; that, “amid our growing knowledge of the structure of matter and in the light of ever more advanced inventions, we clearly see continuous progress towards an ever greater mastery of nature” (Benedict XVI 2007: no. 24). Such knowledge of our ethical commitment towards creation through inventions and creativities direct our

consciousness to what we do to sustain the truthfulness of our freedom. For Benedict XVI, “yet in the field of ethical awareness and moral decision making, there is no similar possibility of accumulation for the simple reason that human's freedom is always new and he or she must always make his or her decision anew” (Benedict XVI 2007: no. 24). This is according to new trends of creativity and innovation in science and technology. With this, we owe ourselves the truth that what we produce should not empower us due to the power and influences of greed, avarices, economic subjugation, imperialism, and atheistic consciousness.

The contention is not about the nature of beliefs in God but on the social considerations of the attributes of God socially and developmentally subscribed to His cosmologically perceived *beingness* through the exercise of human freedom of will. Such actions and their tending corresponding ethical responsibilities in the exercise of one's creative and innovative power show how vulnerable the human person is when true freedom is not duly exercised in relation to the valuation of the *otherness of living*. It is a product of the mind that lives as created. Such development is about seeing the whole creation in the affairs of keeping to the integrality of human relationship for essential survival of the human race. It situates that humanity has to properly know them in order to consciously and humanely develop all things around them, for the purpose of ensuring and sustaining their future through the ethical valuations of the actions they are engaging in the present.

#### **Human Actions and the Social Interpolations of Environmental Sustainability**

All models of environmental development are executed by the valuations of our actions and choices. Our actions and choices define our world and invariably direct our interests and values that indispensably inform our politics and policies of development (see, Alcoforado 2021: 69; Enebo 2021: 60; Idemudia and Tenebe 2021: 89). With them, the society defines the whole processes of development. With culture, politics and environment as indexes of development, the same human actions are regulated. Among these indexes of development, culture regulates the drive for self-definition and self-actualization, and directs human affairs for the realization of social order and justice, and the same manner, information becomes both a possession and a heritage for the emancipation of consciences and moral rectitude when properly managed and employed. (see, Falaiye and Okeregbe 2017: 151; Aghamelu 2019: 91). But the human person being faced with the challenges of ever deepening ecological crisis and environmental problems, he or she is forced to evolve new approaches to ethical issues that are free from the restrictions of ancient theories. Then, he or she culturally, politically and environmentally encouraged to be informed with the framework of emerging metaphysical and epistemological holism where the courses of integral humanism are engendered to sustain the transcendental values of creation.

In all, we largely observed that currencies of scientific and technological development that are unethically monitored, through human activity, as human lives on earth face serious dangers of extermination (cf, Nnamani 2005: 391). Since the dawn of modernity, humans have sequentially polluted, degraded and destroyed the very environment which sustains their lives and those of other living organisms. Not only have they succeeded in making the environment hostile to life, they have also turned it into a breeding ground for the usual and unusual infections. Recurring its existential notations and evaluations of the contemporary human person at the mercies of thinking and intelligibility, Olajide (2017: 17) recounts that;

Humanity potentially equals the sum of all human possibilities and we are whatever we make of ourselves, whichever choices we actualise.... They are in other words essentially human inventions. By extension therefore, God did not create man but rather man created God. Just as mankind created Satan and chose through self-denial and self-emptiness to worship mere works of its hands. By the simplest of definitions this is idolatry. There is only then the self; (male and female) as instantiated existence existing in absolute freedom. When humans hide from this simple existential truth, they hide from themselves and thus become alienated.

The knowledge of these fears of destruction and extinction is based on the socio-cosmological conviction that “all the actions that we see in the world, all the movements in human society, all the works that we have around us, are simply the display of thought, the manifestation of the will of man” (see, Swami Vivekananda on the meaning and values of karma in Philip Kapleau, 1974: 19). It is on this indispensable conviction of the nexus of humanity and the values of the environment that Pope Paul VI in his *Populorum Progressio* examines the true courses of authentic development of persons in the midst of the world's erroneous ideologies and policies, and he expresses that:

The ultimate goal is a full-bodied humanism tries to exclude God in human development. And it does this not mean the fulfilment of the whole man and of every man. A narrow humanism, closed in on itself and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success, for man can set about organizing terrestrial realities without God. But "closed off from God, they will end up being directed against man. A humanism closed off from other realities becomes inhuman." True humanism points the way toward God and acknowledges the task to which we are called, the task which offers us the real meaning of human life. Man is not the ultimate measure of man. Man becomes truly man only by passing beyond himself (Paul VI, 1967, no. 42).

Sociologically put in a very organised manner and special circumstances and values for meaningful and sustainable development, the human society demands that through ethical and humanised actions certain instruments and characters of coercion and motivation are employed to ensure a peaceful, tolerable gregarious existence (Falaiye and Okeregbe 2017: 151). For it is about the character building and a journey of an entire life of a person in society in his or her diverse engagements for personal and collective survivals. This will for selfish survival is a product of debased and unconscious character, and such character is based on the values of a throwaway culture and relativistic mentality. Such actions are seat of karma. As is the karma, so is the manifestation of the will (see, Swami Vivekananda on the meaning and values of karma in Philip Kapleau, 1974: 19). This is morality of conscience hinged on the values of human togetherness and symbiotic integration that is directed to save the environment from the effects of human selfish actions. Such engagements show how resilient and purposeful the individual as a person of reasoning is trying to overcome the existential problems and challenges of his or her times.

With proper and ethical employment of actions and valued choices on the environment, based on his or her intelligibility and inter-subjectivity, the human person possesses the versatility to change his or her fortune, to sustain the resources of the environment, and also has a highly developed brain to direct his or her actions to better reposition of his or her authenticity in the world of conflicting values and ideologies. This rational capacity makes his or her actions distinct from other animal actions and makes him or her unique and integral through the valuation of his or her freedom. With it, he or she succeeds where many other animals failed. He or she has the capacity of surviving and then sustaining his or her future generations, anywhere on earth and can make incursions into water and space, and inventing technology and medicines for the longevity of human life and the currencies of development (cf, Nwankiti, et al 1981: 135). The longevity of life is dependable on the interrelation of faith and reason, with the beingness of God in the affairs of the human person. Such recognition of God in human affairs brings the valuation of the environment for the promotion of human life (see, John Paul II 1991: no 38). The developmental courses of the human person are indispensably linked with and dependently on the level of ecological conservation through the social and cultural civilization for the sustainability of natural resources. Away from this conviction, we are faced with the imposing and unrelenting influences and effects of environmental degradation and pollution due to the mismanagement and misguided employment of human actions and valued choices on the environment, especially the exploration in science and technology.

### **Human Freedom and Theistic Valuation of the Environment in the Age of Scientific and Technological Civilization**

In sustaining the environment through the conservation of natural resources, the *beingness* of God should be seen in the socialization and religiosity of the ecology (cf, Ojo 2020: 103-104). Only through such discursive consciousness on the social and ethical relevance of human actions and on the explorative applications of science and technology can the developmental quests for ecological conservation and sustainability that should morally sustained the hope of better tomorrow (see, Hefner 1998: 523). As ontologically recognised by some socio-environmental *cum* eco-theological thinkers such as Douglas Roche, John Kusumalayam, Pope Paul VI, Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, on the indispensability of ecological conservation in relation to the *Beingness* of God, we agreed that Creation inevitably defines the human persons in relation with the environment that gives them the avenues to exercise their creative power and values. The environment is an active agent of human sustenance and reliability being guaranteed by God and on the individual's relationship with other persons. It is through it that the manifestations of God in human development are made very visible According to Oredipe (2002: 179),

An anthropology which is open and transcendent is capable of providing a correct basis for the concept of the dignity of the person. Man cannot close himself up in a presumed autonomy which leaves him isolated from God and often from his neighbour as well.

Hence, according to Hefner, the valued impression and appreciation of creation expresses the presence of God in human development, and he asserts that, “the dignity of human beings is especially evident in their partnership with God in caring for creation. As tenders of the garden and stewards of creation, human beings are not mere underlings with a task to perform, if they are superior to the other creatures, it is because through them the creative, divine Spirit is present and active in a unique way” (Hefner, p. 523). It is on the consideration of environmental sustainability that Ojo (2020: 102-103) observed through her analysis of the theological and ethical imports of John Paul II's existential personalism on the anthropological consciousness of the environment in our contemporary scientific and technological values and cultures, that:

Human failure to be responsible stewards has led to the current ecological crises threatening global climate stability, the ozone layer, and the diversity of plant and animal species. Ecological problems, such as, the pollution of air, the despoiling of land, depletion of natural resources, the degradation of fresh water, extinction of some species of plants and animals, and decline in

the quality of human life and breakdown of society are challenges to human beings in today's World. The loss of forest and arable land in alarming proportions has tremendous implications for food security. It is instructive to point out that ecological disasters have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable people- the third countries, the poor, the sick and the elderly. This goes against the plan of God who has created everything for the good of humanity.

With theistic assertive consideration of the divine nature of the human person, a supposition can be made that God is the environment; and the environment is necessarily the presence of God in the lives of the human person (see, Kanu 2021: iii). This necessarily means that the human society is supposed to be reflecting God in their care of the environment, as God's spirit is made manifest in the same environment that expresses the almightiness of His creative power, and as “human beings are from God and the earth as well as with God for the earth” (Hefner, p. 523) We understand that, nothing that lives; never lives forever. God is a being beyond existing or living. God lives beyond living and exists beyond existence. These two characteristics of integral humanism do not influence God's nature or *Beingness*. God is life that never dies, and God is existence that causes other existents into being. God is classified beyond the values of life and existence, because God lives before life and exists before existence, and God is the word itself and demands due respect and reverence which only can be rationally and religiously given by humans. All these qualities of God can only be known to the human person when the finite beings are sustained in healthy and safe environment.

Hence, through the values of theistic humanism, the human persons are always in need of common survival by overcoming the fears of ecological degradation and pollution through the conscientious actions. With such mentality, humans seek the ecological conservation in the configuration of the unseen God through the establishment of the courses of love, peace and justice. The everlasting *Beingness* of God can only be reasonable to the human person when the enduring nature of the environment is sustained through the qualities of actions we exercise in and on it, in order to sustain human generations. The achievement of ecological conservation in relation to the valuation of the human persons should be built on faith and reason. Both faith and reason recognise the courses of ecologico-theistic humanism built on the values of love, peace and justice in human affairs, as we analyse the needs for integral ecological humanism in our scientifically and technologically-driven warring civilization.

As existentially recognised, within the operational valuation of industrialised and technological advancements and civilizations, “human beings let themselves be mastered by selfishness; they misunderstood the meaning of God's command and exploited creation out of a desire to exercise absolute domination over it. But the true meaning of God's original command... was not a simple conferral of authority, but rather a summons to responsibility” (Benedict XVI 2010: no. 6). Where there is no life, no responsibility is demanded, for the dead are not held responsible for the causes of environmental fallouts. With life given to the human person, he or she is demanded to live and act responsibly. This existential conviction on the indispensability of life in relation to the institutionalization of human responsibility shows how important the human person is for environmental sustainability and the wholeness of creation, as he or she has entrusted such care through the exercises of rationality and ecological religiosity, and such religiosity of the self is the summon of responsibility towards the sustained courses of life, a collective concern for the sustainability of the human family.

No one develops beyond the values of his or her faith and reason as being sustained by his or her own consciousness of being created and at the same time limited with values of changing his or her world without reference to God. According to Pope John Paul II (1991: no. 38), by the sociology of *Centisimus Annus* in assessing the ecological valuation of human work and family in relation to imposing capitalist consciousness of development as long recognised by Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, he then asserted that:

Man receives from God his essential dignity with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move toward truth and goodness. But he is also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth the decisions which create a human environment can give rise to specific structure of sin which impede the full realization of those who are in any way oppressed by them. To destroy such structures and replace them with more authentic forms of living in community is a task which demands courage and patience.

Such sociological, philosophical and religious imports of ecclesiological issuance of social encyclicals strongly remind us of the indispensable presence of God in the environment and the needs for the sustainable apparatus of integral ecological humanism (the consciousness for the ecological of persons). Hence, the theistic dimension of ecological conservation and sustainability demands that human creativity and innovation in the name of global consciousness for science and technology are to be duly monitored and checkmated. It also demands that there must

be environmental justice in order to attain and sustain the *Culture of Peace* and social order in the world. Attaining progress in any human adventures demands that we master the contents of our minds and the directedness of our actions in order to promote the commonness of existence and living, simply by promoting the courses of peace rather than wars and forms of dehumanization. That is a duty that should be associated with a rational and ethical person. It is really a duty towards ecological conservation and sustainability, the consciousness for the realization of common development in the name of globalization demands that humanity see the environment as a common home, as a heritage that cannot be monopolised.

### **Living Out the Faith on the Path of Environmental Justice**

The sense of the mission for the human development and salvation is to speak what one has heard in order to advance his or her world. Such individual as an ecological agent must be sure and convinced on what he or she has experienced from nature especially, and be already to speak them in love and then sustain them in hope, truth and solidarity. He or she must be sure not to monopolise what he or she has heard, for such a world does not belong to him or her. In religion, politics and education, we are bound to have personal and group reservations for the needs for ecological justice. This is highly expected from the human person as an agent of development as far as there are many mysteries inherent in religion and its practices especially, and majority of them are dependent on the level of human closeness to nature. Such is the justice that is not debatable as the human person cannot live without the existence of the natural order. But, one has to keep his or her reservation within oneself, and then, he or she to allow the light of faith and reason to work out some charity of knowledge with which such religious belief and practices by trying to exact the meaning of nature in the lives of person, for his or her development and salvation.

In the face of fading charity of living in scientifically-driven and technologically-determined society, religion becomes an object of doubt and questioning. Salvation is facing some doubt and the presence of God in the face of imposing influences of science and technology becomes existentially elusive. According to Benedict XVI, “in the modern era, the idea of the last judgement has faded to the background. Christian faith has been individually and primarily oriented towards the salvation of the believer's own soul, while reflection on world history is largely dominated by the idea of progress” (Benedict XVI 2007: no. 42). The human society is greatly concerned by the advancement and progress made by the imposing influences of science and technology, and neglecting the spiritual needs of charity, faith and love that grow the sense and seeds of salvation of souls. The fear of last judgement is strongly diminishing and humankind is resorting to the morality of relativistic, hedonistic and nihilistic culture of civilization. According to Benedict XVI (2007: no. 42),

The fundamental content of awaiting or final judgement, however, has not disappeared: it has simply taken on a totally different form.... A world marked by so injustice, incessant suffering and cynicism of power cannot be the work of a good God. A God with responsibility for such a world would not be a just God, much less a good God. It is for the sake of morality that this God has to be contested. Since there is no God to create justice, it seems man himself is called to establish justice.

This concern for justice in a relation to the personhood of God shows how moral the human person is as an agent of development. Naturally, to be a person, the sense of justice resides in the individual as he or she possesses the gift of rationality to demarcate what is right from what is wrong. This consciousness of development differentiates the person from the other created beings, since he or she can exercise the values of justice in the community he or she belongs, as a basis of morality. This becomes the seat of conscience where the sense and values of authentic development of the human person resides. For the presence of God is made known in human society through our just actions and responsibility in trying to alleviate the pain and suffering of others. It is on the basis of authentic development that the values of life remains the recognition of the ontological values of existence that the human person as an agent of development is nothing or non-existent without the lives of others. That is God in the life of the human person. According to Benedict XVI (2007: no. 42),

If in the face of this world's suffering, protest against God is understandable, the claim that humanity can and must do what no God actually does or is able to do is both presumptuous and intrinsically false. It is no accident that this idea has led to the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice; rather, it is grounded in the intrinsic falsity of the claim. A world which has to create its own justice is a world without hope.

Creating a world that seats on the values of justice is to overcome the presence of pain and suffering due to an increasing rate of ecological injustice. This is a morality that should govern the world in creating a just social order, and a moral civilization (civilization of love) based on the *otherness of Living*. Living for others is a mission of theology. It is a mission of God in the moral salvation of the human person. It is the basic understanding of the purpose of creation which has its values of love, for no aspect of the created order can be explained without due inference to the *otherness of Living*. What kind of farmer, businessman, engineer, priest, medical doctor are you without due reference to the *otherness of living*? The value of the *otherness of living*, operationally, is to show how limited and very irrelevant the individual as a person is when he or she wants to advance the world alone. With our professions or vocations,

our actions are meant to promote the *otherness of living*, which presupposes the true recognition of the presence of God in the lives of others. In it is our profession or vocation as scientists, farmers, soldiers, priests, lawyers, medical practitioners and others that we become really and truly integral and humane, in relation to the values of environment that houses all of us.

### **Evaluative Conclusion**

No one understands himself or herself outside the values of ecological development; he or she resonates through his or her actions and valued choices. This conviction promotes the human person who he or she is in relation to his or her transcendental endings. The human person attains his or her happiness and suffering through his or her actions and valued choices, and owing that the ultimate end and rationale or purpose of human sociality is the attainment of true and authentic happiness. There will be happiness in our living when the freedom to greed, selfishness and avarice are subdued in the exercise of our actions and valued choices on the environment. Owing to the conviction that greed is a vice, and it is dangerous to nature, and when one gives way to the values and operations of greed, selfishness and avarice in any conscious actions and valued choices, such adventure consumes the individual and the society at large (see, Ndagi 2022: 19). The values of true happiness of the human person can be derived from the individual's actions if he or she is willing purposefully with transcendental values to put his or her rationality and intelligibility to use, considering the place of the other person and even God in his or her action and responsibility, especially towards the sustainability of the environment that houses everyone. Such consciousness of freedom should integrally reflect in all facets of development in order to sustain the human family.

Hence, the values of ecological sustainability remain intrinsically possible and enduring when human persons remain truthfully communal in the exercises of their actions and valued choices. Humans are communal when the social and developmental influences that breed the obnoxious cultures of egoism, individualism, isolationism, escapism, segregationism and particularism are duly suppressed, showing the commonness of our humanness (see, Egbe, p. 157). Our humanness shows our values for the nature. For “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” (Francis 2015: no. 139). The values of nature show our level of communal interests and values for the sustainability of human family. For there will be meaningful and integral development when we live in community of common interests and values, and share things in common with members of the community in which we live, having the

knowledge of one another in restoring social order, justice and peace, irrespective of one social and developmental limitations or advantages.

Hence, the sustainability of the human family is on the social, political and religious conviction for the commonness of the environment, that is, the consideration of the environment as common heritage of humankind, on which Benedict XVI (2008: no. 7) reminded us that;

The family needs a home, a fit environment in which to develop its proper relationships. For the human family, this home is the earth, the environment that God the Creator has given us to inhabit with creativity and responsibility. We need to care for the environment; it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible wisdom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion. Human beings obviously are of supreme worth vis-a-vis creation as a whole. Respecting the environment does not considering material or animal nature more important than man. Rather, it means not selfishly considering nature to be at the complete disposal of our own interests, for future generations also have the right to reap its benefits and to exhibit towards nature the same responsible freedom that we claim for ourselves. Nor must we overlook the poor, who are excluded in many cases from the goods of creation destined for all. Humanity today is rightly concerned about the ecological balance of tomorrow. It is important for assessments in this regard to be carried out prudently in dialogue with experts and people of wisdom, uninhibited by ideological pressure to draw hasty conclusion and above all with the aim of reaching agreement on a model of sustainable development capable of ensuring the wellbeing of all while respecting environmental balances.

Nothing about the whole issues of development in reference to the sustainability of the ecology of existence indispensably that are not hinged on the valuation of human family, otherwise, the whole world will be chaotic and disastrous (see, Benedict XVI 2008: no. 8). The philosophy of theistic consciousness for environmental sustainability demands that we recognise that true and integral happiness of the human person cannot be attained outside the framework of societal and family values. This stays within the context of the realization of integral humanism by the sustaining the values of natural resources. This is based on the understanding of the placement of true and integral humanism on the foremost presupposition of the social nature of the human person. This is owing to the developmental conviction that the human sociality is only meaningful with all sense of self-directedness and self-dynamism of the individual in the context of the actualization of the ideals of personhood, which in turn is the actual reasonable platform for achieving the ends of

society or social stability, progress, justice, development and peace. With these factors of societal development, the human person is more than what he or she knows about and of himself or herself. Even the knowledge of what are around him or her cannot be fully comprehended by him or her. This is the reason the knowledge of the world of experience is never exhausted and remains enduring and expanding, and greatly unfolding. The human person is something more than what he or she can experience about his or her *beingness*. He or she is not what he or she is simply once and for all time and space, but he or she is in a process. He or she is not merely an extant life, but he or she is endowed with possibilities to change his or her world of experience through the exercises of true freedom, which make him or her more human and integral.

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