



## **Asouzu's Complementary Ontology as a Foundation for a Viable Ethic of the Environment**

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### **Abstract**

This paper on "Asouzu's Complementary Ontology as a foundation for a viable Ethic of the Environment", posits that an ethic of the environment can be seen as viable if it considers the whole of reality as ontologically relevant. This point of view would free environmental ethics of anthropocentric bias and its attendant consequences while at the same time ensuring the protection and preservation of all being and species, not from sympathy, but as members of a holistic picture of reality. This position is inherent in Asouzu's complementary ontology and Ibuanyidanda philosophy, hence the need to adopt it as a viable foundation for an ethic of the environment. This conclusion is arrived at by a critical analysis of diverse environmental and ethical positions.

**Keywords:** Ibuanyidanda, complementary ontology, environmental ethics.

### **Introduction**

When the fore-runners and fathers of philosophy speculated on moral and ethical ideals, many did so from a particular frame of mind. This frame of mind was anchored on the following suppositions:

1. Only humans have what it takes to act or behave morally and use ethical ideals.
2. Only humans that are so considered by their societies are worthy of moral consideration. Some of them averred that slaves, for instance, do not have what it takes to be moral agents. In other words, free

citizens only owe their moral obligations to fellow free citizens while slaves were treated as undeserving of any moral consideration.

It is true and correct that, even to this day, thinkers speak of morality or ethics as an exclusively human phenomenon; something meant to be realized exclusively within our human societies. Man alone can or should come within the scope of moral consideration since he alone can be said to have "behavior" or conduct and he alone can be affected by the behavior or conduct of other human beings. This point was sufficiently brought out in the writings of Aldo Leopold when he asserted that the early Greeks had concepts of right and wrong but that these were limited to the free-born citizens while slaves were treated as mere properties of their owners without morality and the behavior of their owners towards them involved no questions of propriety (201).

This picture of ethics and morality has, however, gradually undergone transformation. In the first place the rationality and morality of slavery has been called to question, thereby, granting moral consideration to humans that were otherwise denied this status. Similarly, animal behavior specialists, zoologists and naturalists like Jane Goodall, have shown that some other animals exhibit abilities that should make us give them moral consideration. In her book, "My Life with the Chimpanzees", she was careful to observe that animals like dogs and chimpanzees think and exhibit a great sense of morality in their actions (22, 71, 75). Consequently when humans relate to other animals like the ones mentioned above, they should consider that they are dealing with other moral beings.

Before now, it has been thought by persons in some quarters, majority of who have been philosophers that, ethics exist to forestall forms of confrontation in inhuman societies arising from a diversity of interests among persons. This being the case, moral codes have been helpful in regulating and curtailing human excesses within society. This is so considered because in every society the interests of individuals and groups of persons might be taken for granted by others who consider themselves to be of a privileged or stronger class. As Leopold puts it, "All ethics so far evolved rest upon a single premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to co-operate" (202). It is to be generally understood that ethics exist to curb the excesses of the

individual while giving a chance to other members of the community to become good citizens.

From the foregoing, one may argue that the necessity of ethics in the building of human society or community cannot be over-emphasized. Here, the human society which is affected by the scope of human ethics, is taken to include humans and non-humans inclusive of the environment which sustains their existence. In particular, it has been discovered from recent ecological challenges like climate change, ozone layer depletion, desertification and flooding, that it is not only humans that can be affected by human conduct or morality. The non-human part of nature also suffers when the actions of man towards it are devoid of moral regulations. Climate change scientists for instance, generally agree that man's lack of caution in his behavior toward the environment has culminated in the disasters accompanying climate change.

Hence, the thinking that man's use of other animals does not need to be brought under moral consideration leaves much to be desired and has generated a lot of heat among modern-day environmental ethicists especially those inclined to the animal rights debate from the utilitarian perspective. Bentham, according to Asuo and Maduka, lamented the immoral and unethical treatment of nonhuman animals by man and advocated for the granting of rights to life and freedom from torture to other animals based on the premise that they also have the capacity to suffer pain (105).

All of these issues make matters of ethics and morality, matters which are conspicuously beyond human society and the extension of the boundaries of ethics throughout a community that is beyond humans, unavoidable. This kind of ethic, according to Leopold should include soils, waters, plants, and animals (202). This proposition validates an ethic of the environment.

Like other moral codes or ethics, this kind of ethic needs a viable foundation upon which to operate. This foundation should not locate an ontological framework that makes man superior to "the other" but one that sees man as part of a whole. This dependent foundation shows that man needs every other being in nature as a complement to his own existence and as a missing link in the scheme of reality. This foundation is provided by the philosophy of Ibunyanidanda and complementary ontology of Asouzu. This philosophy provides the grounds for the protection and preservation of each being in nature whether alive or non-living, human or nonhuman, solid, liquid or gaseous and whether it is visible or invisible. An ethic that mandates us to

relate with all beings as complements to all in the wheel of life is the most effective ethic in the drive to keep the environment safe and healthy for itself and its dependants.

### **Asouzu's Complementary Ontology**

The discourse on ontology is that which is often characterized with the attempts to describe and explicate the nature of Being. The question of the nature and attribute of being is a predominant metaphysical question which permeates the epochs of philosophy from the ancient to the contemporary. Being which could be defined as "existence", "that which exist", and which all real entities possess (Honderich 82), has received contributions from diverse philosophers with immense inclination towards metaphysics.

Parmenides is credited, throughout the history of Western philosophy, for making the earliest official statement on the subject-matter of being. He defined being as "that which is". Anything that exists is, and in the Parmenidian view, anything that exists constitute being. For him, being is, and non-being is not. He speaks of attributes of being as - one, unchanging, immutable and eternal. His views were completely in stark opposition to those of Heraclitus.

Heraclitus conceived of being as "that which is changing, floating, inconsistent and beyond the reach of human understanding. For him, being is constantly in a state of flux. He is credited with the saying that "we cannot step into the same river twice" the case being that fresh water is constantly coming upon us.

Plato, one of the renowned philosophers of the ancient school, while adopting a dualists' position in his attempt to resolve the age-old rift between Parmenedes and Heraclitus, divided reality into the real beings in the world of forms and the changing physical things of this world. He held that 'real being', namely, the form of things in the world of forms, is by its nature eternal and unchanging while the changing physical things of this world are mere copies of being. The fleeting things around man are for him no reality, but mere appearances. Changing things in the physical world are in his opinion no realities but mere copies of the eternal realities in the world of forms. For Plato, reality is multiple, numerous and constant. Yet, his views did not fail to receive the full weight of criticism and possible rejection from his best student, Aristotle.

Aristotle on his part, conceives of “pure being” (Being as Being), as the substructure and unifying force of all things. For him, Being as Being, is identical with God. The object of metaphysics for Aristotle is God, the pure being, who stands as the foundation and unifying object of all things. It is against this backdrop that Asouzu’s complementary account of ethics and morality can better be understood.

According to Asouzu, “Aristotle in his works on metaphysics, informs us that the notion of being can be grasped within the context of opposites, plurality, unity, negation, privation the dissimilar, the equal and contraries” (143). Aristotle’s ontology is committed to bifurcation and polarization. He characterizes his ontological views with bifurcatory elements such as matter and form, substance and accidents, potency and actuality, material cause and formal cause, efficient cause and final cause etc. This distinct bifurcatory character of Aristotle’s ontology, sets different composites of an element apart, and denigrates their points of equal interrelationships. For instance, Aristotle draws a line of demarcation between substance and accidents. For him, substance is the very nature of a thing, while accident is the quality which a thing has, but which is not essential to the nature of that thing (Omeregbe 143). For Aristotle, substance is the essential nature of a thing which keeps it unique from other things. Accidents on the other hand depend on the existence of substance. The substance of a man for instance is his rational ability. His complexion, height, size are mere accidents and non-essential to his nature as a human being, according to Aristotle.

Aristotle’s ontological conception of being, is noted to be of immense influence to philosophical activities after him. For instance, in the medieval period, Thomas Aquinas conceived Being as Being, to be synonymous with God. God is considered as Being par excellence while creatures are being made understandable through analogy.

For, Duns Scotus, Being is the simplest and all embracing concept which slips man’s definitional attempt. All creatures are for him, Being in the proper sense of the word and never in an analogical sense as presented by Aquinas.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Hegel captured Being from a dialectical point of view, where Being is seen in terms of the thesis and non-being as the antithesis. The contemporary period of philosophy witnessed the emergence of Martin Heidegger, who, in his work “Being and Time”, delved deeply into the nature of being. For him, Being is the foundation and source of all individual things.

It is the life force of all existing entities. All individual beings are the modes upon which the being of beings manifests.

The above corollary explains the diverse understanding of being by philosophers and other thinkers, and sets a platform for proper appreciation of Asouzu's Ontology under consideration in this essay. Asouzu's Complementary Ontology, in other words, depicts a new ambience in the understanding of being and appreciation of reality. It is an attempt to grasp the notion of being from the preceding condition of its intrinsic interrelatedness devoid of polarization and exclusiveness (Asouzu 10).

Asouzu, in his ontology, holds that all existing entities play a crucial role in epistemic appreciation and understanding of Being. For him, "Being is understood as that because of which anything that exist serves a missing link of reality" (251). Being in his view cannot be understood in the exclusivity and isolation of entities, but in the complementary interrelationship that characterize existence. According to his complementary ontology, "to be", is the capacity to be in a mutual complementary relationship with all things that exist. In this regards, it is a practical impossibility to have things exist in isolation, devoid of a mutual, complementary relationship with other things.

Asouzu's complementary ontology springs from "an Ibuanidanda, (complementary) imperative, that everything that exists serves a missing link of reality". In otherwords there is a mutual complementary relationship that exists in all things. Being, reality and indeed existence can only and adequately be understood and appreciated from a mutual complementary perspective, where all things serve as missing links. Reality in this sense is depicted from a holistic perspective.

Ibuanidanda Ontology articulates being from interactive mutual complementary nature. It rejects all forms of polarizations, bifurcation and exclusivity. From this Ontological purview, reality is conceived as a gigantic entity with distinct mutually connected beings that are related to each other. The appreciation and comprehension of this entity, depends on our consideration and appreciation of the mutual connectivity of all components.

Reality from the 'Ibuanidanda's Ontological perspective, incorporates the physical and the spiritual, material and immaterial, sensible and supersensible. The interrelated nature of all existing entities that constitute reality, is never undermined in Asouzu's ontology. All polarized views which

attempt to distort ontological equilibrium, are consciously negated in Asouzu's ontology.

Asouzu in his Ibuanyidanda philosophy, consistently defines Being as the "capacity to be in a mutual complementary relationship with all things that exist" (Asouzu 10). Besides, he understands such mutual complementary relationship as a relationship of mutual service, where all existent realities serve each other interminably. This implies therefore that a thing cannot be, and be alone without any form of relationship with other things. Its existence intrinsically forms a relationship with other things; a relationship that demands mutual complementary service. In this sense therefore, "not being" is inconceivable.

### **The search for a viable environmental ethic**

It is important in this essay to address the bigger question of ethics before proceeding to address ethics' specific question, that of environmental ethics, for study and scrutiny. Arthur F. Holmes in his book *Ethics: Approaching Moral Decisions*, defined ethics thus:

Ethics is about the good (that is, what values and virtues we should cultivate) and about the right (that is, what our moral duties may be). It examines alternative views of what is good and right; it explores ways of gaining the moral knowledge we need; it asks why we ought to do right; and it brings all this to bear on the practical moral problems that arouse such thinking in the first place... ethics as such is interested less in what people in fact do than in what they ought to do, less in what their values presently are and more in what their values ought to be. In that it addresses the truth of our moral beliefs, it is a "normative" discipline (12).

Holmes' position on ethics seems clear and straight forward, even at first sight. In particular, ethics does not only concern itself with particular actions but the "ought" of human actions. It seeks to establish formidable philosophical foundations upon which human actions can be measured for their rightness or wrongness. As Popkin and Stroll contend, the ordinary individual may merely be trying to solve a problem and may try to do this by deciding on a particular course of action in the relevant circumstances. The ethicist, however, generalizes and instead of deciding what to do in that

circumstances may want to speculate on what is the good life, for ethics goes beyond common situations to discussions of a more general sort (2).

In a very brief and apt definition, Aldo Leopold defined ethics in two ways – ecologically and philosophically. Ecologically, he sees an ethic as that which serves as a limitation in the struggle for existence. An ethic provides that guideline, rule or check on the moral excesses of an individual or species that would have otherwise created a hazardous relationship in the ecological community. This definition is striking and important because it relates directly to our bid to establish the necessity of an environmental ethic.

The second definition of an ethic, according to Leopold, is the philosophical. An ethic by this definition is a differentiation of social and anti-social conduct (202). Within societies are beings and species that have varying capabilities and moral interests. These interests have the innate propensity to clash with the overall good of the society unless there is an ideal moral code that can superintend the actions and behaviors of members of the community. This code becomes an ethic. An ethic also provides the mode of behavior towards a particular person, or the community as a whole.

An ethic of the environment or what Leopold calls a land ethic, enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals or collectively: the land (203). This ethic seeks to extend the moral consideration of man to include other beings apart from man because the actions and behaviours of man affect other parts of nature. Asuo and Maduka defined an ethic of the environment as one that extends those values which hitherto were reserved for humans in their relationship to one another, to the environment. The idea, according to them, is to define the limits of human involvement in nature and therefore protect nature which is conspicuously defenceless (15).

### **Necessity of an Ethic of the Environment**

It was Nader Ghotbi in a paper entitled “Intrinsic Value of the Natural Environment: An Ethical Roadmap”, that argued that environmental management requires an ethical evaluation system that is different from the past (316). Like any mainstream ethic, an ethic of the environment is a veritable means of enhancing and maintaining social cohesion. The society, in this case, as stated earlier, goes beyond human society to include non human nature. Without a viable ethic of the environment and adherence to this, the



ecological confusion that is observed today will persist and get worse. The chaos will not affect only animals and plants but, as we have observed in the climate change drama, it will eventually affect the human community. To maintain a healthy balance in nature therefore, there is the dire need to develop a viable ethics of the environment and be led thereby.

Human interactions and actions have been observed to traverse both human and non-human domains. These actions can either be good or bad with their attendant consequences. The action of cutting down a forest, for instance, has consequences both for man and the flora and fauna of that forest. Where the actions of an individual go beyond himself then it is needful to have an ethic to serve as a regulatory mechanism. An ethic of the environment therefore becomes absolutely necessary to check the activities and behaviours of man towards the environment.

### **Approaches to Ethics of the Environment**

Different philosophers of the environment have advanced what in their opinion should serve as a viable ethic of the environment. These are in no way unanimous but we shall state them here.

- 1. Human-centered ethic:** A human-centered ethic of the environment seeks to protect or conserve the environment because of the need to protect the well being of man. The central argument of this brand of ethics is that there is a tendency for the harm that is done to the environment to boomerang on man, hence the need to treat the environment with care. Speaking on this, Asuo and Maduka argued that the basic assumption of this school of environmental ethics is that only humans have intrinsic value (that is, can be seen as ends in themselves). But all other parts of nature possess instrumental value, since they are existing to serve the good of man (15). The need to take care of nature, according to them is not because nature deserves to be so treated but because it will further human ends. An easy example is the current drive to cut down on CO<sub>2</sub> levels by developed countries and the plea for developing countries with forests to sustain them so as to change the climate change and global warming environmental debacles. This call has become necessary because of the fear of what human are suffering and will suffer if nothing is done. This ethic of the environment is actually apocalyptic in appearance and operation. The main flaw of this type of ethic is in its nature. It is more reactionary than moral in that it aims at solving human problems that emanated from mans immorality towards the environment. Yet it does not try to find out the morality or

otherwise of such actions but seeks to lay down restraints that will check the problem. Furthermore, this ethic treats the environment just as a means to an end – that of serving human good. The ethic does not consider the environment as deserving the right to exist intrinsically. Speaking against this ethic, Stephen Clark held that “things do not serve our ends, or any ends with which we can easily sympathize” (31). It is when man tries to make nature to serve only his ends that crises like global warming and climate change erupt. The crises are protests against human immoral actions towards the environment.

2. **Animal-centered ethic:** This brand of environmental ethic calls for moral consideration to be given to animals, especially those that are considered close to man in classification and ontological ranking. This calls for carefulness when dealing with animals like apes, chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, baboons, dogs etc. Naturalists like Jane Goodall made strong arguments for the moral consideration of these because of their abilities to think, use tools and relate with others in society. Jeremy Bentham also argued for the consideration of other animals on the basis of sentientism. He felt that what should constitute ethical concerns should be whether or not something feels pain. With this premise he argued that these animals feel pain and enjoy pleasure the way we do hence should be put into consideration in our moral decision making (Principles of Morals, 771). Whereas this argument is better than the purely anthropocentric, yet an ethic based on it will still leave much to be desired. What, for instance will be the moral justification for leaving out lower animals and plants from the ambit of moral consideration? How can we prove that these do not feel pain or pleasure? It is common knowledge that certain plants and lower animals feel harassed and threatened by certain degree of heat, touch or sound. All these show that pleasure and pain go beyond man and animals with brains.
3. **Biocentric ethic:** Biocentric ethic is one woven around life. It enjoins us to pay moral attention to life in all its ramifications. It is an improvement on the animal-centered ethic as life includes both plants and animals. It is an ethic based on respect for life. By the standards of this ethic, moral value should be attached to all things that possess life and the aims of actions should be to promote and protect life in whichever form it presents itself.

Asuo and Maduka uncovered a flaw in the argument of this type of ethic. As they put it the difficulty with the biocentric ethic is that “the life – possessing members of the ecosystem cannot survive in a vacuum. They need the non-living components for survival. An ethic that undermines the protection of the abiotic factors of the environment will eventually lead to the degeneration of the very biotic factors that it seeks to protect” (17).

The contention of the authors is that the environment is complex and needs the collaboration of both the biotic and abiotic parts for its sustenance, so if an ethic pursues one and negates the other; it cannot be a competent ethical framework to follow.

4. **Ecological holism:** This ethic views nature as one, even though it presents itself in diverse modes and appearances. Getting a workable and inclusive ethic would therefore demand giving moral worth and consideration to each and every component of nature. In other words whether or not man can use that part of nature, the place has an intrinsic moral worth that should make it to be protected from arbitrary human incursions. The thinking is that the earth is an organism and the best way to care for any organism is to give it a comprehensive attention. If any part of it is made to malfunction by another, it will eventually affect other parts.

Even though it may be argued that there is a tint of anthropocentrism in this ethic, it should be explained that the main aim of this ethic is to de-anthropocentrise human thinking towards the environment while at the same time establishing the fact that all parts of nature have the moral right to exist and should be so considered.

5. **Feminist Environmental Ethic:** This ethic of the environment is a fall out of the feminist movement. The claim of the movement was that “women approach practical reasoning from a different perspective from that of men. The difference includes emphasis on community, caring, and bonding with particular individuals, in place of abstract impartiality (Blackburn, 137). Feminists argue that these feminine qualities are good for environmentalism. According to Stephen Clark: Companionable or convivial understanding is sometimes associated with ‘feminine’ modes of cognition. ‘Masculine’ understanding, it is said, is simultaneously abstract and objectifying (33).

The abstract nature of men's thinking makes them to separate between men (that have intrinsic value) and 'the other' (that has instrumental value). This division is exactly the cause of environmental crises because nature is not respected or loved as a companion in the earth but is seen by man as an object to serve man. This mode of cognition places no moral restraint on what can be done to the environment hence leading to ecological crises.

Even though this brand of ethic presents a prelude to Asouzu's Complementary Ontology which we are using as a background to a viable ethic of the environment, we will not fail to point out the "finger – pointing" nature of the argument. The environment has suffered and continues to suffer not because of the activities of "masculine" humans alone but a combined action of both masculine and feminine humans. History has record of female farmers, factory owners and workers and modern – day entrepreneurs. It is therefore better to make all to know without pieces of self righteous rhetoric such as this that men (both masculine and feminine) need to reconsider their moral stand towards the environment.

### **Asouzu's Complementary Ontology as a Foundation for a Viable Ethic of the Environment**

As we stated earlier on, Asouzu's Complementary Ontology stands against a picture of reality that makes one point of view to be exalted and universalized above others. This complementary ontology is part of a wider philosophy referred to as "Ibuanyidanda".In expounding this philosophy, Asouzu holds that:

The ambivalence responsible for these seeming oppositions and ambiguities is deeply connected to the activities of the primitive human instinct of self preservation which has the capacity to impact on the way we relate to each other generally. It is such ambivalence that impels actors to pursue their interests first in the most unilateral, selfish way, and in total disregard of the inherent mutual complementary harmony needed to forestall conflicts and safeguard all interests (Brief Outline 563).

Conflicts, according to the author, arise from the selfish instincts of thinking that one's interest is paramount and needs to be protected even at the expense of the interests of others. But this mindset is erroneous because in

reality there are more than one standpoints which are meant to blend together for mutual benefits to be achieved.

This point is very apt for our argument for moral consideration to be given to beings other than man. The earth is home to beings that are not all human and the health of the earth can only be sustained when in our actions we do not undermine nonhuman beings. The present ecological crises e.g. global warming and climate change are often traced to man's careless actions towards the environment. These actions are mostly orchestrated by the reasoning that man alone has intrinsic value. This ambivalent human posturing turns around to hurt man in diverse ways.

Asouzu argued that all beings actually serve a missing link of reality, (Method and Principles 273– 323). In other words every being is equally important in considering reality hence should not be treated with disdain or disregard. This piece of advice is important in considering the issue of having a viable ethic of the environment. The human centered ethic disregards the beings that are not human in its preferences for ethical consideration. Humans, as one, have elevated their needs and self interests, to an absolute instance, even though they are only a missing link of reality. This is against the philosophy of Ibuanyidanda that warns that we should never elevate a world – immanent missing link to an absolute instance (Brief Outline 569). The result of this undue exaltation shows in modern day ethical concerns which are probably the reason behind this research. Man considers his interest and judgement higher and above the interests of other beings in the environment, hence uses nature to his advantage with little or no consideration of what might be the toll of his action on the environment. Ibuanyidanda philosophy also clearly teaches that:

All existent realities form a mutually complementary whole, any act designed to undermine the interest of any of the units constituting the whole always boomerangs. The danger of subverting the interests of others is always given, since in asymmetrical situations of power imbalance, human subjects often tend to exploit the advantages bestowed by circumstances to achieve their selfish ends at the expense of others. They thereby forget an ontological boomerang effect

that ensues due to the type of mutual complementary relationship binding all stakeholders. In other words, stakeholders tend to forget that what is needed to subvert the interests of any of the units constituting the whole is commensurate to what is needed to make realization of the interests of all stakeholders difficult if not impossible. What this entails is that all acts of selfishness evoke an ontological boomerang effect that always has the potential to contradict what actors initially intend with their actions. With our selfish actions, we intend to live a happy contented life. However, the ontological boomerang effect makes such difficult, if not impossible, because others whose interests remain unattended to would make life difficult for us; and by so doing they make it difficult if not impossible to attain any form of contentment or happiness. Hence, wherever the vicious circle of mutual exploitation is not contained, mutual coexistence becomes difficult if not impossible (570- 571)

From the foregoing, Ibuanyidanda philosophy is anchored on the complementary ontology that holds that reality is made up multiplicity of beings that cohere together. What keeps reality in peace and makes life worth living is the realization that there are more perspectives and beings than one. This is what Asouzu means by the admonition that we should “allow the limitations of being to be the cause of our joy” (568). This is because every being is limited and needs others to complement its existence. Where a being or group of beings, either out of ignorance, what he calls the ‘phenomenon of concealment, or an outright desire to exploit others, subverts others’ rights, there is a consequence. It leads to a breakdown of the ontological balance, what he calls “ontological boomerang” which makes life miserable for all in the community. This clearly is what obtains in the relationship between man and nature. Human actions are motivated by the selfish desire to satisfy their ends and make life wonderful. This is the desire

behind deforestation, air pollution, water pollution and industrialization that releases harmful gases into the atmosphere. Ontological boomerang have been detected in ozone layer depletion, climate change, desertification, flooding, global warming etc. These make life difficult, if not impossible for man to live, and it makes even the rich not to have any security of a certain future.

An ethic of the environment that is deduced from the truths of the complementary ontology of Asouzu is the most viable ethical framework to guide the relationship between human and non human nature. It is also important to say that it is the place of man to understand these truths about the need to see other beings as serving missing links of reality just as much as mankind does, and avoid exalting himself ontologically higher than others and making himself the absolute. Such action of exploitation and using others (the environment) to service mankind's selfish ends will eventually have an ontological boomerang. The need to educate the human mind against the pitfalls of acting against the general good of the community, according to Asouzu can only be achieved by a pre-education of the human mind to learn to accept truths and act accordingly. Like Socrates of old, Asouzu believes that the right knowledge yields right actions and vice versa. This process of pre-educating the mind is called "Noetic propaedeutic". As Asouzu puts it:

There is need to pre-educate the mind and sensitize it, in all things we do because it is in consistent danger of the challenges arising from the ambivalence characteristics of all tension-laden existential situations and the Mkpuchianya (phenomenon of concealment). These existential conditions impact on the way we act and perceive reality. Thus the pre-education entails a form of creating awareness concerning these constraining factors in our relationship to reality generally. It subsists in the effort we make to affirm that anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. Where we are able to think and act this way, chances are that we seek harmony with all existent realities. In the absence of such an Ibuanyidanda mindset

that seeks harmony chances are that actors seek to undermine the interest of other missing links thinking that this is the wisest thing to do (570).

The point made is that morality and ethics can and should be taught. There is a tendency for people to be ignorant because of “constraining factors” which can be removed by the process of noetic propaedeutic –a form of education that clears the mind of the tendency to undermine the interest of other missing links while at the same time projecting personal interests. This agrees completely with Aldo Leopold’s position that ethics should rest upon the premise that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts (203). Translating this to ecological facts would mean that there is need for education or re-education or perhaps pre-education of human minds to know and accept the truth that mankind is not the only member of his ecological community. Where this form of moral education and orientation goes missing and there is ignorance, there follows a boomerang and this has been witnessed in several cases of ecological crises. The environmental consciousness that can be engendered by such noetic propaedeutic will go a long way to help humanity in particular and the environment as a whole.

## **Conclusion**

This paper argues that an ethic of the environment is not just necessary but wholly beneficent for the continued health of the natural environment. While agreeing with this, it is also apt to point out that not all ethics of the environment can engender ecological peace and assure us of the continued existence of the natural environment in a sustainable manner. Some ethics of the environment are meant to promote the false consciousness that man cares about nature while in truth they are exploitative and humanocentric. Others tend to pick out certain corners of nature that are considered worth giving moral value to, while wrongly leaving out other important parts. The need to have a firm philosophical and moral base for such an important ethic prompted our choice of Ibuanyidanda philosophy and the complementary ontology of Asouzu as a foundation. This philosophy points man to the truth that he shares the earth and indeed reality with other co-inhabitants. Good actions should therefore be such as engender harmony and bad ones such as do otherwise. We discovered that the dearth of this ethical orientation has culminated in the ontological boomerang that has so far been observed in the ecological sphere including the dreaded climate change phenomenon,



global warming, desertification and flooding. We have also suggested, in line with Ibuanyidanda philosophy that the ignorance that brought these ecological crises can be removed through thorough pre-education or re-education of the mind to accept and practice environmental truths that can engender and return peace to the environment.

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