

Cautious Moderation: A Paradigm for Environmental Philosophy

Aanuoluwapo Fifebo Sunday

The study aims at contributing to a theoretical basis for granting moral concerns towards nature. Studies in environmental philosophy tend to focus on either eliminating anthropocentrism, which is assumed to be the root cause of environmental challenges, or applying western philosophies, which are traditionally anthropocentric, to solve environmental challenges in a way that seems globally applicable. In this project, I propose to develop an ethic of “cautious moderation,” known as the concept of *Ìkóra Èni Ní Ìjanu* in Yoruba thought, to examine the possibility of an ethic that would make humans conscionable and morally responsible towards the environment. Yoruba moral principle expressed in the concept of cautious moderation (*Ìkóra Èni ní Ìjanu*) would usher in a moderate sense of anthropocentrism for an inclusive and complementary approach to environmental ethics.

The environmental infractions that the world faces today pose a challenge to human survival in the natural habitat; it therefore becomes expedient to find a rationally stimulating and philosophically convincing basis for extending morality to nature. This is what led to the development of environmental philosophy, which commenced in the 1970s (Callicot and Frodeman, 2009).

According to Michael Nelson (2006), it is obvious that western culture, from which traditional anthropocentrism originated, has done evil as well as good in relation to the environment, and environmental challenges show that something is intrinsically wrong. Clearly, there is need for remediation; even when anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism diverge, they still converge on the point that people should begin to think and act ecologically, objectively, and holistically in their relationship to nature.

Over time, traditional ethical theories have been linked with anthropocentrism, and it is believed that the anthropocentric outlook has led to the domination and exploitation of nature rather than exploration by humans. Against the anthropocentric view, attempts have been made by environmental researchers to proffer theories that can aid our search for sustainable environment. The major problem that these theories face is that they are not convincing and compelling enough to guarantee human extension of care to nature (Alafe 2021, 5). Humans have yet to synthesize their place with the place of other species of the biotic and abiotic community. It is the position of this research that humans are inexhaustively important in enhancing a conducive ecosystem because they have the ability and awareness to do so. The fundamental problem that underlies all identified problems is that Western ecological ethical theories of the environment have not proved worthwhile in tackling environmental problems—the reason being that these alternatives reflect the value orientation of humans.

This research is a purely qualitative study. In order to achieve the tasks set for this study, conceptual analysis, critical analysis, and the prescriptive methods of investigation will be employed. Conceptual and critical analysis methods will be used to examine anthropocentrism as well as the options available as alternatives to anthropocentrism. The prescriptive method will be used to advance a better approach to ethical anthropocentrism.