



Research Paper

African Environmental Apprehensions: A Unifying Pool for Rousseau's Emile and Pope Francis' Laudato Si

REMI PROSPERO FONKA, PHD

Department of Philosophy, Catholic University of Cameroon [CATUC] Bamenda

ABSTRACT

African environmental concerns in context are principally a pull factor to global environmental anxieties; principally from the backdrop of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's state of nature and Pope Francis' ecological economics and socio-environmental concerns. Inevitably, Rousseau's environmental naturalism and Pope Francis' ecological economics and socio-environmental concerns, find a reconciliatory pool in African environmental ethics. Hence, despite under-explored and derelict issues of contemporary environmental philosophy and ethics, critically, aspects of nature's moral status, African conceptions of animal status and rights, environmental justice, and African relational/communitarian environmentalism (Ubuntu) provide a platform enhancing environmental safety; guaranteed by attractive common grounds with Rousseau and Pope Francis' worldviews. Explicitly, arguments in this paper aim at raising awareness toward environmental ethical compliance, contributing towards building an ecological family, and consciousness of the consequences our actions have on the global village. Intentionally, by structuralizing this paper into understanding African cosmology and environmental ethics/apprehensions, Rousseau's *Emile* and environmental naturalism, Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, and diverse environmental considerations as a reconciliatory pool, convincingly ensures conservation of nature and harmonizing global living.

KEY TERMS: African, Environmental apprehensions, Unifying pool, state of nature, *Emile*, *Laudato Si*

Received 13 May., 2025; Revised 25 May., 2025; Accepted 27 May., 2025 © The author(s) 2025.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

I. INTRODUCTION

Providentially, both Western and African worldviews address environmental/ecological apprehensions; overwhelmingly highlighting eco-philosophical issues connecting global conservation integrity. Equally, environmental theories underscore elevated humanistic concerns; the need for responsible exploration and cordial relation of all beings, under human supervision. Therefore, cross-examining African cosmo-environmental ethics visualizes overriding prescriptions of deep-seated environmental justice. Inevitably, Rousseau's environmental naturalism and Pope Francis' ecological economics and socio-environmental concerns, find a reconciliatory pool in African environmental ethics. These diverse cultural concerns constitute a unifying banner for "Environmental Philosophy;" entitling this research paper: *African Environmental Apprehensions: A Unifying Pool for Rousseau's Emile and Pope Francis' Laudato Si*.

Considering current and perennial environmental global crisis, environmental conservation becomes uncompromising and an imperative. The relevance of Rousseau's ideas of the state of nature in *Emile*, and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, find practical application in well-articulated environmental and ethical issues in African philosophical perspectives (environmental globalization). African environmental apprehensions constitute a harmonious pool for Rousseau and Pope Francis' environmental considerations. The lowest common factor binding these three is environmental ethics of respect and responsibility for all beings. Hence, drawing from diverse cultural backgrounds, apropos critically drawn constructs of an African philosophy of environmental conservation, challenges and seeks a universal prescription/common grounds for reflecting or contributing to environmental riches. Evidently, highlighted prospects exceed mere confrontation of climatic change perennial problems, global warming, environmental degradation, and protecting endangered species, to certification/safeguarding future generations.

Hence, while acknowledging experimental-scientific methods' relevance, hermeneutical and analytic methods assist greatly in expounding basic features and themes. Sporadically, the comparative approach is a

necessity; justifying the choice of the theme for this research. This purposefully intends drawing from variety of thinkers with diverse backgrounds and perspectives in African and Western philosophy; broadly addressing central themes that boost Rousseau and Pope Francis' environmental ethics and economics of ecology.

This paper consists of four uneven sections. First, is an understanding of African cosmology and environmental ethics; second, Rousseau's *Emile* and environmental naturalism; and third, Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* and environmental concerns. Therefore, the trio anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and eco-centrism become relevant; overturning the table of environmental injustice. Lastly, exploring African environmental apprehensions becomes a reconciliatory pool for *Emile* and *Laudato Si*; leading to a conclusion and bibliography ending this research, and availing future research opportunities enhancing ecological family-hood.

1. UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN COSMO-ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Apparently, African environmental ethics expounds on thoughts about the environment and ontology. This deals with environmental conservation and preservation, emphasizing harmonious interrelations; regarding the environment as "common heritage of all beings, particularly humanity." This advocates for moderate anthropocentrism alongside indispensable African perspective of the cosmos, alongside perspectives of time, space, and causality, nature's moral/ethical status, flora/fauna moral status, relational and anthropocentric environmentalism, conceptions of environmental justice, and ethico-religious dimensions.

1.1. CONCEPTUALIZATION OF TIME, SPACE, AND CAUSALITY

Overwhelmingly, this tackles concerns of interconnectedness; heightening aspects of human beings' acting for the common good, under the guise of collective responsibility across time. Consequently, living the past in the present delineates any prolonged future. For instance, the Nso' of Cameroon, connect time (*ghan*), space (*kireh/kiliing*), and causality (*ke ki yiin*); imploring maximization of one's present (*len/lan*) to establish the best future environment (*kibveshi*). This is expressed in triple sayings: present moment/time and concerns (*ghan se len*), world's future concern (*kibveshi ke Wong*), and consequences flouting laws (*nsaiy Koo woo*).

In another dimension, African conceptions of space and time, rooted in indigenous worldviews stress interconnectedness and holism. Interestingly, the meeting point of causality and metaphysical is vital. African metaphysical thought reaffirms dynamism and vitalism, not limiting causation to the empirical world; blending empirical causation with supernatural causation. Agreeably, Patrick Giddy and several environmental ethical commentaries perceive time strictly as cyclical, focusing on the past and present; with less pronouncement of a linear future, that contrasts Western perceptions (GIDDY Patrick, 2019: 31). Significantly, these influence African apprehensions of community values, relationships, and responsibility towards all beings; strongly emphasizing character development as shaped by past actions.

1.2. MORAL/ETHICAL STATUS OF NATURE

Nature's ethical status avails interconnectivity opportunities with dimensions of time, space, and causality. An exploration of *Ubuntu* (communality) ethics, defining values based on concepts of reciprocity, mutual respect, and working for the common good are relevant; highlighting human dignity and fair treatment of all beings (vertical/horizontal responsibility and accountability). Contemporary African environmental philosophy is gradually enjoying keen attention allotted status of nature. In correlation, Chemhuru Munamoto isolates critical issues moral status of nature, African conceptions of animal rights, environmental justice, relational environmentalism, *Ubuntu*, theocentric and teleological environmentalism, as witnessing increase consideration of recent (MUNAMATO Chemhuru, 2019: 27).

Furthermore, against the backdrop of environmental hazards (pollution, climate change, and flora/fauna extinction), African environmental apprehensions target world environmental challenges. E. Imafidon and J.A. Bewaji locate women's indispensable role as nature co-creators/conservers; estimating eco-feminist concerns, drawing the Gaia hypothesis from Ancient Greek mythology corresponding to African mythology:

African mythology in order to construct an African ecofeminist approach to environmental ethics [is] based on understanding the social injustice facing women in society, first in order to also understand and confront anthropocentric thinking in society and ultimately environmental injustice. It seeks to revisit or at least reject some hard-line cultural beliefs and practices responsible for propping women and environmental oppression (IMAFIDON E., BEWAJI J. A., 2014: 29).

Thus, African mythology highlights women's environmental conservation role as promoting creative environmental concerns. However, Jonathan Chimakonam drifts from marginalization concerns to entrenched traditional world-views continuously favouring men over women, and nursing attitudes privileging humans over other beings (CHIMAKONAM Jonathan, 2018: 5).

1.3. FLORA AND FAUNA MORAL STATUS AND RIGHTS

The moral status and rights of flora and fauna anchored on cultural anthropology is next of importance. This investigates normative conceptions of human and non-human animal/plant relations (perspectives of animal/plant liberation rights). Munamoto Chemhuru reviews Jonathan O. Chimakonam's Environmental Philosophy concerns stating:

New dimensions to interpretations of African culture and values are traditionally elaborated; not so much as prioritising animal [plant] rights and care ethics. Except that it might be read differently as some sort of cultural anthropology because of its hermeneutical interpretation of animal [plant] ethics within the Yoruba culture; this is certainly a fine contribution fleshing out some ontological animal [plant] care ethics that are not only implicit within the Yoruba culture alone, but in most communities in Sub-Saharan Africa. (MUNAMATO Chemhuru, 2018: 79)

Similarly, the Nso' of Cameroon share the same views regarding animal/plant status as indispensable for future planning. Accordingly, drawing from traditional religious inclinations, they protect the flora and fauna, just as humans; insisting that conscientious care for everything in the universe is reverential fear of the creator (*kwa'ti ye Jung wuna fan Nyumbom*). This resounds in the saying: think always about the future (*kibveshi kewir; bih kibveshi*); extended to common good and communal concerns (*wirdze wir bih wir*).

Ensuing from above is the stance that moral status of flora and fauna in African philosophy is diverse; multiplicity of views awards indiscriminate moral status to all beings, while others regard non-human beings as less equal to humans. This determines interaction of flora/fauna; the Nso' demonstratively categorize those with deplorable character traits as ranked equal to animals, deserving inferior treatment accorded animals and plants (*a dze kifa; a dze nyam kwah*: you are a thing; you are a beast). Although fair treatment is due humans and non-humans, humanity must evade debasing itself to the level of animals and plants; highlighting pluralist approach, relational alternative, dual conception, and moderate anthropocentrism.

First, the pluralist approach favours the fact that living and non-living beings should both enjoy attribution of moral status. Second, relational alternative grants more moral status to animals than plants; but outrightly less to both than humans are. Third, the dual conception perspective accords moral status based on membership in human species; equally basing and perceiving agency following contribution to communal humanism. Lastly, moderate anthropocentrism disputes African environmental ethics as moderately anthropocentric; the goal of harmonious co-existence for all beings. Nevertheless, Francis Murove does not imply moral equality of humans and flora/fauna (MUROVE Francis, 2009:320). This highlights three environmental ethics theories of libertarian, ecological extension, and conservation ethics.

1.4. RELATIONAL AND ANTHROPOCENTRIC ENVIRONMENTALISM

Religious overtones are inherent here, but concentration is on conservation rules embodied by communal imperatives. Fundamentally, African worldviews incline toward anthropocentric bents. Jonathan Chimakonam in relation estimates that "it is the human being who problematizes the questions of animal rights and the intrinsic value of physical nature... and that all our perspectives are human epistemic windows." (CHIMAKONAM Jonathan, 2018: 183) Particularly, anthropocentric mentalities reference aforementioned *Ubuntu* (communal considerations); propagating relational environmental ethics that exceptionally demonstrates man-centred environmental consciousness. Evidentially, consequentialist conceptions of African environmental ethics, escort human decisions, goals, and aims of daily activities or project execution. For instance, the Nso' challenge individuals that while planning or executing daily/routines, they ought to consider proximate/remote environmental repercussions: "think of the future of your children (*a kwa'ti kibveshi ke won ve*); and do not have future regrets (*laa yo re'em nteng kibveshi*). Similarly, the Marba of Chad exhibit anthropocentric environmental ethical concerns; highlighting social cohesion and community building, environmental stewardship/protection practices, and collective responsibility. Through "Country-Sunday activities," platforms are established for social interaction and cooperation among community members; requiring collaboration, strengthening communal ties, and fostering a spirit of solidarity. Everyone engages in activities promoting environmental conservation practices: including tree planting, cleaning of local habitats, and care of agricultural fields promoting sustainability. (Phone Interview by DJANGTOUA Pierre; 25th November 2024).

1.5. AFRICAN CONCEPTIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Apart from anthropocentric environmentalism, communal vigilance and conservation prescriptions attract attention to the value of environmental justice. This encompasses respect of individuals' and animal rights, living in safe and healthy environments; connecting and reassuring the development and enforcement of environmental laws and policies. This evokes consciousness evading environmental injustices: deforestation, land degradation, biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, sanitation hazards, waste collection and disposal. For instance, the Nso' and majority tribes of Cameroon organize community labour, protecting environs.

However, we must not quickly award equal moral positions between human and non-beings; but established harmonious co-existence among them. This enables humans to explore nature judiciously; cognisant of the necessity for evading indiscriminate extinction (indirectly protecting endangered species).

Unfortunately, arguments favouring environmental justice in typical African societies lack required or merited attention as in the West. Stephen Nkansah Morgan in relation, regrets the fact that they (for example, Godfrey Tangwa, Segun Ogungbemi, and Murove Munyaradzi), in typical African communitarian society, have not adequately conceptualized the idea of environmental justice. For him, they minimally focus attention on nature preservation (for current and future generations); neglecting factors of equitable distribution of environmental resources and burdens (NKANSAH M. Stephen, 2019: 175). Additionally, Nso' proverbs while recommending the universe's fair treatment, envisages consequences of human unjust explorations:

The fight of two elephants causes the surrounding grass to suffer [*vinga vi yi yen ngeh ghan se vitam vi funini*]. One tree does not make a forest [*kichi ki mo'on ki yo yi fer kov*]. A person is a communal being [*wirdze bih wir amo'oh*]. Finally, the forest is our skin; removing the skin of the human being, results to death [*teh kichi wun wir, bu la beey bo wirdze wu kpu foter*].

The preceding allegations emphasize environmental justice; challenging Africans to obligatorily safeguard their environment. In connection, elements enabling environmental justice and sustainable developmental goals are imploration of African Traditional Religion. Perceived as holistically sacred, nature in context embraces social, spiritual, and physical elements of the universe. Therefore, extension of the moral community includes entire ecosystems; incorporating beliefs, environmental stewardship, and conservation practices. Mbiti insists that reality involves spiritual significance, rituals, respect for the environment, and beliefs in totems as traditional religious factors liaised to African environmental ethical conservation apprehensions (MBITI S. John, 1977:44). Additionally, rivers and streams hallowing dwellers believed to be abodes for river gods, surrounding forests and conserved environments, enjoy logging and cultivation prohibition. Equally, there are traditional religious taboos prohibiting hunting of particular animal species, in order to maintain ecological balance.

2. JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU'S *EMILE* AND ENVIRONMENTAL NATURALISM

Rousseau's contentions regarding *Emile's* upbringing in the context of the state of nature, establishes relevant factors for environmental naturalism. Alongside aforementioned African cosmological/environmental ethics, and later exploration of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, an unquestionable unifying pool ensues. Rousseau investigates how natural education facilitates children's development of natural selves. Ultimately, he thinks child exposure enables learning from experiences, rather than others' tutoring. He esteems that this instils consciousness of stewardship to nature, learning through the environment, observation, natural education, experience, and engagement (particularly with natural elements). Hence, exploring Rousseau's natural education confronting artificial and formal education (state of nature), controversial sex differentiation education, divine human gift and regulatory laws are necessary.

2.1. NATURAL EDUCATION CONFRONTING ARTIFICIAL AND FORMAL EDUCATION

Rousseau thinks natural education, unlike artificial and formal education of society, facilitates attainment of social, moral, and rational points; yet original nature is relevant. Environmental sustenance and protection for him includes stewardship of nature, basic environmental learning, basic observation, and natural education (experience). First, pursuing natural education entails nature's careful treatment, evading indiscriminate exploits; impressed on children, encouraging them to develop ideas by discovery learning not coercion. (ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, 1979: 36) Second, like African Environmental protagonists, and later on Pope Francis, he underscores practical environmental learning (trusting children, permission to explore the natural environment via culturally related tools and habits). Furthermore, he thinks natural education assists children become social, moral, and rational; remaining true to their original nature. (ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, 1979: 38) Lastly, Rousseau stresses the magnitude of experience learning and interplay with natural objects; claiming that alongside play/assigned roles with mates, help in distinguishing and protecting environmental features. (ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, 1979: 40) Locke and Dewey connect to this insisting: "children learn by doing." Therefore, environmental naturalism via Rousseau's five stages of child development (childhood, boyhood, preadolescence, adolescence, and adulthood), leads to the cultivation of strong, virtuous character, rationalistic, and refined sense of appreciating environmental values without parental compulsion. Rousseau regards mothers as natural protective agents; closest in early childhood, guiding them to encounter the environment. Next, in boyhood, education-perfecting senses, assists the mind/intellect to sift perceived correct information. Third, responsible creativity is of importance; with adolescence and exposure to critical thinking/care for the environment.

In another dimension, Rousseau's immediate concern after natural education is his overwhelming preference for male sex education, sidelining the female sex. By focusing attention more on boys' education (*Emile*), controversial and reactionary stance erupts; underlining mothers importance in children education, yet

encouraging the teaching of girls entirely subordinated and dependent on husbands. J. L. Roopnarine and colleagues interpret this position of Rousseau as not only compromising equality or parity, but also extending to mishandling of other cosmological elements; championed by gender bias. (ROOPNARINE, J. L., & Johnson, J. E., 1987: 43-44)

2.2. DIVINE HUMAN GIFT AND REGULATORY LAWS

In spite of his seemingly overriding male chauvinism, Peter Critchley thinks Rousseau justifiably highlights significant divine human gifts regulating laws on all:

The Supreme Being has deigned to do honour to the human race: in giving man unlimited desires, at the same time he provided the law that regulates them so he could be free and self-controlled; and while delivering him to these immoderate passions he added reason in order to govern them. (CRITCHLEY Peter, 2017: 16)

From the above, it is apparent that the freest and most delightful of all acts does not admit any form of violence; opposed to by both nature and reason. Hence, from nature, the weaker party becomes empowered to resist domination; but reason projects the imploration of force solely for self-defence. Implicitly, Rousseau as cited by Critchley stresses the significance of interconnection in social life. Inevitably, this suggests ties as binding and obligating humankind, likewise benefitting animals and plants; granting legitimacy in terms of freedom and judicious harnessing of natural endowments.

2.3. PARALLELS BETWEEN HUMAN AND ANIMAL INSTINCTS/RATIONAL FEELINGS

Rousseau's in this dimension of environmental concern connects the common platform between human beings and animals; relating free will and human nature. For him, inequality disputes with the human-animal hierarchy in its denunciation of social inequality as unnatural. An appraisal of the current situation for Rousseau, amounts to stripping social artifice; revealing deep physical continuity between man and animals. Hence, he concludes, that as embodied creatures, human beings share mortality, vulnerability, and instincts like animals; differentiated by liberty and centrality of reason (ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, Mile, 1979: 37). Succinctly, Rousseau signals humans' indiscriminate nature exploration, endangering other beings:

Stripping this being, so constituted, of all the supernatural gifts, he could have received and of all the artificial faculties, he could have acquired only by prolonged progress; considering him, in a word, such as he must have come from the hands of nature. I see an animal less strong than other [beings]; less agile than others do, but, overall, the most advantageously physically organized of all. (ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, 2012: 66)

Rousseau seems to have located the problem rightly; insisting that while other beings serve human needs, they deserve judicious treatment and management. Thus, with natural fertility, the earth enclosed by forests acting as nutrition and shelter for various animal species, gains protection licence.

3. POPE FRANCIS' LAUDATO SI AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Pope alludes to Saint Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures*; joggling every memory that the earth as common home "is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us." Thus, as constituent elements whose origin is traceable to the earth, breathing her air, and receiving life or refreshment from her waters, he commends exploration with special care. (Nos. 1 & 2: Genesis 2:7) A survey of Pope Francis' encyclical unveils five central themes including endeavour that humanity neither over exploiting nor worshipping nature, necessarily changing structures and hearts, need for a paradigm shift, returning to ethics and moral realism, and ensuring strong interconnectivity between social and environmental issues. In order to achieve this, *Laudato Si* sets goals: "response to the earth's and poor's cry, ensuring ecological economics, adopting simple lifestyles, embrace ecological education and spirituality, and insistence on participatory approach of community involvement." Hence, conceiving every being as "linked by invisible bonds," the obvious challenge lies on the formation of a universal family (the like of African environmental ethos of *Ubuntu*).

3.1. CONSIDERABLE EXPLOITATION OF NATURE

Accordingly, Pope Francis thinks the double socio-environmental crises ravaging the world, invites speedy strategic solutions; integrating poverty combating approaches that simultaneously reinstate human dignity while protecting nature. In his estimation, harming the planet adversely affects humanity; for humans created in God's image, have equal rights with other beings. This summons individuals, families, local communities, nations, and the international community to an ecological conversion. (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 1-3) Equally, Pope Francis regarding nature's exploitation formulates an invitation of "change of direction," embracing responsibility about care of environment, nature protection, and genuine concern for the planet. (cf.

ibid. No. 19) Lastly, he recommends an engagement into dialogue of everyone towards care for our common home or the earth. (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 3, 13, 58, 63, & 205)

3.2. ORIENTATION OF HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND STRUCTURES' RENOVATION

Furthermore, Pope Francis draws attention to the relevance of orienting human behaviour and overhauling structures; estimating the root cause of environmental crisis as resulting from technocracy and excessive human self-centeredness. He proposes honest dialogue at the social, economic, and political life; leading to construction of transparent "decision-making processes," animated by responsible consciences. (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 15, 37, & 246), later asserting:

First, there should be intimate relationship between the poor and fragility of the planet. Second, the conviction that everything in the world is connected is necessary. Third, the critique of new paradigms and forms of power derivative from technology is predicted. Fourth, there is the call to seek other ways of understanding economy and progress. Fifth, the value proper to each creature is significant. Sixth, the human meaning of ecology needs examination at all levels. Seventh, the need for forthright and honest debate is pivotal. Eighth, serious responsibility of international and local policies is indispensable. (*Laudato Si*: Preface)

Fundamentally, abetting growth and environmental preservation necessitates educational, spiritual, ecclesial, political, and theological input; human beings as extensions of the creator co-creating, procreating, preserving and conserving everything in nature. (*Laudato Si*: No. 246)

3.3. ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS

Founded on dialogue with philosophy and human sciences, Pope Francis traces root causes of ecological crisis, acknowledging technology's contributions in ameliorating human living conditions. However, isolates hazards of economic resources misuse, provoking impressive dominance; insinuating the mentality of technocratic domination degenerates into nature destruction and exploitation of the vulnerable. (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 15, 104, & 109) Secondly, he insists, "Modernity has been marked by an excessive anthropocentrism;" self-centred arrangement of human beings, and exclusive excesses causing untold damage to other cosmic inhabitants. Consequence of the "use and throw away" syndrome, evolves into wastes and environmental threats to all. (Nos. 116 & 123) Furthermore, Pope Francis does not stop at apportioning blames, but proceeds to propose solutions to crucial problems of today's world; suggesting the need to accentuate approaches of integral ecology, an inclusive definition recognizing dangers of complex environmental issues. (Nos. 124, 134, & 135)

3.4. THE PLACE OF ETHICS AND MORAL REALISM

The task of recognizing ethics and moral realism, tackling socio-environmental concerns is necessary for Pope Francis. For him, integral ecology should be a "new paradigm of justice;" regarded as sole avenue for respecting human beings' uniqueness and relationship to other beings/surroundings. He appeals to strict consideration of nature as part of human setting and not a separate entity; ruling that: "if everything is related, then the health of a society's institutions affects the environment and the quality of human life." (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 15, 139, & 142) This unquestionably leads to the emergence of two concrete crises: environmental and social. Equally, he projects targeting sustenance for future generations; practically boosted by an urgent moral need resulting to renewed sense of intra generational solidarity. This is fair; granting vision to ecological integrity; alleviating adverse effects of surroundings linked to authentic development. (*Laudato Si*: Nos. 150-156; 158, & 162)

4. AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: RECONCILIATORY POOL OF EMILE AND LAUDATO SI

The trio: African environmental apprehensions, Rousseau's *Emile*, and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* constitute a reconciliatory pool preventing human induced disasters. Psalm 104: 10-23 vividly captures an environmental philosophy the trio into a genuine environmental developmental plan:

You make springs flow in the valleys, and the rivers run between the hills. They provide water for wild animals; there the wild donkeys quench their thirst. In the trees nearby, the birds make their nests and sing. From the sky, you send rain on the hills, and the earth is filled with your blessings. You make grass grow for the cattle and plants for man to use so that he can grow his crops and produce wine to make him cheerful, and bread to give him strength. The cedars of Lebanon get plenty of rain- the Lord's own trees, which he planted. There the birds build their nests; the storks nest in the fir-trees. The wild goats live in the high mountains, and the rock-badgers hide in the cliffs.

At the most radical level of practical discourse, the aforementioned features of Psalm 103 vindicates African environmental concerns as a unifying pool for Rousseau's *Emile* and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*. Consequently, this constitutes an avenue for holism and interconnected nature of organisms, and responsibility.

4.1. HOLISM AND INTERCONNECTED NATURE OF ORGANISMS

African environmental ethics apropos Rousseau's state of nature and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* unveils a conglomeration or holism and interconnected nature of organisms. Envisaged are essential features for protecting the environment, species, and natural resources. Deep-seated exploration of aforementioned concerns promotes sustainable practices; encouraging consciousness and self-awareness of the impact of human actions on the environment. Insistence on environmental interconnectedness is inevitable, as Rousseau, Pope Francis, and African environmental stress. Alfred North Whitehead in relation demonstrates aspects of holism; accentuating the nature of being as consisting of orderly diversified nexus. He draws attention to order, value, and ethics of creativity; insisting, "There can be no living science unless there is a widespread instinctive conviction in the existence of an order of things, and in particular of an order of nature." (WHITEHEAD Alfred North, 1925: 4) Likewise, Rousseau, Pope Francis, and African environmental ethics, he opines that the plan of a nexus influences the character of the various subordinate organisms constituting it. (Cf. *ibid.* 80) In this way, he qualifies the nature of the universe as ordered, characterised by relationships between constituent actual entities. (Cf. *ibid.* 25) Unquestionably, consciousness in upholding holism and nature's interconnectedness establishes social order of reality Whitehead insists:

There is an intrinsic and extrinsic reality of an event, namely: the event as in its own prehension, and the event as in the prehension of other events. The concept of an organism then includes the concept of the interaction of organisms. (WHITEHEAD Alfred North, 1925: 105-106)

This implies the inseparability of units from the whole; yet each unit exist in its own right, upholding the intensity of value for itself and sharing it with the universe (humans, animals/plants respecting each other. Hence, alongside aforementioned views, varied recommendations exhibit the fact that no matter how seemingly insignificant each individual organism, each constitutes a locus of value significant for the entire cosmos.

4.2. ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS OF RESPONSIBILITY

African environmental apprehensions highlight the importance of moral/ethical status of nature and concern for environmental justice, just as Rousseau's divine human gift and regulatory laws, and Pope Francis' role of ethics and moral realism; the trio prescribe environmental ethics of responsibility. Chimakonam Jonathan drums-up this view, constructing the idea of human moral obligations towards non-human beings based on African relational environmental ethics. Accordingly, he regards a careful and critical appeal to the notion of interrelatedness within the African web of life, to defend how it enriches human obligations by preserving the biodiversity for its own sake; particularly species qua species and future generations. (CHIMAKONAM Jonathan, 2018: 43) In connection, Whitehead solicits attention to moral responsibility towards creativity; suggesting that exterminating human beings, animals, insects, or trees, may be moral or immoral; for whether we destroy or preserve, our action is moral if we have thereby secured the meaning and value of that experience as far as it depends on concrete instances in the world's history. (WHITEHEAD Alfred Nord, 1938: 14-15)

4.3. ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION SENSITIVITY

Strikingly, a catalyst for positive change built on consciousness of environmental ethics of responsibility is education on ecological sensitivity. This incorporates four pillars of environmental justice: "emphasizing on the intersectionality of multiple inequalities and axes of oppression, paying attention to multiple spatial and temporal scales of environmental justice problems and solutions, focusing on state power as reinforcement guarantors, and radical/aggressive educational slogans." Equally, there is integration of consciousness, circumventing dominance of human species, rather than single categories of difference; promoting slogans such as: "save the environment our Mother Earth; earth first, everything else second," "act locally; think globally," preserve nature for future generations," "clean earth, bright future," and "your planet, your responsibility." These slogans persuade people to protect their environments; enjoying Peter Singer's sympathy and justification of the doctrine of animal rights.

Furthermore, forgone concerns beef-up dimensions of ethical responsibility, recognizing beings interdependence. Herewith, pronouncement of ethical stewardship reassures ethical frameworks encouraging caretaker actions; an ethos shaping daily practices, steering communities in decisions prioritizing ecological well-being. In another domain, traditional ecological knowledge informs sustainable practices; exploring features of crop rotation, seasonal harvesting, and convention of native plant species. Chimakonam in correlation proposes construction of the nature of human-non-human relations within an African cultural context, values and/or ethics. He esteems that African environmental ethics is "capable of grounding animal rights;" appealing to African modal relational account of moral status. (CHIMAKONAM Jonathan, 2018: 33) Similarly, the Nso' insist that humans (*wiri*) have precepts (*nsirsi*) underlining duties to avoid harming animals for personal gains (*vinyo ve a bame fo lemir nyamsi bih seh wir*). This Nso' worldview of environmental sensitivity, alongside Rousseau's parallels and Pope Francis' views of considerable exploitation of nature,

resonate the importance of ecological sensitivity. Franklin M. Murove likewise reiterates that since animals as humans enjoy the hierarchy of existence (vital force principle) with moral status, they command reciprocal respect linked to human communitarian relations. (MUROVE M. Franklin, 2009: 318) This constitutes a corpus resonating human sensuous bodily aptitude enabling communication, interaction, and moral engagement with nature's entire complexity (human moral obligations towards other beings). The Nso' communitarian environmental perception (I am because you are: *wirdze wir bih wir*) is an articulating of this relational ecosystem account. Similarly, E. Imafidon's Igbo metaphysics illustration advocates for "an eco-bio-communitarian approach ecosystem, showing an ontological equality between humans and non-human to be defended." (IMAFIDON E., 2014: 79) Overwhelming arguments, favour relational environmental ethics in African thought; vindicated by Rousseau's state of nature, and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*.

4.4. CO-CREATION, CONSERVATION/PRESERVATION

Sustainability is significant in contributing to environmental polemics and the politics of sustainable development (particularly to Africa). Conservation/preservation challenges are inherent in anthropocentric developmental notions favouring urbanization interests, so detrimental to environmental concerns. An appraisal of the ethics of development while emphasizing the promotion and sustenance of human happiness/development alongside non-human preservation ought to incorporate holistic views. Rousseau and Pope Francis' interventions culminate in an African environmental ethics; appealing to human competence that appreciates attainable values, not divorcing persons and the universe. Nevertheless, as core-cause of global disrespect for the natural environment, focusing on "overarching eco-systems equalizing functional roles of both humans and non-humans," is essential. Briand Swimme immediately signals the danger of undermining human moral and rational consciousness; a regulating:

Drawing on an Aristotelian/Thomist metaphysics, congruent with the African traditional ideal of 'vital force' running through natural and social reality, I argue that organisms: human or otherwise, are not functional elements in the ecosystem, but historically viable co-determinants thereof. The role of human organisms is co-determining through narrative and history. Human subjectivity is not, pace Nagel, confined to a species-perspective but there is a supra-biological patterning of experience intending understanding and true value. (SWIMME Brian, 1994: 269)

In alignment, the African concept of *Ubuntu* (communitarianism), posits a normative development of agency via others, possibly unloaded and applicable beyond simply social custom. Subsequently, this enhances the metaphysics of "vital force" or "vital spirit" cutting across the globe; embracing an interpretation that is non-dualistic and non-appealing to supernaturalism. African environmental apprehensions through sacrifices and rituals, do not only cooperate with the ultimate being in co-creating/pro-creation, but also sustains everything in being via conservation/preservation. The Nso' (Cameroon) and Marba (Chad) worldviews demonstrate how routinely executed practices encompassing plant, animal and geographical features' preservation is promoted. Rituals conducted to honour spirits of specific plants or animals sustaining humans, often involve elaborate ceremonies and offerings intended to ensure health and prosperity. Likewise, preservation of relief features (mountains, rivers, forests), illustrate deep-seated connections with geographical features, enabling their safeguard. Additionally, educational components and collective responsibility accompany rituals; elders through communal knowledge mediums (proverbs, folklores, and tales), convey messages of the cultural significance of various plants and animals through stories; instilling conservation values in younger generations. Furthermore, there is an embodiment of shared commitment to protect the land and its resources for future generations; solidifying collective communal responsibility and stewardship. Godfrey Tangwa vindicates this worldview, insinuating it involves "recognition and acceptance of inter-dependence and peaceful coexistence of the earth, plants, animals and humans." (TANGWA Godfrey, 2004: 389).

Interestingly, Chimakonam demonstrates how "women continue to contribute toward human and environmental well-being and bio-diversity conservation in spite of untold hardships." He thinks, reversing indigenous patriarchal gender roles and excesses to include women in policymaking/ execution, mitigates prevalence of environmental degradation. (CHIMAKONAM Jonathan, 2018: 86) Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* as well incorporates women's role as "custodians and earth conservators;" stepping-up orientation of human behaviour and structures' renovation. Regrettably, Rousseau's stance downplaying the female sex in matters of education about nature attracts numerous criticisms.

II. CONCLUSION

In highlighting African environmental apprehension, we disembark at an obvious termination constituting a unifying pool for Rousseau's *Emile* and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*; addressing pertinent environmental crisis. By merit, this paper articulates pertinent environmental issues affecting the universe (global warming, poverty, climate change, pollution, and extinction of the biodiversity). Hence, exploring environmental ethical concerns, via African philosophical perspectives of relational/communitarian ethics,

Rousseau's environmental naturalism, and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*/environmental considerations, guarantees ecological balance. As a reconciliatory pool of *Emile* and *Laudato Si*, African environmental apprehensions' exhibition of holism and organisms' interconnectedness, promote ethics of responsibility and ecological education sensitivity.

However, fundamental aspects of environmental ethics, particularly justice, clear-cut policymaking, and epistemological challenges minimally exploited, remain a proximate global disaster to address. Our deliberations challenge a reconsideration of environmental ethics' concerns of compliance, consequences, and contributions; involving adherence to laws, regulations, and ethico-epistemological standards guiding outcomes of environmental ethical attitudes and decisions. Mahatma Gandhi's dictum: "the earth provides enough to satisfy every person's need, but not greed," is inevitable in highlighting environmental consciousness. African environmental ethics, Rousseau's state of nature, and Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* are reference tools for reversing drastic environmental degradation, caused by human activities. Finally, I think ecological justice at stake is reversible through sustainability endeavours, assured in "spirituality, ethico-epistemological attitude, and ecological sensitivity;" orientating human actions based on respect/reverence for all beings. As illustrated, African environmental apprehensions, Rousseau's secularist state of nature, and Pope Francis' religious "praise of nature," have a common telos; preservation, conservation, regeneration, organism interconnectivity, environmental justice/friendliness, and ecological economy, aimed at an improved habitat for all.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [1]. CHIMAKONAM O. Jonathan (ed.), *African Philosophy and Environmental Conservation*, Routledge, New York, 2018
- [2]. CRITCHLEY Peter, *Rousseau, National Law, and Rational Freedom*, Burnley Prints, Burnley, 2017
- [3]. GIDDY Patrick, *Environmental Ethics in the Context of African Traditional Thought: Beyond the Impasse*, <http://www.31 May 2019>
- [4]. GROAG B. Susan (ed.), *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, Stanford University Press, Oxford, 1983
- [5]. HORSTHEMKE, K., *Animal and African Ethics*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2015
- [6]. IMAFIDON E., & BEWAI, J. (eds.), *Ontologized Ethics: New Essays in African Meta-Ethics*, Lexington Books, Lanham, 2014
- [7]. MASAKA Denis, *Moral Status of Non-Human Animals from an African Perspective: In Defense of Moderate Anthropocentric Thinking in Philosophy*, Springer Verlag, New York, 2019
- [8]. MBITI S. John, *Introduction to African Religion*, Heinemann, Nairobi, 1977.
- [9]. MUNAMATO Chemhuru (ed.), *The International Library of Environmental, Agricultural and Food Ethics*, Cape Town, 2019
- [10]. MUNAMATO Chemhuru (ed.), *African Environmental Ethics: A Critical Reader*, Oaths Books, Nairobi, 2019
- [11]. MUROVE, M. F., "An African Environmental Ethics Based on the Concept of *Ukama* and *Ubuntu*," In *Munyaradzi F. Murove (ed.), African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Scottville, 2009
- [12]. NKANSAH M. Stephen et al., "Environmental Justice: Towards an African Perspective," in *The International Library*, Vol. 29, London, 2019
- [13]. NOTRE DAME Philosophical Reviews, <http://www.ndpr.nd.edu>: *The Free Animal: Rousseau on Free Will and Human Nature*
- [14]. POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 2015
- [15]. RIVIZAL N. Richard, *Environmental Ethics in the African Context*, Catholic University of Eastern Africa Press, Nairobi, 2021
- [16]. ROOPNARINE, J. L., & Johnson, J. E. (eds.), *Approaches to Early Childhood Education*, Merrill, New York, 1987
- [17]. ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, *Emile*, Geneva Press, Geneva, 1763
- [18]. ROUSSEAU Jean-Jacques, *Emile*, Allan Bloom (trans.), Basic Books, New York, 1979
- [19]. SWIMME Brian & Thomas Berry (eds.), *The Universe Story*, Blackburn, London, 1994
- [20]. TANGWA Godfrey, "African Environmental Ethics," in *African Journals Online*, <http://www.ajol.info>, index.php, 2004
- [21]. WHITEHEAD A. North, *Process and Reality*, A Pelican Mentor Book, New York, 1925
- [22]. WHITEHEAD A. North, *Modes of Thought*, Free Press, New York, 1938