Enyimba's Notion of *Madukaku* and The Question of Anthropocentricism In African Environmental Ethics

Samuel Akpan Bassey[1]*, Thomas Micah Pimaro Jr[2]

[1,2]Department of Philosophy, University of Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria.

E-Mail: *samuelbassey15@yahoo.com, tmpjnr@gmail.com*

Abstract: The purpose of this study is to scrutinize Enyimba's theory of *Madukakism* as a philosophy of being human within the African framework and to show its implication to African environmental ethics. Enyimba's theory *Madukakism* as a philosophy of being human is founded on the notion of *Madukaku*. Drawn from the Igbo ontological worldview, *Madukaku* avers that "man is supreme", as such, possess strong anthropocentric implication on African worldview. Enyimba Maduka's position seems logical as it draws its inspiration from the place of humans in the ecosystem and African ontology. This paper argues that although human occupies a central position to preserve, care and tend nature for the unity and balance of the ontology and ecosystem, it is perceived as anthropoholism. It is anthro-poholism because, despite man's central role (Anthropo), man is just a part of the (whole) environment, as such cannot exist outside the environment, and cannot be understood without allusion to the environment (Holism). This research is carried out with the philosophical method of analysis.

Keywords: *Madukaku*, *Madukakism*, anthropocentric, communitarian, anthropoholism.

INTRODUCTION

With the recent devastating report released by the UN's IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) on the recent height of global warming in the year 2018, there is now an urgent call for action [1]. The report warned that humanity has only twelve (12) years to act "if tipping points are to be avoided, beyond which uncontrollable feedback loops would (be) set in motion" [2]. Africa is known to be the hottest continent on earth; deserts and dry lands comprise 60% of the entire land mass [3]. While many of its natives struggle with poverty and countries under-development, the effect of global warming is more devastating on the continent natives. Many Africans cannot even afford good shelter, cars, attend classes or work in air-conditioned facility, at least, to reduce the effect of excessive sun caused by climate change. This is unlike, Europe and America which have more favorable climate and their natives have better access to basic amenities that help reduce the effect of extreme weather conditions. Thus among many others, any natural disaster resulting from global warming will be so devastating on the African continent and its inhabitants.

There is no better time to articulate authentic environmental ethics in reducing this impending danger mostly within the African environment. Many African scholars are now challenged to look inward for ethical theories, having been unsatisfied with the western ethical postulations which have often been labeled, anthropocentric in nature. Anthropocentricism sees man at the center of the universe. However, there are two versions of anthropocentrism, which are the weak and the strong. Weak anthropocentricism, acknowledges man at the center of the universe, but puts other beings in the environment into consideration.

What makes us human is the fact that we see things through our lens and our mentality about the world is shaped and limited by our centered perspective and way of being within it. This kind of anthropocentrism appears to be unavoidable and inescapable because human perspective will always play in and it is also evidence in Descartes and Husserl futile attempt to remove all form of human biases in attaining objective knowledge. One major challenge of weak anthropocentrism is avoiding elevation towards egoistic and dominating tendencies of strong anthropocentrism. Strong anthropocentrism is the postulation that man is at the center of the universe and everything is made for him; hence man is supreme [4]. It is important to note that strong anthropocentric thinking is the same underlying rationale behind man's greed and overexploitation of the environment which in turn has caused environmental degradation. Strong anthropocentrism carries supremacy mentality over other beings within the environment.

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*Corresponding E-mail: samuelbassey15@yahoo.com

Strong Anthropocentric thinking is evident in western philosophical postulations from Protagoras 'man is the measure of all things' to the Aristotelian position of 'Man is a rational animal', thereby denying other non-human animal rationality within the environment. However, Naess and Haukeland now identifies a change in mindset among western scholars when they aver that "today, a leading responsibility of humankind is the responsibility for future generations that we hand down a planet with resources as great as we found in our own generations. But we also have a responsibility for future living creatures in general" [5]. This statement can be said to be weak anthropocentric connotation, as long as it tries to act responsibly towards other creatures also.

On the other hand, African ethics has been said to be communitarian in nature. This could be explained using Mbiti's communitarian statement "'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" [6]. When this statement is related to environmental ethics, it depicts the interconnectedness and interdependence of being whose existence is hinged on one another. Furthermore, it shows parties in the environment, with no being been self-sufficient. This is reason Tangwa aver that in traditional African metaphysical worldview, "the dichotomy involving "plants, animals, and inanimate things; between the sacred and the profane, matter and spirit, the communal and the individual, is a slim and flexible one" [7]. However, the philosophy of *Madukaku* claims that against this communitarian background, humans are supreme in African worldview, using "man is the measure of all things" as an anchor point. If this postulation is true, it therefore reveals strong anthropocentric undertone within African environmental ethics. The thrust of this paper is to critically look at Enyimba *madukaku's* strong anthropocentric postulation and its implication to African environmental ethics.

MADUKAKU PHİLOSOPHY

According to Enyimba Maduka, the concept of *Madukaku* is a combination of three Igbo words, which are: *Madu*, *aku* and Ka. Its English interpretation is; "human", "wealth" and "greater than". The interpretation of this phrase means "human is greater than wealth", however, from this phrase Enyimba's *Madukakism* takes it to mean: the human is supreme [8]. His justification is that for African people; importance, worth, value, essence and high quality are attached or attributed to a human person over and above other things' [8]. It is important to note that there is a vast difference between "greater than" which was used in transliteration of 'ka' and "supreme" which he later used to translate the same concept. However, "***greater than***" means higher in quality, "***supreme***" *is often used to mean* "dominant", having power over all others. To this, there is a need for clarification on why the word "supreme" is used in place of "greater than" within the philosophical postulation.

Enyimba Maduka further avers that wealth "refer(s) to anything else outside the human person. In Fact, non-human entities or objects constitute what can be called wealth" [8]. Against this background, it is interesting to note that humans can also be referred to as "wealth" within the same Igbo framework. For example names such as, *Akuabata*, implies that "wealth" has come in. *Akunna* which means 'Father's wealth' shows that the human is "wealth" [9]. To this, Enyimba Maduka's postulation which states that "Wealth here can refer to anything else outside the human person" [8] is faulty, as some names have shown otherwise. If this is also true, then how can humans be supreme above wealth of which he is a part of? Since it makes no sense for humans to be 'supreme' over himself, the only rational explanation could be that "human stands out (greater than) among members in the category of "wealth". This looks more logical and could translate to weak anthropocentrism as long as it does not translate to dominating tendencies of strong anthropocentricism on the environment.

Enyimba Maduka's position which identifies "Wealth" from material acquisitions and titles such as; money or finances, houses, cars, social, political, religious and economic status etcetera" [8] seems logical. This definition makes more sense to this research if it means that, Man is 'greater than riches and titles' and not necessarily generalizing every being as wealth, because riches and titles are artificial, in human construct. This corresponds with the Igbo proverb which states that: *onye nwere mmadu ka onye nwere ego* (he who has human beings is greater than he who has money) or *nwa ka ego* (child is greater than money). "Ego" in this sense means "money", it is also understood to mean wealth "*uba*". However, since without *nwa* (child), one cannot get *mmadu* (person), the substance given to *nwa* is extended to *mmadu* in Igbo anthropological thought. Also, when faced with the choice between *nwa* (child) and *ego* (money), a traditional Igbo person will decide, first for *nwa* (child). This is because it is better valued as "*nwa bu uba*" (child is wealth).

The explanation given above could easily represent as moral learning towards tolerance and mutual respect of the human person. This could be seen to correspond to Enyimba Maduka's second definition of wealth from material acquisitions. This also leaves the position of "human is supreme" of the theory of Enyimba *madukakism* to mean over "Ego", which is 'riches', which also implies "wealth". To summarize the philosophy of *Madukakism*, Enyimba Maduka avers that:

> Indeed, if the human person is at the centre of the universe and its activities, then a person's importance, worth and place in the scheme of things in the universe cannot be undermined. Thus, for *Madukakism* the human is supreme. Infact, as the centre piece of the pressures and influences of other beings in the cosmos, the human person is a force to reckon with, which goes to say that, "the society, community or universe is, because the human person is". Thus, the protagorean dictum that "man is the measure of all things"… becomes significant here. This idea projects the philosophy and theory of Madukakism. On the contrary John S. Mbiti's dictum that, "I am because we are and because we are I am" is antithetical to the idea of *Madukaku* as the basis of being human in Africa and as such against the foundation of the philosophy of *Madukakism* [9].

From the above statement, it is important to note that *Madukakism* is strongly against the communal postulations of many African philosophers before him to reveal a strong case for "individualism and "strong anthropocentricism" within African interactions and cultural experiences. Nevertheless, since its position alludes to the place of man in the cosmos within African framework, this will necessarily have a serious implication for African communalism as well as environmental ethics which many African environmentalists believe is communal in nature. Also, it should be noted that there have been a lot of problems identified the anchor point of the theory of *Madukakism* which states that "man is the measure of all things". This argument has been largely flawed, by Plato and the author, in an earlier criticism of Enyimba Maduka postulation [10].

AFRICAN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Africans' way of life is said to be communitarian. The underlining key presumption of this is that African social orders put precedence on the welfare of the community over that of the individual [11]. This is also supported by Mbiti's statement 'I am because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" [6]. This means that the "I" within the African framework is not as important as the "we" (the collective whole). Although Mbiti's statement is mostly used in explaining human social relations, many African scholars also believe that this is applicable to the environment. However, there have been lots of sharp disagreements on the position of the "I" in African communalism, with most scholars adhering to slightly different views. The debate started with Menkiti and Gyekye, while the former denied that individual has specific rights as it is subsumed in the 'collective whole', the latter thinks individual rights still exist despite this inherent communal spirit [12]. Despite this disagreement, both Menkiti and Gyekye share the same view that an African is a communal being. Ike Odimegwu also proposed Integrative Personhood, while taking a soft position on the "I" (13). Enyimba Maduka proposed *Madukakukism*, taking a more radical position, abandoning the communal spirit. Although the "I" has always been a point of debate in African communalism, however, taking an absolute leap outside African communalism calls for serious questioning.

Many African scholars take the values inherent in African communalism to explain African environmental ethics. For instance, Tangwa describes it as eco-bio- communitarianism against the western perspective he called anthropocentric, Segun Ogungbemi called it "ethics of nature relatedness" [14], while Mogobe B. Ramose called it ecology Ubuntu et cetera. All they tried to do is to articulate African communal value in environmental preservation. Tangwa, sees a strong connection between African environmental ethics and ontology which fosters unity and interdependence. Mbiti in explaining African ontology claims that God, spirits, humanity, and non-humans exist in unity, and to break that unity is to destroy one or more of the modes of existence, and to destroy one of them is to destroy them all [15]. This explains why Africans are more careful on how they relate to non-human beings, as every being within the environment draws its source from God, who is at the apex of African ontology.

However, the entire beings are accountable to God who is at the apex. This explains why taboos and totem play a prominent role in environmental conservation within African societies. In this way, African believes that these taboo and totems are divinely given to control the affairs of men in the environment, to break any of them poses serious implication. To this, man both "I" ('individual', and 'collective whole') cannot tamper with these divine laws without dare consequence. This limits the influence and the power of man over the environment and rejects the idea of man's supremacy as enshrined in the philosophy of *madukakism*. This further explains why an African will pour libation before undertaking a specific task on nature. For instance, an African pours libation before harvesting herbs from specific trees or hews down a specific tree.

Libation is a drink offering to acknowledge the Creator, sacred ancestors, the lesser divinities, human beings as well as the environment. The eventual intention of libation is to uphold the cosmic order of equilibrium and oneness of the beings in the universe. When Africans carry out dealings involving nonhuman beings in the environment which also involves libation, they understand that while beings are not God in themselves, they are theologically linked to God and spirit can sometimes inhabit them. Such thinking made western philosophers like Hegel and Levy-Bruhl see Africans as pre-logical. This is because as Kenyan philosopher John Mbiti posits 'African people are notoriously religious (and) religion permeates all the departments of life so it is not easy or possible to isolate it" (15). The accusation is that Africans often connect everything to the metaphysical realm which does not conform to western two-valued logic (True or false). For example,

A tree is a tree and nothing but a tree (X is X) is the principle of identity of the Aristotelian law of thought. This means either p or ~p must be true; there is no third true the value between them.

To this, an African thinks that a tree can also inhabit spirits, which accommodates a third truth value, but cannot accommodate western two-valued logic of True or False, as a spirited tree is neither still a tree (T) or not a tree (F). This is the reason why Chris Ijiomah proposed Harmonious Monism [16] and Jonathan Chimakonam proposed Ezumezu logic [17] which gives a third truth value for African logic. This three-valued logic can also be used to explain Aristotle's' future contingency statement like: "if a sea-battle will not be fought tomorrow". Also, it is imperative to note that an action consequential from two-valued orientations sometimes disreputably fails to achieve its objectives. For instance, when we conclude that Mr. A is said to be a criminal, without giving any benefit of doubt or accepting that he could act otherwise. To this, two-valued orientation harshly diminishes the capacity to assess the world correctly.

British anthropologist Mary Douglas' in her analysis of the concept of pollution and taboo between the "primitive" and "modern" culture discovered something unique. For her, in modern cultures, the implications of pollution are likely to be social sanctions, gossip, contempt, isolation, perhaps even police action. Nonetheless, in the "primitive" societies, the implication of pollution is much more damning. Pollution, however, could be a religious offense [18]. In summary, for her, taboos in "primitive" civilization, by virtue of their religious status and sanctions from the supernatural are inspired by fear [18]. The justifications may not be right for some group of persons but it surely worked in traditional African societies as far as environmental conservation is concerned. If humans are supreme as well as the measure of all things as the philosophy of *madukakukism* speculates, why will human be restricted from undertaking these dealing within the African environment?

MADUKAKISM, AFRICAN ONTOLOGY AND PROBLEM OF ANTHROPOCENTRICISM

Being in sub-Saharan African thought is hierarchically construed. This means that existence is seen in the form of a hierarchy. For instance, all *being* can be grasped to be at the highest level of existence through the Supreme Being (God) which is a purely non-physical form of existence, followed by ancestors, man, and lower animals. To this, Tempels avers, "it is because all being is a force and exists only in that it is a force, that the category 'force' includes of necessity all 'beings': God, men (living and departed), animals, plants, minerals" [19]. Although Tempels does not explicitly show the significance of this understanding of force to environmentalism, the understanding of African ontology helps understand African environmental ethics and as well as the inherent problem of anthropocentricism.

However, since God is at the apex of all reality, He is in essence not disconnected from the rest of other physical beings. To this, Wiredu avers that the Supreme Being in African ontology "occupies the apex of the same hierarchy of being which accommodates, in its lower reaches, animals, plants and

inanimate objects" [20]. This, therefore, makes the physical form of existence and the non-physical form of existence in African philosophy to be a kind of unity, which ought to uphold harmonious relationships for the well-being of the environment. In this way, the teleological function of God is made possible by virtue of God being responsible for regulating the functions of the other forces which also are purposive in course. In this sense "God is supreme" and not man". Imafidon also supports this teleological understanding of the Supreme Being in African philosophy. For him, "the Supreme Being who created and sustains the universe is seen as the epitome of force. He dispenses this energy of ontological unity at will to other entities. He is therefore at the apex of the hierarchy of being" [21].

The ancestors are at the next level of existence, one that is above "human", but also occupies the lower level from God, because of the level of their influence and participation towards human well-being and their purpose in life. The reason why ancestors occupy a lower hierarchy than that of God is that they are not as powerful and influential as God, though they are more powerful and higher forces compared to the human. To this end, Mawere argues that "the intensity of participation differs resulting in some beings, being found at the top of the hierarchy and others at the bottom of the hierarchy" [22]. However, ancestors are vital forces which act as mediators between God and the living human community. They are also thought to be messengers of God to humanity [15]. In African ontology, since the Supreme Being is the most powerful and revered, it is not possible for the living to worship God by directly communicating with Him, just like the Abrahamic religion. Individuals communicate with the ancestors who are the medium of communication between the living and God. Ancestors are thought to be mediators between the physical world and the non-physical world of God. Ancestors are also the owners of land in any traditional community in Africa whose stead the local chief stands. However, land is believed to be sacred because it bears the remains of the ancestors particularly in the form of graves. A non-native of a community can only acquire land if, and only if, he or she is socially and politically acceptable in the community. The land asset is not to be abused and also not for sale; this is the major reason why it is only awarded to persons who belong to the community, and understands the significance and sacred nature of the resource. The fear of God and ancestors dealing ruthlessly with anyone who tried to cheat or anyone who tries to abuse it largely looms in the society. On the death of whosoever uses the land, it will be reverted back to the community. At times, his or her immediate dependants may be allowed to continue to use the land but again, they must continue to demonstrate respect and loyalty to the land, community, ancestors, and God. This also reveals that 'man is not supreme' and not 'the measure of all things' within the African environment.

The existence of the human is very important in African world view as it occupies the center of the ontology as well as ecosystem. However, the existence of human person in African communitarian thought is not entirely centered on the human person as a lone individual like the case with the Cartesian conception of the individual, but it spreads to other forms of reality, and also in relation to other beings and forces. With reference to this metaphysical conception of the individual in African philosophy, Gyekye argues that even though a person lives in a human society, is not a self-sufficient atomic individual who does not depend on his or her relationships with others for the realization of his or her ends [23]. In this way, Gyekye's view confirms the thinking that is inherent in African philosophy, which is centered on the notion that communal relations and communitarian existence are cardinal virtues in the understanding of the human person as well as ontology. Also, Murove avers that human well-being is inseparably anchored on the way human beings relates with all other existing beings within the environment [24].To this, one could argue that man being at unity with nature in African communal worldview does not necessarily mean that man is supreme above other beings within the environment.

Notwithstanding, the differing degrees of purpose from one being to the other is determined by African ontological hierarchy of existence, which accounts for inherent value. Izibili explains that, inherent value is ". . . a matter of degree rather than an all or nothing affair such that those beings that have inherent value might comprise a hierarchy of those with the most inherent value being at the top and those with less occupying the bottom" [25]. This is possibly one reason why African environmental ethics is sometimes adjudged as being anthropocentric.

This also flows from the accusation that man occupies a central position in the ecosystem as well as African ontology. Thus, often seems valid as it shows some level of weak anthropocentrism within the African communitarian social relations as well as environmental ethics. However, this kind of anthropocentricism poses no problem to the environment as it accommodates other members of the environment, and not subscribing to the 'supremacy' and dominating tendencies of strong

anthropocentrism. In an explanation to this, Mbiti explains that man being at the center of the ontology, does not imply that man lords over the environment but rather he should take care of the natural environment and also seek coexistence with nature. Mbiti claims that humans are not masters over nature to exploit it without feeling or treat it without respect [26]. Instead, people are one with nature, responsible toward nature, able to communicate with nature, and the chief priests of nature. This position is also echoed by Ekwealo who argues that Africans do not believe that humans are a special image of God who was placed to lord over nature. Rather, Africans believe in the unity of forces, and a human being's special position is rather more of a caretaker of the universe, a task which goes with appropriate responsibility and consequences [27].

Lastly, in the order of ontology, there is a lower force that exists after "humanity". This includes the non-human animals and other various forms of existence in the physical world. To this, Tempels avers that "after the category of human forces come the other forces, animals, vegetable and mineral". These forces are measured as lower because of the level of their influence and participation towards other forces. In essence, these lower forces have lower vital force as opposed to the other forces within the African ontological hierarchy of existence. Despite having less vital force, their well-being is important in as far as they are metaphysically linked to their ontological counterparts such as human beings, ancestors and God. Although they are referred to as the lower forces, these animals, plants and other inanimate forms of reality are very powerful beings in the African ontological order. In African ontology, there is a vitalist and spiritual relationship that is shared between these lower forces and the other higher forces such as God and the ancestors. Existence of these lower forces is teleologically oriented because these lower forces are supposed to influence and contribute towards the well-being of human beings and other beings within the hierarchy of existence. They do so in the way in which they spiritually link human beings with God and their ancestors. For example, it is common in African ontology that certain plants and animal species are revered for certain religious purposes like symbols, rituals, and sacrifices. To this end, Mawere contends that "plants and animals can be habited by powerful forces which make them become very prominent in the spiritual rating of the society. This conception of being from the point of view of force is pervasive in African conception of being" [40]. This makes an African treat this non-human content with the utmost respect because of their spiritual link with both ancestors and God.

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, the problem of anthropocentricism is evident in African environmental ethics. Many authors have taken this to imply strong anthropocentricism, whereas it only accounts to weak anthropocentricism. It is weak anthropocentricism because the environment, takes precedence over 'individual'. To this, Enyimba *Madukakism's* which presents human beings as "supreme" in African culture calls for serious questioning as it undermines the importance of African communal nature. It is true that "human' has a central place in both African ontology and ecosystem, this special position does not mean humans are 'lord' or rather "supreme" in the environment, but occupies a center space within ontology and ecosystem. This center position within the ecosystem has been branded chief priest of nature by Mbiti, likewise Ekwealo seeing this central position as caretaker of nature, rather than acclaimed "lord" or supreme.

A caretaker could also be a tenant in a house, pays rent, relates to all other tenant mutually and also fulfills other obligations. This is a mere version of weak anthropocentrism. A caretaker could be said to be an important personality as long as the house is concerned, but going to the extent of branding him 'supreme' is an overstatement [10]. Likewise, human just like any other species has an important place within the eco-system, but this does not amount to being supreme. Rather than being anthropocentric, this paper calls African environmental ethics Anthropoholism, this is basically because man lives in a complementary state and cannot exist without the environment in African culture. Antropo – means "man or human" while holism means - the theory which states that parts of a whole are in friendly interconnection, such that they cannot exist separately from the whole, or cannot be understood without allusion to the whole [28].

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