Ecological Crisis in the Anthropocene: Ubuntu and Ecological Metanoia as Pathways to Ecological Conversion

Christian Celestine Panduka
Institut Catholique de Paris (Catholic University of Paris), Paris, France
cpandukac@gmail.com

Abstract
This study examines how ecology is interdisciplinary subject that it can treated from different fields of studies. It is adopted from the "memoire" (Canonical Licentiate) master's research paper submitted in the Institut Catholique de Paris (The Catholic University of Paris) June 2026, intitled "La crise écologique comme crise spirituelle: une réflexion théologique sur la conversion écologique". In the Christian perspective, ecological crisis is also taken as spiritual crisis, thus merits to be addressed from the spiritual aspect. The study explores the solutions to the present ecological crisis. It points out two of them: Ubuntu and ecological metanoia. Ubuntu, an African notion of life projects human existence as the result of interdependence and interconnectedness with other beings found in the nature, thus protecting, stewarding and taking care of the natural world becomes the life imperatives of humanity. Another proposed solution to combat against ecological crisis is the ecological metanoia, a term drawn from spiritual aspect is a call to transform mind, heart and lifestyle to suit ecological needs to our epoque. It is the spiritual and social realms that triggers an individual and society to raise awareness of the damages inflicted to the natural world, to regret and to decide to change the behaviour.

Keywords: Ecology, Metanoia, Ubuntu, Crisis, Conversion, Nature, Creation and Christianity

1. Introduction

In the Christian world, notable catholic, one of the fundamental doctrinal references is the documents of Vatican II ecumenical Council, (1962 – 1965). Among its 16 documents none of them addressed directly the ecology and its prevailing challenges in the present epoque. Two years after Lynn Whtite Jr. an American protestant theologian raised a strong allegation that the Christianity bears a huge responsivity for present ecological crisis. His argument fetches its doctrinal base from the very nature of Christian religion, the anthropocentric orientation where humanity is the centre of the whole creation. White emphasises on this as he declares: Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen. (White, L. 1967). But is it ecologically worth to put the whole ecological crisis on Christianity as the main cause?

Taking in account the vastness, the complexity and variation of causes of ecological crisis, it sounds just to project it as a challenge concerning the whole human community. Humanity is therefore both, the causer and the victim of the outcome of the environmental degradations. Eventually, ecological crisis is not merely a crisis of nature, but of the human being. It exists not only outside us but also within us. Our unbalanced and destructive relationship with Creation stems not only from our way of life and our model of economic development, but also from our desacralized conception of the cosmos and the human being (Egger M. M. 2012). In the same perspective Jürgen Moltmann insists as he writes: Ecological crisis in the modern world is not due merely to the technologies for the exploitation of nature; nor can we put it down to the sciences which made human beings the lords of nature. It is based much profoundly on the striving of human beings for power and domination. (Moltmann, J. 1985). In this way the contribution of Christianity stands as the misinterpretations of some of Christian doctrines and the human-nature relations as some of the causes of ecological crisis and not Christianity as single entity.

1.2. The statement of the Problem

As we have underlined, Christianity cannot be taken as the solely cause of ecological crisis due to the reality of the complexity of ecology as a field of study, at the same time its contributions cannot be ignored either. Thus, Christian doctrines are both ways to raise the ecological awareness when well interpreted and causes of ecological crisis when wrongly interpreted. Our concern here is then; to explore how Christian doctrines on creation and in particular ecology can be used to raise the ecological awareness, not only within Christian community but the entire human community. This is since the influence of Christianity is in the heart of human history, lifestyle evolution and development.

One of the propositions towards ecological conversion is the African notion *Ubuntu. Ubuntu* is a fundamental concept rooted in many sub-Saharan African Bantu languages, signifying humanity, dignity, and existence (Lutz, D. W. 2009). This notion asserts that humanity do not exist in isolation, rather an interdependence with one another, including what surroundings him, the nature. In this point of view *Ubuntu* carries a reasonable ecological

signification that can facilitate the whole process of ecological conversion by raising a public ecological awareness.

Metanoia is another notion within Christian teachings and traditions which advocate the conversion, transformation and change of lifestyle from what is not upright and worth to what is good. *Metanoia* is a term of Greek origin denoting a profound transformation of the mind, heart, actions, perception, and consciousness, directed toward a specific, positive goal. It is often regarded as a theological, spiritual, or philosophical conviction linked to conversion, reflecting an inner change in one's way of being or understanding (Lacoste, J. Y. 2007).

The same notion of *metanoia* is bestowed an ecological signification to mean raise ecological conscience with the objective of impacting human community to change, to transform and to convert the mindset and way of living while raising the feeling of responsibilities of taking care of the natural world. Within the same perspective, the reality of the vastness and interconnectedness of ecology as study discipline, when searching the right and relevant of dealing with, then, the demand of the holistic engagement suits necessary. Thus, adopting various ways or means of combating ecological crisis for ecological conversion becomes essential. From there emerges the principal question of this reflection: In which ways the Christian notion of ecological *Metanoia* and the African notion of *Ubuntu* can reinforce ecological conversion as the relevant means to combating the current ecological crisis?

1.3. Methodology

To respond to the principal question above, this study holds the inductive method. This method generally involves observing reality, identifying its various aspects, analysing them critically and then proposing principles, solutions, and avenues for improvement. The reality in hand is that ecological crisis, a tangible and concrete challenge in our times. It affects, challenges and felt by the human community and the whole creation. This study will explore the meaning of ecology, ecological crisis and ecological crisis according to Christian perspective. Then it will examine the causes of ecological crisis which falls under the solid umbrella of exaggerated Anthropocene. The causes of Anthropocene are in different ways the causes of ecological crisis thus, philosophy, science and technology and the Christianity are analysed as causes of ecological crisis. The reflection will conclude by the propositions of solutions to the present ecological crisis. *Ubuntu* and ecological *metanoia* will be examined as the possible and relevant avenues towards ecological conversion of our times.

2. Ecology

In the present human languages, the term ecology sounds very familiar and its meaning is comprehensible. However, in the history human written languages, this word with its today's signification has not always in existence. Though for the centuries notion of ecology has been associated with the terms like creation, nature, environment and surroundings but its significations were not as it is today. The term ecology came to its

existence after a Germany zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) composed the prefix "*eco*" from Greek "*oikos*" meaning house, indwelling or shelter and "*logos*" which can be termed as studies. (Larousse, Vol. 3, 1970). From there henceforth the term is integrated in the human languages with the ability of being treated, understood and interpreted from different angles, such as environmental, scientifical, philosophical, geographical, economic, political, theological, spiritual etc. In this sense, ecology is an interdisciplinary domain which studies the interconnection of beings whereas no being can exist in isolation. In short, ecology is defined only within the framework of knowledge about the way in which all beings are dependent upon one another, constituting the vast fabric of their interdependencies. (Boff, L. 1997), "everything is connected". (Laudato si', 2015).

From the fact of everything being connected, we get a wide and rich meaning of ecology suits to our situation as it provides the possibility to undertaking ecology as both biotic and abiotic. Ecology focuses on biotic and abiotic life while a study of environment not only deals with both abiotic and biotic life, but also the social and cultural aspects which are the built or human-made environment. Biotic life refers to the living organisms while abiotic life refers to non-living elements. Ecology is the study of organisms 'at home'. (Rwiza, R. 2021).

More than that, ecology being the reality of interconnectedness among beings is also manifested in the ways of life of different traditions and religions. Laurenti Magesa affirms that as he portrays, For Africans, conception and birth in the human species correspond very closely to the same activities in the plant and animal species. They correspond also to human contact with the soil and its fertility, that is, cultivation, planting and harvesting. Similarly, they are related to the cosmological realities of the seasons, rainy and dry seasons. (Magesa, L. 1998).

In the Christian point of view, ecology falls under the doctrine of creation. The Christian understanding of interconnectedness among the beings is perpetuating, keeping, maintaining the good relations between human beings, natural world and God the Creator. This teaching comes as the result of human beings fulfilling their responsibility of taking care of creation intrusted to them by God. One of the best Christian references of human's imperative to take care of the natural world by God is "The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and take care of it" (Gn. 2:15). On this Jürgen Moltmann insists: If we understand the Creator, his creation, and the goal of that creation in a trinitarian sense, then the Creator, through his spirit, dwells in his creation as a whole, and every individual created being, by virtue of his Spirit holding them together and keeping them in life. (Moltmann, J. 1985). Therefore, the Christian perspective on ecology makes it possible to be observed, analysed and treated from spiritual angle.

By the fact of interdisciplinarity reality and nature of ecology, treating it from spiritual point of view, becomes valid and relevant perspective, putting in account the present situation of impacts of ecological crisis and the radically climatic change. It is from the same reality

that we are going to explore how ecology can be treated from Christian perspective with the vision of searching the solutions and relevant ways to combating the present ecological crisis.

2.1. Ecological Crisis

Ecological crisis is described as the outcome of interconnected crisis of climate change, loss of biodiversity, land degradation and air and water pollution. (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021). When there is a failure of balanced relationships between human beings and the natural world, then the ecological crisis emerges as the result. Here it must be clear that the necessity of caring the environment should not exceed or compared with value of human life, at the same time it doesn't mean humanity can ignore its natural responsibility of stewarding the planet. Humanity, being integral part of creation bears the fundamental responsibility of propagating the natural world. In this way the balanced relationship between the mentioned parts has to be established by the regulated human activities on the natural world in accordance to the ecological precepts. It is the duty of everyone since human beings are both causers and victims of the ecological crisis.

Addressing the very issue of the meaning of ecological crisis in our epoque, François Euvè sees the necessity of breaking the two terms, "crisis and ecology". He starts with "Crisis", it is a concept that disrupts the human way of life diverting it from its original rhythm of being in harmony with nature (Euvè, F. 2021). In other words, crisis is a loss for human civilization of taking care and using nature as means of sustaining humanity, a civilization that, for centuries, existed in harmony with nature. The original nature of human existence in the nature was using it for his sustainability and nature provided the necessities to facilitate it, respecting the co-existing among the two entities. Euvé notes: The word "crisis" is frequently used to describe the current situation; it is a term that evokes the questioning, destabilization, or even the collapse of a model, a set of patterns, or the principles upon which the previous state of civilization was built. (Euvè, F. 2021). Referring to meaning of "ecology" as the interconnectedness and interdependence of beings and the "crisis" as human's lack of civilization then we get the meaning of ecological crisis as man's failure to maintaining the civilization of good relationship with nature. One may ask in this failure of civilization who is victimized?

Leonardo Boff answers this question by associates the ecology with the sufferings of the poor as the most affected. He affirms: The ecological crisis means two basic imbalances in the society: too much consumption by the rich and too little consumption by the poor. (Boff, L. 1997). This argument fetches its relevance from the fact that the ecological crisis affects much the developing countries than the developed ones, and the bitter side of it is that the said developed countries pollute the planet more, and unfortunately the effects smash the whole human community and the entire creation. In this way the ecological crisis manifesting itself through climate change, environmental pollution, deforestation, and accelerating biodiversity loss. It is a concrete and tangible reality, not an abstract concept, it is a lived reality that shapes human lifestyles day by day. Thus, the ecological crisis has become an omnipresent challenge, manifesting in various forms.

2.2. Ecological crisis according to Christian perspective

According to Christian standpoint ecology involves the balanced connectedness and the interdependence within the whole creation, that is human beings, natural world and God the Creator. Then when this reality of interdependence of these three parts is not maintained or in the state of imbalance then one of the outcomes is the ecological crisis. Therefore, according to Christian perspective, the ecological crisis constitutes a rupture of communion and of the harmonious relationships of coexistence between human beings, nature, and God. (Egger, M. M. 2012). It is the result of uncontrolled and excessive human activities on the natural world. This reality is felt with acuity in the West, where it embodies a paradigm of life inherited from modernity and grounded in rationality. This paradigm has reduced the natural world to a mere object of exploitation and domination, thereby devaluing the respect for nature that once manifested the divine presence. Since then, the West has suffered from a genuine addiction to dualism, which separates everything: God and creation, humanity and nature, spirit and matter, masculine and feminine, faith and reason. (Egger, M. M. 2012). As it has stipulated until now, it is not ecological relevant to term ecological crisis only as an environmental, scientifical, geographical or geological crisis rather it can also be comprehended as mindset, moral and spiritual crisis. It is relevant then, instead of projecting Christianity as the solely cause of present ecological challenges we can speak of Anthropocene as a solid cause been generated by difference sources such as philosophy, science and technology and Christianity as the result of various evolution of human lifestyle.

3. Ecological crisis in the Anthropocene era

The Anthropocene is explained as the "Age of Man". It is derived from the Greek words *Anthropos*, meaning "human" and *kainos*, meaning "new" thus new man. The term emerged in the 2000s and was popularized by Paul J. Crutzen. (Kopp, M. 2021). Although the Anthropocene is a geological term, it is also of considerable importance in ecology due to the central role humanity plays within it. Thus, since it spans the fields of geology, geography, science, philosophy, and environmental studies, it also finds a place in ecology, theology as well as spiritual fields.

Anthropocene, being “Age of Man or “New man” as it has been described before signifies the new way of life that has been developed by humanity fetched from his use of natural world. Anthropocene by itself is not bad and is not against nature, the challenges comes when man fails to observe his limits of using the available natural resources. Unfortunately, the present generations witness the uncontrolled and massive use of the natural resources which in different ways is one of the core causes of ecological crisis. The Anthropocene thus characterizes the period during which anthropogenic (human-induced) disturbances cause trajectories to deviate from their zone of stability. (Euvè, F. 2021). From this point of view, Anthropocene becomes therefore one of the mains causes of present ecological crisis. Here we are going to examiner the influence of philosophy, science and technology and Christianity in the emergence of Anthropocene.

3.1. The influence of philosophy in the emergence of Anthropocene

Philosophy a term developed from Greek words *philo* meaning "love" and *Sophia* meaning "wisdom" is a systematic study that explores on existence, truth, knowledge, reasoning, morality, nature and critical thinking. (Blay, M. 2006), has a concrete contribution to the choice of human lifestyle. The choice of human life is shaped by the pertains of thinking, experiences, inborn and acquired skills which is eventually realised in the physical world hence ecology. In this way philosophy is part of human ecology. Therefore, for centuries, philosophy has been one of the study disciplines contributing to shaping human lifestyle as it influences way of thinking, human language and practical life. For good capacity, philosophy has played a key role to the emergence of anthropocentrism whereas humanity has developed a tendency of placing himself at the centre of creation.

One of the roles of philosophy in one's life is the developing of cognition pertains which configures the capacity of reasoning, perception and interpreting the life realities, these says a lot concerning human-nature relations. Unfortunately, in our ecological challenging epoque, instead of enabling a hermeneutic of nature oriented towards protection and preservation, these human cognitive structures have sometimes fostered modes of understanding that render the natural world vulnerable to domination and exploitation. In this manner, the ecological crisis is also the failure of human's capacities to develop the cognitions in accordance with ecological imperatives of our epoque. The ecological crisis is therefore also an anthropological and cognitive crisis, (Egger, M. M. 2010) revealing not only a loss of environmental balance but also a diminished capacity to understand humanity's place within the living world. This erosion of right interpretation and human responsibility on natural world has contributed to the emergence of the Anthropocene. It is thus the outcome of fostering modes of thought and behaviour that legitimize the domination of nature and accelerate human-induced transformations of the Earth system.

The advanced anthropocentrism gave birth to Anthropocene which eventually is one of the causes of present ecological challenges. Therefore, the Anthropocene is the product of an anthropocentrism driven by unbridled human activity on Earth. It has then brought about profound industrial, technological, and geological transformations, while itself being shaped by a major philosophical influence. These ideas redefined humanity's relationship with the natural world, often prioritizing human interests. This tendency particularly emerged first in the modern Western thought, the cradle of many dominant philosophical ideologies then it spread to the rest of the world. Under the influence of these currents of thought, the natural world was reinterpreted as an intellectual construct rather than a genesis of life, shift that ultimately contributed to the advent of the Anthropocene.

In the same line of argument that philosophy has contributed to the emergence of Anthropocene, we rencounter the contribution of thoughts, convictions and contributions Rene Descartes. He is taken as the founder of the modern thoughts, for him human is: "Master and possessor of the nature". (Euvè, F. 2021). The influence of Descartes' ideas on the Western Industrial Revolution is undeniable, under the backup of development, desire to

conquer the world, science and technology, humanity succeeded to revolutionize the world. One may ask what is the connection between philosophy, industrial revolution and ecology?

Philosophy shapes human lifestyle through different life convictions, ideologies, believes and understanding, from there the intellectual capacities are developed which eventually transforms and dictates the mode of life. The life is realized on the nature and humanity is integral part of natural world, thus ecology. From an ecological perspective therefore, the Western Industrial Revolution was and still is the product of the evolution of intellectual capabilities. Through science and technology, and in the name of freedom, humanity legitimized its domination over non-human beings. Humanity became the centre of the world, the whole creation subjected to its control: this marked as one of the geneses of Anthropocene. The Anthropocene represents a major ecological challenge that demands a re-evaluation of human lifestyles to find solutions suited to protecting the planet.

Another aspect that has led to the emergence of Anthropocene is the imbalance orientation of values, the shift from intrinsic value of things to instrumental value of things stands as a pushing factor present human relation to non-human beings. Through its egoistic tendences, the humanity has developed an intellectual and life orientation built up in the anthropocentric premises that humanity alone deserve the intrinsic value. The environmental ethics refuse to recognize human person alone having the intrinsic value, it rather recognizes other beings also to have it. (Rwiza, R. 2021). From an ecological perspective, right ecological orientation is the acknowledging the intrinsic value of things and reject the anthropocentric tendences in the vision of fostering a more respectful and sustainable relationship with the natural world.

Exosomatization, the expansion of human capabilities beyond the confines of the physical body, (Bourg, D. 2022) is regarded as one of the causes of the emergence of the Anthropocene. These abilities enable humans to develop the capacities beyond their original physical ones, as a result they can create machines, theories, and visions of life that justify the massive exploitation of nature, the concrete causes of ecological crisis. Moreover, when the exosomotization is more developed to the extent of dictating the humanity's lifestyle leads to "transcendental damages" (Bourg, D. 2022). These are the damages once inflicted to the natural world they irreversible. Humanity for a great extent has done this in remarkable capacity.

The uncontrolled human activities on the natural world have made the extinction of some flora and fauna species. We have some of examples, the extinct flora: Saint Helena Olive, Cry Violet and Chile Sandalwood, Fauna: Dodo, Woolly Mammonth and Tasmanian Tiger (The international Union for Conservation of Nature). In this sense, the expansion of human capabilities beyond bodily constraints has not stopped at technological innovation but has also spawned forms of destruction with irreversible consequences. Consequently, the natural world is reduced to resources and means enabling humanity to fulfil its destiny.

3.2. The contribution of science and technology in the raising of Anthropocene

Science and technology are another aspect that cannot be ignored in the emergence of Anthropocene which in different ways gave rise to the present ecological crisis as one of its concrete causes. We take up this conviction since in our epoque science and technology dictate the mode of our life. Most of the time we group both science and technology as a single source of ecological challenges, but they can be distinguished and still convey a right message according to ecological relevancies. Technology means an operational knowledge in the sense that science operates as an analytical, critical, and systematic study of reality which takes the form of knowledge. Technology is simply applied science. Such science provides the leverage for all kinds of transformations occurring in nature, society, and in the human body and mind. (Boff, L. 1997)

Although both science and technology interact closely in practice, each has a specific role and function. Nevertheless, their impacts ultimately converge, shaping society, affecting nature, and influencing the human lifestyle and mindset. The impacts of science and technological to natural world and to the human being's life began to make itself felt in the Western world. This is since it is where the Industrial Revolution took place first. Lynn White states it thus: But it was not until about four generations ago that Western Europe and North America arranged a marriage between science and technology, a union of the theoretical and the empirical approaches to our natural environment. (White, L. 1967).

These changes are evident in consumption patterns, industrialized agriculture, and the technological systems that increasingly shape human interactions with the natural world. Consequently, life has become more artificial and technology-dependent, often clashing with ancestral traditions and ecological values. From an ecological perspective, modern technoscientific practices driven by negligence and a desire to master nature have become major drivers of environmental degradation, reshaping ecosystems on a global scale. Pollution of the soil, air, and oceans is a visible consequence of this trajectory. Today, science is no longer merely a method of inquiry or even just a body of knowledge; it is a socio-cultural phenomenon of immense scope that dominates the entire destiny of modern societies. (Euvè, F. 2021). In this context, the ecological crisis can also be understood as a scientific crisis, insofar as scientific knowledge and technological power have too often been developed and applied without sufficient ecological awareness. Sometimes it is applied with inadequate ethical insights, thereby contributing to the advent of the Anthropocene.

In *Laudato si'*, Pope Francis also addresses this question, highlighting that science and technology are among the concrete factors that have accelerated the emergence of the Anthropocene. Humanity has entered a new era in which our technical prowess has brought us to a crossroads. We are the beneficiaries of two centuries of enormous waves of change: steam engines, railways, the telegraph, electricity, automobiles, aeroplanes, chemical industries, modern medicine, information technology and, more recently, the digital revolution, robotics, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies. (Laudato si', 2015). The world is witnessing a radical transformation stemming not only from science itself but also from a technocratic paradigm

that prioritizes efficiency, control, and economic growth at the expense of exploiting the natural world while humanity becomes less responsible on the planet.

But here it must be clear that the challenge lies not in science and technology themselves, but rather in the fact that modern man is not sufficiently trained in responsibility, the preservation of life's values, and an awareness of promoting the common good. Therefore, in various ways, man has become a slave to technology, to the point of no longer being able to lead a life consistent with expected values. The Anthropocene is thus a tool that dictates human way of life.

Moreover, science and technology have endowed humanity with an unprecedented sense of freedom and confidence, at times fuelling an illusion of omnipotence. Empowered by scientific and technological advances, human beings have exercised boundless freedom over non-human creatures, frequently interpreting this domination as a sign of progress and a source of happiness. This attitude has contributed significantly to the emergence of the Anthropocene, as it fosters modes of exploitation and control that compromise the planet's protection and integrity.

We conclude this part by the conviction that the contribution of science and technology in shaping human's mode of life is a tangible and concrete reality of our times that cannot be ignored. As it has been explained, science and technology by themselves are not bad, instead they in fact facilitate life. The challenge is when they are used without considering values of existence of both human and non-human beings. From this point, we develop our reflection to another cause of Anthropocene which is wrong interpretations some of Christian doctrines.

3.3. The interpretations Christian doctrines and the emerging of Anthropocene

As it has been discoursed before Christian doctrines on creation in which ecology finds its place are not bad by themselves, it is only their interpretations are not in accordance with the ecological precepts. In this way, the Christian interpretations of some of her doctrines cannot escape the reality of having been contributed to the raise of Anthropocene, which in its uncontrolled stage becomes the source ecological crisis. One of the strong, most cited, considered authentic reference of humanity's justification and legitimate of dominating the non-human beings is the bible quotations, one of them is: "Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over birds on the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Genesis 1: 28). Many Christian creation doctrines interpret this biblical extract in a verbatim way and fix their justification of domination over non-human beings which is of course unecological means of interpretation.

Some of prevailing interpretations of Christian doctrine is: Centred on the event of the new Adam in Jesus Christ, Christianity established itself as a religion not of nature, but of the person. It severed the umbilical cord linking the human being to Mother Earth and emphasized a freedom that transcends the laws of the cosmos. Creation, therefore, has value

only as the framework and instrument of this relationship. It exists for the human being who stands at its centre and not the other way around. (Egger, M. M. 2012). In this context some of the Christian doctrines have over time watering the emergence of Anthropocene, the high pick of human exploiting the natural resources.

Furthermore, the Christian teaching of cosmology in different ways fosters the human centred outlook whereas the seeds of domination are nourished. This is to say the anthropocentric conception is developed within the basic Christian doctrines. Christian cosmology created a context favourable to the emergence of an anthropocentric worldview, which evolved to become dominant and predatory towards nature. (Euvè, F. 2021). These kinds of interpretations have been practised for some centuries within the Christian traditions, therefore the contribution of Christianity to emergence of Anthropocene, thus ecological crisis be ignored.

Another aspect within Christian doctrines that can be considered to facilitate the raise of Anthropocene is the classification and hierarchization of beings. Under the influence of Christianity and within the framework of life interpretations, humanity has developed intellectual and spiritual capacities enabling it to classify beings. Some are elevated to a higher rank, while others are relegated to a lower one, based on human criteria. This distinction has created a visible hierarchy among beings, thereby placing humanity at the forefront of earthly life. Nearest to God are purely angelic creatures, next the human creatures, who are embodied spirits; then the animals, plants, and material elements; finally, the flux and non-being. (Santmire, H. P. 1985).

This anthropocentric mindset of separation and the hierarchical ordering of beings have clearly shaped the human way of life. It is not only in Western society and within Christianity but also, as was already the case, in pre-Christian African society. John Mbiti refers to this hierarchy as "categories of the separation of beings," distinguishing five of them. **God**, the ultimate origin of human sustenance and of all things; **spirits**, consisting of superhuman beings and the spirits of those who died long ago; **humanity**, comprising both the living and the unborn; **animals and plants**, or the rest of biological life; and **phenomena and objects** that do not partake in biological life. (Mbiti, J. 1972). Though this argument cannot be referred as the Christian doctrine interpretation of classification of being, but it doesn't contradict it neither. Whether consciously or not, this type of mindset fostered the overexploitation of nature which gave rise, a few centuries later, to the Anthropocene causing damage to the natural world that persists to this day.

The influence of Western monasticism remains one of the key factors that facilitated humanity to dominate natural world. The monastic way of life in the Middle Ages transformed concept of existence, shifting the focus from constant prayer to manual labour and the land became the true source of life, a garden to be cultivated. Western social and spiritual developments were built upon the strong Benedictine ethos of work, rooted in the famous life conviction *ora et labora* "pray and work". In the Benedictine spirit, one can discern a significant confidence in the potential for human mastery over nature, alongside a

practical friendship with nature and a willingness to work with it for the good of humanity within a divinely ordered cosmos. In this sense and in keeping with the Benedictine spirit the uncultivated land of the early Middle Ages was transformed into a garden (Santmire, H. P. 1985), thus land exploitation.

We conclude this part by examining the danger of the Christian doctrine of eschatology if unecological interpreted. Eschatology is the branch of theology that deals with the "last things" *eschata* that is, the ultimate destiny of the human (Catéchisme de l'Église catholique, 1992). In other words, eschatology can be understood as the doctrine concerning the ultimate fulfilment of human life, the life after death encompassing judgment, eternal life, and the definitive establishment of the Kingdom of God. This teaching is supported by the Scriptures, for example: “For this world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come”. (Heb.13:14). With this perspective humanity has no imperatives to take care of the planet since it is only a passerby towards to its permanent resident, the life after death.

Christian eschatology is therefore fundamentally positive from a spiritual perspective, as it reveals God’s plan of salvation for all creation. This teaching is not opposed to the natural world. Nevertheless, within the context of pluralistic ecological interpretations, it is sometimes understood as encouraging a disregard for earthly life in favour of an exclusive focus on life after death. From an ecological standpoint, such interpretations are sometimes perceived as contributing to environmental crisis, a crisis associated with the mindset underlying the Anthropocene. Generally, the natural world is perceived as a common ground of which humanity unfolds its life desires, or simply as a set of resources serving humanity. It possesses neither moral or spiritual virtue, nor subjectivity, intrinsic value, or rights. Its qualities are economic more precisely, it is viewed as capital, both present and future. (Eaton, H. 2010). This type of man-nature interpretations even when grounded in the biblical readings specific to certain Christians, has not only affected the spiritual dimension of existence but has also contributed to the advent of the Anthropocene.

4. *Ubuntu*: An African contribution to stewardship for Ecological Conversion

Ubuntu asserts that human beings do not exist in isolation but in interdependence with one another; the individual is therefore not a separate entity but an integral part of the community. Similarly, *Ubuntu* holds that an African’s life derives its meaning from relationships of interdependence. In many African traditions, initiation rites play an essential role in shaping individuals and communities. Through these rites, young people are introduced to fundamental values such as dignity, respect for elders, family responsibility, cooperation, and a sense of autonomy. They also emphasize the principle of interdependence, recognizing that human beings are an integral part of nature. One of the primary objectives of these teachings, drawing upon ancestral wisdoms, is once again to facilitate young ones understand the intimate bond uniting human life with the rest of creation. (Magesa, L. 1998).

From its core ethos “*I am because we are*”, (Mbiti, J. 1972) recognizes that the environment is an integral part of human existence, and therefore merits respect, protection

and responsible care. *Ubuntu* finds its profound meaning in the existence of every being. I must understand that my existence draws its essence from the "we" a reality that encompasses both self and other. In the African perspective of creation, this "otherness" includes nature and non-human beings, which provide meaning, value, and a shared space for coexistence. Such way of life interpretation fosters mutual flourishing and sustains existence in many ways, with nature at the heart of this relational and existential reality. Thus, humanity remains an integral part of nature and must embrace its responsibility as a steward of the natural world. The question then arises: to what extent is *Ubuntu* the necessary resource for strengthening the ecological conversion?

In the arena life interpretations, this concept of *Ubuntu* holds profound ecological significance, not only within the African context but also within the Christian conception of creation and in the ecological world. *Ubuntu* embodies an ecological ethic that guides individuals in their lives and encourages them to adopt a twofold lifestyle: first, respecting and protecting the environment that sustains them, and second, consuming the earth's produce with wisdom and moderation. (Salgado, J. P. 2024). Thus, protecting the Earth and consuming its bounty with moderation and wisdom finds its full meaning in the concept of *Ubuntu*. Since this notion has been deeply rooted in African traditions for centuries, putting it into practice becomes both realistic and attainable. It represents an essential step toward the ecological transformation that our planet urgently needs today.

In a similar trend of pointing out the ecological significance from African traditions and their profound respect for the natural world, we find a strong argument rooted in the African spirituality which stewards the natural world. In African spirituality, there has been a spirit of conserving African forests. They are taken to link the present to the past generations and are preserved for the coming generations. Forests are symbols of harmonious co-existence of the earth, plants, animals and humans. (Rwiza, R. 2021). This African tradition, which highlights the profound interdependence between human beings and the natural world, aligns not only with the concept of *Ubuntu* but also resonates with a Christian and world ecological perspective. Thus, the African conception of nature illustrates, in various ways, how the protection of the natural world can be rooted in local traditions. Consequently, ecological conversion as a process of transforming human lifestyles to preserve the environment must also incorporate and value local practices.

Another dimension of the *Ubuntu* concept within the realm of ecology, highlights the unity between God, humanity, and all of creation. It also conveys notions of "sharing" "cooperation" and "collaboration," (Sagadou, J. P. 2024) values that are particularly significant in the ecological sphere. This concept stands in opposition to selfish tendencies and instead fosters an attitude of respect and benevolence toward the natural world, grounded in the recognition that all beings exist in relationship and that nothing exists in isolation. Thus, *Ubuntu* offers a form of ecological conscience that encourages the development of constructive wisdom in how we inhabit the Earth, affirming the intrinsic value of all beings as essential elements in the ongoing flourishing of creation.

In this same spirit of valuing the relationship between humans and nature, African traditions bear witness to bonds of cooperation and collaboration between humans and non-humans. The whole human life from conception, birth, adolescent, adulthood to old age carries significant meaning and responsibilities in each stage of life and it is attached to the nature. Assigning individuals names associated with animals, trees, or seasons reflects a lived reality, embodying deep connections to the natural world. In many African societies, animals such as dogs and cats are not killed for food, as they are considered members of the family. Similarly, lions and leopards are not slaughtered lightly; instead, they are respected as symbols of strength and protection, offering humanity models of leadership and responsibility. For the Africans, conception and birth in the human species correspond very closely to the same activities in the plant and animal species. They correspond also to human contact with the soil, and its fertility, that is, cultivation, planting and harvesting. Similarly, the names designated to individuals relate to cosmological realities ((Magesa, L. 1998)

Although Magesa does not explicitly use the term *Ubuntu*, but his argument clearly highlights the African perspective of the interdependence of beings, which lies at the heart of this reflection. This same worldview is reflected in cultural practices aimed at preserving nature, such as the prohibition against cut down sacred trees like the baobab or setting fire to sacred places, particularly hills used for traditional rituals. Taken together, these traditions exemplify a profound ethic of respect and coexistence, reinforcing the idea that human life is inextricably linked to the well-being of the natural world. In this light, African traditions concerning nature play a significant role in the broader movement of ecological conversion by offering concrete, relevant pathways for genuine ecological engagement.

Furthermore, *Ubuntu* is often perceived as a vital force embodied in African spirituality, integrating divine power, humanity, and the cosmos into a deeply ecological vision. It can be viewed as a form of African metaphysics that draws its source from divine energy and permeates all that exists living and non-living alike including humans, animals, plants, minerals, objects, and even events. This inner force upholds the principles of interdependence and interconnection among all beings, serving as the foundation for harmonious coexistence within creation. There is no separation between God and creation, between humanity and nature, or between spirit and matter. Ubuntu is therefore the eco-spiritual paradigm and cosmic energy that unite God, humanity, and nature for the purpose of preserving creation (Sagadou, J. P. 2024).

From this perspective, *Ubuntu*, a concept emphasizing the transmission of vital energy from a divine source to all creation emerges as a solid foundation for ecological engagement. It is viewed as a pertinent response to current environmental challenges, recognizing the nature as the source of all vital energy while opposing individualism and promoting the common good and collective well-being.

We conclude this section by projecting *Ubuntu* as an African concept rich enough to foster the relevant ecological interpretations in accordance to needs of our era of grave ecological crisis. In this context, *Ubuntu* advocates the viable dialogue articulating

relationship between humanity and nature. This relationship has often been overshadowed by the rise of modern social comprehension while traditional ways of life, rich in ecological wisdom losing their significance. *Ubuntu* is a kind of profound dialogue with African spiritualities that allows us to rediscover the spirit of the Earth, Air, Water, or Trees and transform the violation, torture, and exploitation mindset due to human greed (Sagadou, J. P. 2024).

Ubuntu thus represents a shift toward the dialogic languages of nature, strengthening the human capacity to reconnect with it. From this perspective, ecological expression can present elements of nature in relational and intimate terms "our hills, our rivers, our forests, our animals, our trees, our valleys, our air, our oceans" in order to affirm their intrinsic value and promote respect, benevolence, and the protection of the natural world.

5. Ecological *metanoia*: A Catalyst for Human Reconciliation with the Natural World towards Ecological Conversion

In the Christian tradition, the concept of *metanoia* is generally associated with penance, purification, repentance, and self-transformation. It also conveys the idea of correcting or reorienting one's life from bad comportment to good one. *Metanoia*, in the Christian sense of the term, represents the new man transfigured in Christ, provided he answers His call. *Metanoia* is not merely a return; it is a leap of faith, a second birth. (Priaulet, I. 2020). A question may raise here; how can ecological *metanoia* function as a resource towards ecological conversion?

In ecological domain, the term *metanoia* denotes a powerful ecological concept that links ecological awareness to a profound transformation of mind and heart. It also signifies a turning away from the degradation of the natural world in advocating its protection, preservation, and responsible stewardship. Ecological *metanoia*, as a profound transformation of mind and heart, can be appears a right path to correct human behaviours that are unjust toward the natural world. Thus, ecological *metanoia* becomes an opportunity not only to combat environmental degradation but also to inspire a collective ecological conversion rooted in responsibility and change.

From a Christian perspective, humanity’s mission on earth consists of protecting, preserving, and caring for Creation which does not mean dominating, misusing or degrading it. We are not owners free to plunder it, but stewards *oikonomoi* charged with protecting a Creation that proclaims the glory of God. (Kykotis, S. 2021). Within the Christian traditions, the concept of *metanoia* has served also as a vital means of fostering reconciliation. In ancient Greece the concept carried a deep philosophical meaning different from Christian era where it got more ecological signification. For the Greeks, *metanoia* entailed a change of will, whereas for Christians, it involves divine grace and a transformation of both heart and way of life (Priaulet, I. 2020), thus ecological conversion.

Reconciliation is a process that requires time, patience, commitment, and the willingness of the conflicting parties. When at least two parties are in conflict, *metanoia*

comes into play, enabling this process to materialize. It manifests through expressions of regret and the making of concessions, serving as a tool for reconciliation to reach an agreement a vital need for these parties. But who, in this context, is in conflict and in need of reconciliation?

From an ecological perspective, the uncontrolled exploitation of the natural world reveals humanity's failure to fulfil its responsibility to protect and care for it. This situation reflects a rupture in the harmony that ought to exist between God the Creator, nature, mistreated by humanity. By this failure man enters in conflict not only with the nature but also with its Creator as it is failing to fulfil its vocation of stewardship and as a protector of creation.

Thus, humanity requires to develop a sense of *metanoia* to return to his original vocation of taking care of creation intrusted by its Creator to reconcile with the nature to restore this broken harmony. Indeed, the damage humanity has inflicted upon nature has given rise to a conflict that must be resolved. Ecological *metanoia* thus represents a step toward reconciliation with nature, with the aim of building a new Earth. Consequently, it must be viewed as an inner imperative, enabling us to live out an ecological commitment grounded in personal transformation that nourishes the common good. (Kykotis, S. 2021).

This reconciliation therefore is grounded in the Christian tradition bringing about the harmony, it carries three steps, acknowledging mistake committed, regrate of having done it and then desiring to transform motivations that might have facilitated action. It is very relevant within ecological field; therefore, we have to accept the mistakes we have committed against natural world, regrating on them and then develop the desire of stopping doing them again. This is relevant and concrete way towards ecological conversion as it is the way of putting in practical the ecological *metanoia*, a call transforms our lifestyle by regenerating the intrinsic values to the non-human beings.

In the Christian point of view, the ecological crisis in different ways can be termed as also a spiritual crisis. When the Christians fail to maintain their responsibilities of taking care, stewarding, protecting and giving intrinsic values to the creation, means they fail live their faith. The responsibility of propagating the creation is one of the duties constructed within Christian values and precepts that need to be kept. To combat against this, becomes a way of materializing the ecological metanoia. It is where spiritual revolution necessities its place in the interpretation of Christian doctrines. Revolution here does not encourage the changing Christian belief practices rather it visions to transform the misinterpreted doctrines to denote the correct meaning in accordance with ecological imperatives of the epoque. The spiritual revolution is not a matter of speaking of spirituality as a deduction drawn from certain doctrines, a deduction that we might or we might not draw. The point is to grasp spirituality as an overall experience of the connectedness of all searching, encounters, of experiences of meaning as that thread stringing all the pearls so as to form a necklace. (Boff, L. 1997).

As a process oriented towards ecological conversion, ecological metanoia calls for the integration of the various dimensions of life and understanding. This integration enables a

richer interpretation of ecology grounded in a Christian perspective and other fields in which the natural world is grasped not only intellectually but also spiritually, as bearing intrinsic and sacred meaning.

6. Conclusion

Today the world witnesses the impacts of ecological crisis with bitter, tangible and grave phenomenon and for a greater extent humanity is both direct causer and victim. We have seen that through its uncontrolled activities on the natural world becomes the cause of the ecological crisis, then the impacts generated affects the whole creation including humanity, thus victim of the reality. Anthropocene being the massive use of the natural resources, is the outcome man's activities on the natural world through different practises such as science and technology, philosophical perceptions and religious practices, notable Christianity. All these become the coursers of ecological crisis due to lack of proper interpretations suit to the ecological demands of the time.

Aware of present ecological challenges is not enough we need to address them with the vision of searching relevant the solutions. *Ubuntu*, an African notion which advocates the reality of interdependence and connectedness of beings, emerges as one of the relevant ecological stewardships towards ecological conversion. From its celebre slogan, "*I am because we are*" manifests that according to African point of view nobody can exist in isolation, man's existence depends on others including nature. Humanity is then integral part of natural world; it has the obligations to protect and to accord the intrinsic values on it.

Furthermore, the ecological *metanoia* stands as another concrete proposition to combat the ecological crisis the world facing now. It is relevant since it carries both religious and social convictions. As a social aspect it calls to transform mind set, lifestyle, life perspectives and daily behaviour, and as spiritual aspect it advocates the conversion from bad to good, turning away from sins, resolve the conflicts through reconciliation and changing the heart. These both aspects find its relevant place in the ecological realm since man is both social and spiritual being. Therefore, ecological *metanoia* is one of the relevant solutions to the present ecological crisis where the world searches the solutions to address the problem.

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