

PAUL TAYLOR AND THE QUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTIANABILITY

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DOI: 10.13140/RG.2.2.31621.83688

Abstract

The paper appraised Paul Taylor's Respect for Nature as an ethics of possible harmonious living, as a thrust philosophy of environmental preservation and sustainability, especially for the contemporary civilizations which actions and choices are heavily effecting the environment, especially in the faces of the application of herbicides and other forms of environmental growth controls. Such ethics specifies the indispensable needs for responsible and pragmatic character and actions of the human person towards the management of the intrinsic values of the environment. It recognizes that the human person as a subject of development with which, he or she should necessarily value the intrinsic worth of all natural entities including himself or herself. This is in order to have a harmonious existence, as it takes lives to sustain the nature that give lives. Such philosophy did not forget or being elusive to the trend of ecological survival of lives along natural food chains, but philosophically advocate against arbitrary abuses of some particular entities or beings in order to sustain some others. It recognizes that the sustainability of the ecology is dependable on the survival of all natural living entities or beings irrespective of their life-threatening nature as creatively possessed. Adopting phenomenological method of analysis, this paper evaluates this philosophy as it is applied to the management of contemporary global environment, especially in the developmentally and imperialistically regarded Third World countries. After the observation of the strengths and weaknesses of the ethics, it concludes that the Respect for Nature as a principle or theory of environmental sustainability is inevitable and indispensable in sustaining the values of creation. In so doing, nature will remain a "mother" that gives birth to lives and love to sustain them healthily, and it is the responsibility of the human person to sustain such mother in order to remain in existence.

Keywords: Human Person, Paul Taylor, Nature, Ethics, Ecology, Natural Entities, Sustainability, Human Responsibility

Introduction

With the valuation of some contemporary environmental theories that are ethically oriented and humanistically promoted in recent times, such as, Iroegbu's Globalised Ethics; Oruka and Jumia's Parent Earth Ethics; Kanu's Igwebuiké Consciousness for Environmental Sustainability; Ogungbemi's Ethics of Nature Relatedness; Tangwa's Eco-Communitarianism; Brehren's African Relational Environmentalism, and Mogobe Ramose's Ubuntu Ecology, we recall the indispensable theory of Paul Taylor's Respect for Nature.¹ The theory shows the metaphysical valuation of the environment in reference to the dignity of the human personhood. With religious, social, economic and scientific understanding of the ecology, a good number of ecologists or environmentalists are with the conviction that: the Mother which is the "nature" is the ultimate inspiration of the development, peace and unity.² This constitutes majorly the concerns of Taylor's Respect for Nature, as he sees the creation in the indispensable relationship between the human person and the nature, that is, the whole understanding of the environment.

It is the human person that expresses the act and profound gift of respect for the nature that indispensably houses him or her. Such philosophy of authentic living holds that the environment is a mother, and it is good at given birth to lives and sustaining them. The nature is about the valuation of life, and it remains life in its entirety.³ It is in this recognition of life that we recount Segun Ogungbemi's traditional thoughts of environmental management in reference to human relationship and continence:

In our traditional relationship with nature, men and women recognize the importance of water and air management to our traditional communities. The ethics of not taking more than you need from nature is a moral code. Perhaps this explains why earth, forest, rivers, wind, and other natural objects are traditionally believed to be both natural and divine. The philosophy behind this belief may not necessarily be religious but a natural means by which the human environment can be preserved the ethics of care is essential to traditional understanding of environmental protection and conservation.⁴

The goal of life is survival, and the vision of common survival is the gift of rationality and reasonability. This consciousness is wholesomely demonstrable in the dynamics of human relationship and the values of self-authenticity and subjectivity.⁵ For, it is in realistic presence of life that the operationalities of the Culture of Peace (which promotes human unity and serenity) are demanded from the human person for the purposes of sustaining the universe, especially in the faces of the Culture of War and other forms of dehumanization. Standing on this premise of assessing nature in relation to the doctrine of creationism, there is need for the natural sustainability and preservation in order to sustain the life of the human person and his generations.⁶ Such arrangement for common survival demands a common ethics of living. The dynamism of

¹C. S. Ifeakor & A. Otteh. "African Environmental Ethics: A Non-Anthropological African Environmentalism." In: A. Kanu (ed). *Provocative Essays in African Philosophy*. USA, Bloomington, 2022, pp. 25-48.

²P. O. Isanbor & P. A. Edema, Environment and the Emergence of Dehumanised Future. *Cogito: Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, 2022, pp. 28-42.

³J. O. Egbonu & P. O. Isanbor, Contemporariness of Aldo Leopold's Land Ethics. *Albertine Journal of Philosophy and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 7, pp. 2023, pp. 98-107.

⁴Segun Ogungbemi, "An African Perspective on the Environmental Crisis." In : L. J. Pojman (ed). *Environmental Ethics: Readings in Theory and Application*. 2nd Edition. Belmont: C. A. Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1997, p. 330

⁵See, J. I. Onebunne & S. Ikechukwu, "African Ecological Crisis and Education", In I. A. Kanu (ed). *African Eco-Philosophy: Cosmology, Consciousness and the Environment*. Maryland: APAS, 2021, pp. 233-234

⁶P. O. Isanbor, Environmental Sustainability and the Quest for Global Social Order in Francis' Laudato Si. *Ochendo: An African Journal of Innovative Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2021, pp. 125-141, see, p. p. 127.

living shows that all natural entities or beings indispensably need one another, and ethics as a branch of philosophy courageously helps to checkmate or monitor the human actions that promote such relationships, but without some basic arguments due to the operationalities of human reasoning and values.⁷

We live with and for ethics, and with it, the person is said to be human, as all sense of his or her freedom is classified along the level of responsiveness. For it, the person is expected to direct his or her world along the values of his or her actions and choices. All ethics are only attributed to the human person in relationship to other beings or entities. It is to show how responsible and dutiful the human persons are to keeping to the values of their world.⁸ In reasonable way, the society recognizes that a more inclusive ethics asks about appropriate respect toward all living things, not only the wildlife and farm animals, but now the butterflies and the trees.⁹ In respect to the ecological sustainability, any change in ethics indispensably serves as the emergence of environmental ethics, though, it always have the human person at its apex but also cuts across all the aspects of nature and ecology.¹⁰

With respect to the values of life and the wholeness of creation, one recognizes that ethics, for over two thousand years, has been worried and still worrying about the quests for civilizing the human persons, helping persons relate to persons in ways characterized by love, fairness, justice, equity, reasonableness, care, and forgiving. Ethics seeks to humanize us in respect to nature.¹¹ Today, a vigorous new interest in nature and human responsibilities towards it represents one of the more interesting changes of perspective in philosophical enterprises in recent times.¹² The contemporary situation of most countries can make us to really doubt the things in nature and whether there is need for environmental sustainability, the future of the environments which includes the human person, animal, plant and organism has gone to extinction and are rendered useless. This ethical redemption of all living entities as having intrinsic values yearns for an indispensable respect of one another in the world in the view of attaining ecological and developmental justice and harmony as is reflected in the philosophical concerns of Taylor's Respect for Nature.¹³ Hence, the paper is directed to appraise the workability of such philosophical conviction as an ethics of living based on the relationship of the human persons as sapiential beings, other beings and the nature in general, by evaluating human actions and responsibilities towards the sustainability of nature as a mother of existence.

Nature and the Propelling Environmental Problematics

There is no doubt about the very explicit fact that the human person and nature are inseparable phenomena. This fact, despite its explicitness, has however been relegated somehow and in some sense, to the background. The idea of its relegation can be traced down to the Judeo-Christian Tradition, whereby the Israelites believe that God created nature for their use. Hence, following the transcendental nature of God, they made a distinction between God and nature. But, for many theological environmentalists with Judeo-Christian tradition and consciousness, the ideals of nature are indispensably and inseparably from the ideas of God. As such, the environment should be

⁷Cf. E. A. Afolami & P. O. Isanbor, Ethics, Environment, and the Questions of Anthropological Cultures and Challenges. *Albertine Journal of Philosophy and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 3, 2019, pp. 107-114.

⁸See, E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O. Isanbor, Ecological Humanism and its Development Philosophy in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2012, pp. 44-53; E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O. Isanbor, Environmental Degradation: Development Philosophy and Moral Responsibilities. *Journal of Environmental Issues and Agriculture in Developing Countries*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2012, pp. 20-28.

⁹Rolston Holmes III, *A New Environmental Ethics the Next Millennium for life on Earth*. New York: Routledge, 2012, p. 93.

¹⁰Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 3.

¹¹See, E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O. Isanbor, Ecological Humanism and its Development Philosophy in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2012, pp. 44-53; E. U.

¹²Rolston Holmes III, *A New Environmental Ethics the Next Millennium for life on Earth*, p. 20.

¹³See, J. O. Egbonu & P. O. Isanbor, Contemporariness of Aldo Leopold's Land Ethics. *Albertine Journal of Philosophy and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 7, 2022, pp. 98-107.

respected and protection in reference to the personhood and dignity of God, who is creation personified in the faces of nature.¹⁴

Away from this consciousness for environmental sustainability, the trenches of ecological degradation and pollution have become by this very fact pockets of interest, and it is this concern that informed Paul Taylor's *Respect for Nature*. As J. A. Hexter pointed out, nature for them, "is a stage upon which an essentially moral drama unfolded, on which two actors—with unequal dignity to be sure, God on the one hand, man on the other played their respective parts."¹⁵ That nature is regarded as a mere stage for the unfolding of moral drama, has led humans to exploit nature at will, without considering the consequences of their actions. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin must have noticed the results of the actions of humans when he wrote in his book, *Building the Earth*, that "the ills from which we are suffering have had their seat in the very foundations of human thought."¹⁶ Chardin noticed that mankind is at the verge of perishing, having entered, through his thought, the greatest period of change the world has ever known. For Chardin, if mankind is not to perish, he must now wake up to the task of building the earth.

The idea of building the nature has provoked the minds of many scholars to have written about nature, one of which is Paul Taylor. For Taylor, the nature, which is the earth deserves our respect. For him, the same way we respect human beings and credence them above all in the environment, same way we ought to respect nature. He made this very clear when he buttressed that the wellbeing of the environment impacts heavily on the wellbeing of the individual. The wellbeing of nature in this wise is indispensably connected to the human wellbeing.¹⁷ It implies here therefore that, the nature—the universe, is the universe of the human person, and as such must be respected. In the light of this, this work, using the philosophical analytical and expository methodologies, exposes Paul Taylor's view on nature in relations to the values of human actions and choices in our contemporary quest for environmental sustainability.

Paul Taylor and the Philosophy of Respect for Nature

Paul Warren Taylor (November 19, 1923- October 14, 2015) was an emeritus professor of philosophy at Brooklyn College, where he specialized in normative and applied ethics. He was the author of several works in ethics, including *Normative Discourse* (1961) and *Principles of Ethics* (1975), Taylor is probably best known for *Respect for Nature* (1986), in which he developed and defended a sophisticated biocentric (life-centered) environmental ethic. Taylor's *Egalitarian Biocentric Ethic* (1986) synthesizes elements of classical virtue ethics with Albert Schweitzer's ethic of reverence for life, Peter Singer's *Moral Egalitarianism* and Kenneth Goodpaster's *Moral considerability*. Taylor contended that one who adopts the ultimate moral attitude of respect for nature will become an environmentally virtuous person, and some regards to Aldo Leopold's *Land Ethics*, Gareth Hardin's *Ethics of the Lifeboat* and Arne Neass' *Deep Ecology*.¹⁸ He identified environmentally ethical conduct with conduct motivated by respect for nature. Such environmentally virtuous conduct seeks to promote the flourishing of all living organisms.¹⁹

These principles that support Taylor's *Respect for Nature* are centered on the conviction that

¹⁵See, M. O. Ikeke, "An Eco-Philosophical Discourse on the African Charter's Rights to A General Satisfactory Development." In: I. A. Kanu (ed.). *African Eco-Philosophy: Cosmology, Consciousness and the Environment*. USA, Maryland: APAS, 2021, pp. 71-98.

¹⁶Paul W. Taylor, "The Ethics of the Respect for Nature", in *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Michael E. Zimmerman, et al (eds.), (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1993), 67. (66-83).

¹⁷Cf, J. O. Egbonu & P. O. Isanbor, *Ibid*.

¹⁸J. B. Callicott & R. Frodeman. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*. USA: Gale Cengage learning, 2009, pp. 897-898.

humans have no right to reduce the richness and diversity in the ecosystem to satisfy their personal needs; rather, they are to explore the environment in relation to the values of life. Assessing these philosophical thoughts on the values of environment, Colyvan, Liguist, et al. posit the following:

A good philosophical understanding of ecology is important for a number of reasons. First, ecology is an important and fascinating branch of biology, with distinctive philosophical issues. Second, ecology is only one small step away from urgent political, ethical, and management decisions about how best to live in an apparently fragile and increasingly degraded environment. Third, properly conceived, philosophy of ecology can contribute directly to our understanding of ecology and to its advancement. Philosophy of ecology can therefore be seen as part of the emerging discipline of “biohumanities,” where the disciplines of biology and humanities together advance our understanding and knowledge of biology.²⁰

The philosophy of the Taylor's Respect for Nature as a theory or principle of environmental conservation indicates that the human society through its religions, politics, governance, culture, commerce and other forms of socialization of values and interests, invest its ethical actions and goodness of character for the sustainability of the intrinsic worth of the environment.²¹ It is expected that this consciousness naturally flow from the attitude that recognized that nature is a mother, and what happens to the environment will have a prolonged effect on the values of lives, indispensably on the worthiness of the human life. This attitude is the manifestation of the kinds of the actions in nature and of the choices made on the environment in reference to what the human person perceives of himself or herself as a subject of lived-experience and as a true agent of development.²² Taylor further admitted that:

We cannot see the point of taking the attitude of respect,... once we do grasp it and shape our world outlook in accordance with it, we immediately understand how and why a person should adopt that attitude [of respect] as the only appropriate one to have toward nature.²³

With this conviction, he defended a deontological biocentric environmental ethic. He argued that all living beings have inherent value in them. It was an innovative work in non-anthropocentric ethics, and since then it has been often anthologized and used in ethics and the teaching of environmental philosophy in schools. It is all about the human's duties and responsibilities towards the protections of the values of non-human lives in reference to the values of creations in general. It is on how to think about our moral duties to the non-human world. Hence, Taylor's theory of environmental sustainability and continence has given the human person as a subject of lived-experience and as a real agent of development, the unique way of thinking about the values of the environment in reference to his or her dignity and right. For him, that just like “human ethics”, Respect for Nature has three components which are;

- i. An acceptance of a belief-system,
- ii. An attitude of respect for persons, and
- iii. A system of rules and standards.

²⁰Colyvan, M., S. Liguist, W. Grey, et al. (2009). “Philosophical issues in ecology: recent trends and future directions”. Ecology and Society <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art22/>

²¹P. W. Taylor, The Ethics of Respect for Nature. *Environmental Ethics*, 3(3), 1981, pp 205-215.

²²P. W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*. Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 81.

²³P. W. Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 90.

In outlining his theory on the Respect for Nature, Taylor began firstly by identifying the concept of goodness and the way in which the good ought to be respected and promoted against the backdrops of that which is bad and evil. For Taylor, the good is that which ought to be respected and promoted. In relation to his theory on the respect of nature, Taylor holds that the good of human nature is that which ought to be respected and promoted and not those that are evil, harmful and inimical to the experience of the human person in the universe. Moving further, Taylor holds that to promote a being's good is either to bring about a state of affairs not yet realized in its existence that is conducive to its good, or to get rid of a condition in its existence that is detrimental to its good.

Protecting an entity's good can be done in any number of ways. This number of ways includes:

1. By avoiding the act or processes of causing the nature harm (that is, by refraining from doing what would be contrary to its good),
2. By preventing the loss of something needed for the preservation of its good, and
3. By keeping the nature safe from danger, thereby enabling the nature to escape harm that might otherwise come to it.²⁴

The entire above listed are the ways of promoting and protecting a being's good and by doing this, it becomes beneficial to nature and all it contains. The next question that one asks is; what constitutes the general concept of good? Concerning this, one can easily surmise that the general concept of good which Taylor holds is that of an appropriate greater number of true happiness, self-actualization and human flourishing. Our grasp of the concept, however, is not helped by simply equating it with one of these terms, since their meaning is as obscure and indeterminate as the idea of "the good of humans" itself. Perhaps the clearest way to define it is to say that it is the kind of life one would place supreme value on if one were fully rational, autonomous, and enlightened.²⁵ In the light of these considerations, one imagines and naturally inquires of what and in what consists the sorts of entities that have a good of their own? Taylor holds that in the course of nature and reality, all entities have sorts of goodness in them that ought to be respected and appreciated. Although, most times things that are viewed as that possessing goodness in themselves are animate beings, Taylor sees this as inadequate effort for environmental or ecological sustainability or continence, for he holds that even if certain things in existence, for instance, inanimate objects having no cravings for satisfaction like the rational and autonomous animate concrete realities, have a good of their own because it makes sense to speak of their being benefited or harmed. Thus; the things that happen to them can be judged from their standpoint, to be favorable or unfavorable.²⁶ Thus there is need to have an altitude of respect of nature for the sake of the environability of the environment hinged on human personhood and values.²⁷

A very plausible question at this point bothers on the "whatness", perceivably inherent as a fundamental concept of an entity in the consideration of its value and worth? Taylor answers that to have inherent worth is not synonymous to having intrinsic value or inherent value. In explaining these two concepts, he holds that both intrinsic and inherent values are similar. This is because, they are both relative and they are neither attributed to anything outside its relation to beings. These

²⁴Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 59.

²⁵Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 63.

²⁶Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 69.

²⁷J. O. Egbonu & P. O. Isanbor, Contemporariness of Aldo Leopold's Land Ethics. *Albertine Journal of Philosophy and Related Disciplines*, Vol. 7, 2022, pp. 98-107.

²⁸Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 70.

concepts therefore do not explain the inherent worth of a thing. The inherent worth according to him, is attributed only to entities that have a good of their own.²⁸ Going further, he explains some environmental ethical implication discoverable in the notion of inherent worth. They include:

1. It enables all to understand that all persons are the same status of moral subject and thus are bearers of inherent virtue and worth.
2. Nothing (especially humans) should be treated as mere means to some specific end.
3. The idea that if all persons are considered as possessors of inherent worth, then there should be promotion and protection of each individual's good, and all should be seen as the ultimate end and not as means to achieving this end in itself.²⁹

Taylor's Respect for Nature as an ultimate end entails having an altitude of respect for nature just as we adopt a set of moral rules and standards in ethical ways which are binding on the human beings "to be doing good and be avoiding evil" and thus involves our commitment towards achieving the courses of achieving and sustaining societal peace, justice and tranquility. Therefore, it involves the actions of humans in not only abiding by the moral principles but also pushing others to adopt these principles and thus we are better able to achieve the sustainability of the good of nature.³⁰ More so, the altitude should entails that scientific curiosity, the aesthetic attitude of appreciation for nature's beauty, and the hedonistic attitude of enjoying the pleasures of the out-of-doors, amongst others should be geared towards promoting the good of nature and not those that are harmful, dangerous and not beneficial to the wholeness of nature. For instance, if scientific curiosity leads to endangering the lives of animals and limiting their species, then their aim is totally bad and this is against Taylor's Respect of Nature. How do we achieve this ultimate end? Taylor's answer is that scientific curiosity, and other specific attitudes towards nature should be geared towards ecological preservation and promotion such that the consideration for construction of recreational camps, amongst others should not be harmful to the ecosystem. Therefore, the interference or manipulation of natural world by humans for Taylor is only compatible if only it constitutes respect for nature and not a manipulation of it.

The Ethics of Bio-Culture

The notion and impression of the ethics of bio-culture was brought to lime light by Taylor to differentiate it from the nature and concern of bio-centric theory of environmental ethics. Opposing to both bio-centric ethics and human ethics established in this work, the ethics of bio-culture is only concerned with human treatment of plants and animals in an artificially created environment subject to human control. In other words, the ethics of bio-culture does not concern itself with nonhuman living beings in the world or in the natural ecosystem. Therefore, the bio-culture is a set of human social institution and practices through which the environment and the living organisms (both plants and animals in them) are manipulated and controlled to serve human ends. For example, by means of hybridization, breeding programme, and other methods of genetic control, humans produce the kind of animals and plants that will best serve human purposes (Taylor 1994: 207). The first point to consider in the ethics of bio-culture is that the life and death of these nonhuman living beings wholly depends on human verdict and choice. This is because they are the products of human manipulations which are essentially meant to serve human ends.

The notion of bio-culture translates to the conceptualization of the objection to death. In Respect

²⁹Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, pp. 79-80.

³⁰G. Williams, *Adaptation and Natural Selection: A Critique of Some Current Evolutionary Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966, p. 40.

for Nature, Taylor discusses vegetarianism and fights what would appear to be the view necessitated by his ethic—that it would be equally as bad to kill an animal as it would to kill a plant, so an omnivorous diet would have as little consequence as an herbivorous diet would. However, because animals are sentient and plants are not, he maintains that killing an animal and causing it pain is worse than killing a plant, a living thing that cannot feel pain, and so if killing sentient animals can at all be avoided, it should.³¹ This isn't because being hurt is worse than being harmed, or even that being hurt and harmed is worse than being harmed (when hurt applies to sentient beings and harmed applies to insentient beings), but because pain is an undesirable state for others and can be avoided. Although Taylor appears to support an egalitarian ethic and an Aristotelian hierarchy of beings, both would maintain that it is worse to kill a certain type of living being than the other. Taylor would maintain that it is bad to kill a plant (or animal) other than for sustenance,³² (in the need to fulfill our own biological interest), because to do so would cut off its biological interest to survive.

Taylor does not argue for the rights of nonhumans as such. However, it seems that his ethics entails some rights—negative rights, or rights from harm, at the very least. Taylor's endorsement of vegetarianism could appear somewhat hierarchical. However, if it were hierarchical, then the needs of animals would always be considered over those of plants, since animals would be considered to have more value. This isn't the case. Here, the natural capacities of the living beings seem to play into biological interest and fall under biological interest. Therefore, because their value is covered by biological interest, which counts for equal value among all living organisms, they have no outstanding value. This stays in line with egalitarianism. It seems that, if forced to choose between killing two types of organisms in a case of conflicting interest, we may look to certain relevant qualities outside of biological interest but are essential to a living thing fulfilling its good—for instance, that of sentience, which wants for avoidance of suffering—based on some of these capacities.

Paul Taylor's Notion on the Rights of Animals and Plants

In *Respect for Nature*, Taylor begins by explaining that to understand if animals or plants have rights, we must establish these two basic assumptions. The first is to enquire if plants and animals are sorts of things that can have rights, The second is on the possibility to establish the truth of the proposition if they do or do not have rights, under the assumption that it is conceivable for them to have rights.³³ He goes further by saying that there is need for us to understand the concept of right so as to understand if plants or animals fit into what can have right. He defines right as a legitimate claim to something or a sense of entitlement to something either morally or legally.³⁴ Rights either imposed on an individual through moral connotation or a legal right which on its own endows the individual with a status in the community gives one the authority to act or possess a final authority over a certain level of choice and action as a subject of lived experiences.

Taylor links legal rights as in the case of the human person to animals and plants, especially with the ones that pertains to the recognition of rights for the insane, small children or mentally derailed persons. He opines that in so far these set of people can be considered to have rights even though they cannot fathom it or claim what they have a right to, then we can speak of animal and plant right. With this claim in mind, it therefore follows that we can say that plants and animals

³¹Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 295.

³²Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 183.

³³Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 219.

³⁴Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 219.

legitimately deserve entitlement to their own rights since they are an entity. However, the example he gives is arguable on the fact that we cannot equate plants or animals with the human person whether young or old. The human person is overtime capable of attaining rationality and able to interpret and act of his or her right but we cannot say such of a plant. Even though there have been cases of pet animals displaying some level of understanding, we still cannot equate it with the human level of interpretation.

He classifies what the notion of each creature having its own good means. He defines this term to suggest that an entity has its own good, which essentially means that it may be helped or hurt without reference to any other entity.³⁵ Taylor assumes that all beings that may be killed or formed have their own good. However, a rock, on the other hand, is an inanimate item that cannot be killed or destroyed. Breaking a rock into a million pieces would only spread the rock into a different shape, however cutting down a tree causes it to die and ceases to operate in its original state. Taylor also claims that the idea of goodness is not synonymous with sentience or the ability to experience suffering. This places species with no ability for suffering, such as trees, in the same category as those with their own good.

The anthropocentric approach of ethics, according to Taylor, is exclusively concerned with the advantages and repercussions to people. He believes that human acts that influence the natural environment can be right or wrong based on one of two criteria: they have positive (or negative) effects for human well-being, or they are consistent with the system of standards that protect human rights. From anthropocentric viewpoint, creatures are only considered if they have an impact on human existence. It also claims that entities have no inherent worth or intrinsic value, and that their sole purpose is to aid or damage humanity. A human-centered approach, on the other hand, is described by Taylor as having moral duties owed to wild plants and animals as members of the earth's biotic community.³⁶ He claims that organisms are distinct entities that need to be treated as such.³⁷ Taylor is simply saying that plants, animals, and all of nature's creatures do not belong to us and therefore deserved to be recognized separately as entities that deserve legal right even if we argue that they cannot possess a moral right.³⁸ Furthermore, the assumption that humans are better is only a point of view. For Taylor, humans would be superior if all objectives in nature needed human traits and capacities. However, the diversity in nature necessitates a variety of capacities, some of which humans lack. Because eagles have significantly greater vision than humans, they can adapt to a lifestyle that humans could not. Does this imply that eagles are more intelligent than humans? For Taylor, superiority is a concept that is based on what we value. Of course, we value our own attributes above those of other animals, and Taylor claims that this shallow and egocentric perspective is why we have caused so much damage to the environment and the biotic community as a whole.

Ethics of Taylor's Nature for Nature

It is a given concern that in the philosophical engagement and postulations, no human thought system can be of perfection or near perfection due to the capacity of individual's reasoning that is subjected to the approval and disapproval by other persons. If it were perfect, academic endeavor would have ended long ago. Philosophy in particular, thrives on detecting the

³⁵Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 223.

³⁶Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 226.

³⁷Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 226.

³⁸Paul Taylor, *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics*, p. 224.

imperfection and defect in theories, views and opinions of others. As it pertains to ethics as a means of assessing human actions in relations to the values of nature, more senses of criticism have to be invested on such philosophy, to see how tenable it is. This means that such conclusions are only tentative and not definitive. Flowing from this, there must be some strengths and weaknesses of Taylor's Respect for Nature as an ethics of development in relation to the management of our contemporary environment, especially in the Third World countries.

First, to many bio-centric environmentalists, credit must be given to Taylor's Respect for Nature, because it has brought out the uniqueness in nature and the importance of environmental ethics in the development of the human society. It suggested that the adoption and application of the tools of environmental ethics are indispensably vital for the survival of all life forms on earth and the survival of ecology as a sustainer of lives depends on it.³⁹ Taylor with this theory presents to us a different kind of biocentrism in the life of ecological philosophy. Taylor disowns both anthropocentric and holistic positions and advocates instead a life-centered ethic of respect for nature in which agents recognize that each living thing has a good of its own, the realization of which is intrinsically valuable (or worthy of being preserved or promoted) and is to be pursued for its own sake. Respect for nature is comparable with and supplements a Kantian respect for persons. In Taylor's version of biocentrism, however, not only is human superiority denied, but each living thing is also held to be equally worthy of respect, irrespective of differences of interests, and to have the same moral significance.⁴⁰ Respect for all creatures is what Taylor envisaged for, unlike in the contemporary times where values have been differently structured, which has allowed science and its heavy applications of technology on the environment to unrestrainedly explore and exploit the environmental malleability solely for technological development without due recourse to the intrinsic worth and value of the environment and the consequences both negative and positive these actions impact on the environment. Oftentimes in the process, human beings have lost their value and worth and have been dangerously exposed and treated as mere animals and beasts of burdens. This has thus occasioned a gross disrespect for human dignity. Consequently, there seems to be the loss of identity, where the human person can be burnt alive like animals for both religious and political reasons like in the case of blasphemy in the religious circle.

Second, Taylor's theory also has helped in understanding that knowledge about the human person as a being of development and experience alone is not enough, rather there is need to understand the nature of animals and plants as well. His notions are vital for the development of the individual as an enlightened and educated person, which corresponds with the classic search in philosophy that bothers on figuring out what it means to be human. Now, with Paul Taylor's Respect for Nature as a philosophy of authentic living, a handsome elucidation of the Socratic dictum that "Unexamined life is not worth living", and which in reference to the management of the environment, can be translated to mean that "Life in an unexamined world is not worthy living either," receives greater boost and relevance. This is because, the human persons are the only species capable of enjoying the promise of culture, politics and economics that determine what happened on and in the environment. The human persons are also the only species capable of enjoying the splendid panorama of life that vitalizes the values of nature in general as following the employment and workability of their reasoning. This helps the human persons as beings of

³⁹See, E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O Isanbor, Ecological Humanism and its Development Philosophy in Contemporary Society. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Anthropology in Practice*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2012, pp. 44-53; E. U. Ekuigbo & P. O. Isanbor, Environmental Degradation: Development Philosophy and Moral Responsibilities. *Journal of Environmental Issues and Agriculture in Developing Countries*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2012, pp. 20-28.

⁴⁰J. B. Callicott & R. Frodeman. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, p. 150.

experiences and as subjects of development to learn the indispensability of the adoption and employment of the tool of environmental ethics in evaluating the human dimensions in reference to their actions and choices in forming and designing urban and rural settlements.

Third, Taylor's theory of the Respect for Nature can be linked with some positive theory in ethics. His egalitarian biocentrism and respect for all entities or beings can also follow the thought of philosophers like Kant in his categorical imperatives and the utilitarian ethicists. It would be difficult to examine environmental controversies without using the fundamental categories and language of ethics: rights, fairness, justice, and utility. People who oppose environmental regulations often appeal to the property rights, social fairness, and social benefits ideologies and theories. Environmentalists likewise appeal to the rights of nature, the values of wilderness, and the harms of environmental pollution and degradation. All societal approaches to ethics as theories or ideologies advise the human beings to make informed and responsible decisions in terms of the consequences of their actions and to act in ways that maximize overall social benefits and development. Likewise Taylor appeals most especially to the human person as a subject of lived experiences to be considerate in dealing with other humans and other things in nature. It may not be out of place to surmise that the supporters of this view might majorly come from the flank of the animal activists, eco-feminist and biocentric ecologists.

In furtherance of the above, another approach of affirmation is from the natural law ethics. The natural laws are derived from God's laws. Natural law ethics derives standards of right conduct from the laws of nature. There should be preservation of any specie because it has an intrinsic value, and this plays an important role in the balance of nature, and thus fits this pattern of reasoning.⁴¹ Quite importantly, a certain kind of departure appears to have been recorded in the contemporary times with the unfortunate incidents of deforestation, unnecessary and unwarranted hunting and killing of animals arbitrarily. This absurdity has impacted heavily on the contemporary human society transforming it into a den of refuse, whereby respect for humanity and nature have gone to extinction.

However, despite the soundness of his philosophy, some philosophers laid some critics on it. For this, Peter Singer maintains that only sentient beings have interests and that only beings with interests deserve moral consideration.⁴² But, Taylor argues that it is arbitrary to restrict the class of morally considerable beings to sentient beings. Since all living organisms can be harmed or be made to benefit and what benefits them promotes their good, Taylor insists that there is no non-arbitrary reason by human beings not to extend moral consideration to all living organisms. In reacting to this criticism, Mary Anne Warren rejects Taylor's reasoning on the grounds that since lower organisms do not care whether their biological interests are satisfied; neither should humans.⁴³ It seems for Taylor that his argument is sound, however, morals and morality have gone beyond the level of "do good or do bad". The question of intention has assumed today a dominant scope of consideration in moral analysis and judgment. It is very important to know that even if animals and plants can be harmed and having morals as he claimed, their level of living and existence cannot surpass that of human beings or even be allowed on the same par with humans.⁴⁴

⁴¹J. Desjardins, *Environmental Ethic: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, 5th edition. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2013, p. 23.

⁴²See, P. Singer, *Animal Liberation*. New York: New York Review, 1975, pp. 8-9.

⁴³M. A. Warren, *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 48.

⁴⁴J. Desjardins, *Environmental Ethic: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, p. 25.

Another criticism of Taylor's ethics is based on his conviction that the good or welfare of individual organisms determines human moral relations with nature. This criticism contended that Taylor's focus on individual welfare fails to address the actual concerns of environmentalists. Most environmentalists are concerned not with the welfare of individual mosquitoes, dandelions, and microbes, but rather with species preservation, ecological integrity, and pollution. These critics insist that a holistic ethic can better address these environmental concerns the idea of extending equal moral consideration to every living organism, including every insect and plant, strikes most people as not only too demanding, but outrightly absurd. How can people live their lives if they must give plants and insects the same moral consideration attributable to humans? Taylor tries to mitigate this objection by formulating a complex set of principles (self-defense, proportionality, minimum harm, distributive justice and retributive justice) for fairly resolving the conflicts that inevitably arise between humans and other equally considerable organisms.

Even with these principles in place, however, Taylor's bio-centric ethic remains extremely demanding, since the principle of proportionality dictates that the basic interests of plants trump the non basic interests of the human persons as beings of lived experiences.⁴⁵ This may be applicable to the concerns of the law makers in most Third World countries, especially in the current episode of Nigerian political landscape where there are many political attempts to create cattle-grazing colonies rather than conventional ranches for such agricultural practices.⁴⁶ Such concerns for sectional business practices for particular tribes of the nation seem to be informing the minds of some of the leaders who have stakes in such businesses to refer to the rights of animals and their freedom, whereas the lives of the people who "allegedly" voted them in are terribly endangered, and are possibly being drawn very close to a possible extinction in favour of the herds of cows. Taylor's notion is indirectly imbedded in some system and persons and this made them act indirectly as animal and non-living things.

Conclusion

Having examined Paul Taylor's notion of Respect for Nature, one's fascination cannot but be drawn to his passion towards the promotion of an environmental sanity and, sustainability of nature and its preservation. He stressed a kind of all-encompassing type of life and living in the communal world. Taylor's theory has demonstrated that the human person and nature are one, and the human person should not act in total superiority on other organisms, rather they are to complement the human person and his or her values and dignity as a subject of development, and it demands that all human persons indispensably work together for the promotion of nature in order for lives to be healthily sustained and valued. Regardless of whether his ethic prevails in the end or ultimately forces us to look elsewhere for an adequate environmental ethic, Taylor's bio-centric outlook helps those who accept it to have a greater appreciation and respect for nature.

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⁴⁵J. B. Callicott & R. Frodeman. *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*, p. 898.

⁴⁶M. A. Warren, *Moral Status: Obligations to Persons and Other Living Things*, p. 50.

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