

Hegel's Idealism and Environmental Holism

Akinola Mohammed Akomolafe¹ Olusegun Steven Samuel²

1. Department of Philosophy, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos, Nigeria

2. Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos, Nigeria

*Email of the corresponding author: akomolafeakinola@yahoo.com

Abstract

This paper seeks to extend the frontier of Hegel's idealism to confronting environmental problems. While our focus is on the theoretical issues bedeviling recent measures to addressing environmental problems, yet we also discuss the practical challenges facing environmentalists in getting to the root of the issues that bother them. The paper suggests that contemporary environmentalists can borrow much from Hegel's idealism, especially his notion of harmony which his thesis of *the absolute* depicts. The paper argues, through an appeal to the method of dialectical ecologism, that Aldo Leopold and J. Baird Callicott's land ethic and ecological communitarianism respectively could develop strong theoretical base if structured on Hegel's non-exclusive thesis. Without relying on Hegel's idea of harmony, consciousness and interconnectiveness of beings, we argue that environmentalists' theses cannot be holistic as claimed.

Keywords: Dialectical Ecologism, Consciousness, Harmony, Environmental problems

1. Introduction

Problems are usually approached from diverse ways. Also, ideology seems to serve many purposes. To address certain problems, scholars tend to adopt different frameworks. In this piece, we hope to apply Hegel's thought to confronting environmental problems. Thus, this paper is partly an exercise in metaphysical exploration, and it is partly an engagement in environmental ethics. In its metaphysical aspect, the paper deliberates on Hegel's idealism. In its environmental segment, we turn our attention to Leopold's land ethic, as well as its enhancement in Callicott's philosophy. Therefore, we are interested in employing Hegel's idealism to confronting environmental problems that have bothered theorists like Leopold and Callicott, among others.

The concern of this paper then is to raise anew the issue of theoretical foundation upon which environmentalists have erected their thesis. In this attempt, we will be defending the position that Leopold and Callicott's views would benefit more if they are constructed on the idea of harmony, consciousness and interconnectivity, which Hegel's idealism focuses on (rather than attempting the absurd). Alluding to Hegel's metaphysical posture and Leopold-Callicottian ecology, we posit that the method of dialectical ecologism is highly needed as a theoretical path to tackling environmental crisis that environmentalists are proffering solutions to.

To come to grips with the above aims, this paper is structured into three sections. The first section discusses Hegel's idealism (and his method of dialectics). The second segment exposes Leopold's land ethic, and its enhancement in Callicott's ecological communitarianism. The third section shows how Hegel's view can strengthen environmentalists' tasks.

2. Hegel's Idealism: A Brief Analysis

It is a truism that Hegel's idealism is constructed on the pillar of dialectics. It is also a self-evident truth that at the centre of Hegel's idealism is his doctrine of *the Absolute*. If the core of Hegel's idealism is the notion of the Absolute (*geist*), then the question is: What is does the Absolute entail in Hegel's idealism? This section briefly discusses Hegel's idealism and his principle of dialectics through which the principle of the absolute is explicated.

First, let us point out at the outset that there are different shades of idealism. To be clear, idealism is a branch of philosophy that presupposes that consciousness, mind or thought is primary, whereas matter is secondary. Idealists do not however share a monolithic view about reality and its nature. Unlike British idealism, Hegel's idealism is tailored in line with German philosophical thought of Fichte and Schelling, which central focus is on the universal mind. That is, Hegel's idealism is one of the views that stresses that progress can only be attained in the world if human consciousness or mind is developed on the one hand, and when conflicting thoughts are reconciled. It is through the principle of dialectics that he seeks to attain this goal. Hence, idealism, in Hegel's view, is not directed at *denying* the existence of matter nor is it geared at *rejecting* the connectivity between the real and the rational. What is the focus of this idealism?

Let us now discuss this idealism. Writing on Hegel's philosophy, Subrata Mukherjee and Sushila Ramaswamy (1999: 249) point out that, for Hegel, "separateness had to be ended by a theory of unity of totality within the ambit of reason". In this case, Hegel identifies that things in the world are not only unorganized, they are explained in a way that their interconnectivity is not accounted for. For instance, it is observed that science removes thought from practice, in the same way that some scholars have denied the actual. Apparently,

philosophical systems before Hegel have either overstressed the existence of matter at the detriment of thought, or vice versa. Hegel's idealism is therefore directed at reconciling the divide between these conflicting thoughts concerning reality since he believes that only the reconciliation of contradiction can bring about development. Hence, E.K. Ogundowole (2011: 20) notes that, for Hegel, "the world is a totality which is progressing; or conversely, progress is of the very essence of the totality, not simply an attribute of some part of it, or of some segment of its history..."

To substantiate this point of view, Hegel's idealism is structured on his idea of the Absolute Spirit. This thesis explains reality as one entity with many-sided angles. Things, to him, have different nature when view from their contradicting features, however, the underlying content among these things unify them all. Apparently, all existing entities (thought and matter inclusive) are one and the same reality: the absolute. Accordingly, Hegel (1977: 479) writes:

...spirit itself as a whole, and the self-differentiated moments within it, fall within the sphere of picture-thinking and in the form of objectivity. The content of this picture- thinking is absolute spirit; and all that now remains to be done is to supersede this mere form, or rather, since this belongs to consciousness as such, its truth must already have yielded itself in the shape of consciousness.

While describing the nature of his system, Hegel (1977: 530) puts it thus: "Consciousness must now grope forward to an understanding of objects in the form of self. But it does so by gradual stages, and dirempts itself into a number of distinct mental postures in which separate sides of the object are gradually brought together." Therefore, Hegel maintains that, "thought is always in its own sphere its relations are with itself, and it is its own object. In having a thought for object, I am at home with myself. The thinking power, the 'I', is therefore infinite, because, when it thinks, it is in relation to an object which is itself." (www.marxist.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/sl/sl_iii.htm). This infinite, speculative thought, or pure thought dovetail with the determinate things, hence; the totality of thought and nature is the absolute. Therefore, Hegel's idealism seems to universalize all realities into one, where each reality is an aspect (a part) of the totality. To corroborate this stance, Joseph Omoregbe (1991: 131) says that Hegel's philosophy is centered "...around the absolute understood as the totality of being, that is, the whole of reality as one single being." Omoregbe (1991: 133) adds that, "the synthesis of being and non-being is becoming, and that is what the absolute is" In his bid to espouse this connectivity of all species, beings or entities, Hegel explores a method dialectics. Let us sketchily look at this.

Hegel adopts the method of dialectics to show how contradictory positions about reality can be resolved. Thus, he believes that disorderliness has to be reconciled through a theory of unity of totality. This theory is what he calls the absolute spirit. This theory is based on Hegel's dialectical method. In the words of Samuel E. Stumpf and James Fieser (2003: 312), Hegel's dialectics:

...exhibits a triadic movement, usually this triadic structure of the dialectic process is described as a movement from thesis to antithesis and finally to synthesis, after which the synthesis becomes a new thesis, and this process continues until it ends in the Absolute idea. What Hegel emphasized in his dialectic logic was that thought moves. Contradiction does not bring knowledge to a halt, but acts as a positive moving force in human reasoning.

With regard to Hegel's dialectics, the term 'contradiction' or 'negation' does not connote a mechanical denial. Rather it means a wide variety of relations, difference, reflection or mere insufficiency of a category or incoherency. Hence, in his *The Science of Logic*, he writes:

...contradiction is, on the other hand, immediately represented in the determinations of relationship. The most trivial examples of above and below, right and left, father and son, and so on ad infinitum, all contain opposition in each term. That is above, which is not below; "above" is specifically just this, not to be "below," and only is in so far as there is a "below," and conversely, each determination implies its opposite (Hegel, 1969: 441).

Through his principle of dialectics, he identifies that contradictory elements can be reconciled if we have a deeper and broader understanding on how reality develops itself and how contradiction is resolved into a synthesis. Thus, the framework of dialectical process is to show how thought and nature acquire this character.

There are certain fundamental points that Hegel's dialectics tries to bring out clearly. These points are crucial if we are to fully grasp Hegel's idealism and its usefulness for contemporary social issues. First, Hegel's idea of the absolute seeks to unify or harmonize all realities—matter and thought, nature and man, consciousness and fact, etc. Second, Hegel's dialectics seems to show that the change is triadic on the one hand, and that

contradictory thoughts need to be reconciled so as to achieve and development. Third, Hegel seems to project a non-exclusive theory of reality where extreme dualistic ideologies are rejected.

As the foregoing suggests, a study of reality ought to account for the totality, but when particulars are studied it is when one has the knowledge of the whole can an adequate knowledge be obtained about the particulars. In this respect, Hegel's idealism suggests that the whole, totality, community or society supersedes the part, hence harmony should be pursued through the reconciliation of the parts to the whole.

It is vital to recount that Hegel presents a communitarian ideology where the parts are not to be isolated from the whole if we are to have a robust understanding of reality and development. Therefore, contradictions among the parts are to be reconciled through the affirmation of the fact that all existing beings are part of the whole and not independent of it. Apparently, the notions of interaction, interrelationship and interdependency of all beings are established by Hegel through his notion of the absolute spirit following the sequence of change via the dialectical method. In sum, Hegel's idealism stresses the non-exclusivity of one being at the expense of others. This is the ground of harmony that he seeks when he asserts that, "What lies between reason as self-conscious mind and reason as an actual world before our eyes, what separates the former from the later and prevents it from finding satisfaction in the latter, is the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated (and so transformed) into the concept" (Hegel, 1952: 6).

Today, societies are bothered with issues of divide between human's interest and the interest of nature as a whole. While there are hundreds of literatures that have discussed Hegel's solutions to such end, there are few papers that have focused on the import of Hegel's idealism to contemporary efforts to confronting environmental issues. This paper seeks to argue that Hegel's idealism has invaluable import for environmental studies, in the sense that his theoretical speculation can be applied to help strengthen the arguments of environmentalists like Leopold and Callicott who seek for a holistic cum communitarian basis for extending moral consideration to nonhuman natural entities. We shall show how Hegel's view can help create an internal order for environmentalists' stances in the third segment of this paper. However, before we turn our attention to reflect on Leopold and Callicott's views in the second part of this paper, let us briefly highlight the theoretical footing of Hegel's idealism. First, Hegel suggests consciousness renewal in his idealism. Second, Hegel focuses on the whole rather than the part. Third, Hegel stresses the fact of interconnectivity and interdependency of beings. Fourth, Hegel identifies a need for change and development. And lastly, Hegel projects a non-exclusive outlook and an interdisciplinary approach to knowing where metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, political, social, economic and scientific issues are brought under one umbrella—idealism or consciousness.

So far, what we have attempted in the first section of this paper is a sketch of Hegel's idealism. Let us not proceed to the next segment of the paper where we intend to discuss Leopold and Callicott's environmental theories.

3. Environmental Ethics and Problems: Leopold and Callicott's Reflections

Numerous challenges have been observed as threats to the environment. Hence, contemporary scholars have re-energized the spirit to resolve, once and for all, the entire human (if not natural) causes of environmental problems. Whether in the area of beliefs, actions, inventions, ethics or consciousness, emphasis is now placed on what could be done to ameliorate the negative effects of humans' deeds on the environment that have resulted into increasing environmental challenges. Today, it is evident that when humans release toxic chemicals into the air, water or soil it contaminates the environment which, then, has potency to bring harm on living organisms and equally affects the efficiency of the environment. The bid to resolving environment problem is therefore on-going.

However, when it comes to how we are to confront it (environmental problems) numerous solutions have been suggested. While some scholars advance a technological renewal as a suitable mechanism to combating environmental abnormality, some are quick to add that there is a need for a just law/system for ensuring that humans are constrained by international environmental guidelines. Yet, there are those like Leopold and Callicott who think that without revisiting the traditional anthropocentric consciousness, in the attempt to rekindle environmental restoration and activism, only minute success can be realized. It is others' belief that even when anthropocentrism is overcome, it seems crucial for ethical consideration and obligation to be extended to nonhumans. In fact, there are clusters of arguments—here and there—on how environmental abnormality can successfully be redressed. It is our intent, in this section, to examine one of the eloquently argued perspectives on the matter. In this regard, Leopold and Callicott's environmental theory is our focus. The ideas of David Hume and Charles Darwin influenced these scholars.

To start with, Leopold presents us with an eco-centric solution to environment problems. In this approach, he applies ecological lens to environmental concern, thereby arguing for the inclusion of all entities in our moral philosophy on the one hand, and a defense of the moral right of the community of all beings (species) on the other hand. This view, to be certain, intends to account for the interdependency between human and nonhuman natural entities. In other words, Leopold considers ethics as appropriate for addressing environmental problems,

but this ethics, to Leopold, requires to be grounded in ecology. According to R. A. Perry (1964: 303), ecology is essentially “concerned with populations of organisms and the processes which make for their stability, increase, decrease, or replacement by other populations.”

Leopold is one of the scholars that prioritized the field of environmental ethics. Taking its start in Darwinian Theory, the land ethics, portrays by Leopold, seeks to extend moral sentiment that is at the core of social ethics to land. Social ethics, as Hume and Darwin have insisted, is directed at restricting anti-social actions. Like these scholars, Leopold employs Darwin’s ideas of struggle for life (survival of the fittest) to press home the point that humans are definitely tampering on the right to existence of other species. Having subscribed to the guidebooks of ecology and evolutionary theory, he maintains that there is a need to extend moral sentiment to nonhumans. He writes, “The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is, if I read the evidence correctly, an evolutionary possibility and an ecologically necessity” (Leopold, 1998: 117). This extension of ethics to cover nonhuman entity is highly needed, according to him, because, through philosophy, it is now clear “...why we cannot destroy the earth with moral impunity; namely, that the “dead” earth is an organism possessing a certain kind of degree of life, which we intuitively respect as such” (Leopold, 1979: 140).

Leopold goes on to add that there is a need for a new ethics (a land ethics), which is not in any way a refutation of social ethics, but an extension of its coverage to protect soils, waters, plants and animals. He openly attests that this ethics (environmental ethics) is yet to be fully attained and it cannot prevent “...the alteration, management, and use of these “resources” but it does affirm their right to continued existence...” (Leopold, 1998: 118), however, he is skeptical that the intellectual contents of traditional ethical theories are capable of being used to pursue this goal. Hence through ecology, Leopold argues that human and nonhumans are equal members of the ecological community of interdependent part. And from the standpoint of evolutionary studies, Leopold agrees with Darwin that humans are kin to nonhuman species. That is, he drags humans and nonhumans into a familial origin. From this, Leopold (1998: 118) maintains that, “In short, a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such.”

To summarize Leopold’s view, it is fundamental that one indicates that he sets a new maxim of morally right conduct when he asserts that, “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1998: 123). Having postulated a new normative principle, Leopold argues that the land ethics seeks to extend philosophical value to all members of the land community: soils, waters, rivers, plants, humans etc. etc. The different segments of the land ethics have different arguments to support them. As a whole, Leopold is advancing a consciousness change—that is, every species should be treated with respect because: (1) ecological studies have revealed the interconnectivity among species, (2) humans’ consciousness of superiority over nature is a wrong one, (3) the parts cannot function appropriate without the whole seen as working towards a goal, (4) and that there is a need for consciousness renewal.

Leopold’s land ethic has generated many controversies because he does not spell out in greater details the ideological foundation of his thesis. Leopold’s land ethic deliberates on certain issues which Callicott reformulates, defends and extends. Issues such as: the moral obligation of human to land, the intrinsic value of land, land as energy as suggested in Leopold’s land pyramid, moral extensionism to and considerability of land, and the role of ecological conscience as well as consciousness are discussed by Callicott to further reflect on Leopold’s environmental ideology. We cannot discuss all the angles to these scholars’ position in this paper. Let us comment on the crucial parts. One thing remains fundamental to Leopold’s thought that Callicott intends to defend. In trying to defend the land ethic, Callicott does not only employ the themes and concepts of the aforementioned scholar, he as well engages in a critical exploration of them, thereby providing a new theory—ecological communitarian defense of the land ethic—which we shall now discuss. The subsequent paragraphs of this section squarely unmask Callicott’s view.

Thus, Callicott sees the first task of environmental ethicists as identifying that there are certain errors in traditional ethical theories that render them not suitable for tackling environmental hurdles. It is Callicott’s idea that some assumptions that at the core of social ethics, human ethics, traditional ethics or anthropocentric ethics would pre-empt us for getting a better deal out of them. Like Leopold therefore, ethics requires to be wore a new garment. Environmentalists must therefore understand, if they are yet to, that social ethics employ certain themes which hinder humans’ attempt to get to the root of environmental problems through them. For instance, some traditional ethical theories construe humans as master humans master rather than fellow citizen with other species. To Callicott’s mind, there is therefore a need to rethink the underlying beliefs of traditional ethical approach to resolving environmental concerns. Thus, Callicott, like Leopold, argues that environmental philosophy aims at correcting this obnoxious mode-of-seeing or thinking. Therefore, Callicott (1995: 21) posits that:

Environmental philosophers, rather, are attempting to articulate a new worldview and a new conception of what it means to be a human

being, distilled from the theory of evolution, the new physics, ecology, and other natural sciences. On this basis, we might suggest how people ought to relate to the natural environment but there is rather little deducing of specific rules of conduct. People come to believe that old norms (such as stone adulterers and burn witches) should be abandoned and new ones adopted (such as abolish slavery and feed the hungry) only when their most fundamental ideas about themselves and their world undergo radical change. Much of the theoretical work in environmental ethics is devoted to articulating and thus helping to effect such a radical change in outlook.

As the foregoing suggests, Callicott is proposing that no valuable change can be realized in the environment unless the outlook of people is consciously changed. To effectuate this change, it is problematic to rely on traditional metaphysics and ethics because they are at the root of the problem. The solution as Callicott's recommendation shows is to invent or search for new theoretical parts as evident in ecological, evolutionary and natural sciences. The foundations of these sciences, as Leopold and Darwin's ideas provided, enable Callicott to provide an internal logic for a new environmental philosophy.

The first task involves considering the arguments that anthropocentrists have adopted as a basis for dominating nonhuman natural entities. Herein, Callicott looks at the issue why intrinsic value is deposited in human but not all species. As we would see later, Callicott (1995: 24) argues that, "the claim that all and only human beings have intrinsic value may not be consistent with a more general evolutionary and ecological worldview." The second task of activism, as Callicott indicates, is again incomplete without extending ethical sympathy to nonhumans. In this respect, he wishes that, at the end, environmental activism will lead to or attain a holistic non-anthropocentric nature. He thinks that this is significant if we are to purposefully and practically deal with environmental hazards. He writes, "The eventual institutionalization of a new holistic, non-anthropocentric environmental ethic will make as much practical difference in the environmental arena as the institutionalization of the intrinsic value of all human beings has made in the social arena" (Callicott, 1995: 24).

Neither idea seems likely to yield much success, Callicott contends, if environmental ethicists do not go ahead to add that humans should, not only in principle but also in action, have ethical obligation to all sentient and non-sentient members of the ecological community. Here again, environmental philosophy is doing the unusual. That is, Callicott thinks that the third task is that humans should live responsively as well as have duties to protect nonhuman natural entities. Environmental ethics seeks to change the status quo and makes anew a new but controversial change to our consciousness. Thus he posits that, "Ethics often is rendered paradoxical between attitudes, values, and beliefs, on the one hand, and actions, practices, and behavior, on the other hand" (Callicott, 2009: 163). Hence, it is submitted that all environmentalists should be activists, however, "The way that environmental philosophers can be the most effective activists is by doing environmental philosophy" (Callicott, 1995: 33) and this entails further that:

In thinking, talking, and writing about environmental ethics, environmental philosophers already have their shoulders to the wheel, helping to reconfigure the prevailing cultural worldview and thus helping to push general practice in the direction of environmental responsibility (Callicott, 1995: 33).

To effectuate environmental responsibility he suggests ecological and evolutionary guidelines as theoretically tight as intellectual guide needed for sustained environmental solutions. There are varieties of issues that Callicott sets out to resolve either in the land ethics or in the field of environmental philosophy as a whole. He tries to address the following questions, though not necessarily raised by him as such: What are the implications of Leopold's land ethics? What are the issues involved in its ethical maxim and considerability criteria? And, why must it be that environmental ethics ought to be structured on a holistic non-anthropocentric foundation?

Firstly, the concern has been raised in some philosophical quarters that Leopold does not sketch out, in the land ethic, a model/maxim which allows one to make an ethical choice between two conflicting ethical theories. That is, the land ethic does not, at any point, indicate how ethical matters will be resolved when human interests conflict with the interests of other members of the ecological community. Put differently, it is argued that there is no guideline of action when conflict arises between human and nonhuman interests. Animal liberation ethicist, Regan argues, for instance, that Leopold's land ethics tends towards eco-fascism since Leopold holds that it is wrong to mutilate even a single plant, and even at that, it seems suggestive, from Leopold's account, that it is right to reduce human population to ameliorate environmental destruction. If this claim is correct about the land ethics, it means then that it advances something which seems ridiculous. On this matter, however, Callicott vindicates Leopold's land ethic from the charge of eco-fascism, and he, other than Leopold, provides two ethical criteria (which are products of his ecological communitarian analysis) for resolving any conflict of interests that arises between human and nonhuman. Callicott notes, in this respect, that Leopold has pressed it to our hearing

that the land ethic is an accretion to the human ethics. This means that the land ethics is not a replacement to the social ethics. Rather, it is an addition. Therefore, Callicott (2001: 211) maintains that, "...it is equally evident—at least to Leopold and his exponents, if not to his critics—that the duties attendant upon citizenship in the biotic community (to preserve its integrity, stability and beauty) do not cancel or replace the duties attendant on membership in the human global village (to respect human rights)." Thus, Callicott argues that it would be erroneous to read into the land ethics, the view that the right to life for every single ecological entity is implied since this, in fact, is inconsistent with the structure of the biotic community. Thus Callicott, Jonathan Parker, *et al* (2011: 140) stress that, "'The only certain truth' of ecology, Leopold observed 'is that...creatures must suck hard, live fast, and die often. Extending rights to life into the natural world would wreak havoc: it would mean protecting prey from predators...'"

However, he grants that Leopold does not explicitly show how conflict of interest between the members of human community and biotic community on the one hand, and human community and ecological community on the other hand, can be addressed, however, he rejects the views of those who charge the land ethic for ecofascism. He takes it to be a misreading of the land ethic. He then moves on to provide two criteria for making ethical choice when members of the ecological community experience conflicting goals. These criteria are absent in Leopold's thought. As one is required to state here, members of the ecological community include: humans, animals, plants, trees, waters, soils, or collectively—the land. So, should there is any conflict of interest among members of the ecological community which comprises: sentient and non-sentient natural entities, Callicott advance two maxims, which he calls Second-Order Principles to prioritizing our actions as well as decisions. Callicott (2001: 212) puts it thus:

By combining two second-order principles we can achieve a priority ranking among first-order principle, when, in a given quandary, they conflict. The first second-order principle (SOP-1) is that obligations generated by membership in more venerable and intimate communities take preference over those generated in more recently emerged and impersonal communities. The second second-order principle (SOP-2) is that the stronger interests (in lack of better word) generate duties that take precedence over duties generated by weaker interests.

The purpose of these second-order principles is to regulate the decision making process when human and nonhuman interest conflicts, or when interests among nonhuman species conflicts as well as when duties we have to individuals conflict with duties we have to the community as such. SOP-1 gives a preference for species in a more venerable and intimate community in both evolutionary and ecological terms than to aliens. For instance, Callicott affirms that human community is more venerable when compared to other members of the ecological community; hence obligation to humans should take preference over those of other members of the land community. SOP-2 takes into consideration interests of species. Callicott seems to think that interests can be adjudged stronger and weaker, and it is interests that he ranks first in deciding what our environmental responsibilities and duties are to be. Aside this two second-order principles, there are first-order principles that our social ethics hints at. Moreover, among these second-order guidelines, Callicott takes SOP-2 to be superior to SOP-1 in deciding on what decision we are to make if two first order principles such as: "Honour thy father" and "Love your Nation" are in conflict.

Secondly, Callicott looks closely at the environmental duties and obligations that human memberships in the biotic communities [or even ecological community] generate. Before Callicott, answer has been provided by Leopold to this issue. Leopold holds that humans are to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of land. Why does Leopold think that this is what is needed? Explanation to this will require a brief sketch of how Leopold understands ecology anew. The history of ecology has changed a bit. Ecology has been explored along the themes of 'economy of nature,' 'balance of nature,' 'nature as organism' and so on. Arthur Tansley thinks that there are deficiencies in ecological perception of species as static, that is, nature is not at any time balanced. He thus proposes the name ecosystem which, according to him, captures organic and inorganic systems (Newton, 2006: 170-183). Leopold thinks also that the notion of 'balance of nature' does not clearly mirror reality vividly along the ecological lens. Leopold (1936: 728) writes:

To the lay mind, balance of nature probably conveys an actual image of the familiar weighing scale. There may even be danger that the layman imputes to the biota properties which exist only on the grocer's counter. To the ecological mind, balance of nature has merits and also defects. Its merits are that it conceives of a collective total, that it implies some utility to all species, and that it implies oscillations when balance is disturbed. Its defects are that is only one point at which balance occurs and the balance is normally static.

Following from Leopold's citation above and his treatment of ecological change in the "Land Pyramid" section

of the land ethic, Callicott identifies that Leopold employs the concept of ecological change (flux) rather than that of balance. However, it seems clear that Leopold's maxim, to Callicott, is far from being carefully theorized since it has within it a contradiction. Callicott (2002: 100) holds that, "Leopold knew that conservation must aim at a moving target. How can we conserve a biota that is dynamic, ever changing, when the very words "conserve" and "preserve"—especially when linked to "integrity" and "stability"—connote arresting change". Against this backdrop, Callicott insists that this poser needs to be revised or "dynamized" as he puts it. To solve this conundrum, Callicott introduces the concept of scale. In Callicott's words:

Leopold was keenly aware that nature is dynamic, but, under the sway of mid-century equilibrium ecology, he conceived of natural change primarily in evolutionary, not in ecological, terms. Nevertheless, scale is equally normative when ecological change is added to evolutionary change, that is, when normal climatic oscillations and patch dynamics are added to normal rates of extinction, hybridization, and speciation (Callicott, 2002: 100).

Callicott clearly affirms the existence of paradigms shift in ecological development from the balance of nature to that of flux of nature and this, to him, does not hinder the land ethics, however, he thinks that there is a need to alter the moral maxim postulated by Leopold (1998: 123-124) which suggests that, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" to the one which indicates that, "A thing is right when it tends to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Callicott, 2001: 216). Evidently, he transposes Leopold's ethical criterion to indicate, first, that environmental disturbances are natural (that is, there are disasters that are not directly or indirectly caused by humans, which suggests that the notion of stability is misconstrued by conservatists) and to establish that, second, it is the rate of humans' alteration on the environment that raises the ethical concern in the first place. Callicott (2001: 215) observes that, "Long before *Homo sapiens* evolved, violent disturbances regularly occurred in nature. And they still occur, quite independently of human agency" but, "problem with anthropogenic disturbances—such as industrial forestry and agriculture, exurban development, drift net-fishing—is that they are far more frequent, widespread, and regularly occurring than are non-anthropogenic disturbances..." (Callicott, 2001: 215).

Thirdly, Callicott believes that through the 'community' and 'kinship' concepts that are deducible from 'ecology' and 'evolutionary' sciences respectively, it will be convincing to advance a land ethics to provide a moral standing to all species, just as social ethics has been employed to provide moral consideration to all humans. Like Leopold, Callicott refers to the concept of intrinsic and inherent values to negate the subordination of nonhuman interests to economic gains of humans. He, like Leopold, then see the urgent task of environmentalists ad that of rejecting human centeredness mode of thinking that reduces land to mere soil to be use for economic gain. To resolve environmental crises therefore, both Leopold and Callicott advance (1) moral considerability of land, (2) respect to land and all the members of the ecological community, (3) development of ecological conscience, (4) application of new theoretical lens rather than traditional applied ethical theories, and (5) given much roles to private individuals in conservative management.

The land ethics has been a guidebook or compendium on environmental ethics since the days of Leopold. It is without doubt one of the best works on environmental ethics. Although it should not be overrated since many problems are yet to be completely resolved in it. Many writers have indeed showed the negative aspects of Leopold's thought, even after it has been reworked by Callicott. Darren Domsy and Eric R. Horn's Criticisms are intriguing and constructive. We are not interested in pointing at all the problems that other scholars have identified in Leopold's land ethics in this piece. Rather, we are interested in showing how the land ethics can develop better theoretical foundation from the mixture of Hegel's dialectics and Leopold-Callicottian ecological lens to yield a methodical footing that we shall call 'Dialectical ecologism.' It is through this method that we seek to show the import of Hegel's view on contemporary attempt to resolve environmental concerns.

4. The Theoretical Import of Hegel's Idealism on Environmental Issues

There are number of ways that Hegel's idealism can provide internal order for environmental ethicists' position, especially Leopold and Callicott's theories that have resemblance with Hegel's idealism in certain respects. As it is vital to stress, here, that both Hegel and the exponents of land ethics are interested in showing how human actions can be carried out in a way that contradictions are in thought and actions are resolved. It is vital also to note that contradiction is the thrust of idealism and environmental ethics. Hegel, for instance, seeks to remove contradictions in the way which reality is conceived on the one hand, and in the use to which nature is put to on the other. Environmentalists are interested on how humans' erroneous world outlook about their place in the scheme of things can be corrected in a way that they will be helped to see clearly that all entities have roles to play in the scheme of things and that no idea of superiority can be justified. Thus, to pursue the interest of one entity or species (man) at the detriment or expense of another (nature) is therefore to advance the importance of

the part over the whole. This, to Hegel, is a misconception, and detrimental to attaining progress.

The emphasis of Hegel, like that of Leopold and Callicott, is to ignite the intellectual consciousness in us that the interest of the whole is to be considered if meaningful change is to be realized. However, if one stresses that a particular entity is superior to others, this ought, as a matter of fact, not to lead to the extinction of its contradiction. Going by this, the issue of consciousness being the major tool for social reconstruction becomes necessary. But what kind of education can resolve the dialectical tension that subsists between human and nature, and matter and consciousness? Suggestions to this question have been provided by Hegel and Leopold. Whereas Hegel seems to suggest the Absolute thesis where contradictions are united in an harmonious way wherein the parts are not destroyed but reconciled into the whole, Leopold employs ecological lens to show that each species, which is in conflict with other species, needs other species to survive. The lesson here is that it will be dangerous, in the practical sense, to think that humans are above nature, and that they have rights to use up the world's resources. It is erroneous to think that human can live without nonhumans. How is this possible? It is ever wrong, we think, to pollute the environment even if such pollution will not harm humans. However, for Hegel, what is needed is consciousness renewal.

The point therefore comes more vivid when we observe that we cannot do without plants and animals. Thus, we live and have our existence on them, for without them man's existence is an illusion. As Paul Sheppard (1973: 550) rightly says that, "Man is in the world and his ecology is the nature of that *inness*." We cannot live long if we continue to live as if pollution and global warming are not capable of putting us out of life. Whether this point is seen as anthropocentric or not, one thing we need to add is that in it—the logical tie with non-human beings is evident. All environmental ethics therefore is anthropocentric in a sense, but because we are attempting to save other species—the extension is non-anthropocentric. Thus, there is no contradiction involved in saying that we are advancing both positions. What seems fundamental is that the non-anthropocentric perspective is more robust. However, it is advanced from the point of view of man. We are seeking for a better approach to save the world; hence our worldview should be at most more humane, more logical and more fruitful.

Man and nature are part of the ecological community. Hence, the way man thinks about nature is how he will relate with it. Since theory, as we have posited, must be brought to life, our worldview about reality ought to be improved if we are to resolve practical environmental problems. It is a theory that suggests that consciousness and the actual are interconnected that can provide a guide to good environmental thesis. This is the view that lies assessable in Hegel's idealism. The idea of man versus nature should be resolved. Thus, the interconnectivity of man and nature should be stressed, and this is what Hegel describes as the absolute, whereas Leopold advances same with ecology. It is apposite that we affirm that the understanding of our environment requires the understanding of Leopoldian ecological relation of man to land. This relation is primarily to be looked at from the standpoint of ideology or consciousness remodel, rather than by advancing a new ethics, a theory of intrinsic right of nature or a theory of moral considerability to land has Leopold and others have done. The purpose of ecology to us is to enable us see the chain or connection among species and how one thing depends on the other for survival. The idea of Hegel shows this organic relation among beings clearly. Thus, Hegel's thesis of the absolute is the totality of reality seen in their interconnectedness. As the foregoing indicates, the lesson that one could bring forth is that considerable effort should be made to see reality in this light. It is after this has been done can we attempt a consciousness renewal. We have capacity to change our way of looking as thinking beings and this is what is important in environmental studies. Thus, Callicott (2011: 127) posits that, "We are thinking animals; if not uniquely thinking animals, then certainly, among all animals; we specialize and excel in thinking." There is a need to bring forth the ecological way of seeing to fully grapple with the problems that assail us. Sheppard (1973: 551) writes:

And so ecology as applied to man faces the task of renewing a balanced view where now there is man-centeredness, even pathology of isolation and fear. It implies that we must find room in "our" world for plants and animals, even for their togetherness and their opposition. It further implies exploration and openness across an inner boundary- an ego boundary- and appreciative understanding of the animal in ourselves which our heritage of Platonism, Christian morbidity, duality, and mechanism have long held repellent and degrading.

How do we advance this philosophy that would largely be result-oriented? To answer this question, we think that there is limit to what a single theory or people can do. This paper is therefore advancing a dialectical ecology as one of the plausible answers in environmental ethics and it is an attempt to complement other works on environmental activism. Dialectical ecology affirms on the one hand, that man and nature are interconnected. This connectivity of man to nature indicates that phenomena of nature or reality are not in isolation and should not lead to mutual exclusion. This presupposes that reality ought to be conceived in this manner. Here, we are advancing a view similar to Hegel's method that the reconciliation process should be a form of settlement, agreement or harmony in reality. This settlement arises from the fact that nature or man cannot stand on its own

without other realities. As we have argued above, the dissimilarity between anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric philosophy lies in their way of seeing. Consciousness renewal is therefore what is needed for friendly environment. Dialectics therefore enables us to grasp the interconnectivity among species, whereas ecology relates this interdependency to human and natural concerns.

5. Conclusion

This paper has attempted an exploration of Hegel's idealism to resolving contemporary environmental concerns. In this bid, we considered the import of Hegel's idealism to Leopold and Callicott's environmental ethics, thereby showing the connections between idealism and environmental ethics. The paper concluded that Hegel's idealism is invaluable to confronting recent environmental hurdles that the land ethic is aimed at resolving without involving itself in absurd conclusion that nonhuman species have intrinsic value.

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