Essencism as an African Paradigm Towards the Salvation of the Environment

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Abstract

The present global environmental crisis is traceable to certain fundamental strands of Judeo-Christian thinking that actually encourage the over exploitation of nature for the sole benefit of man. This is anchored on the firm belief that nature as created is basically for the purpose of man-humans. This Judeo-Christian thinking of man's dominance of the earth is classically depicted or captured in Genesis Chapter 1, Verse 27-28 where the Bible says "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him, male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over fish of the sea and over fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth". This biblical command and blessing constitute what emboldened the human race to see nature as an object of exploitation and exploration. This also, promote isolationism of humans-man as being distinct and different from nature. With this isolationist understanding and posture, man developed his twin cognitive activities of science and technology as portent instruments of exploitation and exploration to conquer nature. It is therefore the development of science and technology as both instrument of exploitation, exploration and weapon to conquer and subdue nature that has led to several dislocation of nature's delicate balance, which has brought what is generally refer to as environmental problems or crisis. In this paper therefore, effort will be made to show that it is the activities of man through the instrumentality of science and technology that has created the environmental hazards that the world is now faced with. It will also be argued the extremism necessitated by the Judeo-Christian thinking can be moderated through the educative process, which can be achieved through essencism as a philosophy. It is the position of the paper that the current environmental crisis can be curbed through a process that will make man to realize his essence on earth.

Keywords: Essencism, Africa, Paradigm, Salvation and Environment

1. Introduction

Humans see themselves as being created in the image of the transcendent supernatural God, and as such are distinctly separate from nature. It is this orthodox Christian ideology that led to the untrammeled exploitation and exploration of nature through human cognitive creation of science and technology. This can be seen in the way modern Western science is frame with the matrix of Christian theology, which portrays serious arrogance towards nature. Indeed, without science and technology the environmental extremes and crisis the world is currently exposed to may not have been possible. It is science and technology, Judeo-Christianity itself that basically provide the deep-seated drive to unlimited exploitation of nature.

Clearly, there is a Christian sense in the defilement of our paradise-earth, which can be seen in the Biblical "Garden of Eden", which was a microcosm of the entire planet. Man was put in the "Garden of Eden" for a purpose of understanding the complex nature of

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the universe, so as to be in a better position to domesticate nature through sustenance of its delicate balance. However, man's disobedience through his acquisition of the knowledge of science and technology (forbidden fruit) led man to assume the position of creatorhood. With this knowledge of science and technology, nature was viewed as object to be fully exploited, explored and conquered for the benefit of man. This therefore, created a gulf between man and nature in one hand, and God and man on the other. This scenario led to the isolationist posture of man, whereby, man becomes a distinct entity far away from nature.

This generally created a dynamism that generates so much confusion in the affairs of man. This confusion has been the focus of philosophers from the era of Plato and Aristotle, where philosophers sought to provide answers to questions regarding nature, human existence, values and ways of understanding and relating with nature. Philosophers primarily have addressed the human conditions. With the emergence of environmental crisis, a new specialization has come out that takes into consideration our definition of relationships and responsibilities to nonhuman beings. The current environmental crisis can indeed be defined through multiple lenses that include the effects of pollution, destruction of habitat, decimation of plants and animal species, and a fast declining quality of life. The consequences and effects of humans on the environment is a reoccurring global issue, with certain people maintaining an anthropocentric view, which holds that the resources of the earth are basically defined in their utilitarian relationship to humans, while some others are of the view that all living things are alike when it comes to value.

It rather very difficult to see how distinctly separate humans are from nature. Such a separation can only lead to selfishness towards fellow humans, and equally induces human selfishness towards nature. It is therefore the position of the paper that it is this selfishness of man towards nature that has generated the current global environmental crisis and problems. These environmental crisis and problems, the paper posits are clear products of scientific and technological development as encouraged by Judeo-Christian theology and thinking. To solve these problems and curb the crisis, the paper proposes a philosophical framework of "Essencism" as an African paradigm towards the salvation of the environment. This however, can be achieved through the process of education. Our methodology here will be basically analytic.

2. The Impacts of Science and Technology on the Environment

It is an established fact that the environment is in crisis due largely to human actions. This human actions are science and technology, which are two basic human cognitive activities geared toward the domestication of nature or the environment. But before we proceed to discuss in details the impact of science and technology, it is important we define the key terms here, which is aimed to remove any form of ambiguity and provide clarity of meaning. The key concepts discoverable here are science, technology and environment.

Science: Science is basically a search for knowledge and understanding, which is characterized by systematization and motivated by curiosity. So the output of scientific endavour usually includes hypotheses, theories that offer explanation to the observed

phenomena. Science is anchored on empiricism through observation and experimentation (Ekanem, 2008).

Technology: This is a very broad term or concept that usually comprises the crafting of materials and transforming them into implements that permits man to control and manipulate natural resources so as to satisfy his needs. It is generally seen as the practical application of scientific knowledge based on creativity (Ekanem, 2005, 2008, 2014).

Environment: This is the totally of the physical structures that surround humans, which comprises of land, air, water, space, time and the socio-cultural settings inherent therein. The environment is a very encompassing concept that includes several living and non-living things such as the atmosphere and climate, the cosmic and several other energy resources (Ebin, 1995 and Anijah-Obi 1996).

With this clarification, we can see that we are looking at the impact the systematized knowledge of man as a result of curiosity, and the practical application of such knowledge based on creativity can have on the totality of the physical and non-physical structures that surround man.

Science and technology basically support our society by assisting us to develop certain facts and discover new ways of surviving, but this equally have harmful and negative consequences on the environment. There are clearly several benefits and uses derivable from these twin human cognitive activities. Indeed, without science and technology, it would have been almost impossible to cope with the chaotic and disorderliness that characterized our society (Baez, 2000).

Science and technology also impact on the environment in devastating ways. Science and technology equally have the "greatest forces for beneficent social change in human history and will continue to be needed to solve the economic and social problems of the future" (Beaz, Retrieved 2016).

Modern technology has provided humanity with enormous power to manipulate almost everything that includes the earth, air, fire and water. This is aptly captured by Malone et al, (1984) where they opined that modern bulldozers and power shovels can move masses of earth's surface comparable to the height of the Egyptian pyramid within weeks instead of several years. They also stated that the effluents of the factories can affect and raise the temperature of rivers, while the sky can be made dark within minutes through atmospheric pollution.

These scientific and technological powers of the modern time has helped to accelerate the trends of environmental degradation and deterioration. Here we see that science and technology have yielded enormous social benefits and conveniences, but these are accompanied with severe destructive consequences, hence, the question has been; is science and technology a blessing or a curse?

To be able to provide a comprehensive satisfactory response to this question, will imply going outside the scope of this paper. This we intend not to abandon but offer an explanation that will sustain the goal of this work.

Science and technology have a strong symbiotic relationship as both assist each other to grow and function more effectively. Science provides technology with the basic and fundamental knowledge to carry out its creative works of creating and producing instruments and tools that will also in turn aids science to expand its frontier of curiosity to acquire knowledge and understand nature better. Hence, Paul Kick Patrick (1986)

states "I think the human race is a hostage of its technology which is the child of the science. I used to think we were a noble racket (science) and that truth should make us free. Now I have to be dubious".

This suggests that technology is a product of science and this offspring of science (technology) has brought about a burden of doubt as to the nobility of science when it comes to truth value of its methodology, explanation, laws, and theories (Baez, 1976).

Science and technology are said to be outputs of two distinct activities that are considered equally very vital activities. One involves the search for knowledge and understanding which are clearly characteristic of science, the other have to do with the application of knowledge with the sole purpose of satisfying human needs, which is the major character of technology. To some, there appear an overlap of science and technology in a manner that there exists no recognition of their basic differences as divergent modes of activity.

The motivation of science is fundamentally curiosity that springs and rises from the deep desire to know and understand. Science has as its outputs hypotheses, theories and laws that uniquely explain the observed phenomena. Technology on its part is said to be explored by science as it concerns what it (technology) creates that never existed before. This therefore makes creativity the cornerstone or pillar of technology just the way curiosity is to the cornerstone of science. There can not be a generation of science without the key element of curiosity and technology cannot strive without the basic ingredient or element of creativity. So, the outputs of technology include things like new devices and procedures unlike the science which is basically explanation. The goal of technology is to bring about things that will satisfy human needs and wants and not to theorize about such devices and procedures.

From here, we can see that the negative sides of technology emerge from one of its core goals or objectives which target is to dominate and control the materials and the forces of nature through certain procedures and devices designed and produced to meet and satisfy human needs, which are usually employed to proliferate human wants (Baez, Retrieved 2016).

Technological advances has led to the emergence of a complex social system of inequality since it is not every body that benefit equally or even benefit at all, from technological change. Also, advancement in technology has brought about beautiful things of life, which make it possible for man to expand his economic growth more exponentially. Technology is employed to raise the standard of production and manufacture of goods and provide better services through transportation of goods and services. It has assisted immensely in the means of communication which has been made faster and easier. Trade and commerce has flourished at an exponential and geometrical proportion due largely to technological advances, which has led to globalization. But as trade and commerce grew, there emerge serious impacts of technology on the natural environment such as air, land and water with high degree of pollution, degradation, deterioration and contamination.

Again, there is a social impact of technological advancements as can be seen in our beautiful cities, but with the negative effects of insecurity, pollution and congestion. The effects of warfare technology on the natural environment is equally enormous. Indeed, there is no aspect of our lives that is not impacted by science and technology in both

positive and negative ways. So, the question therefore is; how can we regulate technology or ameliorate its negative effects on our natural environment that has come to pose a mortal danger to human existence? Should man abandon technology or increase technology to solve the present environmental challenges and problems?

It is in an effort to provide answers to some of these questions that this paper is inspired. It is our thinking and firm belief that the challenges posed by science and technology on our natural environment can be effectively tackled through the educative process base on a philosophical parameters of Essencism.

3. Education, Environment and Essencism

It has been shown through the above analysis that science and technology are serious threats to our environment. This is due to the fact that the conception of technology and even science is done with man seen as an outsider from nature. This implies that man sees science and technology as tools that will aid him to conquer nature. This conception of science and technology present mechanistic pictures of these twin human cognitive activities, and therefore portray man as seriously lacking in the "inner compulsion to understand the world as a meaningful cosmos and to take up a position towards it" (Weber, 1964:117).

What can be deduced from this is clearly the fact that human socio-environmental problems are largely due to our spiritual depravity basically and generally championed through science and technology. So, to provide a permanent and enduring solution to this, require a proper schooling for man to realize the error in his reasoning and approach to nature. This education of man can only be successful through a philosophical model of education that will develop a balanced personality of the physical and spiritual that can adequately comprehended both aspects of himself and nature in which man is a pivotal part.

The credence and relevance of this assertion or position is graphically captured by Appleyard (2004), when he says, "… we have paid a price for the material success of our classical science- we have been spiritually depraved". It is this spiritual depravity that has led to the kind of science and technology that human kind has conceived which has dislocated the balanced web of nature, hence, the environmental havoc experienced globally.

It is our position that this havoc is a product of disconnection between man and nature, and this can only be restored through an educational system that combines the physical and spiritual development of man. It is on the basis of this that Essencism as a philosophy of education becomes a portent philosophical paradigm towards reconnection of man and nature. This is because all other philosophies like idealism, realism and pragmatism only emphases the spiritual or physical (material) aspect and not both.

Unlike these other philosophies, Essencism is a philosophy of education that seeks to develop both the physical and spiritual aspects of man through the educative process. As a philosophy, Essencism advocates and promotes dualism, which is the essence of the human person. It attempts to develop a complete human personality that will be well balanced physically and spiritually through education. The instrumentality of education is

adopted here because, it is through education that values and the worthwhileness of any culture can be transmitted from one generation to the other.

Again, it is through education that science and technology is promoted and made socio-economic tools. However, this has been done through a wrong philosophical foundation of either idealism, realism, existentialism, naturalism, pragmatism, etc that is always deficient in either in the physical or the spiritual. But generally, science and technology has been championed through a philosophy that is entirely physical and materialistic. It is this wrong philosophical foundation in our educational system that has led to negative effects of science and technology in our environmental degradation. This is a result of disharmony between man and nature as promoted in our schools.

This general disharmony can only be savaged and corrected through Essencism as a philosophy since it strives to develop both the physical and the spiritual aspects of man which can enable man to realize his essence and purpose on planet earth. The need for Essencism can be seen in the words of Capra (1990), when he declares:

I believe the world view implied by modern physics is inconsistent with our present society which does not reflect the harmonious interrelatedness we observe in nature. To achieve a stage of dynamic balance, a radically different social and economic structure will be needed: a cultural revolution in the true sense of the word. The survival of our whole civilization may depend on whether we can bring about such a change. It will depend, ultimately, on our ability to adopt some of the Yin attitudes of Eastern mysticism, to experience the wholeness of nature and the art of living with it in harmony (28).

From this we can see the need for Essencism as a solution to the current disharmony. This is because, the dynamic balance, "advocated here is that between the physical and the spiritual which is the goal of Essencism. Also "the Yin attitudes of Eastern mysticism" is nothing but the spiritual development of man which will place man in a better position as a complete personality to realize that he (man) is part and parcel of nature. It is this essencist approach that can make it possible for man "to experience the wholeness of nature and the art of living with it in harmony".

Indeed, it is Essencism that can establish that wholesome connectedness between man and nature. This is because, Essencism sees man as a biological organism that is with nature. As a result of this relationship with nature, Essencism will make it possible for man to be cautious when he (man) practically acts on his environment, and this will necessarily bring about changes in the positive side. This therefore, requires man, to make use of his intelligence to relate with his environment in a way or manner that will be beneficial and favourable to him. To achieve this, man needs to be calculative enough as to weigh and know the consequences of his relationship. This process requires certain degree of intelligence, which based on anticipated consequences of man's actions on his environment. Accordingly, Childs (1931) in his book *Education and the Philosophy of Experimentalism* opines that intelligence is not a substantive thing but rather:

Intelligence is behavior that is guided by anticipated consequences. In other words, we have behave intelligently when we participate in the movement events in such a way as to shape the direction of present happenings so that they terminate in outcomes favourable to growth and expansion. Every tool which man has invented in order to better achieve his ends is an evidence of behavior marked by this quality of mind (75)

What can be gleaned from this are the facts that intelligence and the quality of the mind are very vital in science and technology. These are the twin tools as already stated upon which man employ to domesticate his environment. So, to be able to improve the intelligence and the quality of minds that produced the science and technology that has destroyed our environment is through the educative process also. However, this educative process needs be anchored on a philosophic foundation that will shape and guide such educative process (es). It is on the basis of this that Essencism becomes an effective pathway through which we can develop the minds of our scientists and technologists, and provide them with a philosophic intelligence that can aid them to invent what can sustain the environment and not destroy it. This is because, historically, it is science and technology that has led to our environmental disasters. This is succinctly captured by Bohm (1980) through a central idea of intellectual and spiritual history when he alludes:

…we are in some way 'wrong'. Its most obvious contemporary forms lies in the image of our selves as polluters and wreckers of the planet. But underlying this and all its other current expressions is the conviction that there is something wrong with the way we 'know' things. This modern anxiety is an obvious descendant of the Christian notion of original sin. Both imply that there is an intrinsic flaw in our relationship with our world and both suggest that this flaw arises from a corrupted form of knowledge. This Christian corruption arises from our pride that made us wish to know more than God intended. The scientific corruption arises from the method of separation and dissection, of isolating parts of the whole in order to understand them. This has made us destroyers of nature. In order to understand the world, we have to cut into it or break it open. We must create artificial conditions what we do not do is passively contemplate the whole. We do not reverence creation; we break it open like a child to see how it works. And we cannot put it back together again classical science has not merely misled us in our laboratories and observatories; it has made us wrong in our world (138).

Here, science and technology are the problems of our environmental degradation due to human aggressive exploitation and exploration of nature. This approach has led to disconnection of man from the storehouse of inspiration and knowledge, which only Essencism can restore. This restoration can be made possible because Essencism involves the combination of the physical and spiritual dimensions of man into a whole that will create a unique system, character, and culture for Africans. This combination will assist Africa to develop in a balanced manner devoid of the mistake of Western science and technology which was devoid of the spiritual dimension but rather places more emphasis on material (physical) aspect of development. This is what inspired Alexis Carrell according to Omoregbe (1990) to assert that:

Western civilization, with its scientific and technological advances has not been of much help to man. On the contrary, it has only succeeded in making man understood, neglected and unhappy. The result is that man has becomes increasingly unknown. Western civilization has been developing in the wrong direction that it has now come to a disastrous end with its misplacement of value (146).

This disaster of Western civilization is the environmental challenges its science and technology has presented to humanity. Man indeed is misled into ecological Armageddon as a result of scientific and technological advancements which are seriously

flawed due to their materialist inclinations. So, this mortal danger that humanity is faced with can only be salvaged through an educative system that will completely bring about a new kind of knowledge that is balanced, and this can be achieved with Essencism, since it has the capacity to develop the human person through the physical and spiritual dimensions that will create a complete personality that is aware of his role and function on planet earth.

4. The Roles of Essencism

When Essencism is brought into the educational and environmental domains it will help:

1. Engage the citizens of all demographics to think critically and creatively when evaluating scientific, technological and environmental issues.

2. It will assist the citizens to make informed and educated judgment about scientific, technological and environmental issues.

3. It will help develop skills and a commitment to act independently and collectively to sustain the environment, improve on the methods and qualities of science and technology.

4. It will enhance citizen's appreciation of science, technology and their impacts on the environment.

5. It will help moderate the citizens explorative and exploitative tendencies, and this will bring about science and technology that will be environmental friendly.

6. It will help reorient education to empower individuals to make informed decisions for scientific, technological and environmental integrity, social justice, and economic liability for both present and future generations, with respect to cultural diversities (UNESCO, 2015).

7. It will help promote general education on climate change as this relate to science and technology. This will create and enhance public understanding of climate change, science and technology and their consequences and problems. Also, this will help to prepare present and future generations to limit the magnitude of these and how best to respond to this challenge (Beatty 2012).

5. Benefits of Essencism

It is explicit in the analysis here that Essencism is an effective philosophy that will be holistic enough to correct the anomalies that has led to the present state of socio-environmental malady. This becomes an imperative when we realize that there is no socio-political and economic issues that Africans and the governments will better articulate or formulate without the vital imprimatur of science, technology and the environment hence, Essencism as a philosophy will assist to,

1. Establish a relationship between science and technology, environment and social issues.

2. Combine sound knowledge of diverse field and professions.

3. Evaluate science, technology and environment and their impacts and general development of the society.

4. Critically estimate and reflect on scientific and technological impacts or effects in relation to ethical values, principles and standards.

5. Create and bring about the ability to solve problems and articulate decision making skills that will help ameliorate the negative impacts of science and technology.

6. Make the citizenry to be very effective, active and participatory in issues. that relate to science, technology and the environment.

7. Create environmental impact awareness of science and technology.

8. Make science education to be social and practical oriented.

9. Define the social relevance of science and technology.

10. Place man as the focal point of all developmental process especially in the aspects of science, technology and environment.

11. Bring about a system of science and technology that will be environmental and social friendly

12. Create harmonious relationship between man, nature science and technological progress.

13. Identify and correct certain unfortunate image of technology through education such as the myopic acceptance of all technological innovations as good and basically indicating development.

14. Develop a store of knowledge, skill and experience that are peculiar to Africa that will enable Africans to service and satisfy their basic necessities of life such as food, cloth and shelter.

15. To encourage creative ability of Africans that will aid them to explore and exploit nature with dignity, restraint and realization that they are part and parcel of nature, and therefore evolve a technological culture that will suit the specific needs of the continent and still promote sustainability.

16. Inspire a consciousness that will lead to the Africanization of the productive process through wide spread knowledge that underpins creative technology which is specifically Africanized to a defined conceptual standard. The technology that will emerge from this will have a continental outlook of "Africanness", tailored or designed to suitt the African environment.

17. Create an educational system that will lead to technological evaluation within the comparative advantage of the continent, which is progressively dependent on the metaphysics of the African people.

18. Facilitate indigenous scientific and technological advancement through the school system by awakening the spirit of creativity and self-reliance that is dependent upon resource availability within the continent.

19. Encourage diversification, technological pluralism and effective and proper adaptation of all technological or practical knowledge to respond naturally to African socio-cultural pattern.

20. Bring out a system of education that will make it possible for human and material resources to be effectively combined to develop an appropriate technology that will lead to sustainable development in Africa (Ekanem, 2005)

These efforts must be carried out in such a way that these will systematically, functionally and structurally reflect and conform to biophysical environmental conditions prevalent in Africa. Also, the technological advances that will emerge as a result of Essencsim will

make man to be materially and spiritually free, and not domesticated by technology. Through Essencism, man will have the means and capacity to subjugate technology through activities that will favour and promote balancing nature's demands. Through Essencism man will come to the consciousness of the universal law which is anchored on the principles of equality, balance and harmony. Our present approaches to science and technology are seriously lacking in these principles and are in flagrant violation of the universal law. Russell (1981) captures this vividly when she asserts that "The basic answer to all human troubles lies in the one fact that man's way of life has been a constant violation of one universal law which demands that all transactions in Nature must be balanced and equal in their interchange. Nature demands that every transaction between divided pairs of mates in the electric universe shall be so complete that each will cancel the other without leaving any residue of unbalance whatsoever…which does not end in harmony and equal happiness for both, leaves a residue of unbalance which is best pictured by the word tension"(130).

The present environmental hazards is necessitated by the "tension" created by science and technology "transactions", which has been in constant violation of the universal law. This tension can be reduced and removed when our education is made to prepare the minds of Africans with essencist spirit and attitudes. These will make it possible for Africans to pursue and do science and technology within the framework Essencism, which puts man in the same level with nature. It will on the strength of this that science and technology will become tools for human discovery comfort and as a means of enhancing and sustaining the environment.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to examine the role Essencism as a philosophy of education can play towards the salvation of the environment. It also aims at identifyng the impacts of science and technology on the environment.

It has been discovered that our environment is seriously threatened through the twin cognitive activities of man, which are science and technology. The root cause of this environmental threat has been traced to the Judeo-Christian doctrine that empowers man to have authority over all that has been made available in nature.

Again, the environmental disaster is attributed to the twisted or flawed knowledge of man of the biblical command as found in the book of Genesis. This is because; science and technology inclined more to the material aspect of human nature, and thereby ignoring the spiritual aspect. This in a way created disconnection between man and nature. This is also due to the violation of nature's law of balance and equality as results of scientific and technological activities. So, education can become an effective tool towards the correction of this fundamental error of man. However, to achieve this through the educative process, such an educative process must be laid on a philosophic foundation which we refer to in this paper as Essencism.

The adoption of Essencism is due to the failure of other Western philosophies to have the capacity to promote the physical and the spiritual aspects of man at the same time. So, Essencism is that philosophy of education that can effectively develop a balanced personality of the physical and the spiritual. This becomes an imperative and vital

because our environmental problems are products of material inclination of the philosophies that inspire science and technology as developed by the West. With Essencism as our philosophy of education, scientific and technological advances will manifest a reflective essence of man as both a physical and spiritual being. Technology and science will also not be seen a means of exploitation and exploration, slavery and subjugation but rather vital cognitive human activities to sustain nature, protect the environment and provide man with the comfort he deserves as controller of the habitable earth.

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