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Chemhuru, Munamoto: *Environmental Justice in African Philosophy*. – London and New York: Routledge 2022. 156 S., geb. € 168,35 ISBN: 978-1-032-00667-3

In this book, Munamoto Chemhuru, focuses on African views of society and ethical concepts of existence. He insists that environmental justice emerges from African philosophies, such as communitarian ethics, relational ethics, *unhu/ubuntu* ethics, ecofeminist ethics and intergenerational ethics. The book reminds us that “I am what I am because of who we all are”, thus excluding self-centredness in the African environment ethical philos., because life in Africa is about joint living with the dead, the living, the future generation, gender and non-human.

C. first shows how African environmental ethics was not part of scholarly discourse prior to the 20th century. He, however, demonstrated that one cannot do justice to African environmental philos. by denying African environmental ethics because the two are connected.

He then explores the issue of environmental (in)justice in Africa bringing out the North-South challenge. He indicates that environmental deterioration is affecting everyone around the world regardless of their social, political, geographical, or economic background (43). He explores the unfairness of the distribution of environmental justice between the global North and the global South, indicating that Sub-Saharan Africa has been victim of injustice since the 16th century through the slave trade and colonization and is still being unjustly exploited by the global North. For him, environmental justice in Africa should not be the responsibility of Africans alone. The global North ought to bear its obligations in the situation because it is linked historically to the exploitation of the African continent. He opines that environmental justice is a fundamental human and economic rights issue in Africa because of the interplay of various factors such as inequality and deprivation, unequal treatment and the non-involvement of everyone in environmental decision making (41). He argues that those who face environmental injustice also face fundamental human rights violations. This echoes Athena Gorospe’s declaration that “[t]he environmental crisis is a justice issue because the ones most affected by it are the poor,” such as Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans. For Gorospe, climate change affects these poorest populations even though they contribute less to greenhouse emission.¹

Moreover, C. considers environmental justice issues from the perspective of African land ethics. The land ethics include not only human beings but also various other aspects of the community and environment, such as soils, water bodies, plant species, and animals. Thus, community in Africa goes beyond human beings to include its interdependent nature with other non-human creation (58). He highlights that before colonisation, African land ethics was based on communal ownership and

¹ Athena E. GOROSPE: “Evangelicals and the Environment; Going Beyond Stewardship”, in: *ERT* 37/3 (2013) 256–266, 262.

ontological connections between land and community, but this was suppressed, and everything was destroyed by the exploitative policies of colonialism (61). There is a link between the land and the various forms of being in African ontology, such as the spiritual beings, humans, the dead, and the future generations. The land in Africa is the property of the dead, the living, and the unborn (66). He opines that in “the African land ethics, land should not be conceived as a private property or a product in the economic sense” (71). Sié Eric Dah² explains that among the Birifor, land must not be sold. The exploitation of the land is a fact in West Africa today. The reviewer documented a vivid example of how the denial of the sacredness of gold in the Southwest of Burkina Faso led to massive destruction of environment and social relationships in some communities.³

Furthermore, he talks of African relational environmental justice by giving attention to the relationships between various being in the African ontological realm (75). He emphasises the idea of communitarian living in Africa, arguing for the importance of *Ubuntu* as a relational African philos. (79). C. emphasises *Ubuntu* which is an ancient African word meaning “humanity to others”. *Ubuntu* binds humans as related persons. *Ubuntu* might therefore be taken as the basis for human relationships and even conceptions of duties for justice towards each other and towards other non-human beings. *Unhu/ubuntu* is therefore a relational ethics, which will be useful for our understanding of the connection of environmental justice in African relational ethics because of its accommodation of duties not only towards fellow persons, but also to other beings that humans may not be directly related to, because environmental justice is about justice beyond human communities (79–80). The uniqueness of human beings is overlaid by the interconnectedness and interrelatedness that characterise the whole of reality (81).

Moreover, C. raises the issue of African ecofeminist environmental justice, highlighting the role of women, children, and the disadvantaged communities with regards to environmental justice. He argues that although African countries are the most affected by environmental injustice, women are more severely affected than men (107). He views that “[t]he central argument of African ecofeminist thinking is that social and political philosophies, such as patriarchal systems based on the oppression of women, colonialism, and dualist thinking are responsible for supporting philosophies of domination, exploitation and colonialism in Africa” (108). “The dichotomisation of the individual into patrilineal and matrilineal categories does not really make sense in some parts of Africa” (110). For C., the female agents are the teachers of core values to children. J. A. Kayode Makinde⁴ also argues that “[t]he very first values in life are taught to children by their mothers – language, taboos, norms and traditions, superstitions and restrictions.”⁵ Edith Deen adds that while men are fighting over positions to make themselves known, women continue quietly to witness and instruct children in the faith.

Finally, C. talks about intergenerational environmental justice in African philos. This explores the importance of future generations when talking about environmental justice in African philos. Intergenerational justice considers both human and non-humans needs and wellbeing for present and

² Sié Eric DAH: *L'Église, Champ de Dieu: Intelligence du Mystère à partir de l'Image du Champ en Milieu Birifor*, (Mémoire en Théologie, 6ème Année), Koum, unpublished dissertation, 1998, 13–14.

³ Ini Dorcas DAH: “Desacralisation of Gold in South West Burkina Faso. A Christian response to gold mining and its consequences on creation”, in: *Essays on the Land, Ecotheology and Traditions in Africa*, ed. by Benjamin Abotchire NTRH / Mark S. AIDOO / Daniel Nii Aboagye ARYEH, Eugene, OR 2019, 192–204.

⁴ J. A. Kayode MAKINDE: “Women in Nation Building: A Biblical Approach”, in: *Women, Culture and Theological Education*, ed. by Protus O. KEMDIRIM / Mercy A. ODUYOYE, Nigeria 1998, 66–85, 75.

⁵ Edith DEEN: *Great Women of the Christian Faith*, New York, NY 1959, xix.

future generations (127). For him, human beings need to rethink their present conditions and the future in term of intergenerational distributive environmental justice (129).

Thus, the strength of this work is the argument that the concept of sustainability is not new to the African context for the interconnectedness in African environmental justice considers the human and non-human, animals, keeping the unborn in mind, because to sustain the environment is to make sure that resources are used with the future generations in mind. While the United Nations defines sustainable development as, “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”⁶, it is worth noting that the African dimension goes further, including even the past which is not part of the UN concept of sustainable development. A more thorough proofreading should have enabled this publication to be a tremendous contribution to scholarship in content as well as in form (e. g.: 1, 13, 20, 45, 52, 57, 59, 65, 83, 86, 91, 94, 104, 116, 118, 126, etc.).

I would place this book in the field of Creation Care (Eco-Theology). This is a tremendous contribution to scholarship, because in the current world divided by greed and selfishness it is important to understand that when Africans speak about environmental philos., they include the human and the non-human creation. The other major significant observation is that knowing that Africans have an environmental philos. that includes every aspect of society is crucial for a more holistic treatment of creation and that they play a key role in furthering environmental justice as responsible actors and not merely as passive recipients.

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⁶*Sustainable development*: Meaning and challenges, ed. by Markkus LEHTONEN / Christian DE PERTHUIS / Sylvie DUCHASSAING / Michel DIDIER, Cercle des Économistes, Groupe Caisse des Dépôts, Paris 2002, 3.