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Ubuntu perspective on ecotheology towards environmental justice

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Adherence to Ubuntu, which anchors on interconnectedness, interdependence, conviviality and sacrosanctity of life, can make a significant and positive contribution to environmental justice. As Ubuntu is about belonging, 'I belong therefore I am', human beings [*abantu*] would have a sense of belonging to, interdependence and interconnectedness with the environment and, therefore, do everything to conserve nature.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: It would be enforced by a sense of knowing and appreciating that human beings cannot survive without the rest of creation, whereas the rest of nature can survive without humans. So, human should stop behaving as if everything is about them and co-exist harmoniously with the rest of creation.

Keywords: anthropocentrism; environment; interconnectedness; interdependence; interdisciplinary; Ubuntu.

Introduction

This article provides a perspective of Ubuntu on ecotheological discourse towards environmental justice. The premise is that Ubuntu anchors on interconnectedness, interdependence, conviviality and sacrosanctity of life. Ubuntu is also based on the maxim, 'umntu ngumntu ngabantu', a situation of 'I belong, therefore I am'. It is that 'belonging' that thrusts Ubuntu in the field of ecotheology and in the interest of environmental and ecological justice. *Umntu* [a human being] is an integral part of creation and is adversely affected by the calamities that befall nature. *Umntu* has been largely found culpable of the injustices that take place in ecology, climate and the entire environment. Some of the ills that are attributed to human beings include deforestation, desertification, extinction of species, forced migration, bush fire, air pollution, soil erosion, oil depletion, ozone depletion, greenhouse gas increase, extreme energy, water pollution, natural hazards, metals and solid minerals depletion. In the context of Malawi, the need for energy results in burning charcoal and production of coals. That contributes to deforestation.

Ubuntu is a worldview and an ethic that promotes solidarity and hospitality. The land and the earth discussions are central in the discussion of Ubuntu, thus subscribing to the notion that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof (Ps 24:1). Ubuntu, therefore, calls on the powerful and the rich to be mindful of the poor and less powerful for mutual co-existence, having a fair share of the produce of the earth, so that there is peace and prosperity. In that endeavour, Ubuntu is a call to *umntu* to act responsibly towards each other and towards non-human creatures in the interest of interdependence and interconnectedness. That is responsibility to end poverty, to create a clean and safe environment, and to glorify God through creation. Ubuntu, further, promotes the invocation of African epistemology to pay respect to nature, care for creation, to build a symbiotic cosmological relationship and to encounter and work with God through nature.

Research methods and design

Perspectives on ecotheological discourse

Ecotheological discourse seeks to explore the tripartite relationship of God, cosmos (nature) and humans. It is expected that there should be relationships between God and humans, God and cosmos, and humans and cosmos. The ultimate goal is to achieve environmental and ecological justice. The study is premised on the understanding that humans should be considered only as integral part of creation, and not possessing any special authority or

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distinction from the rest of creation (Ambrosius 2005:2). This view is clear in the 1986 Assisi Declaration where the Christian delegates agreed[1]:

- 'All creation is designed by God to work together and this for God's glory.
- Humans were created to "look after" all that God has created and should not destroy it.
- The world's resources, including animals are not to be exploited. Humans have no licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest his glory.
- No, to nuclear war'.

At the heart of the Declaration was a quest for ecological justice. Ecology is the study or discourse about the whole inhabited earth. From Ambrosius (2005:2), it is learned that:

> Deep ecology promotes the inherent worth of all living beings regardless of their instrumental utility to human needs and insists on the need for the restructuring of modern human societies in accordance with the inherent worth of all of nature in order to achieve ecological or environmental balance.

Ambrosius (2005:2–3) delineates the principles that ecology operates on as intrinsic values, diversity, vital needs, population, human interference, policy changes, quality of life and obligation of action. Ecotheology also focuses on the issues to spell out the role that humans play and their culpability to the atrocities that are experienced in human and non-human life, by commission or omission. It is concerned about the redress that should see the liberation of the rest of creation from those culpabilities.

Andrew Mukaria (2021:17954) delineates the principles of ecotheology, which have been developed through hermeneutics interpretation from different scholars:

- 'The principle of affirming the intrinsic worth of nature. In this case, ecotheology tries to understand that the universe, earth, and all its components have intrinsic value and worth. The goodness of the creation (1 Tim 4:1–5).
- The principle of interconnectedness - That earth is a community of interconnectedness of all living and non-living things, which all depends on each other. This is a premise of the created world (Genesis 4).
- The principle of the voice - the universe, earth as its voice as a living organism (Gaia hypothesis) and can resist injustices (Genesis 4:10, Number 22: 21–35).
- The principle of purpose - the universe and the earth and all its components were placed for a greater purpose (Roman 8:18–22).
- The principle of mutual custodianship - this reflects in the role of the humans with the earth. Instead of being masters on the earth, humans should view themselves as guests on it. Custodians of the host do not deny responsibility but include respect for the bonds between humans and other creatures (Psalm 8).
- The principle of the resistance – this principle claims that the earth and its components actively resist those injustices imposed by humans. Nevertheless, it does not divorce eco-justice from social justice but recognises its claim on human lives by identification and being with the earth (Jeremiah 12:9)'.

The principles that are delineated above could contribute to the salvation of the universe. Soteriological approach to ecotheology is about the liberation and salvation of not only humans but also the rest of creation. It is in consideration of the fact that creation is groaning, eagerly expecting the revelation of the children of God and that it should be 'liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God' (Rm 8:19–21 NIV). Complete salvation and liberation should entail caring for creation, commensurate with God's plan in creation. Salvation should be considered as wholeness or comprehensive well-being. Hence, Ernst Conradie argues that 'God's acts of salvation would target any deficiency in such well-being' (eds. Werner & Jeglitzka 2016:110). Regarding the wholeness of salvation, Conradie goes on to state (eds. Werner & Jeglitzka 2016):

> This accounts for the wide variety of biblical metaphors for salvation (used here as a generic term), including the liberation of slaves, liberation from oppression, healing from life-threatening diseases, feeding the hungry amidst famine, deliverance from evil through exorcism from evil forces, rescuing amidst military and security threats, redemption of those held hostage, reconciliation amidst various forms of violent conflict, the reintroduction of law amidst chaos and anarchy, pedagogy for the ignorant, the reconstruction of society through new visions and so forth. (p. 110)

Conradie misses out freedom that should be granted to the rest of creation, which is the crux of ecotheology. Ecological discourse is a matter of faith. It considers the ecological crisis to be a moral problem as well as an issue of Christian faith, and thus it calls for ecological responsibility. It is about joining and working with the Living God in the salvation of the whole universe. It is about the continued presence of the Living God who is within everything and renewing all things. It is a story of transformation. The call for ecological conversion and consciousness involves a genuine effort to re-articulate proper human self-understanding within creation (Otu 2012:35–36). As ecological discourse and ecotheology are concerned about transformation, the issues of anthropocentrism[2] and anthropocene[3] become central.

1.The World Wildlife Fund (WWF). It was established on 29 April 1961 in Morges, Switzerland and has become a leading organisation in wildlife conservation and protection of endangered species. It presently has over 5 million supporters [worldwildlife.org]. In 1986, the 'Assisi Declaration' of the WWF got together leaders from five religions – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism – to celebrate its 25th anniversary.

2.'Anthropocentrism is a philosophical perspective that places human beings at the centre of importance, suggesting that human lives and interests are the primary or most significant factors in the universe, it often implies that nature and other species are primarily valuable for their utility to humans'. (AI generated)

3.'Anthropocene refers to a proposed geological epoch defined by the significant and potential irreversible impact of human activities on the Earth's climate and ecosystems. It essentially marks the period where humans have become a dominant force in shaping the planet's environment'. (AI generated)

The effects of negative human dominion over nature have been felt over time. The negative effects and dimensions of anthropocentrism should be addressed. We refer to negative effects because some scholars argue that anthropocentrism may not be ruled out as completely bad and that may border on being 'misanthropic'. Kopnina et al. (2018:3) assert that the arguments of those scholars who give a positive spin to anthropocentrism, which include the fact that 'anthropocentrism can and should be a powerful motivation for environmental protection' in recognition of the fact that humans depend entirely on environment for their living and livelihood. Other scholars argue that 'humans possess unique characteristics, such as intelligence, self-awareness, and moral agency, which distinguish them from other living beings' (Tanner 2024:2). These arguments will be expanded on in the last section. Negative effects are based on the fact that anthropocentrism imbues a mindset that 'contributes to environmental degradation, including pollution and species extinction' (Tanner 2024:3).

Christian anthropocentrism contributes to a kind of 'escapism', finding reasons for running away from responsibility. This may be associated with fundamentalist views of using the gospel to denounce the earth as not our home, claiming heaven to be our home. Kavusa (2022:6) lists the six denial 'Biblicist eschatological principles' as follows:

1. 'The principle of imminent cataclysm: Earth is headed for disaster which will happen sooner rather than later.
2. The principle of disconnectedness: We humans do not have to share or feel responsible for Earth's fate. Salvation is for humans, not for Earth.
3. The principle of inevitability: There is nothing we (humans or Earth) can do about it.
4. The principle of transcendence: What really matters is the next world. This world is ephemeral and ultimately unimportant compared to the better future existence.
5. The principle of sovereignty: God is in ultimate (even direct) control of all this.
6. The principle of self-interest: God will rapture "believers" out of this mess at the End'.

The fundamentalist notion, resulting in escapism does not do justice to the call for action towards environmental and ecological justice. Ecotheology is, thus, about putting issues of ecological justice in perspective and restoring the tripartite relationship. It is noted that there are divergent views on the foci of ecotheology according to different worldviews. Conradie (2023) observes that global divides are noted:

> [*A*]long confessional lines, between the North and the South, the West and the East, on issues of gender and sexual orientation and, especially, by reference to contemporary science [*especially in the global North*] and/or traditional, indigenous wisdom [*widespread in the global South*]. (p. 4)

Conradie (2023:5) makes a call to Christians to put their house in order for their message of salvation to resonate with the oppressed, humans and the rest of creation, as a message of liberation, so that salvation is experienced inside and outside of the church, culminating in 'ecological reformation of Christianity'. Thus, Christians shall be enabled 'to transform the world according to the core identity and characteristics of the Triune God, namely mercy and therefore justice' (Conradie 2023:5–6).

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Results

Ubuntu as a call to wholeness

We invoke Ubuntu to the ecotheological discourse, as it resonates with the principles that have been discussed in the previous section. Ubuntu is a way of life that is as old as African humanity. Ubuntu is the fundamental ontological and epistemological category in the African thought of the Bantu-speaking people. Mpetsheni (2019) has written on Ubuntu as a soteriological ethic. In this section, some of his views will be adapted to espouse the idea that Ubuntu as a soteriological ethic is much applicable in the ecotheological and ecological justice discourses. We note some of the scholars' assertions on Ubuntu. For Gathogo (2008:2), Ubuntu is 'personhood or humanness, and/or respect for human dignity'. Tschaepe (2013) promotes:

> [*T*]he concept of *Ubuntu,* as a progression into wholeness, (and as) the basis of understanding *ubuntu* as an ethical concept and provides a foundation from which to understand the various meanings that have been assigned to the word throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. (pp. 48–49)

We appreciate Gade's (2011:303–329) classification of *Ubuntu* 'as a human quality', 'as either connected to, or identical to, a philosophy or ethic', 'as African humanism', 'as a worldview' and 'as connected to the proverb, "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" (people are people through people [sic])'. Such classification and understanding enables us to view Ubuntu in discourses of Ubuntu enables of wholeness and considerations of welfare of humans and the rest of creation. According to Mbiti (1991:200), 'African people recognise social order and peace as essential and sacred. Any disruption of these would therefore be regarded as sin and would thereby be punishable'. An inference can be made from Mbiti's contribution that any human behaviour should be viewed in terms of its contribution to the betterment or worsening of the conditions of social life. Any human being should be encouraged to put the interests of the community above personal interests. In line with this argument, Turaki (2000:np) attests, 'the community is man (sic) in relationships: To the human world, to the worlds of nature and to the spiritual world'. This is against the notions of individualism and anthropocentrism. In that regard, it can be argued that the family, the clan and the tribe are the formation sites of a person. The values and norms of those sites reflect on the behaviour, conduct and character of individual members, save the deviant individual who choose to violate the good of their societies. This idea is supported by Turaki's (2000:np)

averment, the belief 'man (sic) is the product of family, the clan, the tribe and the spirits that have made him'. Daniel (2009:147) avows that an individual's wayward behaviour amounts to 'an offence to the whole community and its consequences affect not only the thief (wrongdoer) but also the whole body of relatives'. It may be added that the sin committed by an individual affects the rest of creation.[4] Hence, Kato (1985:16) argued that 'all human tragedies, be they sickness, poverty, or exploitation, are mere symptoms of the root cause which the Bible calls sin'.

Another categorisation of Gade is that Ubuntu is human quality, which is manifested in various ways. Mabovula (2011:40) drawing from Mbigi (1997), argues that Ubuntu is a development of 'a network of concepts such as "group solidarity," "compassion," "respect," "dignity," and "collective unity" to convey his idea of *Ubuntu*'. In this regard, Archbishop Tutu (1999) presented the following view of Ubuntu as human quality:

> Africans believe in something that is difficult to render in English. We call it *ubuntu, botho.* It means the essence of being human. You know when it is there and when it is absent. It speaks about humaneness, gentleness, and hospitality, putting yourself on behalf of others, being vulnerable. It embraces compassion and toughness. It recognises that my humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together. (p. 69)

Further to the notion of human quality, Gathogo (2008) raised the aspect of African hospitality, stating that:

> [*I*]n Africa, an ideal person is primarily hospitable (and) this hospitality is ideally extended to all people: Friends, foes or/ and strangers, [*and*] is also extended to all departments of life. (p. 2)

Oduyoye (2001)Also promotes the notion of hospitality as:

> [*I*]nherent in being African, as well as in adhering to a religion that derives from the Bible … [*and it is*] given a religious meaning, and linked with the ancestors, Christ and God. (p. 94)

Hence, we admire Khoza's (2005:269) definition of Ubuntu as 'an African value system that means humanness or being human, a worldview characterised by such values as caring, sharing, compassion, communalism, communocracy and related predispositions'. For Murithi (2009), Ubuntu:

> [*P*]rovides inspiration and offers guidelines for societies, and their governments, on how to legislate and establish laws which will promote reconciliation. In short, it can 'culturally re-inform' our practical efforts to build peace and heal our traumatised communities. (p. 228)

He also states that:

> [*A*]n ongoing reflection on and re-appraisal of this notion of *ubuntu* can serve to re-emphasise the essential unity of humanity and gradually promote attitudes and values predicated on the sharing of resources as well as on the collaborative resolution of our common problems. (p. 228)

4.Genesis 4:12 (NIV) 'When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you'.

Gade also classified Ubuntu as an expression of African humanism. Khoza (2005:xxi) stated that Ubuntu 'constitutes the spiritual cradle of African religion and culture [*and*] finds expression in virtually all walks of life – social, political and economic'. Letseka (2013:381) claims that '*ubuntu* is a humane notion'. Letseka (2000) states that:

> [*P*]ersons living in communities that embrace *Ubuntu* would be marked by a commitment to treating others with a sense of *Botho* or *Ubuntu*, which entails treating them with justice and fairness. (p. 188)

Murithi (2009) argued that: 'this notion of *Ubuntu* sheds light on the importance of building peace principles of reciprocity, inclusivity and a sense of shared destiny between different peoples'. This is popularly expressed in the Nguni proverb, '*Umntu ngumntu ngabantu*'. This proverb was supported by Mbiti's 'I am because you are'. By that, Mbiti (1969:108) promotes 'the communal dimension of the African way of life' where 'the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately', but can only say, 'I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am'.

Gade also states that Ubuntu is an 'orientation towards a being becoming whole' and it thrives in difficult and trying environments. Human beings often display hostile behaviour towards each other and the rest of creation. Human beings sometimes act with hostility against others and the rest of creation. As such, Gathogo (2008:2) noted that and asked, 'Why do we find many acts of *unyama* (animal like behaviours) in a continent that is hundred percent *Ubuntu*?' Letseka (2013:381) also 'lamented the shocking and horrifying incidents of moral indiscretion that appear to have become commonplace in South Africa', which 'range from violent crime, premeditated murder, rape, assault, to homophobic attacks and police brutality'. Africans hold a belief that God is the creator who gave the quality of Ubuntu on human beings in creation. *Umntu* has been at the centre and an integral part of creation. Hence, Mbiti (1969:92) postulates that 'African ontology is anthropocentric' and that 'God is the explanation of man's (*sic*) origin and sustenance; it is as if God exists for the sake of man (*sic*)'. Humanity has, thus, become the primary focus of God. Ubuntu derives its attributes from God. God gave *ubomi* [life] to human beings, as God did to other creatures.

Teffo and Roux (1998) made a point that the Ubuntu discourse should be based on the African perception. African people exist, ontologically, as part of God's creation and their cosmological order has been ordained by God. They have, from eternity, occupied a geographical space, which implies that they have always had access to land, and they related with the natural beings. Their anecdotes and folklores carry meanings and are full of existential realities, which cannot be grasped, by any means, by the European researchers. The hierarchical order of the cosmological view, as suggested by Teffo and Roux (1998:196) would start with God as 'the creator and source of all vital forces', followed by 'the ancestors, then humankind, and then the lower forces,

animals, plants and matter'. Central to the cosmological order is *umntu* as an ontological being who draws meaning from and gives meaning to the natural space. *Umntu* should have Ubuntu to be able to live a balanced life. I have been brought up to understand and oriented to a cosmological view of amaXhosa[5] as a balanced life. In their greeting, 'How are you?' (the 'you' may be in the plural [*ninjani?*] or in the singular [*unjani?*]), it is usually expected that the response should take long. The respondent has to tell what happens in the entire family, neighbourhood and the entire community, including non-human beings and ecological dynamics at large and even the weather patterns, as they impact food security and the good of the animals. When the respondent is done, they can reciprocate, *ninjani nina/unjani wena?* [And how are you?]. Individualism has no place in Ubuntu community. Kamwangamalu (1999:27) observes that, in the spirit of communalism, individual interests are subordinated to the will of the community. The community consists of the people, animals (wild and domestic) and everything that makes the universe. Hence, it is important to observe the tripartite cosmic peace and order, which includes God, people and the rest of creation. Humans cannot survive without the rest of creation. The creation needs responsible humans for sustainability.

Discussion

Towards ubuntu ecotheology

Ubuntu as worldview, African humanism, human quality, ethics, has a prowess to contribute to the ecotheological discourse towards environmental justice. We consider *umntu* as interconnected and interdependent with the rest of creation. The objective is to advance the argument that 'African ideas of being extend beyond humans to the environment' (Chitando 2020:7). Ubuntu perspective stresses that both humans and nature have intrinsic value. The discourse debunks the notion of the 'Western business policy makers' who favour 'technology as solution to the climate crisis, often at the expense of Ubuntu-related indigenous practices' (Kavusa 2022:12). With Ubuntu, there are indigenous knowledge systems that can be put into use to reverse the calamities that befall the earth communities and the loss of lives because of factors such as (Ngwena 2020):

> [*H*]uman-induced climate change, resulting to the depletion of the ozone layer, de-forestation, air, water pollution carried out by industrialisation from developed countries continue to cause ecological degradation, not to mention the deplorable health challenges arising from illegal dumping of industrial and household waste, gas flaring and all sources of water contamination leading to all kinds of diseases. (p. 17)

In Ubuntu worldview, community encompasses all spheres of the cosmos. Hence, abantu should engage in political, economic, ecological, spiritual and other activities towards environmental sustainability. The renowned environmental activist, the Nobel Prize laureate, Wangari Maathaai presented a good model of someone who operates from Ubuntu perspective and African worldview to sustain the environment. She contributed to sustainable development, democracy and peace. Her focus was to save 'the Congo rain forests in Central Africa which is home to indigenes among the inhabitants' (Ngwena 2020:17). Maathai (2009) considered that:

> [*T*]he Congo Basin rainforests ecosystem is a phenomenon, as it holds about a quarter of the world's remnants of tropical rainforests, and provides a blanket of all of Africa's vegetation which includes a large number of forests, savannah, woodlands aquatic and riverine habitats. (p. 265)

Deforestation, in that regard, would impact adversely on various indigenous species and the livelihood of so many indigenous people. Maathai promoted the creation of an environment that would allow the indigenous forest dwellers to actively participate in dialogues that would ensure sustainability. As members of the community, they had their experiences and knowledge systems that had been handed down from generation to generation regarding conviviality of humans and the rest of creation in the area. Regarding this conviviality and interdependence, Van Dyk (2017) makes this assertion:

> Without plants, humans and animals would have no food or oxygen. Without animals, the existence of many plants would become impossible, because many of them depend on animal pollination, dispersal of seeds and the carbon dioxide produced by such animals. (p. 847)

Ngwena (2020:20) attests that 'a life lived in community is conducive in maintaining harmonious relations between the Creator, the living/non-living (ancestral spirits), present and future generations and the natural/wild world'. This is against the western style imposition of positions and solutions which do not resonate with the indigenous people, a way of overlooking the people and applying measures that are detrimental to the environment.

Ubuntu stands in stark contrast with the Descartesian formula and philosophies, which promote individualism and anthropocentrism. Descartesian views are validated by Christian anthropocentrism, which promotes selective reading of scriptures, so as to advance human dominion over creation. Ubuntu, on the other hand, is about African humanism, promoting the display of indigenous ecological wisdom and knowledge. It finds expression in the indigenous peoples living 'in conscious harmony with the natural/wild world and their traditional practices (complementing) their values, (recognising that those values are) gradually eroded due to enculturation and adaptation' (Ngwena 2020:22).

Ubuntu is associated with land. For abantu to be able to exercise hospitality, they need land and they use indigenous knowledge systems to care for it. Abantu find their identity in the land mass they occupy and they consider the use of the land very crucial. In buttressing this point, Ngwena (2020:23) asserts, 'Indigenes, in particular perceive land as the truest identity of the people and it should be preserved'. With that sense of identity, abantu should work against degradation of

5.IsiXhosa language speaking people found predominantly in the Eastern and Western Cape of South Africa. I belong to that language speaking group.

land, pollution and desertification as those impact negatively on 'food security and sustainability'. Land is the major means for survival, containing the most needed resources beneath and above the surface. Acknowledging that land was the gift from the supernatural being, abantu in the African setup would hold ceremonies to appreciate and celebrate 'events such as good harvest, rain, and new season(s), and new life' (Ngwena 2020:24). Ngwena (2020:24) posits that those and other good practices 'should be incorporated in search of approaches and models towards saving the environment in the present and beyond'.

Ubuntu, thus makes a contribution to ecotheology in an endeavour to promote environmental sustainability and ecological justice. Tutu, in a foreword to *Eco Ubuntu – Season of Creation* (n.d.), argued:

> If Ubuntu encourages us to cultivate and care for ourselves, for our families and our brethren, so too should we care for our larger, extended body – the veld, bush, soil, air, water, and the wetlands. We need to widen the circle of our Ubuntu as we become aware of the totality of what we are. Our bodies extend into the soil, into the air, into the rivers and oceans. (n.p.)

Next, suggestions of what ought to happen towards environmental sustainability and ecological justice are made. Ubuntu ecotheological approach should move from the point of showing solidarity with all of creation, human and non-human beings alike. Humans should understand their coexistence with the rest of creation, as companions, victims and allies in earth community. There should be attempts towards ecological sustainability, adopting habits of living that are environmentally fitting, enabling life to flourish and using technology that is ecologically and socially appropriate. There should be a concerted effort to promote stewardship that is displayed in social and community participation. Through this stewardship, humans will be exposed to adopting 'sufficiency as a standard of organised sharing, which requires bare floors and definite ceilings for equitable or fair consumption' (Mukaria 2021).

Social and community participation should entail actions towards restoration and protection of an ecosystem that has been damaged or degraded or destroyed, so that the ecosystem may evolve naturally. Data should be monitored scientifically to effectively manage natural resources. Community awareness campaigns should be launched intentionally to change mindsets and promote interconnectedness and interdependence. Along with awareness raising campaigns, stewardship culture of sustainability should be developed. Humans will be encouraged to exercise restraint in using natural resources to allow for sustainability of the earth. They should be oriented towards equitable distribution of wealth so that all of life and all parts of creation will thrive.

Conclusion

Ubuntu epistemology contributes in the development of ecotheological discourse towards environmental justice. Anchoring on the principles of interdependence and interconnectedness, the exposition of Ubuntu reveals that humans cannot survive without the rest of creation while the rest of creation can survive without humans. The promotion of the tripartite relationship of God, cosmos and human makes it possible for humans to realise who they are and have their mindset fixed accordingly. When nature is treated well, with dignity and respect, it will provide what is needed for human survival. When humans behave well in the tripartite relationship, God has already promised to forgive their sins and their land (2 Chr 7:14). Humans, possessing the spirit and values of Ubuntu, will refrain from the atrocious activities that cause nature to groan waiting for the revelation of the children of God and for liberation from bondage, and the children of God will be revealed and liberation attained (Rm 8:19).

In an Ubuntu environmental worldview, there will be justice and fairness. Land will be used responsibly, without greed and recklessness. There will be no over-utilisation, environmental degradation, extinction of species and other vices. Humans ought to rise up as stewards, without the anthropocentric obsession and execute the duty to creation, to fellow humans and to God. The governments shall be implored to develop and implement policies that would promote a better life. With adherence to Ubuntu worldview, life will be enjoyed in abundance.

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Competing interest

The author declares that no financial or personal relationships inappropriately influenced the writing of this article.

CRediT authorship contribution

Lungile Mpetsheni: Conceptualisation, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualisation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. The author confirms that this work is entirely their own, has reviewed the article, approved the final version for submission and publication, and takes full responsibility for the integrity of its findings.

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