



How NGOs Can Responsibly Partner with Religious Communities to Promote Peaceful Co- Existence with the Natural World and Nonhuman Animals

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Dar Vision, 2008

ABGG: The African Biodiversity Group

“Reach out to faith communities for **dialogue and collaboration**...Faith-based communities comprise the largest social organizations in Africa, representing a repository of opportunities to spread the cause for sustainability on the continent. Conservation leaders should reach out to religious communities to collaborate in implementing these recommendations, with a view to enhancing the capacity for value-based sustainability decisions that link nature and human well-being.”

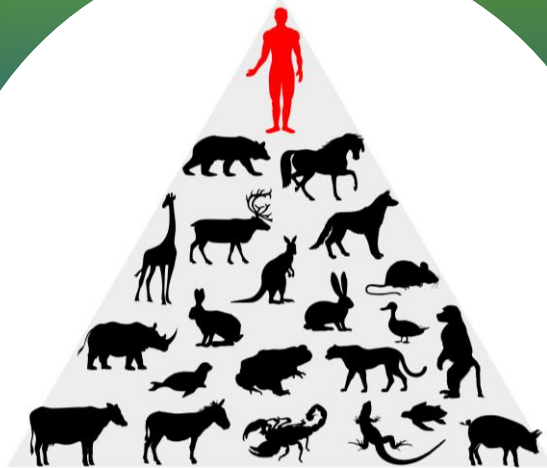


Moving beyond instrumentality in how we justify prioritizing the well-being of other animals and the environment in anthropocentric spaces.

*Harnessing the
diverse ways in which
people are motivated
to show care and
concern for the living
world*



Anthropocentrism



1. Human beings are unique from and superior to the rest of the natural world.
2. Humans have **power** over the natural world.
3. **Only humans have inherent value**. They are moral agents and moral subjects.
4. **Nonhuman animals and the environment have no inherent value**. Their value is in relation to their usefulness to human beings.

Anthropocentrism as Root Cause

“...Christianity inherited from Judaism...a striking story of creation. By gradual stages a loving and all-powerful God had created light and darkness, the heavenly bodies, and earth and all its plants, animals, birds, and fishes. Finally, God created Adam and, as an afterthought, Eve to keep man from being lonely. Man named all the animals, thus establishing the doctrine of his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to to serve man’s purposes. And, although man’s body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature; he is made in God’s image. Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (White, 1967).



Anthropocentrism as Root Cause

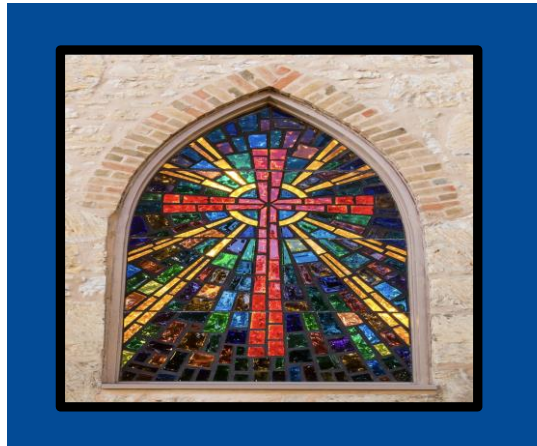
“The awakening of ecological consciousness since the 1960s has had an immediate effect on Islamic theology: the basic tenets of Islam have come under the heavy fire of ecologists...According to this line criticism, Islam is anthropocentric because it takes human value and importance as its starting point: man is given dominion over nature and its other creatures and these have value only in their use to human beings who are bestowed with stewardship...by the almighty” (Afrasiabi, p. 281, 2003).



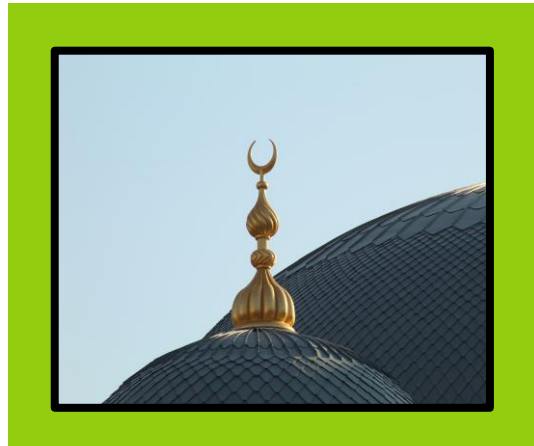
Anthropocentrism as Root Cause

“African religious morality is essentially anthropomorphic...One can conclude, with some degree of confidence, that although African religions do offer *some* protection to other-than-human animals (as an essential part of divine creation), such protection remains somewhat arbitrary: animals are hardly ever seen as mattering in and for themselves” (Horsthemke, 2019).

Dialogue as a Pathway to Partnerships: Responsible Anthropocentrism



Christianity



Islam



African Indigenous Religions

Laudato Si': On Care for our Common Home

Biblical Creation Mythology: Genesis 1-3 | ¶65-68

- God is the source of all creation, and all creation is good.
- Human beings are unique because they are made in the image of God demonstrating the dignity of all human beings.
- Humans have dominion over the Earth.
- Dominion ≠ Exploitation
- The Earth belongs to God and is a gift to us. Humans are to protect the Earth for generations to come.
- Nonhuman living beings have their own value apart from human use.

The Roots of our Ecological Crisis

- Qualifies anthropocentrism
- The “technocratic paradigm” – the use of science, technology, and the economy to master the natural world by exploiting resources for profit and also purporting to appropriate them to solve environmental and social crises.
- “Modern anthropocentrism” privileges the technocratic paradigm. It is “misguided” because it disconnects humans from their interconnection with nature and grants them an almost absolute power over it.

Islam

The *Qur'an and Hadith*

- Allah is the source of all creation (Surah 21:30).
- Allah has dominion over the Earth and according to his will (Surah 24:42-45).
- Allah created the Earth to sustain human needs (Surah 55:3-12).
- Dominion ≠ Exploitation.
- Human beings are vice regents (*khalifah*) over the Earth (Surah 6:165).
- But they must rule with balance (Surah 55:8-9) and mercy toward animals (

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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a large, round, woven basket. The basket is made of a light-colored material, possibly cotton or wool, and features a vibrant, multi-colored geometric pattern. The colors include shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, and red. The pattern consists of concentric bands and a central diamond shape. The hands are positioned at the bottom and sides of the basket, supporting it. The background is a blurred, natural setting with green foliage.

African Practices for Responsible Use

Care and Concern – Guide to Community

Religions & NGOs

- For flourishing – humans, animals, environment
- Recognize the interrelationships between these
- Call for responsible uses of resources
- Going beyond economic benefits
- Against cruelty and neglect





Thanks

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