



Phenomenology of Planet Earth Ontology: A Stride towards Environmental Integrity and Conservation

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Abstract: The major problem facing the planet earth in the 21st century is human intrusion into the dynamics of the planet earth and its ecosystems. This has generated other serious problems like global warming and other implied risks that threaten all life on the planet. However, these problems cannot be left at the margin of philosophical reflection. The argument of this article is that Phenomenology of Planet Earth Ontology is a Vital Stride towards Environmental Integrity and Conservation; it gives a better account of asymmetrical relationship between humans and the natural world. The article proposes a return to the planet earth whereby the earth should be considered as the Other-self to us humans and to other ecosystems with its own ontological significance that deserves respect, care and protection. We have to see ourselves not as superior to the natural world, but rather, as part of it together with the other entities constituting the whole world. We need to bring the earth back to rightfully serve its purposes of being a mother and home for all existing beings. The article raises candid philosophical issues about our comportment towards the environment and how respectively we can live together with it.

Keywords: Planet Earth Ontology, Environmental Integrity and Conservation

1. INTRODUCTION

The major problem facing the planet earth in the 21st century is human interference with its dynamics and ecosystems. This has generated other severe problems like global warming and the implied risks that threaten all life on the planet earth. The most fundamental issue is that these problems cannot be left at the margin of philosophical reflection. In my article on the *Reconstituting Nature of Modern Technology on the Environment*,¹ I argued that, today's instrumental technological rationality regards the environment as *standing-in-reserve* awaiting human manipulation to the height that the environment has lost its ontological significance. It is on the basis of this claim that phenomenology of planet earth ontology should be taken as an essential stride towards environmental integrity and conservation.

Phenomenology of planet earth ontology emphasized in this article is to develop a return to a meaningful asymmetrical human-world relationship, interrelationships among organisms and between organisms, living and non-living in the environment for the earth's natural process for its integrity and self-conservation.² It further underlines the ontological nature of human and nonhuman forces in relation to environment, underlining the intrinsic value of humans in relation to nature and the limits of human infringement on the planet earth. The basis of this ontology is to cultivate a proper relationship with the world or environment that respects its natural processes for self-sustenance; a relationship that challenges the traditional man-centred, Cartesian dualistic and detached approach to the world. It is to put the natural world at the centre for the being of both humans and the rest of world entities and ecosystems. Thus, phenomenology of planet earth ontology provides a framework of looking and discovering the ontological significance of the world, rather than assuming and deducing it on the basis of a manipulative *technical rationality*.³ Herbert Marcuse, in his critique of this rationality argues that *technical rationality* fashions everyday life into a "technological reality" that

¹ Ichuloi Anthony, "The Reconstituting Nature of Modern Technology on Environment", in *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, vol.3 Issue 6 (2015) 314-321.

² Allaby Michael, *The Oxford Dictionary of Ecology*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998, 136.

³ Barrett W. *The Illusion of Technique: A Search for Meaning in a Technological Civilization*, Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1978.

encloses the human perceptions, experiences and thoughts by projecting the planet earth as a box containing resources to be manipulated for human purposes,⁴ thereby overriding all substantive and value-laden regard to the world or planet earth. It is a rationality that carefully repositions and modifies human reason,⁵ while creating a rationalized regard system of earth-manipulation, veiled by the ideology of efficiency in achieving desired ends. Technical *rationality* undermines a reciprocal relationship between humans and the world.

In the context of this reflection, phenomenology of the planet earth is explained as the exploration and description of the world ontology and its mode of manifestation free from any manipulation; while the world refers to totality of things in the state of affairs that have their embedded natural meanings that are not confined merely to human perception, interest and manipulative experience.⁶ The goal of this article is to describe the ontological significance of the planet earth as it is lived, experienced and reflected upon in all of its concreteness, relevance and urgency with the intent to discourage the anthropocentric regard to nature.⁷ It is all about the *life-world* where all organisms derive their meaning and relevance and not about the dissipating, egocentric and anthropocentric regard to the natural world that has bedevilled humanity for centuries.⁸ The article creates an environmentally-related philosophy that is enucleated by a *substantive* or *essential rationality* for the integrity of both humanity and world ecosystems.

2. THE DISSIPATION OF THE PLANET EARTH

As it has been indicated in the preceding paragraphs, today, we experience extraordinary set of problems related to human destruction of the natural environment: contamination, resource depletion, global warming and so on.⁹ The natural resources of the planet earth (forests, minerals, fisheries and agricultural lands) are exploited at such a rate and speed that is no longer sustainable. We are using the planet's renewable resources faster than what the planet itself can replenish. Furthermore, the earth ecosystem and biosphere is deeply, constantly and adversely affected or destroyed, thereby threatening the extinction and destruction of natural habitats and species. This human incursion of the planet earth has irreversible effects on the whole ocean ecosystems, rivers and coastal wetlands; that is, it has the general loss of bio-diversity, including humans themselves. One does not need to go far to justify these claims; it is enough to see the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps, the increase in hurricane incidences, changing rainfall patterns and fundamentally, the constant increase in earth's surface temperatures. The rationality behind human uncontrolled attack on the planet earth and the environment is to continuously and egoistically adapt the planet to accommodate human selfish interest, instead of adapting human interests to the world and its dynamics, since humans themselves are part of the natural world.

The planet earth is relentlessly subjected to the mercy of religious, scientific and technological influences or forces, which sometimes are instigated by the growth of human reason and world population growth threats. To substantiate these assertions, religion with all its positive contribution to humanity, it has significantly failed to enhance the integrity of the planet earth. For instance, human exploitation of the world is Biblically looked at as the command given by God to humans to use the natural world for their own purposes, while the world is pictured as devoid of its own ontological meaning other than that of serving human purposes.¹⁰ In fact, some Biblical versions in their attempt to execute this "perceived" command of God without analysing it literally use the expression "*to exploit*" the natural world. This erroneous thinking is real in many of the members of society to the extent that the world is there to serve humans. In a brutal and direct sense, which is the most irrational and disturbing thing of it all is the Biblical narrative that justifies the destruction of the world and everything in it by floods. The Abrahamic religious world regards this destruction of the natural world

⁴ Marcuse Herbert, *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*, 2nd edit., London and New York: Routledge, 1991, 220.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁶ Von Eckartsberg, R, *Introducing Existential-Phenomenological Psychology*, USA: Duquesne University, 1998, 3.

⁷ Pollio R. Howard., et al. *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, 5.

⁸ Pojman P. Louis, *Global Environmental Ethics*, California, Mayfield Publishing Company, 2000, 176.

⁹ Bradley Ian, *Dios es "Verde": Cristianismo y Medio Ambiente*, Santander: SAL TERRAE, 1990, 17.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:17.

as an expression of God's outrage to humans for their act of rebellion or sin against His command.¹¹ In its basic understanding, even though religion is not fundamentally in the domain of reason, there is no rational and correlative explanation and relationship between human weakness or sin and the ontology of the world that led to its curse or destruction. Why should the world be held responsible for human weakness? This Judeo-Christian and Islamic religious regard to the world is a manifestation of human superiority over the natural world; it is a regard of the world as having no meaning of its own independent of human interests.

On the scientific level of evidence, in an intense way we experience a unrelenting incursive scientific investigations related to the planet earth, invariable industrial explosions that have led to environmental pollution, that encompass serious depletion of ozone layer around the planet that has its ontological function to protect all life from the sun's harmful rays caused by Chlorine and Bromide found in Chloro-floro carbons (CFC's). We have toxic fossils from fuel consumption which result in emission of Greenhouse gases, majorly attributed to be the leading cause of global warming and climate change. It is scientifically understood that when these toxic gases reach the atmosphere, they create a hole in the ozone layer, thereby causing the earth's atmosphere to retain more heat.¹² Consequently, excess heat threatens all life on the planet earth, including humans themselves. The earth's atmosphere and natural dynamics are persistently being changed to such an extent that the planet earth is almost becoming similar to that of the planet Venus, with surface temperatures above the boiling point of water that is 250 degrees celsius together with sulphuric acid rain that endangers any form of life.¹³ Furthermore, this problem of global warming involves desertification that leads to the scarcity of water resources for the world's growing population. This is experienced through the glooming droughts that are affecting the entire globe with other related adverse impacts on the biodiversity. In a profound sense, the effects of this invasion of the planet earth is today experienced through the hurricanes, like the hurricane Katrina which a few years ago hit the Southern coastal city of New Orleans in the USA causing the deaths of over 1000 people.

In relation to world population growth, the United Nations Environmental Assembly report of 2017, held in Nairobi-Kenya, informed that as the human population grows and prospers, massive human activities on the environment to sustain the implied population end up producing environmental changes that cascade through the Earth's systems.¹⁴ These massive activities include environmental degradation in the form of air, water and soil pollution; deforestation, soil erosion and desertification; water scarcity and biodiversity loss. This environmental degradation affects where and how people live. The point is that all these issues make all life vulnerable to disasters and tragedies to the level that all life on the earth's, surface including the seas is at the brink of destruction. However, it is important to note that the detrimental effects experienced on the planet earth is not only limited to climate change that leads to melting of polar ice, change in seasons, occurrence of new diseases, frequent occurrence of floods and change in overall weather scenario, but fundamentally to all biodiversity in its entirety.

Thus, religious, scientific and demographically instigated incursion of the world, in all their forms, is unacceptable. Invasion of the planet earth for whichever reasons raises fundamental philosophical questions: Why should the world be subjected to human selfish interests? What is the relationship between man and the planet? How does man regard the planet earth? What is the relationship between population growth and environmental destruction? What is man's place in nature? Is man equally destroyed together with the natural world? Does the planet earth have its own relevance that is not given to it by man? What is the real problem with the planet earth? These questions necessitate a philosophical assessment of the ontology of the planet earth and human relation to it.

3. THE PROBLEM OF THE 'TWO WORLDS'

The planet earth is without doubt in danger of dissipation fundamentally because of the rationality that has given the erroneous perception of the planet earth as composed of 'two opposing worlds' (real and

¹¹ Genesis 6: 5-13.

¹² Jacobson Z. Mark, "Review of Solutions to Global Warming, Air Pollution, and Energy Security", in the *Journal of Energy & Environmental Science* Vol. 2, (2009) 148-173.

¹³ Houghton John, *Global Warming, Climate Change and Sustainability*, 4th Edition, The John Ray Initiative Limited, 2011.

¹⁴ United Nations, *Emerging Issues of Environmental Concern*, United Nations, 2017.

virtual). This erroneous rationality is crucial to the integrity of the world, such that on one side there is an objective world and on the other side exists imagined subjective world for human satisfaction, pleasure, enjoyment, etc. These two worlds are perceived to be in opposition to each other. This separation of the world into two worlds, today, influenced by modern technologically driven rationality, has made the objective world to be set into a mental-picture such that all about it is perceived in the light of modern machination and exploitation, thereby making it lose its ontological significance.¹⁵ In such an attempt, the objectivity of the world through destruction ironically is dissolved and devoid of reverence, such that what is real appears to subsist only as an object of human imagination and machination for invasion to respond to human self-seeking interests. Feenberg, explaining more the intruding and disrespectful nature of modern societies, informs that modern technology *de-worlds* its materials and *summons* the environment to submit to extrinsic demands¹⁶ of human interests, while undermining its own intrinsic ontological meaning. Under such regard to the world or environment, humans are basically left with an abstract or virtual picture of the real environment, thereby destroying the dialectic of a world always already there, in Husserl's terms, as opposed to the Cartesian world that is reflected upon.¹⁷ Grounding this claim, Don Ihde emphatically remarks on the ontological meaninglessness of world entities in the technological frame with the claim that symptomatically, natural world as that which 'stirs and strives,' as the 'springhead in the dale' is lost.¹⁸ Entities become just "things ready for human" simulated management¹⁹

The problem of the 'Two Worlds', which tends to order the natural environment *artificialises* the world to the height that it is being reduced to a designed network of resources for manipulation, thereby alienating humans from the world as their home that is supposed to be regarded as the horizon for authentic realization of their being.²⁰ It is a flawed rationality that gives a false Parmenidian perception of the world as static and mechanistic reality, while undermining its dynamic and ontological nature. Fundamentally, it removes the world of human involvement in a more profound and basic way, thereby losing its character as an ontological source of reference for humans. Under the determination of such rationality, the physical world is no longer grasped from within the perspective of its own meaning, human experience and purposes; instead the human subject does stand opposed to it. This leaves us with the Cartesian idealistic and dualistic epistemology that has deepened the gap of relationship between the subject and the world, where the world is the object of human thought devoid of its own ontological meaning. Martin Heidegger reacting to this evasive Cartesian epistemology argued that, in conventional philosophy and psychology, the relationship between person and the world has been reduced to either an idealist or realist perspective.²¹ The idealist view of the world is majorly propagated by technical rationality, which continues to perceive the world as a function and design of humans who act upon it through their intentional consciousness, actively shaping the world into their self-created image. In contrast to idealist view of the world, the realist view perceives humans as a function of the world in that the world acts on them and they only reciprocate this reaction in a manner that reconstitutes their being. This position is held by the socio-ecological theories of the world held by thinkers like the Clark and others.²² However, it should be noted that both perspectives (idealist and realist) are defective in a sense that they are one directional, where both humans and nature are perceived to exist independently and separately each working upon the other. They undermine the authentic nature of human life in asymmetrical relationship with the natural world as explained by phenomenologists like Husserl, Heidegger, etc.

Another weighty effect of the 'Two Worlds' is that, the world as a tangible reality of the state of affairs is being transformed into something abstract or absent and simultaneously a meaningful human

¹⁵ Heidegger Martine, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper and Row, 1977.

¹⁶ Feenberg Andrew, *Questioning Technology*, New York: Routledge, 1999.

¹⁷ Drohan C. Michael, 'I Think Therefore Everything Is: A brief Phenomenology of the Spirit of New Technology', in *Semiophagy: Journal of Pataphysics and Existential Semiotics*, Vol. II, (2009).

¹⁸ Don Ihde, "Heidegger's Philosophy of Technology," in Robert Scharff and Val Dusek, *Philosophy of Technology: The Technological Condition: An Ontology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Limited, (2003) 290.

¹⁹ Heidegger Martine, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Op. Cit.

²⁰ Husserl Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

²¹ Heidegger Martine, *Being and Time*. Translation by John Macquarrie, New York: Harper and Row, 1962.

²² Clark Nihel, *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*, SAGE Publications Limited, 2011.

experience of the world is undermined. Under such a determination, the human ego is empowered to organize the natural world to the level that the world is seen as an inert set of forces to be harnessed to human ends.²³ The natural world is perceived as an object open to attacks from *calculative* human thought to the point that nothing is believed to resist the forces of such thought.²⁴ This kind of regard to the world is engrained in the continued pursuit of scientific discoveries and knowledge, where human beings regard nature as the “other thing” and not the “other self”; the world is regarded as the *enemy* for that matter, which is to be sacrificed for the purpose of achieving scientific and technological goals. The unfortunate thing of this manipulative attitude is to create an irreconcilable dichotomy between theoretical science and the natural world, which science studies such that theoretical science is seen to represent the known, intellectual and progressive, while the natural world is conceived as incomplete, static, primitive, and therefore to be organized by the power of the theoretical or scientific mind. Of course, the weighty implication of this is twofold: on one hand, we have the loss to humanity of substantive external reality since reality is now the product of the scientific and technological mind. On the other hand, we have the loss to humanity itself through this loss of the natural world, which constitutes us.

The point is that this modern incursive thinking demeans human regard of the world as a constitutive element of human nature, such that the world is perceived to be there for humans to exploit. Under such consideration, the real world for meaning is fundamentally being reduced to *theory*, prompting the stance that other world ecosystems are there simply for what humans can get out of them. Thus, to deal with the misgivings of this rationality and regard to the world, it is paramount to address and regard the planet earth as having its own ontological meaning that is not given to it by any external forces; humans need to substantively address the way they exist in relation to their world and allow the earth’s natural forces to take their course of world reconstitution (including humans) for its own maintenance. This is where phenomenology of the planet earth (a return to planet earth) is imperative in our attempt to explain how nature shows itself the way it shows itself in the process of self-regulation.

4. A RETURN TO PLANET EARTH

The above nihilistic technical rationality enshrined in modern science and technology and their illusion of progress, which tends to regard nature or world as a resource pool for manipulation should be substituted by a positive phenomenology of earth ontology which perceives the natural world as having its own ontological significance. This is well informed by the philosophical concepts of *life-world* as propounded by Husserl, *being-in-the-world* of Heidegger and *return to planet earth* approach of Nigel de Clark and other environmental philosophers. The realization of this phenomenology requires a revolution in human thinking that addresses the fundamental environmental questions raised by the preceding subsections. We ought to address deeper hard questions that will position at the centre the integrity of the natural environment.

As explained above, the abuse of the natural environment or world, today, is constantly and effectively turning against us as it is now experienced in climate change and global warming that is threatening the lives of the ecosystems including humans themselves. Under this, human relation to the world is not to be perceived anymore as merely one directional and neutral in nature. Humans have to understand that the actions they do to the world are the same things they do to themselves because they are part of the natural world. In other words, the disappearance of the concrete environment in which we actively relate and participate, and where we derive our subjectivity, would mean that we too implicitly and unconsciously define ourselves against the disappearance of our very selves, hence our own self-dissipation and alienation.²⁵ It is unfortunate that we lose ourselves in what sometimes appears fascinating, while in essence it is an irreversible destructive engagement with the world and our very selves.²⁶ Humans have to see the world is their indispensable *Other self*, such that without it they are not complete as humans.

²³ Giddens Anthony, *Modernity and Self-Identity*. California: Stanford University Press, 1991, 164-5.

²⁴ Ichuloi Anthony, “The Reconstituting Nature of Modern Technology on Environment”, in *The International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*, vol.3 Issue 6, (2015) 314-321.

²⁵ Ichuloi Anthony, “A Critical Reflection on the Human Condition in Technological Development”, in *Scholars Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(3C) 2015; 743-752.

²⁶ Moran Dermot, *The Phenomenology Reader*, New York: Routledge, 2002, 288-289.

The argument is that the challenge of planet earth ontology for environmental integrity and conservation is more than a mere engineering problem of calculatively improving both scientific and technological efficiency in providing technical solutions to the environmental problems as presumed by modern technical rationality; it is not just for human selfish interests that have led us to interfere with the natural world. Rather, is a move towards understanding and respecting nature for both its own sake and for our sake as well, since we are defined in it. It is more of the challenge of reducing the rates at which we are unconsciously and gradually annihilating ourselves together with the planet earth and the being of other ecosystems, while equally establishing asymmetrical relationship with the planet earth.²⁷ This return to the planet earth can be treated under the following: the concept of *life-world*, unity between humans and the world, and finally, world as self-forming.

4.1. The Concept of Life-World

Even though science and technology tend to answer most of human problems, there still remains the fundamental issue of how to reconcile scientific rationality with the experiential element of human nature for a meaningful existence. To achieve this, we have to address the fundamental issue of the *life-world* and following fundamental philosophical and existential questions: Do we see the world as more than just empty appearances of things in the state of affairs that we must ascribe to our true nature? How does the world relate to human life for a meaningful existence? In attempt to answer these fundamental questions and to overcome the dichotomy between man and environment that is set aside by technical rationality manifested through manipulative regard to the world, it is important to address the ontology of human experience and consciousness of the *life-world*. The rationale of this is that every intentional concrete act of human experience necessarily involves some aspect of the world as its object, which reciprocally provides the context for the meaningfulness of human life.²⁸

To talk of *life-world* in relation to the fundamental ontology of the natural world basically means the everyday world that humans live in with all its taken-for-granted assumptions. The *life-world* is the world of human lived-experience of which without it there will be no human experience. It is the world that we sometimes take for granted or ignore with all of its invested ontological value; a pre-scientific, experientially given world that we are familiar with and never call into question.²⁹ Husserl, the father of phenomenology describes the *life-world* as “the world of immediate experience”, the world as “already there” and “pre-given” to us, which Gabriel Marcel calls the “world of the problematic” in relation to human search for a meaningful life.³⁰ Conversely, the basic thing about all these assertions is that the *life-world* is the meaningful foundation and ultimate source of human meaning.³¹ The basis of these claims is that our everyday life and its relation to the world cannot be ignored, especially when the practical world is being consistently threatened by scientific explorations to the level of its disappearance. The concept of *life-world*, therefore, raises the awareness of the importance of direct human relationship with the world. We cannot ignore that being in the world is basically experiential, which is not just common experience, but fundamentally, a particular human lived-experience for a meaningful life and existence. The lived-experience here referred to is that which is lived by a person at a given time and condition, in a given place in the state of affairs; it is pragmatic since it implies the totality of human life. This experience is already there and is part of human awareness of the self and the world of that experience. Max Van Manen informs that:

“A lived experience does not confront me as something perceived or represented; it is not given to me, but the reality of lived experience is there-for-me because I have reflexive awareness of it, because I possess it immediately as belonging to me in some sense. Only in thought does it become objective.”³²

The concept of lived-experience in relation to the world, therefore, should be seen as the object of environmental ontology, which is not a flight to some preconceived utopian destiny, but rather a

²⁷ Orr W. David, *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, 5.

²⁸ Stewart D. et al, *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and Its Literature*, Ohio University Press, 90; Pollio R. Howard, *The Phenomenology of Everyday Life*, Cambridge University Press, 1997. 7.

²⁹ Moran Dermot, *The Phenomenology Reader*. Op Cit., 288-289.

³⁰ Marcel Gabriel, *Man Against Mass Society*, translation by G. Fraser, Lanham: University of America, 1985.

³¹ Husserl, Edmund, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Op. Cit, 126.

³² Van M. Manen, *Researching Lived Experiences*. The Althouse Press, London, 1997, 11-25.

homecoming or return to mother earth for a meaningful human existence that takes into account human experience and integrity of the natural world where that experience is realized. Any destruction of the *life-world* brought by any force including modernity and its embedded influences leads to the plight of what the poet Suzanne Langer once informed:

“Most people have no home that is a symbol of their childhood, not even a definite memory of one place to serve that purpose. Many no longer know the language that was once their mother-tongue. All old symbols are gone. . . . The field of our unconscious symbolic orientation is suddenly ploughed up by the tremendous changes in the external world and in the social order.”³³

The most critical thing pointed out by Langer in the text is that the destruction of the natural environment or world implies that humans too are equally lost, thereby forced to live without a home. In fact, it is self-defeating that, today, we no longer speak the language of nature with the natural environment and we seem to live unconsciously with it. The *life-world* is not anymore given a reflective attention that it deserves; instead, it has been put out of human sight to the level that humans never make their experiences in the *life-world* an object of their conscious awareness for their own human natural progress. The *life-world* seems not to take priority in terms of concerns and experiential structures it occupies in their lives. Rather, human experiences are regarded to sporadically happen, without any consideration of how they happen. However, this is not the end of it all. For humans to recover their sense of purpose or meaning, they should again find their way back home to the planet earth for a meaningful life. This getting back home is fundamentally about recasting again a meaningful human presence in the world in a way that honours the integrity of the environment, ecological systems, evolution, their own human dignity, spirit, while forging authentic roots and connection with the planet earth.³⁴ When these elements are put into place, then humans are helped to find their genuine bearings again in relation to mother earth.

To substantively address the *life-world* ontology, it is important to take-up the Heideggerian concept of *being-in-the-world* as a way of describing the unity between humans and the world.

4.2. Unity between Humans and World

In the preceding section, with the concept of *life-world*, the world is pictured as an ontological horizon through which humans realize themselves and manifest their subjectivity. But what exactly does this mean? Heidegger in his phenomenology presents the unity between humans and the world starting with human experience as a way to address the various issues that arise from subject – object Cartesian dualism that has largely contributed to the destruction of the natural world. Heidegger regards the natural environment and humans as intimately indivisible: a *person-world-whole* that is one integral reality rather than two opposing entities. He employs the concept of *being-in-the-world* to express this unique and indivisible union, which he regards to be a fundamental structure of human existence, as opposed to the *within-the-world* forms of being that non-human entities share. From a Heideggerian perspective, it is important to note that the *world* means two basic things:³⁵

First, the world is “a totality of equipment: *present-at-hand*³⁶ and *readiness-to-hand*,”³⁷ which Heidegger himself terms as the *ontical* world of things or entities.³⁸ Mark Wrathall, a Heideggerian

³³ Langer, K. S, *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*, Vol. II, in the *Journal of Value Inquiry* 10(1), 1976, 292.

³⁴ Orr W. D, *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. Oxford University Press, 2002, 30

³⁵ Lafont Cristina, “Hermeneutics”, in *A Companion to Heidegger*, edited by Dreyfus Hubert and Wrathall Mark, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Limited, 2005, 271.

³⁶ The *present-at-hand* entities are those entities that are based on the possible assertions to be made upon them, and do not have any practical implications or are seen as irrelevant, mere representations of an independent reality indifferent to practical projects. For example the brokenness of the hammer, the broken hammer becomes *present-at-hand* object; it doesn't serve its purpose of which it was made (hammering). (Brandom, R. [2005]. ‘Heidegger's Categories in *Being and Time*’, in *A Companion to Heidegger*, Edited by Dryfus Hubert and Wrathall Mark, Blackwell Company, 228ff; Don Ihde, *Heidegger's Technologies: Postphenomenological Perspectives*, Fordham University Press, 2010, 38.)

³⁷ *Readiness-to-hand* refers to entities that have the relationship of service, significance or use to/by the human subject. Heidegger describes “serviceability” as the potential which objects have to be caught up in the practices which institute specific respects of appropriateness. For something to be so caught up is for it to be *involved or engaged in performing its practical activity or purpose*: “The Being of an entity within the world is its

philosopher and writer calls it the extended, physical and measurable world – *place wherein* – human beings live and experience their interests and purposes.³⁹ Second, there is the ontological world, which is the communal world of relationships that is shared with others, other ecosystems, and from where ecosystems derive their meaning. In *Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, Heidegger clarifies this notion of the ontological world when he informs that:

“World is understood beforehand when objects encounter us... The mode of being of the world is not the extantness of objects; instead, the world *exists*.”⁴⁰

In the text, we find that Heidegger does not use the term in the physical sense to mean the totality of those entities which populate the world; it is not the sum total of actual or extant beings or things that are *ready-to-hand* or *present-at-hand*.⁴¹ Neither is it something totally outside, observable or inferred to which I have access with my mind with its contents as it is cognitively conceived.⁴² Rather, he conceives of the world as the determination of human existence, a highly integrated horizon for human meaning.⁴³ Heidegger explains this when he says:

“In *Dasein* itself, and therefore in its own understanding of Being, the way the world is understood is, as we shall show, reflected back ontologically upon the way in which *Dasein* itself gets interpreted.”⁴⁴

The most basic interpretation of what Heidegger says in the text is that the source of meaningfulness and the significance of *being-in-the-world* is, we human beings. We do not need to refer to anything outside of ourselves in terms of any objectified reality such as modern science or in terms of modern technological artefacts. Faithful to his phenomenology of human beings (*Daseins*), Heidegger thinks that our regard of the world is a reflection of our own existence, of ourselves in the sense that the world is ultimately part of us, of our existential, relational structure; we are practically engaged with it.⁴⁵ This does not mean that there is no external *objective* and *ontic* world with which we need to have an external relation. Heidegger is aware that the Cartesian concept of the world adopted today by modern science and technology has led to its manipulation as an object of research and all sorts of incursions to the height that it is no longer part of our existential structure. Because of that, Heidegger sets out to establish an ontological world of our subjective involvement, through which we might derive our subjective significance as *world-forming* subjects. Miguel de Beistegui emphatically describes Heidegger’s phenomenological interpretation of the world as:

“... to say that we exist only in and through our relation to the world, that we, as human beings are nothing independent from, and in addition to, our being-in-the-world... Openness to the world is what defines our being, not thought.”⁴⁶

What Heidegger does is to give the world an *ontological* and phenomenological significance in terms of the modes of *being-in-the-world*. What he says about the world can be restated as: *So long as we*

involvement.” (Heidegger, Martine, *Being and Time*, Op. Cit., 116). Such involvement in turn comprises a system of references or assignments of tasks: “To say that the Being of the *ready-to-hand* has the structure of reference or assignment means that it has in itself the character of *having been assigned or referred*” (Ibid., 115). Anything *ready-to-hand* is so only in virtue of the role it plays in a “referential totality of significance or involvements” (Ibid., 118).

³⁸ Heidegger Martine, *Being and Time*, Op. Cit., 123; Ibidem, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, translation by Michael Heim, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984, 172.

³⁹ Wrathall Mark, et al., *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honour of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Vol. I*, London, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000, 211-15.

⁴⁰ Heidegger Martine, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, 2nd edition by Albert Hofstadter, Indiana University Press, 1982, 299; Ibidem, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, Op. Cit., 172.

⁴¹ Moran Dermot, *The Phenomenology Reader*, Op. Cit., 289-295.

⁴² Krell, F. David, “The Factual Life of *Dasein*: From the Early Freiburg Courses to *Being and Time*,” in *Reading Heidegger from the Start: Essays in His Earliest Thought*, edited by Theodore Kisiel and John Van Buren, New York: State University of New York Press, 1994, 371; Kolb D, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986, 132.

⁴³ Vensus George, *Authentic Human Destiny: The Paths of Shankara and Heidegger*, Washington: Library of Congress Cataloguing Publication, 1998, 138.

⁴⁴ Heidegger Martine, *Being and Time*, Op. Cit., 36.

⁴⁵ Kolb David, *The Critique of Pure Modernity: Hegel, Heidegger and After*, Op. Cit., 132-6.

⁴⁶ Miguel de Beistegui, *The New Heidegger*, New York: Continuum, 2005, 12.

are, the world exists, and if we are not, then, the world does not exist, since it is defined by our relation to it. Unlike Aristotle's rational animal and Descartes' mental substance, for Heidegger, humans are defined as being-*in-the-world* by nature. However, the question is: What is the content or the core phenomenon of this *being-in-the-world*? The core phenomenon of *being-in-the-world*, for Heidegger, is *being-in* or literally, *in-ness*. This sounds rather strange, but Heidegger in his fundamental ontology of *Dasein* is describing our mode of existing. *In-ness*, according to Heidegger, is primarily a matter of positive engagement or involvement; a kind of active residing or *dwelling*.⁴⁷ Only human subjects are *in-the-world* in the sense of being *open-to-it* and by their presence disclosing-it,⁴⁸ which is essentially having experiences. What does this mean? *Being-in-the-world* is specific to humans; the rock for Heidegger is *within-the-world* and not *in-the-world*, but I as the human subject, *am-in-the-world*.⁴⁹ This simply means that the way *I am-in-the-world* is fundamentally a different mode of existence than the way the rock is *in-the-world*. Why? Because I experience the world; the rock does not experience anything, and it does not ask fundamental questions about its mode of *being-in-the-world*. In this sense, the rock and all other *non-Dasein* entities represented are *within-the-world*⁵⁰ for Heidegger. He uses the term *worldhood* to refer to the significance that accrues to entities by their relationship to human concerns and interests, which occurs only in correlation with one's engagement with those entities in terms their ontological significance.

The fundamental characteristic of *in-ness* or *worldhood*, which we constantly project in our experience, then, is "the totality of significance"⁵¹ in terms of which objects *within-the-world* have ontological *relevance* either to themselves or to the rest of entities in the ecosystem.⁵² As humans, our *being-in-the-world* is basically a matter of having experiences and the world in this sense is about horizons of meanings and concerns⁵³ that constitute our lived-experiences for a meaningful existence. Humans do not exist apart from the world, but are intimately caught up immersed in world-formation in terms of revealing the ontological significance of world entities. The implication here is that there is an indissoluble unity between people and world.⁵⁴ It is impossible to ask whether humans make the world or the world makes humans because both exist always together and can only be correctly interpreted in terms of the holistic relationship of between the two. Thus, from a Heideggerian perspective, any environmental incursion is an affront to peoples' capacities to experience themselves in the world as having meaningful responsibilities towards it for their meaning, upkeep and continuity.

It is, therefore, fundamentally important to note that human ontological relation to the natural world, free from objectifications and dichotomies between humans and world as described by Heidegger can bring other important developing assessments. Even though human engagements hold humans and world always together, it is equally imperative to address the ontology of the physical and spatial world itself, taking into account its various aspects that relate to all forms of bio-diversity. This is

⁴⁷ Wrathall Mark and Jeff Malpas, *Heidegger, Authenticity, and Modernity: Essays in Honour of Hubert L. Dreyfus, Vol. I*, Op. Cit., 209-10.

⁴⁸ Puthenpurackal J. Johnson, *Heidegger Through Authentic Totality to Total Authenticity*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1987, 31; Greaves Tom, *Starting with Heidegger*, New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010, 83-4.

⁴⁹ Heidegger Martine, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude and Solitude*, trans. by William McNeil and Walker, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, 196-200.

⁵⁰ Heidegger Martine, *Being and Time*, Op. Cit., 95.

⁵¹ *Totality of significance* is the relationship of assignments of meaning to objects, which constitute what we call world and, is grounded in the human subject. Entities make sense to us only within a total system of human meaning or purposes. Whereas other entities involved in the world are functional and instrumental, human subject herself is that for-the-sake-of-which the referential totality operates. Graham Harman, *Heidegger Explained: From Phenomenon to Thing*, Chicago: Open Court, 2007, 64.

⁵² Ridling Zain, *A Comprehensive Study of Heidegger's Thought*, New Orleans, Louisiana: Columbus University Press, 2001, 28.

⁵³ Heidegger Martine, *Being and Time*, Op. Cit., 95, 188-90; Ibidem, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude and Solitude*, translation by William McNeil and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995, 282-7; Wrathall, Mark, *How to Read Heidegger*, London: Granta Books, 2005, 38ff; Dreyfus Dubert, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger's Being and Time, Division I*, Op. Cit., 16ff.

⁵⁴ Stewart David., et al., *Exploring Phenomenology: A Guide to the Field and its Literature*. Ohio University Press, 1990, 9.

essential because, the making of the world is not just the work of humans alone; humans should not take themselves as the only *world-formers*.⁵⁵ There are also other inhuman forces that are continually engaged in the process of *world-formation*, which should not be interfered with by human intrusions; they should be left to run their own ontological course for self-management and sustenance and ultimately for world-formation. The argument is that the world is continually in the state of self-forming.

4.3. World as Self-forming

It is important to understand that Heidegger's explanation of the indissoluble union of the world and humans is from the subjective standpoint, such that the world may seem to have no relevance of its own minus human beings who are to give it relevance. It is more of a person-centred interpretation of the world, which if not well checked will continue to perpetuate human scientific superiority over nature, where the world will be subjected to the mercy of humans for its meaning and relevance. It is a carefully linear and one directional (human-nature) regard to the world and its setting, which from a scientific perception will continue to conceive of the earth as a resource pool that exists to be exploited as if those resources have no limits.

In fact, today's various attempts by environmentalists to address human night raid on the environment, seem to fall on the same unilateral trap, whereby solutions are equivocally thought to come from only one direction of humans as if the natural environment has no part to play by itself. Again this is erroneous and misleading because it treats the natural environment largely as to be in an "enclosed box" to be worked upon and redirected by humans. It perpetuates an intrusive and manipulative relation to the environment to the extent that nature no longer takes care of itself, thereby needing humans to salvage it. This approach to nature ultimately makes nature disappear.⁵⁶ It is an approach that is not nature friendly, because it works at the expense of nonhuman forces or disturbances, while disregarding their capacity to enable ecosystems themselves to interact and sustain themselves.⁵⁷

Unilateral approaches to environmental issues deeply do not see the planet earth as a single unity, integrated and dynamic physical system⁵⁸; they annihilate the unity of humanity with the world, thereby generating other complicated environmental problems much faster than we can actually identify and respond to them.⁵⁹ As it has been explained in the preceding subsections, unilateral approaches lead to a total negation of any non-linear or asymmetrical approach, dynamics and alternate domains of our relation to planet earth. They undermine intimacy with nature, thereby removing humans from their being as part of nature as properly argued and intended by Heidegger, Husserl and other phenomenologists. The effect of this, once more, is unfathomable dichotomy between humanity and nature. Influenced by Heidegger and other environmental phenomenologists, Nigel Clark in his onto-environmental philosophy addresses the one sidedness of human regard to nature, while attempting to give a substantive solution. He does so, not from human to environment standpoint, as addressed by Heidegger, but from *nature-to-nature* perspective. Clark proposes a *return to planet earth* ontology, which according to him is not simply about a reaction, opposition and solution to earth disturbances brought by inhuman forces and preservation of existing structures that bring about climate unsteadiness, but essentially a landscape ontology that addresses ecological system interdependence for self-sustenance.⁶⁰ The fundamental and most innovative aspect is that, this system interdependence provides a balanced view of nature, while recognizing the role non-humans or inhuman forces or powers play in maintaining that balance. In Clark's assessment, inhuman forces are the environmental phenomena that occur naturally, which either can be destructive or constructive. These natural forces include hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, volcanic activity, droughts, forests, etc. To reiterate the point, not all these inhuman forces result in negative ecosystem impacts; some have positive impacts on ecosystems, even though it is hard to quantify the their positive effects.

⁵⁵ Clark Nihel, *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*. Op. Cit., 36.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 31

⁵⁷ O'Neill V. Robert, "Recovery in Complex Ecosystems", *The Journal of Aquatic Ecosystem Stress and Recovery* Vol. 6, (1999) 181–187.

⁵⁸ Clark Nihel, *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*. Op. Cit., 4-5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, X.

Clark's onto-environmental argument is that during the occurrence of inhuman forces the world takes its own way of acting for self-preservation and regulation that should be respected. In other words, it is not only humans who can solve the problem of climate change, but also nature itself when allowed to take its natural course has a self-regulatory power. Under such a claim, the *return to planet earth* is, therefore, about the recognition of the opportunities created by inhuman powers in terms of recombination of evolved structures and processes, renewal of the system and emergence of new paths of life within the ecosystems in the planet earth. The contrast here is that scientific and technological intrusion on the environment and other human related causes interfere with the adaptability of the ecosystems for self-sustenance, while the *return to planet earth* provides adaptive capability that allows respect to nature as we endeavour to sustain and develop it.⁶¹

The *return to planet earth* ontology is a way of thinking that presents a phenomenological standpoint for channelling and reorganizing misplaced human regard attitudes towards the natural environment. It provides for a natural science and interdisciplinary collaboration in the management of environmental for more sustainable environmental development paths.⁶² The basis of this is that it is not only humans that organize the natural planet earth; even nature through inhuman forces organizes other ecosystems and even humans. In other words, nature develops successful strategies for living on earth for all species and maintains itself through nonhuman forces. To save the planet earth we do not need entirely scientific and technological interventions, but also we need to involve nature or the planet earth itself. Scientific and technological interventions (reduce industrial emissions, reduce nuclear investigations, etc) are being tried and seem not to give substantive expected results to the problem created. In fact, some countries like the United States and North Korea express their resistance to such world measures. The probable reason to this failure could be that such scientific attempts are basically extrinsic to the problem being treated. Instead, we need intrinsic solutions to intrinsic problems affecting the planet earth; we need to seek the worldhood of the environment by going through an ontological engagement of ecosystems in the world-formation since their influences go beyond the material implications or meaning for environmental sustenance.⁶³

Earth's natural turbulences or forces, such as hurricanes, storms, landslides caused by heavy rains, floods, events triggered by fire, wind, and herbivores, are inherent parts of the internal dynamics of ecosystems, such that their developments and evolution are vital for ecosystem resilience and integrity.⁶⁴ Hurricanes, tropical storms and floods, for instance, notwithstanding the destruction they cause, help in distributing the excess and unbearable earth's heat to the earth's poles, thereby lowering atmospheric temperatures. Floods help rejuvenate floodplain vegetation and are important drivers of many ecological processes in floodplains. Furthermore, large storms and the tremendous amounts of rainfall that comes with them are beneficial to ecosystems and human agricultural needs. All these are of great importance for regenerating and re-organizing the ecological systems after turbulence and disruption.⁶⁵ Of course, while these may have some positive benefits, it should be noted that earth turbulences, hurricanes and the flooding also affect ecosystems negatively to the level of destroying lives of people and other species on the planet.

Today's world campaign attempts to plant more trees are other vital ways of returning to planet earth ontology, which in essence is a recognition that the world is invested with self-value that is not given to it by any external agent;⁶⁶ they are attempts to go back to the planet earth to allow it regulate itself and create an environment suitable for other ecosystems to come in and play their role in the maintenance of the planet. For instance, the ontological character of forests plays a greater role in world-formation. It is conventional knowledge that forests through their foliage protect water

⁶¹ Smit, Barry. et al., "Adaptation, Adaptive Capacity and Vulnerability", in the *Journal of Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 16, (2006) 282-292.

⁶² Lambin F. Eric, "Conditions for Sustainability of Human-Environment Systems: Information, Motivation, and Capacity, In the *Journal of Global Environmental Change* Vol. 15, (2005) 177-180.

⁶³ Moran Dermot, *The Phenomenology Reader*. Op. Cit., 288-290.

⁶⁴ Sousa, W. Philip, "The Role of Disturbance in Natural Communities", *Journal of Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 15 (1984) 353-391.

⁶⁵ Folke R. Carl. et al., "Resilience Thinking: Integrating, Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability". *Journal of Ecology and Society* 15(4), 2010) 20; Bellwood, D. R, et al. 2004. Confronting the Coral Reef Crisis. *Journal of Nature* 429 (2004) 827-833.

⁶⁶ Moran Dermot, *The Phenomenology Reader*. Op. Cit., 288-289.

resources in a way that craggy bark and abundant litter decrease the speed of water distribution and favour slow but substantive infiltration of rainwater into the soil. Particularly in dry areas, the capacity of forests to retain other precipitations such as mist that can be collected and stored for other usages by the ecosystems found in those forests and even to be used by humans. In their attempt to protect water resources, forests regulate the climate and reduction of poisonous gas emission impacts by providing oxygen necessary for lives of the ecosystems. Through their ability to control wind speed and air flows, forests influence local air circulation, thereby retaining solid suspensions and gaseous elements; they filter air masses and retain contaminants. Studies show that mature trees anywhere on the surface of the planet earth can absorb about 48 pounds of CO₂ a year and all of the oxygen needed by living organisms comes from plants.⁶⁷

More importantly, forests *conserve the natural habitat and biological diversity* by offering a habitat to flora and fauna. Most ferns and flowering plants grow in the forest and plants within the forests are the primary habitat for thousands of other organisms. As a habitat, plants regulate the climate necessary for those organisms in the forests. They provide shade, help moderate the temperature. On a larger scale, such as in tropical rainforests, plants actually change the rainfall patterns over large areas of the earth's surface. Forests and other plants also make and protect the soil by reducing erosion and help to conserve the soil. The forest canopy slows down the wind while its dense network of roots holds the soil in place; in the forest and the prairie, the roots of plants help hold the soil together thereby reducing erosion and regulating land movement (mass slides and falling rocks) and buffering effect that protects against flooding or severe river bank erosion.⁶⁸ Soil is made up of lots of particles of rocks which are broken down into very small pieces. When plants die, their decomposed remains together with the broken rocks are added to the soil. This helps to make the soil rich with nutrients and air. Forests are important in the restoration of degraded fragile ecosystems of drylands and increasing their productivity. The argument here is that the ontology of forests will enable the whole ecological system to withstand climatic changes and turbulences and essentially retain its function of earth formation. This is possible only if the forests are either in their natural state or under good natural ecological conditions, which secure their own perpetuation through the functioning of their ecological processes.⁶⁹

The deep-seated point is that the natural organization of the planet earth provides an insightful understanding of the role of biological diversity in ecosystem dynamics. Biological diversity is essential in the self-organizing ability of complex adaptive systems⁷⁰ both in terms of absorbing changes and in regenerating and re-organizing the system and new life-forms.⁷¹ The dynamics of ecological systems make it possible to relate to environmental entities in a manner that secures their capacity to support and sustain the natural environment. Under this regard the identity of each individual organism within the planet earth, at whatever ontological level of its being, is not independent of the rest of ecosystems that constitute the planet, but is a function of relations of the individuals in question with other individuals in the ecosystem. Thus, the planet earth is perceived as fundamentally constituted inter-relationally, rather than cumulative of isolated forces in its structure.⁷² The individuals constituting the planet the earth (including humans) serve as a function of the wider system or field to which they belongs; they should be seen as permeating nature at large. By making the world system itself the central locus for all meaning would imply that the erroneous justification for ranking humans over others on the account of their manipulative rationality is eliminated within the relational paradigm within world ecosystems, thereby repositioning each organism to perform its

⁶⁷ Linderman Marc, et al., "Land-Cover Change and Vegetation Dynamics Across Africa". In *J. Geophys Res*, 110, no. D12, D12104 (2005).

⁶⁸ Lambin, E. F. et al., "Dynamics of land-use and land-cover change in tropical regions". *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 28 (2005) 205-241.

⁶⁹ Walker, B.H, et al., "Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability in Social-Ecological Systems", *Journal of Ecology and Society* 9(2) 2004, 1 – 20.

⁷⁰ Levin A. Simon, *Fragile Dominion: Complexity and the Commons*. USA: Perseus Books, Reading, Massachusetts, 1999.

⁷¹ Folke R. Carl., et al., "Regime Shifts, Resilience and Biodiversity in Ecosystem management", *Journal of Annual Review of Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 35 (2004) 557-581.

⁷² Freya Mathews, "Deep Ecology," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, Edited by Dale Jamieson. Blackwell Publishers Limited, 2001, 218.

role for the good of the entire ecosystem. It is a releasement from the misplaced traditional man-in-environment making in favour of the relational total-network of forces for world-formation.

The diversity and individuality of the world-forming forces implies the generation of a lasting novelty far-from mere sustenance of planet earth dynamics.⁷³ Left to its own procedure, nature has a remarkable way of healing, protecting, and supporting itself. The unfortunate thing is that humans always want to make everything independently for themselves, facing out all that is not of any use to them to the height that things are no longer what they are in and for themselves, they are what they are for humans. Under this equivocal perception, the whole ecosystem is thereby affected; nonhumans are regarded not present in the entire process of purification of the earth's atmosphere, no longer present in the elimination of some dangerous organisms, etc. Nature composed of biological and material and inorganic systems that sustain life has been adversely affected.⁷⁴ The results of this are evident today: global warming, and climate change.

All the above inhuman *world-forming* systems and many others break the old manipulative, linear, one-sided and anthropocentric approach to nature and introduces in non-linearity, diversity, and flows. The nonlinearity generates path dependency or asymmetrical relationship with the natural world, where there is always give and take. Humans should give to the natural world and receive from it as well as the system evolves and develops itself. This reciprocal relation is not just of mutual interchange, which sometimes can again lead to mastery and manipulation of nature, but rather, of radical asymmetry.⁷⁵ It is radical asymmetry in the sense that it is a mutual relation of care and interdependence, where one thing impacts upon another, each in need of the other. Humans and nonhumans are ontologically interconnected and dependent upon each other.⁷⁶ A consequence of this trail of interdependency is to allow the development of ecosystems to play their qualitative role in the natural system dynamics for a qualitative change in the natural environmental. If nonhuman world-forming forces are not respected, then, any attack on the earth, including scientific intrusion will turn the entire planet into a vast experimental laboratory losing sight of the independent ontological force of things in themselves on the planet earth. Sometimes if not most of the times, humans ought to let the earth "be for itself" and let it contribute in its own way to the whole process of world formation. They ought to recognise that there are also inhuman forces that are continually engaged in world formation and, these forces should not be interfered with, they should be left to run their course. The profound implication of this is that, the defence of nature consequently in an explicit way is a matter of self-defence for humans themselves. That is, human self-realization can only be better off to the extent that it respectfully encompasses the rest of nature and any impulse for self-preservation and enrichment automatically implies the preservation of nature itself.⁷⁷

5. CONCLUSION

The article has attempted to give a phenomenology of planet earth ontology. It has done this, first by challenging the Cartesian epistemology of subject-object dichotomy in regard to human-earth relationship, which regards the planet earth as an objective reality "out there", primitive and chaotic to be studied and organized by human reason, while there is subjective reality constructed by human consciousness. This human-earth relationship has been shown to be reductionist, providing simplistic, one-directional and physical explanations of the world that undermines authentic human experience and asymmetrical relation to the world; it sets aside world ecosystems for human exploration and manipulation, thereby disregarding their ontological significance. It is more of human-scientific unconcealment of the will to power that conquers the world by investigating everything hidden in it with an end of dominating it. Humans ought to question their ego centric, human-centred and misplaced way of world-formation or design.

Second, the article has advocated for the *return to planet earth* ontology, which finds its basis on Charles Darwin who attempted to give a natural scientific explanation of the evolution of the world and its species not just for their survival, but essentially for the recognition of the intrinsic, gradual

⁷³ Folke Carl. R, et al., "Resilience Thinking: Integrating Resilience, Adaptability and Transformability". *Journal of Ecology and Society* 15(4) 2010, 20-30.

⁷⁴ Clark Nihel, *Inhuman Nature: Sociable Life on a Dynamic Planet*. Op. Cit., 44.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁷⁶ Orr W. David, *The Nature of Design: Ecology, Culture, and Human Intention*. Oxford University Press. 2002, 5.

⁷⁷ Freya Mathews, "Deep Ecology," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, Op Cit., 222.

and dynamic nature of the world ecosystems. This does not mean that the planet earth should not be touched or be abandoned, but rather to go back to it by preserving it so that it presents itself as an entity, home that has its own intrinsic relevance and function for self-management. This is basically because earth ontology gives a profound understanding of the broader context that mother earth has limits necessitating nonhuman forces in ecosystems and dynamics to play their fundamental role in world-formation.

Finally, the article suggests a metaphysic of planet earth ontology for asymmetrical and dynamic inter-relatedness among organisms as the main stream of modern ecology for a sustainable environmental integrity and conservation. This is because the natural world is not merely a warehouse of unrelated resources to serve human needs. Rather, it is a horizon of a highly integrated, interrelated and interdependent ecosystem upon which all life forms, including the soil, water, plants, animals and humans depend on each other for a continued existence. The natural world, therefore, should be regarded as the *Other-self* to humans and to other organisms that has its own ontological value and function. In this regard, if humans have to safeguard their future existence in today's scientific and technologically determined world, then the manner of safeguarding it should not be separated from the reality of their world or environment. Asymmetrical relation with the planet earth seeks to enforce the thinking grounded on the recognition of nonhuman ecological systems in which the human imprint is not to be seen as the only force to induce or repair environmental changes. Humans have to look for inextricable entanglements, mutual interdependence and co-constitutive relations to planet earth in order to attain ecologically friendly results. Human existence can only be meaningful in virtue of its responsible and dialogical character with the entire cosmos; for without this, humans can only plunge themselves into the abyss of extinction. Therefore, environmental conservation should seriously take the phenomenological and trans-disciplinary standpoint that ensures the recognition of nonhuman and human intervention.

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