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Article

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ETHICS OF ENERGY TRANSITION: NIGERIA AND THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF CLIMATE RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

Nigeria, Africa's largest oil producer yet one of the most energy-poor nations, faces a profound ethical dilemma: whether to prioritise fossil fuel-driven development to address poverty or transition to renewables in line with global climate imperatives. This paper therefore explored Nigeria's energy future through three normative lenses: cosmopolitan climate justice, nationalist developmental rights, and African environmental ethics, with a focus on Samuel Bassey's anthropoholism. Cosmopolitan theorists argue that climate duties must be shared globally, distributed according to responsibility, capacity, and fairness. From this perspective, Nigeria must participate in mitigation efforts while demanding financial and technological support from industrialized nations. In contrast, the developmentalist position emphasizes sovereignty and historical justice, asserting Nigeria's right to utilise its fossil resources just as the Global North did. Yet these two frameworks, when taken alone, risk either downplaying historical inequality or justifying unsustainable dependency. Anthropoholism provides a mediating alternative. Rejecting both human supremacy and purely ecocentric approaches, it grounds energy ethics in the indivisibility of human and ecological flourishing. By framing Nigeria's choices as duties of care to communities, ecosystems, and future generations, anthropoholism supports a just transition that is sequenced, participatory, and restorative. This approach enables Nigeria to harmonize

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development with responsibility, offering an authentically African pathway to sustainable futures.

Keywords: Anthropoholism, Climate Justice, Developmental Rights, Energy Transition, Nigeria.

Introduction

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country and largest oil producer. However, the country embodies one of the starkest paradoxes in global energy politics. Despite vast fossil fuel reserves and decades of petroleum exports, over 90 million Nigerians lack reliable access to electricity (IEA, 2022). Oil dominates state revenues, yet it has also fuelled corruption, ecological devastation, and violent conflict in the Niger Delta (Watts, 2021). This paradox places Nigeria at the crossroads of two pressing imperatives: the pursuit of energy-driven development to alleviate poverty, and the obligation to transition toward renewable energy in response to the global climate emergency. The ethical tension here is profound. Cosmopolitan climate justice argues that all states share duties to mitigate climate change, distributed according to fairness, capacity, and responsibility (Shue, 2019; Caney, 2020). From this perspective, Nigeria cannot claim exemption, even as a developing country, because its choices affect the global commons. In contrast, nationalist developmental rights emphasise sovereignty and historical justice, defending Nigeria's entitlement to use its fossil resources just as industrialised nations once did (Sachs, 2016; Okereke, 2021). Yet both approaches remain incomplete if assessed solely through external frameworks. This paper introduces anthropoholism, developed by Nigerian philosopher Samuel Bassey, as a distinctly African contribution to environmental ethics. Anthropoholism rejects both anthropocentrism, which elevates human supremacy, and ecocentrism, which dissolves human agency into nature. Instead, it posits that humans and ecosystems are co-constitutive, bound in a holistic life-support system where harming the environment is equivalent to harming humanity (Bassey, 2019; 2020). Grounding Nigeria's energy transition in anthropoholism reframes the debate: development and responsibility are not competing demands but inseparable duties of care to people, communities, ecosystems, and future generations. By situating Nigeria within the global debate between cosmopolitan justice and nationalist sovereignty while foregrounding anthropoholism, this paper proposes a framework for a just transition that is globally responsible, developmentally legitimate, and philosophically authentic to African thought.

Nigeria's Energy Landscape

Historical Background of Energy Dependence: Nigeria's energy story is inseparable from its history of oil discovery. Petroleum was first struck in Oloibiri, Bayelsa State, in 1956, and commercial production began in 1958. By the early 1970s, oil had overtaken agriculture as the primary driver of government revenues (Omeje, 2021). This marked a structural shift from a largely agrarian economy to one dominated by petroleum exports. Today, Nigeria is a member of OPEC and remains one of the world's top ten crude oil exporters, with reserves estimated at 37 billion barrels (NNPC, 2022). This dependence, however, created what scholars have termed the "resource curse." Sala-i-Martin and Subramanian (2013) argue that Nigeria's overreliance on oil rents weakened institutions, entrenched corruption, and fostered rent-seeking behaviour among elites. The oil boom of the 1970s, rather than catalysing industrial diversification, entrenched a mono-economy vulnerable to global oil

price shocks. Thus, the foundations of Nigeria's energy paradox were laid: resource wealth without structural transformation.

Energy Access and Poverty

Despite being an oil giant, Nigeria faces staggering energy poverty. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA, 2022), about 92 million Nigerians lack access to electricity, making it the country with the largest energy access deficit globally. Even for those connected to the national grid, power supply is unreliable, with frequent blackouts that force households and businesses to rely on diesel and petrol generators. These generators, while filling the supply gap, contribute to environmental pollution and increased carbon emissions (Eberhard et al., 2021). The paradox is stark: a country with abundant energy resources remains unable to deliver reliable power to its citizens. As Okoro and Chikuni (2007) note, this reflects not just technical deficiencies but also governance failures, policy inconsistency, and infrastructural neglect. Thus, any conversation on Nigeria's energy transition must begin from the lived reality of energy poverty, not abstract global commitments alone.

Environmental Consequences of Fossil Fuel Dependence

Oil extraction has imposed heavy ecological costs, particularly in the Niger Delta. Frequent oil spills, estimated at more than 240,000 barrels annually, have devastated local ecosystems, poisoned water sources, and disrupted livelihoods dependent on fishing and farming (Amnesty International, 2018). Gas flaring, despite being officially banned, continues at high levels, releasing toxic pollutants and greenhouse gases. Watts (2021) describes this as "petro-violence," where communities are trapped in cycles of ecological degradation, poverty, and conflict. Beyond the Delta, climate change exacerbates vulnerabilities across Nigeria. In the north, desertification threatens pastoralist livelihoods, fuelling farmer-herder conflicts (Blench, 2021). In the south, sea-level rise and coastal erosion threaten densely populated cities like Lagos and Port Harcourt. Nigeria's fossil fuel dependence thus creates both local and global environmental harms.

Renewable Energy Potential

Paradoxically, Nigeria also possesses vast renewable energy potential. Solar radiation levels average 5.5 kWh/m²/day, making solar energy highly viable, particularly in northern states (Shaaban & Petinrin, 2014). Hydropower resources along the Niger and Benue rivers could be expanded, while biomass and wind resources remain underutilised. Yet renewables contribute less than 10% of the national energy mix, excluding traditional biomass (IEA, 2022). Scholars argue that Nigeria's transition is constrained less by technical potential than by policy inertia, financing gaps, and vested interests in fossil fuel rents (Akinyi, 2020). This raises the ethical stakes: if alternatives exist, continued fossil fuel dependence is not merely a matter of necessity but of choice, implicating questions of justice and responsibility.

The Policy Landscape and International Commitments

Nigeria has signalled its commitment to climate action. In 2021, the government announced a net-zero target by 2060 and passed the Climate Change Act to institutionalise a national transition framework (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). Nigeria is also a signatory to the Paris Agreement, pledging to reduce emissions by 20% unconditionally and 47% conditionally by 2030. However, critics highlight a "commitment-implementation gap." Okereke and Etemire (2022) argue that Nigeria's pledges often remain aspirational, lacking robust enforcement, financing, and accountability mechanisms. Subsidies for fossil fuels

persist, distorting energy markets and discouraging investment in renewables. Moreover, the influence of multinational oil corporations entrenches fossil fuel dependence and resists transition efforts.

Nigeria in the Debate on Energy Futures

Nigeria's situation epitomizes the broader Global South dilemma in energy futures. On one hand, the nation embodies the urgent need for development, electrification, and poverty alleviation. On the other hand, it is both a victim of climate change and a contributor through emissions from oil and gas. As Sovacool et al. (2020) note, this creates a "double bind" where developing countries must navigate the competing imperatives of growth and sustainability. By situating Nigeria's energy paradox within this global debate, it becomes clear why philosophical reflection is necessary. The country's decisions are not merely about technology or economics; they are about justice, sovereignty, and ethical responsibility. Nigeria's energy future, therefore, is not just a national issue but a global ethical question.

Cosmopolitan Climate Justice: Global Responsibility

The Cosmopolitan Argument: Cosmopolitanism begins from the premise that moral responsibility transcends borders. Climate change, as a global commons problem, exemplifies this challenge: the atmosphere is shared, and emissions anywhere affect people everywhere. Philosophers such as Henry Shue (2019), Simon Caney (2020), and Thomas Pogge (2017) argue that obligations for climate mitigation must be distributed according to principles of fairness, regardless of national boundaries. This means that Nigeria, despite its developmental challenges, cannot opt out of the collective duty to address climate change. From a cosmopolitan perspective, three main principles are relevant: historical responsibility, capacity to act, and vulnerability to harm. Each provides a moral lens through which Nigeria's role can be assessed.

Historical Responsibility and Nigeria's Emissions

Cosmopolitan theorists stress the importance of historical emissions. Industrialised nations such as the United States and members of the European Union bear primary responsibility, having contributed the bulk of cumulative carbon emissions since the Industrial Revolution. Nigeria, by contrast, contributes only about 0.3% of global emissions annually (IEA, 2022). Yet, cosmopolitan ethics does not allow Nigeria to use its comparatively small footprint as a total exemption. As Shue (2019) argues, while historical emissions matter, all states with fossil-fuel economies must recognise their ongoing responsibilities in the present. Nigeria's expanding oil and gas sector, if left unchecked, could lock the country into a carbon-intensive future, exacerbating climate change and undermining global mitigation efforts. Thus, while Nigeria can rightly demand that wealthy nations bear the brunt of responsibility, it still has obligations to minimize further harm.

Capacity to Act: The Argument from Ability

Cosmopolitan justice also considers the capacity of states to contribute to mitigation. Caney (2020) emphasises that duties should be distributed according to both responsibility and ability. Wealthier states have greater financial and technological resources to reduce emissions. However, Nigeria, as Africa's largest economy, also has non-trivial capacity. Its GDP (around \$477 billion in 2022, World Bank, 2023) and significant renewable potential mean it cannot claim incapacity. Nigeria has already invested in solar mini-grids and hydropower projects, signalling that capacity exists, albeit limited. For cosmopolitans, the ethical imperative is proportional: Nigeria should do what it can without undermining its

developmental goals, while wealthier nations must do more. This introduces the concept of differentiated responsibility – a shared but unequal obligation.

Vulnerability and the Ethics of Protection

A third dimension is vulnerability. Nigeria is highly exposed to climate impacts: desertification in the north, flooding in the Niger Delta, and rising sea levels in coastal cities. As Abubakar (2020) notes, climate change threatens food security, displaces populations, and intensifies conflicts.

Cosmopolitan climate justice stresses the duty to protect the most vulnerable, not just within national borders but globally (Gardiner, 2011). Nigeria's vulnerability, paradoxically, strengthens the case for transition: reducing reliance on fossil fuels not only aids global mitigation but also reduces local harms like gas flaring and oil pollution. Thus, from a cosmopolitan view, Nigeria's transition is both a duty to others and a responsibility to its own citizens.

Nigeria in the International Climate Regime

Nigeria has already entered the cosmopolitan climate governance framework. As a signatory to the Paris Agreement, it has pledged to reduce emissions by 20% unconditionally and 47% conditionally by 2030 (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2021). Its 2060 net-zero commitment aligns with global solidarity. However, critics argue that Nigeria's implementation has been inconsistent. Okereke and Etemire (2022) highlight the gap between commitments and actual enforcement, pointing to weak institutions and fossil fuel subsidies. From a cosmopolitan perspective, such gaps undermine not only Nigeria's credibility but also global climate cooperation. The cosmopolitan ethic would therefore demand not just signing agreements but actively aligning domestic policies with global goals – phasing out subsidies, expanding renewable investment, and ensuring environmental justice for affected communities.

Intergenerational Justice

Cosmopolitan climate ethics is deeply intergenerational. Shue (2019) and Gardiner (2011) stress that current decisions impose irreversible burdens on future generations. For Nigeria, this raises profound ethical stakes: will future Nigerians inherit an economy locked into oil dependency, with degraded ecosystems and unmanageable climate impacts? Or will they inherit a diversified, sustainable energy system? This obligation is not abstract. Rising youth populations mean that by 2050, Nigeria will have the third-largest population in the world, projected at over 400 million people (UN DESA, 2022). Ensuring their flourishing requires ethical foresight today.

Critiques of Cosmopolitan Demands

Not all scholars accept cosmopolitan arguments uncritically. Critics argue that cosmopolitanism risks imposing unfair burdens on the Global South, ignoring historical injustices and structural inequalities (Robinson, 2020). Nigeria may justifiably resist moralising discourses that obscure the disproportionate responsibility of the Global North. Yet, even acknowledging these critiques, cosmopolitanism provides a normative reminder that global interdependence demands shared responsibility. For Nigeria, rejecting cosmopolitan justice entirely risks isolating itself from climate finance, green technology transfers, and global partnerships that could aid its transition.

Nigeria's Ethical Position in Global Climate Responsibility

Nigeria embodies the dual role of both a victim and a contributor. It is among the most vulnerable to climate harms, but also a fossil fuel producer with agency in shaping Africa's energy future. Cosmopolitan ethics situates Nigeria as a responsible actor in the global commons, not merely a passive recipient of harm or aid.

Thus, the moral case for Nigeria's transition is not that it bears equal responsibility as wealthy nations, but that it has a duty proportional to its capacity and vulnerability. By embracing a cosmopolitan ethic of solidarity, Nigeria can align its energy policies with both domestic well-being and global justice.

Nationalist Developmental Rights: Energy for Growth

The Developmentalist Argument: While cosmopolitanism emphasizes global duties, the developmentalist perspective stresses the moral right of nations to pursue industrialization and poverty alleviation using whatever resources are available. For Nigeria, where over 40% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2022), access to affordable and reliable energy is indispensable for development. Fossil fuels, despite their environmental costs, remain the fastest and most accessible route to large-scale electrification and economic transformation.

This argument is grounded in the principle of sovereignty: states should retain autonomy over how they use their resources to meet domestic needs (Okereke, 2021). Moreover, developmentalists argue that pressuring Nigeria to rapidly transition away from fossil fuels amounts to climate injustice, since wealthy nations have already reaped the benefits of carbon-intensive development (Muttitt & Kartha, 2020; Sultana, 2022). Muttitt and Kartha (2020) emphasise that forcing low-emitting, energy-poor nations to forego their remaining hydrocarbon reserves without adequate financial compensation or renewable alternative capacity severely restricts their right to economic development and exacerbates global inequalities. In the context of Sub-Saharan Africa, such demands are increasingly critiqued as a form of "climate coloniality" that shifts the primary burden of decarbonisation onto nations least responsible for historical emissions (Sultana, 2022, 2024).

Historical Injustice and Unequal Carbon Footprints

The principle of fairness is central to nationalist developmental claims. Industrialised nations bear overwhelming responsibility for cumulative emissions: the United States and Europe together account for nearly half of historical CO₂ emissions, while Africa as a whole contributes less than 4% (IPCC, 2023). To demand immediate fossil fuel restraint from Nigeria, a late-developing state, is to perpetuate historical injustice. Sachs (2016) argues that the Global North effectively "used up" much of the global carbon budget while building prosperity, leaving little room for developing nations to grow. From this perspective, Nigeria has a right to exploit its oil and gas reserves as part of its development trajectory. Any global climate strategy that overlooks this historical asymmetry risks reproducing neo-colonial hierarchies, where the Global South bears disproportionate sacrifices.

The Right to Development in International Law

The nationalist developmental position is reinforced by international legal norms. The 1986 UN Declaration on the Right to Development affirms that all peoples have an inalienable right to economic, social, and cultural development (United Nations, 1986). Energy is fundamental to realizing this right. Without expanding energy access, Nigeria cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty eradication,

education, and industrialisation. The principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR), enshrined in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, acknowledges that while all states share responsibility for environmental protection, developing states have the right to prioritise development. Nigeria can therefore legitimately argue that its developmental rights must not be curtailed by climate obligations imposed from outside.

Energy for Poverty Alleviation and Industrialisation

Nigeria's developmental needs are immense. Over 90 million Nigerians lack electricity access, and millions more rely on biomass for cooking, with severe health consequences (IEA, 2022). Expanding energy access is therefore not a luxury but a moral imperative for human dignity. Fossil fuels, being currently abundant and infrastructurally embedded, provide the fastest route to electrification. Moreover, energy is critical for industrialisation. Without reliable and affordable power, manufacturing, digital infrastructure, and agricultural modernisation remain stunted. As Akinyele and Iwayemi (2020) note, industrial diversification is central to reducing Nigeria's dependency on oil rents. Ironically, fossil fuels themselves may provide the bridge to building the very industrial base that would later enable renewable integration.

Postcolonial Critiques of Climate Governance

Nationalist developmental arguments also resonate with postcolonial critiques of international climate politics. Scholars such as Okereke (2021) argue that global climate governance often marginalises African voices, framing the Global South as "defaulters" rather than partners. Climate conditionalities tied to aid or finance can undermine sovereignty, perpetuating dependence on donor institutions and multinational corporations. For Nigeria, this raises the risk of a "green dependency": becoming reliant on Western financing and technology for renewables while losing autonomy over its development path. As Acemoglu and Robinson (2019) remind us, development cannot be imposed externally; it must emerge from domestic priorities. Nigeria's right to determine its energy future is therefore a matter of both justice and sovereignty.

The Problem of Energy Colonialism

A growing literature highlights "energy colonialism," where wealthy nations and corporations push renewable projects in the Global South primarily to meet their own climate goals, often sidelining local communities (Newell & Phillips, 2021). For example, large-scale land acquisitions for biofuels or solar farms may displace rural populations, replicating the extractive logic of fossil capitalism under a green guise. Nigeria must therefore guard against being pressured into a transition that sacrifices local needs for global optics. The ethical question is not simply whether Nigeria should transition, but under what conditions, and whose interests the transition serves.

The Pragmatic Argument: Fossil Fuels as a Development Bridge

Even some climate justice advocates such as Okereke (2021) and Onyekwena (2025) acknowledge that fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, may serve as a temporary "bridge" for development in resource-rich countries. Prominent climate policy scholars argue that an abrupt phase-out without viable modern energy infrastructure risks plunging developing nations deeper into systemic poverty and energy deficit (Okereke, 2021; Onyekwena, 2025). Oil and gas revenues, if managed transparently, could fund renewable infrastructure, education, and healthcare (Akinyi, 2020). Leading African climate advocates emphasise that a pragmatic, equitable transition must allow energy-poor nations to utilise domestic hydrocarbon reserves strategically as transitional assets (Okereke, 2021; Onyekwena, 2025).

For Nigeria, abandoning fossil resources prematurely may mean forfeiting critical fiscal revenues without viable alternatives, effectively undermining both national development and long-term climate resilience. The pragmatic version of the developmentalist argument thus stresses sequencing: Nigeria should transition gradually, ensuring that developmental milestones such as poverty reduction, industrialisation, and infrastructure expansion are achieved first. Only then can renewables sustainably take over.

Limits and Challenges of the Developmentalist Argument

Despite its moral force, the developmentalist perspective has limits. First, fossil fuel dependence has already proven unsustainable in Nigeria. Oil rents have fuelled corruption, conflict, and inequality (Watts, 2021). Thus, relying further on fossil fuels risks deepening the very underdevelopment it seeks to overcome. Second, the global energy market is shifting. Demand for oil may peak by the 2030s (IEA, 2022), threatening the long-term viability of fossil rents. Betting on oil as the engine of future development may therefore lock Nigeria into stranded assets. Finally, climate change itself imposes severe developmental costs. Desertification, flooding, and food insecurity disproportionately harm the poor, undermining the nationalist developmental claim that fossil fuels unequivocally promote well-being.

Nigeria's Negotiating Position

In practice, Nigeria oscillates between cosmopolitan and developmentalist positions in international fora. On the one hand, it pledges ambitious climate targets. On the other hand, it emphasises its right to exploit fossil resources for growth. This “dual rhetoric” reflects the real ethical and political tension Nigeria faces: acknowledging climate responsibility while defending developmental rights. A balanced path forward may lie in pursuing a just transition: leveraging fossil resources in the short term to build renewable capacity, while ensuring that the burdens and benefits are distributed fairly. This is core of Anthropoholism as an ethics for environmental management.

Anthropoholism and African Environmental Ethics

Why Anthropoholism Matters for Nigeria's Energy Debate: Most discussions of climate ethics in Nigeria draw on Western paradigms like cosmopolitan justice, utilitarian cost–benefit analysis, or nationalist developmental rights. While these frameworks provide important insights, they risk marginalizing African contributions to environmental philosophy. Anthropoholism, developed by Nigerian philosopher Samuel Akpan Bassey, offers a homegrown paradigm that rejects the polarities of anthropocentrism (which privileges humans over nature) and ecocentrism (which subordinates humans to ecosystems). Instead, anthropoholism posits a mutual embeddedness of human and ecological life, emphasizing that human flourishing and environmental integrity are indivisible (Bassey, 2019; 2020; Asuquo, 2020). In the context of Nigeria's energy transition, anthropoholism is not just a theoretical innovation; it provides an ethical compass. By grounding energy choices in the indivisibility of human–nature flourishing, anthropoholism enables Nigeria to chart a pathway that is both developmentally responsive and ecologically responsible. Locating the ethics of energy transition within anthropoholist framework examines the moral questions of moving from fossil fuels to clean energy, ensuring that the shift is fair and does not harm vulnerable peoples and communities.

Principles of Anthropoholism

Bassey articulates anthropoholism around three core principles:

- i. **Holistic Interdependence:** Humans are not separate from nature but part of a relational whole. Harming ecosystems harms humans because both co-constitute the life-support system.
- ii. **Human Distinctiveness without Supremacy:** Humans possess moral agency and responsibility, but this does not translate into domination. Rather, humans act as caretakers within the broader ecological community.
- iii. **Live-and-Let-Live Ethic:** The guiding norm of anthropoholism is coexistence. Human activity must allow for the survival, continuity, and flourishing of non-human life, since this underpins human well-being itself (Bassey, 2019; Asuquo, 2020).

These principles shift the ethical focus from short-term utility to long-term co-flourishing. They demand policies that enhance both human development and ecological sustainability, rather than trading one off against the other.

Anthropoholism versus Fossil Fuel Dependence

From an anthropoholistic perspective, Nigeria's reliance on oil extraction and gas flaring violates the duty of care embedded in human–nature interdependence. The Niger Delta exemplifies this violation: oil spills and pollution have devastated fisheries, poisoned farmlands, and displaced communities (Watts, 2021). Under anthropoholism, these harms are not collateral costs of progress but ethical failures that undermine the integrity of the human–ecological whole. Nationalist developmentalists often justify fossil fuel use on grounds of sovereignty and poverty alleviation. Yet anthropoholism reveals the paradox: policies that degrade ecological systems ultimately perpetuate human suffering. Developmental rights cannot be sustained on the destruction of the very environment that sustains life. Thus, fossil dependency is self-defeating when viewed through an anthropoholistic lens.

Anthropoholism and Renewable Energy

Anthropoholism does not demand an immediate halt to fossil fuel use; rather, it provides criteria for judging energy pathways. Renewable energy is favoured because it sustains the live-and-let-live ethic by minimising ecological harm and promoting long-term human flourishing. For example, solar energy harnesses Nigeria's abundant sunlight without degrading ecosystems. Hydropower, if managed inclusively, can serve communities while protecting ecological balance.

However, anthropoholism also warns against "green colonialism." Renewable projects imposed without community participation such as large-scale land acquisitions for biofuels, violate the anthropoholistic principle of relational integrity. Energy transition must therefore be participatory, ensuring that communities are agents in shaping decisions that affect their socio-ecological futures.

Duties to Future Generations

Anthropoholism places strong emphasis on intergenerational responsibility. Since humans are embedded in a continuum of ecological life, present generations owe duties to ensure that future Nigerians inherit both a habitable environment and viable energy systems. This principle aligns with, but is distinct from, cosmopolitan intergenerational justice (Shue, 2019). While Shue grounds responsibility in fairness across time, anthropoholism roots it in the indivisibility of human–ecological flourishing. Failing to protect ecosystems is not merely unfair; it is ontologically destructive, severing the continuity of life itself.

Anthropoholism, Participation, and Justice

One of the most practical contributions of anthropoholism is its insistence on participatory responsibility. Just as humans are embedded in ecosystems, communities must be embedded in decision-making. Top-down policies whether fossil-fuel extraction by multinationals or renewable mega-projects funded by international donors fail, if they rupture socio-ecological relations. An anthropoholistic energy policy for Nigeria must therefore be community-driven, inclusive, and restorative. This aligns with contemporary frameworks of energy justice, but anthropoholism grounds participation in African ontology rather than liberal rights theory.

Toward an Anthropoholistic Framework for Nigeria's Energy Future

Taken together, anthropoholism provides a distinctly Nigerian ethical framework for navigating the energy transition. It suggests three evaluative questions:

- i. Does this policy sustain the integrity of socio-ecological relations?
- ii. Does it respect human distinctiveness without ecological domination?
- iii. Does it enhance the co-flourishing of people, ecosystems, and future generations?

By applying these criteria, Nigeria can move beyond the reductive binaries of global climate justice versus sovereign development. Anthropoholism reconciles these perspectives by showing that true development is impossible without ecological sustainability, and that true responsibility is impossible without community well-being.

Reconciling the Tension: Towards an Anthropoholistic Just Transition

Nigeria's energy dilemma embodies the clash of competing ethical frameworks. Cosmopolitan climate justice demands Nigeria's participation in global mitigation, proportional to its responsibility and capacity. Nationalist developmental rights defend its sovereignty and entitlement to exploit fossil resources for growth. African environmental philosophy, particularly Samuel Bassey's anthropoholism, offers a mediating framework that grounds energy ethics in the indivisibility of human and ecological flourishing. Anthropoholism adds a critical dimension to reconciliation. Unlike cosmopolitanism, which frames duties in terms of distributive fairness across borders, anthropoholism insists that ecological harm anywhere is harm to humanity itself, since humans and nature co-constitute a holistic life system (Bassey, 2019; 2020). Unlike nationalist developmentalism, which can justify ecological sacrifice in the name of sovereignty, anthropoholism cautions that development premised on degrading ecosystems is self-defeating. By foregrounding the "live-and-let-live" ethic, anthropoholism reorients Nigeria's energy debate from abstract global obligations or state-centered rights toward concrete duties of care to communities, ecosystems, and future generations. A just transition for Nigeria must therefore integrate three dimensions:

- i. **Cosmopolitan Responsibility:** Commit to global climate goals while demanding fair finance and technology transfers.
- ii. **Developmental Sovereignty:** Use available resources to alleviate poverty and expand energy access, but without entrenching extractive dependency.
- iii. **Anthropoholistic Ethics:** Evaluate energy policies by whether they sustain socio-ecological relations and enhance co-flourishing across generations.

In practice, this means that fossil revenues, where still exploited, should be transparently invested in renewable infrastructure, ecological remediation, and community empowerment. Policy should prioritise decentralised renewables such as solar mini-grids that align with

anthropoholistic values by respecting both human needs and ecological integrity. Participation is central: communities bearing the costs of extraction or renewable projects must be agents, not objects, of decision-making. By combining cosmopolitan justice, developmental rights, and anthropoholism, Nigeria can move beyond reductive binaries of “growth versus responsibility.” Instead, it can model an authentically African pathway of just transition should be sequenced, inclusive, and ecologically respectful. Such a framework not only advances Nigeria’s developmental goals but also contributes to global climate ethics by showing how indigenous African philosophies can enrich the discourse.

Conclusion

Nigeria’s energy dilemma dramatizes the wider ethical tensions of the Global South in a climate-constrained world. Cosmopolitan climate justice highlights its responsibility to contribute to global mitigation, while nationalist developmental rights defend its sovereignty and entitlement to exploit resources for growth. Yet both frameworks remain incomplete unless anchored in a philosophy that reflects Nigeria’s own socio-ecological realities. Samuel Bassey’s anthropoholism provides such an anchor. By rejecting both human supremacy over nature and purely ecocentric approaches, anthropoholism emphasises the indivisibility of human and ecological flourishing. It reframes Nigeria’s choices not as a trade-off between development and responsibility, but as a duty of care to sustain the holistic life-support system that binds present and future generations. A just transition for Nigeria must therefore be anthropoholistic in orientation: sequenced to allow poverty reduction, participatory to empower affected communities, and restorative to heal the ecological wounds of fossil dependency. Fossil revenues must be reinvested in renewable energy, ecological remediation, and community resilience, with policies evaluated by whether they enhance the co-flourishing of people and ecosystems. By synthesizing cosmopolitan justice, nationalist sovereignty, and anthropoholistic ethics, Nigeria can resist reductive binaries and articulate an authentically African pathway. In doing so, it can transform its energy paradox into a normative model for the Global South demonstrating that sustainable futures are possible when development and ecological care are pursued as inseparable imperatives.

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