Taripato and Integral Ecology: Ecological Responsibility from an Ilocano Perspective

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Abstract: Ecological responsibility, as emphasized in *Laudato Si'*, is rooted in the understanding that an essential aspect of being human is the commitment to care for the environment. In the Ilocano language, this committed practice is expressed through the concept of "t*aripato*," which encompasses nurturing and protecting, depending on context usage. Drawing from the praxis of *taripato*, this paper attempts to contextualize *Laudato Si'*s teachings on ecological responsibility by interpreting it from an Ilocano perspective. This perspective characterizes environmental care as nurturing connections, recognizing our life source, and showing respect not only because we benefit from the environment but because it is integral to life. Following a lexical exploration of the meaning of *taripato*, the paper concludes by offering insights on ecological responsibility.

Keywords: Ecological Responsibility • Environmental Ethics • Filipino Philosophy • Integral Ecology • *Laudato Si'* • *Taripato* • *Nakem*

Introduction

The Ilocano care for the environment is implicit in the term *nakem,* which is understood as the holistic, interior, and non-compartmentalized sense of inner self. Its dimensions span the intellectual, the volitional, the emotional, and the ethical aspects of the human person.[1] In other words, *nakem* involves the totality of human personhood. This means that the Ilocano looks at oneself as whole—a full person who is at once conscious of one's

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[1] Leonardo N. Mercado, "Understanding the Philosophy of Buot-Loob-Nakem," *Scientia: The International Journal on the Liberal Arts* 6, no. 2 (2017), 4-8.

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inherent dignity and freedom, way of life, ethical discernment, spirituality, and manner of relationship with humans and non-humans. In its ethical sense, *nakem* also presupposes the "Ilocano ethos of self-understanding"—that is, the self-revelatory, relational, and perceptive character of a person, enabling one to partake in a discursive participation in upholding and shaping the community's moral imperatives and ideals.[2]

Nakem is normative as it embodies the community's noble teachings (*panursuro*), ideals, and moral standards understood as *pagrebbengan*—which can be interpreted as "duty," a corollary to *nakem* understood as "responsibility." On one hand, a person is at peace and has a clear conscience when one's thoughts and actions align with the community's noble values. Such a person is regarded as a *nanakem a tao* (a wise and responsible individual) and is considered to have a *naimbag a nakem* (a virtuous disposition). On the other hand, a person who acts or thinks contrary to these values is deemed *awanan-nakem* (thoughtless, unconcerned, and irresponsible). Thus, the flourishing of self in Ilocano culture involves both maximizing personal capacities and contributing to the collective well-being of the community.[3] This mutually-enriching relationship between the subject and society is to be understood both as a project and an ideal. Mutual enrichment suffers when the subject falters or society fails or when both suffer from fragmentation or collapse.

As an integrated sense of inner self, *nakem* is understood through the fourfold Ilocano frames (*uppat a pannuli*) of self: cultural, ecological, communal, and

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[2] Danilo S. Alterado, "Nakem ken Ulimek: A Hermeneutic of Silence in Ilokano Cosmic Self," in *Wisdom and Silence: Essays on Philippine Nakem Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Academy Press of Amsterdam, 2021), 15-16.

[3] Alterado, "Nakem ken Ulimek," 15-16.

religious.[4] First, the cultural frame offers a web of meanings that support or form the Ilocano's sense of simplicity predisposed by hard work and frugal lifestyle. This is reinforced by a durable sense of resourcefulness and resilience amidst geographical limitations. The ethos of respect and humility in daily interactions forms a deep cultural structure. Second, the ecological frame highlights the Ilocano's deep and intuitive awareness about one's environment. This may be reflected through environmental care and the adoption of ecological community spirit that encompasses both human and non-human beings. Nature is regarded not in a modern exploitative-utilitarian sense but through an existential and relational attitude, evident in respectful appellations like "*Apo Init*" (Lord Sun) and "*Apo Langit*" (Lord Heaven). Third, the communal frame emphasizes traditional close-knit ties, where relationships are maintained by upholding communal values, underscoring *nakem*'s communal and relational essence. Lastly, the religious frame illustrates the Ilocano's Christianity imbued with indigenous temper. Religion is one of the major formative elements of character and orientation. Belief in a transcendent reality, spirits, the afterlife, and God—addressed as "*Apo*"—reveals the profound spiritual dimension of *nakem*.

The fourfold frames are interconnected, integrated, and complementary, forming a holistic self-understanding that permeates an Ilocano's way of perceiving and engaging with the world. Thus, *nakem* encompasses the Ilocano way of knowing oneself, relating to others in the community, co-existing with nature, and connecting with the Divine.[5] Furthermore, these frames signify *nakem* as a sense of home or dwelling for the

[4] Ibid., 18-20.

[5] Aurelio S. Agcaoili, *Balabala ti Filosofia nga Ilokano* (Honolulu: Undertow Books, 2016), 60.

Ilocano. Alterado describes this sense of dwelling: "To dwell, to be at home means to be at peace. To dwell is to preserve each thing in its wholeness. It is to care for the things surrounding us. Fundamentally, it means to remain at peace… within the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence."[6] This understanding reflects the Ilocano's inherent inclination to transform and care for the environment, creating an ideal dwelling where peace and abundance could flourish.

From the angle of *nakem*'s ecological frame, the Ilocano holds a profound and enduring connection with the land. This connection is described as the "friendly and familiar when man [sic] the caretaker knows how to take care of it."[7] The land is perceived not merely as a physical space, but also as a gift and a source of blessings that sustain life—a concept understood as *kadagaan* in Ilocano culture. It embodies the idea that the land is a divine grace bestowed on those who diligently work to live a good life.[8] This belief underscores the reciprocal relationship between the land and its caretakers; as the land provides sustenance and nourishment, it necessitates responsible stewardship.

Integral to this stewardship is the act of *taripato,* an Ilocano term that encompasses the acts of caring, nurturing, and fostering of something one holds in significant value. It reflects the Ilocano ethos of sacrificial love when used in a relational context. Nonetheless, in an ecological context, it may reflect the Ilocano framework for ecological responsibility emphasizing the need to care

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[6] Danilo S. Alterado, "Introduction," in *Wisdom and Silence: Essays on Philippine Nakem Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Academy Press of Amsterdam, 2021), xx.

[7] Aurelio S. Agcaoili, "Nakaparsuaan, Kadagaan, and Panaglunit ti Daga: Climate Justice and Environmental Ethics in Ilokano Life," *Budhi: A Journal of Ideas and Culture* 12, no.3 (2018), 15.

[8] Agcaoili, "Nakaparsuaan, Kadagaan, and Panaglunit ti Daga," 14-15.

for the land to maintain its health and vitality. To care for the environment—following the ecological frame of *nakem*, the implications of *kadagaan* and *taripato* for ethical reflection—is not only about preserving the land for the present, but also ensuring its wealth to sustain the needs of future generations. Pope Francis' *Fratelli tutti* affirms the Ilocano ethos in the following:

> To care for the world in which we live means to care for ourselves. Yet we need to think of ourselves more and more as a single family dwelling in a common home. Such care does not interest those economic powers that demand quick profits. Often the voices raised in defence of the environment are silenced or ridiculed, using apparently reasonable arguments that are merely a screen for special interests. In this shallow, short-sighted culture that we have created, bereft of a shared vision, "it is foreseeable that, once certain resources have been depleted, the scene will be set for new wars, albeit under the guise of noble claims."[9]

This passage reiterates the teaching on integral ecology earlier mentioned in *Laudato Si'* and articulated as the integral vision that sees all creatures as interconnected.[10]

The main aim of this paper is to argue for *taripato* as the Ilocano praxis of environmental care stemming from the foundational notion of *nakem*. Seen from the lens of *nakem* as a theoretical framework, *taripato* is the act of a *nanakem a tao* (that is, a responsible and wise person). This paper also examines how the Ilocano term *taripato*

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[9] Francis, *Fratelli tutti: Encyclical Letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship* (October 3, 2020), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html, 17. Hereafter referred as FT in text.

[10] Francis, *Laudato Si': Encyclical Letter on Care for Our Common Home* (May 24, 2015), https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato -si.html, 70. Hereafter referred as LS in text.

may serve as a framework to contextualize the notion of integral ecology as the foundation for environmental care and ecological responsibility from an Ilocano perspective. This exploration shall begin with a mapping out of philosophical perspectives on ecological responsibility, discussing how each of them is a framework for environmental action. In the second section, the Church's teaching on integral ecology will be covered, tracing how it responds to the philosophical perspectives on ecological responsibility. In the third section, the lexical meaning of *taripato* will be explored on how it implies a continuous effort of care and nurturance with the environment in a relational sense, and from this exploration, arguments presenting it as an Ilocano ethics of environmental care shall be articulated. This study concludes by interpreting ecological responsibility from an Ilocano perspective with *taripato* as the driving force for an environmental ethos, thus contextualizing the idea of integral ecology.

Perspectives on Ecological Responsibility

To care for the environment is to be aware of the presence and needs of other beings and be sensitive to their welfare. In other words, we care for the environment beyond reasons for utilization, preservation, and conservation. Thus, being responsible for the environment means we care for it because caring defines our humanity.

Caring begins with having the right mindset and perspective. Having the right mindset and perspective means seeing reality as an integrated whole.[11] "Seeing" or "perceiving" is construed as being conscious of the details of my experience through the full engagement of

[11] See Arne Naess, "The Deep Ecological Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects," *Philosophical Inquiry* 8, issue 1/2 (Winter 1986): 10-31.

all my senses. This sensory engagement can be communicated by humans through language.[12]

Thus, seeing is more than seeing with the eyes. To experience the world is to be fully immersed in it. This elucidates the main point of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception: a fundamental, embodied experience that involves the entire body in relation to the environment.[13] Being ecologically responsible encompasses the four facets of seeing: awareness, immersion, contemplation, and response. These affirm that seeing is not just cognitive but also an embodied experience. Seeing as embodied is a vital element in intersubjectivity—I make myself present right where I am to position myself to encounter others and allow them to encounter me.

The practice of ecological responsibility is founded on the belief that being in the world does not only mean existing, but it also means humans are there in relation with other beings.[14] There is a responsibility because there is a relationship. Humans, by their free will and moral capacity, are bound to be responsible for nature because they are related to the environment. The human capacity to think and create points out the role of humans as stewards in the world who can enrich the environment and other beings. The experience of human existence in the world is the call to exercise human creativity through an engagement with nature. Rodriguez et al. wrote:

> Being creative means engaging the world in a way that allows human beings to use their ability to understand

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[12] John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 5.

[13] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (New York: Routledge, 1962).

[14] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 50-53.

> the world and other beings in a way that is not destructive. It must not only be not destructive but we must also act in a way that actually allows other beings to flourish. The allowing of other beings to flourish means not interfering with their natural existence, and if possible, contributing to their development.[15]

Humans are dwellers within nature. Being ecologically responsible, the relationship between humans and nature goes beyond utility and moves towards mutual care.[16] Leopold defines this relationship as a community that emphasizes the human person as the nurturer of nature and not its conqueror.[17] To be distinctively human means protecting culture—by cultivating care and nurturing respect through which we reclaim our place in nature as dwellers and stewards. Dwelling in nature means co-existing with non-human beings and treating the earth as common home.[18]

Most often modern humans tend to be exploitative and calculative in their thinking to maximize utility. But then, such an attitude inordinately prioritizes the production of more advanced technology that degrades the natural environment.[19] The exercise of ecological

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[15] Agustin Martin G. Rodriguez, Jacqueline Marie J. Tolentino, and Roy Allan B. Tolentino, *Doing Philosophy: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2018), 64.

[16] Erazim Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars: A Philosophical Inquiry into the Moral Sense of Nature* (New York: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 212-214.

[17] Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *Applying Ethics,* edited by J. Olen and V. Barry (New York: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1999), 460-469.

[18] Mark Joseph T. Calano, Mark Oliver D. Pasco, Marie Chris B. Ramoya, *Philosophizing and Being Human* (Quezon City: Sibs Publishing House, 2016), 65-66.

[19] Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, trans. John M. Anderson and Hans Freund (New York: Pantheon Books, 1966), 46, 54-55.

responsibility should also involve the habit of meditative thinking through which humans may not just perceive nature in terms of utility but also as a meaning-giving reality. Creativity does not only involve constructing edifices and tools. It is also about being caring and kind—that is, working to promote the human and non-human beings' flourishing.[20]

Seen from the lens of human creativity, care presupposes a profound level of awareness that makes us more attentive to the well-being of other species and beings in the world. The care for the environment thus calls for mindfulness. Rodriguez et al. also proposed ways to implement such mindfulness on the level of practice: "Being open to their presence, learning the different ways of knowing reality, and listening to people to test our knowledge and enrich it, are the best ways of becoming mindful of nature."[21] Such ways involve assessing the impact of consumption and how they affect the environment in general, comprehending our place in the natural community by pursuing human flourishing and progress without sacrificing nature.[22]

More importantly, care for the environment goes beyond environmental slogans such as "clean and green" projects and "tree parenting" activities in the neighborhood. Mindfulness here demands that we go beyond having pleasant surroundings with the motivation of such environmental slogans or policies; instead, we do them to gain a deeper appreciation of nature and its inherent goodness.

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[20] See Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "The Praxis and Theory of Environmental Marxism," *Journal of Dharma* 39, 4 (October-December 2014): 319-334.

[21] Rodriguez et al., *Doing Philosophy,* 67.

[22] Nora Räthzel and David Uzzell, "Transformative Environmental Education: A Collective Rehearsal for Reality," *Environmental Educational Research* (2009): 265, DOI: 10.1080/13504620802567015

Philosophy, through environmental ethics, could provide a foundational perspective and framework for developing our ecological conscience to care for the environment.[23] Philosophy is not merely a desire for knowledge but an active pursuit of truth and wisdom. Wisdom also involves recognizing the limits of our understanding, offering well-grounded justifications for our beliefs, discerning what truly matters in life, and applying this knowledge in practical ways that demonstrate thoughtfulness.[24]

In this section, we established that the exercise of responsibility involves examining beliefs that dispose humans to behave and cause either damage to or protection of the environment. Correcting destructive beliefs that determine dispositions may rectify human mistakes and could promote the protection of the environment as common home. Such an endeavor is already a desirable praxis. Hence, ecological responsibility is at once a moral and epistemic issue.

Laudato Si' on Integral Ecology

Pope Francis identified and challenged two approaches that promote negative dispositions toward the environment. The first approach is the technocratic mindset which maintains the systematic practice of exploitation of resources and holds the belief that resources are in infinite supply. Yet, this is the very

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[23] Francis Julius N. Evangelista and Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., *Ethics: Theories and Applications* (Mandaluyong: Anvil Publishing Inc., 2020), 227.

[24] Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., *Making Life Worth Living: An Introduction to the Philosophy of the Human Person* (Quezon City: Phoenix Publishing House, 2017), 14-15. See Napoleon M. Mabaquiao Jr., "Philosophy and the Challenge of Environmental Crisis," *Kemanusiaan: The Asian Journal of Humanities* (2024): 85, DOI: 10.21315/kajh2024.31.1.5.

practice and notion that move moderns to squeeze the earth dry of its wealth. It has also been the root cause of evils like the illegal seizure of ancestral lands, wars, environmental degradation, and health's exposure to harm.[25] Eventually, this leads to the second approach which is modern anthropocentrism.[26] This is the pervasive human-centered outlook that compromises the integrity of Creation. Because people generally assume that the earth can withstand limitless exploitation, they tend to think that they are "making the most of it" so they can generate profitable gains, which is also a manifestation of what Heidegger called as "calculative thinking."[27] In reality, these are symptoms of an abusive and hegemonic attitude that regards other beings and things as resources—either as raw materials or dumping grounds that no longer serve humanity's "progressive development."[28]

It is without doubt that modern/advance modern science and technology have been beneficial in producing significant means of improving the quality of human life. It made human work and production costs more bearable. The technological advancements also opened up new opportunities and offered a unique way of understanding the potential of further development of natural resources. But with these new opportunities come new concerns. As technology advances, consequential problems follow: inequalities, marginalization of the disadvantaged, fragmentation of cultures, poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation.

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[25] Ferdinand D. Dagmang, "Amplifying *Laudato Si'* With the Science of Epigenetics," *MST Review* 21 no. 2 (2019): 1-20.

[26] Francis, *LS*, 115-120.

[27] Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking,* 46, 51-52.

[28] Francis, *FT*, 18-21.

Pope Francis warned against the abuse of technological power.[29] It must not be elevated beyond their function to the point of controlling humans. Humans control technology, and it is not the other way around. Thus, in this case, there is a need for a profound interior ecological conversion by which we examine ourselves and evaluate our lifestyles in producing and consuming goods.[30] By so doing, we give time to appropriate sustainable and healthy progress so that we can have enough space and time to still appreciate or recover our most profound values. As the global community strives to advance with its sophisticated technologies, it is equally its obligation to work on advancing the sense of responsibility, human values, and conscience.

Both Christian philosophers and theologians hold that the human person, as *imago Dei*, is called for responsible stewardship, that is, invited to espouse care for both the environment and people.[31] Progress that neglects the intrinsic worth of every living being is not true progress at all. Moreover, a development that is not "human" is yet another tool for oppression and inequality, because only the privileged tend to benefit from the best of human work and production. From the lens of responsible stewardship, technology must elevate the quality of human living, and it should render us to be more creative and caring.

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[29] Ibid., 27-28.

[30] Francis, *Global Compact on Education* (October 15, 2020), 3-4, accessed from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/pont-messages/2020/documents/papa-francesco_20201015_videomessaggio-global-compact.html; *LS*, 218-220; *FT*, 114.

[31] Jeane C. Peracullo, "Human Stewardship and its Critics," *Philippiniana Sacra* (2009): 492, 497-498, https://philsacra.ust.edu.ph/admin/downloadarticle?id=137378DA8F5A1BC3D752C727EBBA46F7.

The earth is not only our common home—it is also our common experience. In it we live, learn about life, and understand the mystery of human existence. Without Earth, human existence would cease. To be precise, the mutual interdependence between nature and humanity underscores the latter's responsibility to care for the former, and the former's role in sustaining the existence of the latter.

As a response to the technocratic mindset, modern anthropocentrism, and the throwaway culture, the Church's teaching on integral ecology emphasizes the interrelationship between humans and all of nature: we are meant to behold all of Creation as our brothers and sisters and as beings in relationship with God.[32] Protecting the environment is also a matter of social justice because environmental concern is at once a social, cultural, and spiritual matter.

Integral ecology essentially covers the environmental, economic, social, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of our daily life. As a holistic approach in working on improving the quality of life, its application as environmental care must be restorative of the dignity of the people, especially the poor, while protecting nature at the same time. Ceasing to exploit the world for human purposes also means looking at the value of human work and labor as an expression of human dignity. Without meaningful work, there would be no sense of fulfillment in one's life, and eventually human capital erodes.

Integral ecology thus refers to the interconnectedness of all elements in Creation, emphasizing that relationship is not limited to human relationships alone, but also extends to relationships with non-human beings. Human beings are integral to the ecological order, and we are not above that order; we are in it. Such a relationship is

[32] Francis, *LS,* 11-14*; Global Compact*, 3-4.

essentially moral because nature has indispensable significance for human existence, considering that the human person as a moral being possesses the imperative to care for the environment in a way that promotes creativity and flourishing.[33]

Having a common experience as one community together is a solid basis to forge a common ground for us to examine the reality of socio-environmental issues. The common ground includes both human dignity and ecology as points of reference, so it is not simply a matter of looking for different shades of perspective on the issues, but rather an active and collaborative endeavor for collective action beginning with the local communities' quality of life.

Raising the quality of living means providing more opportunities where people get higher chances of living a fulfilled life, with and for others, under a just society. The collective task therefore is to orient our actions, decision, and policies toward improving human living conditions in both urban and rural areas and this is done through ecological education.[34]

The point of integral ecology as a way for environmental care is also proactive in the sense that communities are involved in searching for solutions. Called to have an integrated outlook on life and to recognize the basic interconnection between humans and

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[33] Jeane C. Peracullo and Rosa Bella M. Quindoza, "The Environmental Activism of a Filipino Catholic Faith Community: Re-imagining Ecological Care for the Flourishing of All," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 56, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010056.

[34] Patricia Joy Mobilla, "Developing a Culture of Care: Ecological Education According to *Laudato Si'," Scientia* 12, no. 2 (2023): 12-13, https://doi.org/10.57106/ scientia.v12i2.143; John Ken Francisco and Niño Randy Flores, "Ecological Communion: Integration of *Laudato Si'* in Christian Faith Formation in CICM Schools," Conference Paper presented at 11th HCU International Conference, Huachiew Chalermprakiet University, Thailand, July 2024.

Creation, it is a must to have a fundamental U-turn in the way we see the world. Hence, environmental advocacy is more than making a moral stand—it is a spirituality that is borne out of interconnectedness and common responsibility for all of Creation.

Taripato as Environmental Care

This section explores *taripato,* analyzed through the lens of *nakem,* as foundational for the Ilocano ethics of environmental care. It begins with an examination of the word's lexical meaning to uncover how *taripato* serves as the Ilocano framework for ecological responsibility. From the fourfold frame (*uppat a pannuli*) of *nakem*, it could be drawn that *nakem* presupposes a sense of dwelling in one's land (ecological frame) grounded in the community's way of life (cultural frame), spirituality (religious frame), and relational engagement with others (communal frame). Considering that environmental care is one of the distinctive strengths of the Ilocano culture, the Ilocano recognizes the inherent connection of the self to nature. Nurturing this connection is *taripato*, and this shall be understood via the concepts of *dungngo* and *nakem*.

Taripato is commonly translated in the Iloco language as "care." Besides care, it can also mean "nurturing," "safeguarding," and "sustaining," depending on its contextual usage. Essentially, this word reflects the general Ilocano experience of caring for and protecting something or someone due to the value and profound meaning associated with the object of care. Such care is to be understood in a relational sense such as guiding a person towards his or her "*pagsayaatan"* (i.e., well-being; good) in a manner that elevates his or her "*nakem*" (i.e., intellectual, emotional, ethical, and volitional inner-life).

According to Agcaoili (2012), the contemporary meaning of *taripato* possesses two senses.[35] The first sense highlights *taripato* as paying attention to something important. It involves an act of active listening that fosters mindfulness. This means that *taripato,* that is, to care for someone or something is to look after their well-being beyond utilitarian-transactional motives. It also denotes a sense of managing or administering in the sense that "I take thorough care of the allowance granted to me by my mother to sustain my needs and respect her efforts". In other words, the first sense of the word denotes that we care because someone or something was entrusted to us. The second sense of the meaning of *taripato* frames it as "providing loving attention." This encapsulates the notion of safeguarding and nourishing something or someone with an awareness of their vitality, significance, and vulnerability. This bears the relational sense of meaning because it also carries the sacrificial aspect—that is, caring for someone or something as offering the best of oneself and the best of one's portion of time in one's human existence to sustain and vivify an object of one's care.

Similarly, Carro's interpretation of *taripato* denotes care and nourishment as in the second sense of Agcaoili's rendition. However, the emphasis of meaning describes *taripato*'s usage in conversation as fostering someone or something's growth and development. Such emphasis highlights being solicitous, thoughtful, heedful, considerate, and prudent. According to Carro (1888) and Vanoverbergh (1956), *taripato* as care is an act of "breathing life" into another and this gives the notion that to care for someone or something is to nurture and

[35] Aurelio Agcaoili, *Kontemporaneo a Diksionario nga Ilokano-Ingles/ Contemporary Ilokano-English Dictionary* (Quezon City: Cornerstone of Arts and Sciences Publishing, 2012), 1622.

protect them with one's own life.[36] In the same fashion, Gelade (1993), building on the works of his confrere, Vanoverbergh's Ilocano lexicography, infers that the meaning of *taripato* is dependent on its contextual usage. It could mean *caring, safeguarding, providing, nurturing*, *sustaining*.[37]

In these lexical senses of meaning, it can be observed that *taripato* is inherently understood as an active verb. Even when used as a noun (i.e., *panagtaripato*), it still denotes an ongoing activity. Its ordinary usage in language highlights an action in progress. Hence, for the Ilocano mind, to care for someone or something profoundly and lovingly is an active endeavor that describes a dynamic movement, a travel of meaning that communicates significance and value (which is understood in Iloco language as *pateg*). In other words, I care because it is meaningful; it is meaningful because I found my life and reason for existence in what and whom I love.

From the lens of *nakem*'s ecological and relational frames, I argue that *taripato as* environmental care is a process of human action involving seeing, connecting, and nurturing. As an Ilocano, I associate it with the image of a tightly-knit family, anchored in the experience of the Ilocana woman as a strong and loving figure who guides her children toward their *pagsayaatan* (well-being; good). *Taripato*, as an exercise of ecological responsibility, entails taking care of oneself and the community as a whole. Caring for the environment fosters a connection with it, marked by a recognition of its life-giving power, much like children recognize their mother as their source of life and sustenance. *Taripato*

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[36] Andres Carro 1888 *Vocabulorio Ilocano-Español*, as translated from the original Spanish by Morice Vanoverbergh, *Iloko-English Dictionary* (Quezon City: CICM Missionaries Inc., 1956), 344.

[37] Gerard P. Gelade, *Ilokano-English Dictionary* (Quezon City: CICM Missionaries Inc., 1993), 674.

reflects the moral imperative to care for the environment not primarily because humans benefit from it, but because it is the foundation that gives meaning to one's identity and the community's way of life.

Seeing as an element of *taripato* involves not only asking, "Who am I?" or "Who am I becoming in the context of loving?" but also reflecting on, "How am I doing as a steward of nature?" *Nakem*, as an awareness of nature's value, necessitates self-reflection—a call to journey inward and see ourselves more clearly in relation to our connection with the environment.[38] As discussed earlier, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception highlights the role of full sensory engagement in shaping our awareness of the environment, making ecological responsibility more than just an intellectual exercise. By immersing ourselves in the lived experience of nature, we cultivate a deeper connection that fosters care and respect. Thus, awareness of the experience of caring for the environment requires facing oneself at the core of one's being, engaging the mind, heart, will, and entire person to offer a better and more profound response.

For the Ilocano, the connection of the person and the community to nature is inherently an ethical relation. *Taripato* as care arises from love and finds its ethical expression through *nakem* as a sense of moral and epistemic responsibility. In other words, I am aware that my life and that of my community are closely linked to our land, and so I must care for and enrich it in a way that ensures the sustainability of nature's gift for future generations. Viewed through the lens of *nakem*'s communal frame, *taripato* is understood as faithful love or *dungngo*—a love that transcends mere feelings and embodies a profound sense of duty as a moral response of gratitude to God whom the Ilocano recognizes as the

[38] Alterado, "Nakem ken Ulimek," 12-13.

generous giver of nature. The act of *taripato* serves as a tangible ethical manifestation of this love and responsibility, concretely reflecting the ethical dimension of *dungngo* within *nakem*.[39] When practiced in personal relationships—such as those between parents and children, within marriages, or among friends—or in communal relationships, such as public service, *dungngo* expressed through *taripato* conveys a deep commitment to the flourishing of the individual and the well-being of the community.

Taripato as care entails caring for the other in the sense of nurturing life (*biag*)—living not just to survive but to give someone a world through recognition, connection, and care as freely offered gifts. *Nakem* encapsulates the Ilocano sense of a good and virtuous life.[40] *Nanakem* is used to describe someone wise and responsible, "a person who is mature and responsible." In this sense, *taripato* is an act of a person who is *nanakem*, caring for something or someone which reflects a commitment to live a good and flourishing life. Following the Ilocano perspective, ecological care and responsibility are practices of the wise person who profoundly understands one's connection with nature. The co-existence between humans and non-humans, and their integral relationship, therefore, underscores the necessity of environmental care.[41]

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[39]Alterado, "Nakem ken Dungngo: An Ilokano Intimation of Love and Care," in *Wisdom and Silence: Essays on Philippine Nakem Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Academy Press of Amsterdam, 2021), 108-109.

[40] Danilo S. Alterado, Godofredo G. Nebrija, Raul L. Villanueva, "Nakem and Virtue Ethics: Framing the Ilokano and Amianan Sense of Life," *Humanities Diliman* 20, no.1 (2023): 23. https://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/humanitiesdiliman/article/view/9122/8053

[41] Agcaoili, "Nakaparsuaan, Kadagaan, and Panaglunit ti Daga," 6, 15-16.

Three potential counterarguments are discussed and addressed to demonstrate that *taripato*, as the Ilocano ethics of environmental care, is not only a deeply ecological, relational, and communal ethos but also an adaptable and actionable framework capable of addressing contemporary ecological challenges while honoring traditional values. This also highlights *taripato* as a human act of *nanakem a tao*, one that involves seeing, connecting, and nurturing.

One potential counterargument against *taripato* as the Ilocano framework for ecological responsibility is its perceived emphasis on human-centered care. Critics might argue that while it appears to include non-human beings as part of the ecological community, its focus on human flourishing and cultural sustainability risks reducing nature's value to its utility for humans. This anthropocentric perspective, they could claim, limits its ability to engage meaningfully with the broader ecological system or to recognize the intrinsic value of non-human life.

However, *taripato* is fundamentally ecocentric when examined through the fourfold frames of *nakem*. Similar to Leopold's land ethic, *taripato* expands human relationships to include the elements of nature, reflecting the Ilocano's deeply integrated worldview. The Ilocano cultural understanding of direction exemplifies this integration: *Amianan* (North) references the *amihan* or the northern breeze, *abagatan* (South) the *habagat* or southern wind, *daya* (East) the rays of the sun, and *laud* (West) the sea.[42] This intimate relationship with nature extends to practical traditions, such as planting fruit trees or vegetables in every settlement and minimizing waste by repurposing items for continued use. Such

[42] Alterado, "Nakem ken Ulimek," 18-19.

practices demonstrate an inherent respect for nature's cycles and resources.

Furthermore, *taripato* embodies the Ilocano religious frame, emphasizing gratitude and the mutual support between humans and nature. The Ilocano's frequent expression of thanks – "*Agyamankami Apo!*" – reflects their acknowledgment of nature as a divine gift with intrinsic value. The Ilocano sees oneself as part of nature, forming a relationship of mutual flourishing rather than domination. In this sense, *taripato* transcends human-centered care and aligns with the principles of integral ecology, affirming the interconnectedness of all beings and committing to the holistic well-being of the entire Creation.

Another counterargument is that *taripato*, as an expression of *dungngo* (love) and *nakem* (awareness of responsibility), might be seen as too abstract to effectively guide concrete, systematic ecological actions. While the ecological and relational frames of *nakem* may inspire *taripato* through *dungngo*, possible critics might argue that love alone lacks the urgency or practicality needed to address pressing environmental crises such as climate change or resource depletion. They might view *taripato* as a theoretical concept that falls short of providing actionable strategies for large-scale ecological challenges.

On the contrary, *taripato* as environmental care, flowing from *dungngo* in *nakem,* is far from being merely an emotional response. It is deeply rooted in tangible, responsible actions that embody respect for nature and shared ecological commitment, fueled by the desire to make a difference in the world.[43] A specific example of *taripato* in the Ilocano communities is the practice of *banata* (communal sharing of resources) which

[43] Alterado, "Nakem ken Dungngo," 110-111.

demonstrates a profound sense of unity and connection.[44] For instance, a *bubón* (i.e., a well) located in a private farmland is typically accessible to the entire community, reflecting the belief that natural resources belong to everyone and should be shared for the common good. This unspoken practice reflects the community's shared meaning and collective identity, illustrating how *taripato* operates as a lived ethos within the communal and cultural frames.

Moreover, the sharing of resources through practices like *banata* nurtures the principle of *kinaaruba* (neighborly relations), which fosters harmonious relationships with both others and the natural world. This sense of community interconnectedness is not just symbolic but is actively practiced ensuring sustainability and mutual care.[45] By grounding ecological responsibility in concrete communal practices, *taripato* transcends abstraction and becomes a viable framework for addressing environmental challenges in a manner that is both practical and culturally resonant. This also contextualizes integral ecology in a local sense as *taripato* captures the element of action that is at once collective and personal.[46]

Lastly, critics might argue that *taripato*, rooted in traditional Ilocano culture, underestimates the complexities of globalization and modern environmental challenges, such as industrialization and economic growth, which often prioritize development over sustainability. They might claim that it is insufficient to address the destructive practices and priorities of

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[44] Alterado, "Nakem ken Ulimek," 18-19.

[45] Alterado, "Nakem ken Dungngo," 110-111.

[46] Francis, *Laudate Deum: Apostolic Exhortation On the Climate Crisis* (October 4, 2023), accessed from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

contemporary global systems. However, *taripato* remains relevant, as it embodies a sustainable interaction between humans and the natural world—one that reshapes the environment without causing harm or imbalance. Ilocano culture, shaped by hard work and frugality, fosters a deep sense of resourcefulness and care for possessions, promoting behaviors that align with long-term sustainability. This is evident in household practices like reducing waste, minimizing pollution, and prudent consumption, rooted in historical experiences of scarcity and economic hardship. By drawing on these values, *taripato* offers a culturally grounded yet adaptable framework for addressing modern environmental challenges.

Nakem's ecological and communal frames offer a dynamic framework adaptable to modern environmental challenges, such as climate change and urbanization, by emphasizing interdependence and shared responsibility. These frames align with global sustainability initiatives by encouraging collective action and fostering ecological stewardship. The Ilocano practice of *banata* can inspire urban and rural projects like community gardens, shared water systems, and renewable energy cooperatives. Similarly, the practice of *kinaaruba* as the ethos of being a neighbor supports the development of eco-friendly communities, integrating traditional practices like backyard farming into urban settings. In this sense, *taripato* transcends being merely an articulation of Ilocano identity; it also embodies the Ilocano approach to thinking globally while acting locally.

Furthermore, the concept of *taripato*, grounded in care and nurturing, enriches modern sustainable practices by fostering ethical stewardship and community-driven solutions. Its focus on protecting and preserving resources aligns with approaches such as the circular economy and renewable energy adoption. The

relational care inherent in *taripato* equips communities to resist the detrimental effects of global forces, including deforestation and resource exploitation, by promoting an ecological advocacy rooted in cultural values. *Taripato* as a framework of ecological responsibility, empowers communities to advocate for policies that prioritize ecological balance and cultural preservation while opposing harmful environmental practices. By harmonizing the wisdom of *taripato* with the sustainable development goals, communities can address global challenges while affirming their cultural identity and ecological heritage for future generations.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the philosophical perspectives on ecological responsibility, highlighting that it is at once moral and epistemic, considering that beliefs and actions are causally related. The way we view nature influences the way we relate to it. If humans see it as something useful and profitable, then the relationship is utilitarian. If we see it as a home, we perceive it as integral to life; hence we care and protect it.

Pope Francis exhorts that a healthy ecology is a reflection of the dynamic and interdependent relationship between humans and nature.[47] By dwelling in nature, humans reshape it and in turn, nature provides the ground for culture to develop. Thus, from an Ilocano perspective, *taripato* frames ecological responsibility as the action of a wise person (i.e., *nanakem*) who understands the mutual interdependence between

[47] Francis, *Laudate Deum: Apostolic Exhortation On the Climate Crisis* (October 4, 2023), accessed from https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html.

humans and nature. To care for the environment is to uphold our human culture and to constantly work for justice and human flourishing without destroying the environment.

Hence, environmental care or ecological responsibility, framed through *taripato*, must be transformative and liberating, promoting the holistic flourishing of individuals by fostering care and protection of nature. The transformative character of *taripato* as an act of a *nanakem a tao* extends beyond human relationships, encompassing the duty to nurture and safeguard non-human life. In this way, *taripato* as environmental care is inherently emancipatory, striving to cultivate a harmonious and flourishing existence for all beings. *Taripato* as environmental care emerges from a love rooted in rational convictions and oriented toward the good of the community. When this love is enacted through responsibility, it fosters not only the flourishing of the self but also the broader well-being of both human and non-human communities.

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