

A Postcolonial Critique of Mark Coeckelbergh's AI-Driven Environmental Philosophy in an African Context

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Abstract

Green Leviathan or the Poetics of Political Liberty by Mark Coeckelbergh offers an ambitious philosophical account of AI-driven climate governance and its implications for political liberty. While the work provides a nuanced engagement with Western political thought, from Hobbes and Rousseau to Dewey and MacIntyre, it remains grounded almost exclusively within a Euro-American philosophical horizon. This limited epistemic framing constitutes a significant omission when considering the global scope of both climate change and AI governance.

This paper argues that Coeckelbergh's proposed solutions, from the starkly Hobbesian "Green Leviathan" to a more nuanced "relational freedom," are fundamentally untenable and potentially neocolonial when transposed onto an African context. They are untenable because they advance a model of centralized, AI-driven authority (Green Leviathan) that mirrors colonial governance, predicated on a new form of resource extraction (data colonialism), and justified by a conception of relationality that remains incompatible with African communitarian philosophies. This critique demonstrates that these Western-centric constructs fail to account for the continent's history of colonial domination and its indigenous philosophical resources, which are essential for any truly global environmental ethic.

Methodologically, the analysis proceeds through a critical contrast between Coeckelbergh's key normative proposals and selected African philosophical perspectives on community, authority, and human-nature relations. This critical methodology exposes the inherent limitations of the framework through three main lines of inquiry: the green leviathan as neocolonial governance, the limits of relational freedom and the vector of data colonialism.

Ultimately, this paper asserts that any viable framework for global AI and environmental governance must be decolonized. This requires moving beyond a paradigm that universalizes Western political thought and instead actively integrating diverse philosophical traditions. By offering crucial perspectives on community, nature, and justice, these traditions are indispensable global resources for constructing the genuinely "sympoietic" common world Coeckelbergh himself endorses. The paper thus uses his own terminology to expose the profound limitations of a vision that, while valuable, remains philosophically provincial.

Keywords: Mark Coeckelbergh, Green Leviathan, Postcolonialism, AI Ethics, Environmental Philosophy, African Philosophy, Climate Justice