**A role of the Environmental Ethics in the modern society**

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KYIV-2000

The inspiration for environmental ethics was the first Earth Day in 1970 when environmentalists started urging philosophers who were involved with environmental groups to do something about environmental ethics. An intellectual climate had developed in the last few years of the 1960s in large part because of the publication of two papers in Science: Lynn White`s “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” (March 1967) and Garett Hardin`s "The Tragedy of the Commons" (December 1968). Most influential with regard to this kind of thinking, however, was an essay in Aldo Leopold`s A Sand County Almanac, "The Land Ethic," in which Leopold explicitly claimed that the roots of the ecological crisis were philosophical. Although originally published in 1949, Sand County Almanac became widely available in 1970 in a special Sierra Club/Ballantine edition, which included essays from a second book, Round River.

Most academic activity in the 1970s was spent debating the Lynn White thesis and the tragedy of the commons. These debates were primarily historical, theological, and religious, not philosophical. Throughout most of the decade philosophers sat on the sidelines trying to determine what a field called environmental ethics might look like. The first philosophical conference was organized by William Blackstone at the University of Georgia in 1972. The proceedings were published as Philosophy and Environmental Crisis in 1974, which included Pete Gunter`s first paper on the Big Thicket. In 1972 a book called “Is It Too Late?” A Theology of Ecology, written by John B. Cobb, was published. It was the first single-authored book written by a philosopher, even though the primary focus of the book was theological and religious. In 1973 an Australian philosopher, Richard Routley (now Sylvan), presented a paper at the 15th World Congress of Philosophy "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" A year later John Passmore, another Australian, wrote Man’s Responsibility for Nature, in which, reacting to Routley, he argued that there was no need for an environmental ethic at all. Most debates among philosophers until the mid-1980s was focused on refuting Passmore. In 1975 environmental ethics came to the attention of mainstream philosophy with the publication of Holmes Rolston, III`s paper, "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" in Ethics.

Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher and the founding editor of the journal Inquiry authored and published a paper in Inquiry “The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement” in 1973, which was the beginning of the deep ecology movement. Important writers in this movement include George Sessions, Bill DeVall, Warwick Fox, and, in some respects, Max Oelschlaeger.

Throughout the 1970s Inquiry was the primary philosophy journal that dealt with environmental ethics. Environmental ethics was, for the most part, considered a curiosity and mainstream philosophy journals rarely published more than one article per year, if that. Opportunities for publishing dramatically improved in 1979 when Eugene C. Hargrove founded the journal Environmental Ethics. The name of the journal became the name of the field.

The first five years of the journal was spent mostly arguing about rights for nature and the relationship of environmental ethics and animal rights/animal liberation. Rights lost and animal welfare ethics was determined to be a separate field. Animal rights has since developed as a separate field with a separate journal, first, Ethics and Animals, which was later superseded by Between the Species.

Cobb published another book in the early 1980s, The Liberation of Life with co-author Charles Birch. This book took a process philosophy approach in accordance with the philosophy of organism of Alfred North Whitehead. Robin Attfield, a philosopher in Wales, wrote a book called The Ethics of Environmental Concern. It was the first full-length response to Passmore. An anthology of papers, Ethics and the Environment, was edited by Donald Scherer and Tom Attig.

There was a turning point about 1988 when many single-authored books began to come available: Paul Taylor`s Respect for Nature; Holmes Rolston`s Environmental Ethics; Mark Sagoff`s The Economy of the Earth; and Eugene C. Hargrove`s Foundations of Environmental Ethics. J. Baird Callicott created a collection of his papers, In Defence of the Land Ethic. Bryan Norton wrote Why Preserve Natural Diversity? followed more recently by Toward Unity among Environmentalists. A large number of books have been written by Kristin Shrader-Frechette on economics and policy.

In the 1980s a second movement, ecofeminism, developed. Karen Warren is the key philosopher, although the ecofeminism movement involves many thinkers from other fields. It was then followed by a third, social ecology, based on the views of Murray Bookchin. An important link between academics and radical environmentalists was established with the creation of the Canadian deep ecology journal, The Trumpeter. In 1989, Earth Ethics Quarterly was begun as a more popular environmental publication. Originally intended primarily as a reprint publication, now as a publication of the Centre for Respect for Life and Environment, it is focused more on international sustainable development.

The 1990s began with the establishment of the International Society for Environmental Ethics, which was founded largely through the efforts of Laura Westra and Holmes Rolston, III. It now has members throughout the world. In 1992, a second refereed philosophy journal, dedicated to environmental ethics, Environmental Values published its first issue in England.

On the theoretical level, Taylor and Rolston, despite many disagreements, can be regarded as objective nonanthropocentric intrinsic value theorists. Callicott, who follows Aldo Leopold closely, is a subjective nonanthropocentric intrinsic value theorist. Hargrove is considered a weak anthropocentric intrinsic value theorist. Sagoff is very close to this position although he doesn’t talk about intrinsic value much and takes a Kantian rather than an Aristotlian approach. At the far end is Bryan Norton who thought up weak anthropocentrism but wants to replace intrinsic value with a pragmatic conception of value.

A brief history of environmental consciousness in the western world places our views in perspective and provides a context for understanding the maze of related and unrelated thoughts, philosophies, and practices that we call "environmentalism." Understanding where the questions being asked and analyzed are coming from is essential in environmental analysis: the kinds of questions asked by an environmental group and their interpretation of the results can be vastly different from, for example, a utility, logging company or special interest (ranchers grazing public lands, and so forth).

The term "environmental ethics," in fact the whole field, is a very recent phenomenum, actually only several decades old, although many particular concerns or philosophical threads have been developing for several centuries. A Professor named Eugene Hargroves began a journal he named Environmental Ethics in the late 1970s in which controversies regarding environmental behaviour and visions could be discussed. This name became an umbrella for a group of strange bedfellows. A controversy had begun in 1974 when an Australian named John Passmore published a book called "Man`s responsibility for nature: ecological problems and western traditions" in which he argued that environmental preservation and concern was inconsistent with western tradition. Robin Attfield replied 1983 in a book entitled "The ethics of environmental concern" by holding that the stewardship tradition was more important than dominion in western thought, and that this is what forms the foundation for environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is a collection of independent ethical generalizations, not a tight, rationally ordered set of rules. Environmental ethics will be a compilation of interrelated independent guidelines - a process field that will be coming together for a long time.

Ethics really flow from peoples perceptions, attitudes and behaviour - as in the case of environmental ethics and animal liberation. Like chess, decision making in life is very perceptual or intuitive - by analogy, there are l) favourite formations (of players or arguments); 2) empirical investigation of these (with maximum and minimum expectations); which leads to a progressive deepening of perspective.

The problem is only dimly perceived in the beginning, but becomes clearer with thought and re-examination. What holds a chess game together is not the rules but the experience the individual player. A grand master at chess sees more on a chessboard in a few seconds than an average player sees in thirty minutes.

Environmental ethics today encompasses a diverse, not necessarily related, anthology including:

1. Animal rights.

2. The Land Ethic.

3. Ecofeminism.

4. Deep Ecology.

5. Shallow Ecology.

6. The rights of rocks, and so forth.

8. Bioethics.

Bioethics could be defined as the study of ethical issues and decision-making associated with the use of living organisms and medicine. It includes both medical ethics and environmental ethics. Rather than defining a correct decision it is about the process of decision-making balancing different benefits, risks and duties. The word "bioethics" was first used in 1970, however, the concept of bioethics is much older, as we can see in the ethics formulated and debated in literature, art, music and the general cultural and religious traditions of our ancestors.

Society is facing many important decisions about the use of science and technology. These decisions affect the environment, human health, society and international policy. To resolve these issues, and develop principles to help us make decisions we need to involve anthropology, sociology, biology, medicine, religion, psychology, philosophy, and economics; we must combine the scientific rigour of biological data, with the values of religion and philosophy to develop a world-view. Bioethics is therefore challenged to be a multi-sided and thoughtful approach to decision-making so that it may be relevant to all aspects of human life.

The term bioethics reminds us of the combination of biology and ethics, topics that are intertwined. New technology can be a catalyst for our thinking about issues of life, and we can think of the examples like assisted reproductive technologies, life sustaining technology, organ transplantation, and genetics, which have been stimuli for research into bioethics in the last few decades. Another stimulus has been the environmental problems.

There are large and small problems in ethics. We can think of problems that involve the whole world, and problems which involve a single person. We can think of global problems, such as the depletion of the ozone layer which is increasing UV radiation affecting all living organisms. This problem could be solved by individual action to stop using ozone-depleting chemicals, if alternatives are available to consumers. However, global action was taken to control the problem. The international convention to stop the production of many ozone-depleting chemicals is one of the best examples yet of applying universal environmental ethics.

Another problem is greenhouse warming, which results mainly from energy use. This problem however can only be solved by individual action to reduce energy use, because we cannot easily ban the use of energy. We could do this by turning off lights, turning down heaters and air conditioners, building more energy efficient buildings, shutting doors, and driving with a light foot. These are all simple actions which everyone must do if we are concerned about our planet, yet not many do so. Energy consumption could be reduced 50-80% by lifestyle change with current technology if people wanted to. New technology may help, but lifestyle change can have much more immediate affect.

Environmental ethics is a relatively new field - and the name "environmental ethics" derives from Eugene Hargrove`s journal, which was begun in late 1970s.

This field - environmental ethics, - will be subsumed as other areas of applied ethics develop more fully. The early pieces or threads of environmental ethics were disconnected...one needs a quick review to fully comprehend today`s "whole" - and know the directions in which the threads lead.

Environmental ethicists as well as policy-makers, activists etc. frequently speak about the need for preservation of various parts of nature. Two main grounds are repeatedly presented for this need:

1. Our moral responsibilities to future human beings (sometimes called sustainable development) require that we stop using technology and science for short-term gains at the expense of long-term risks of very negative ecological effects for future people. In several official declarations and policy-documents this idea has been expressed as "the precautionary principle", roughly the idea that we should not use particular means of production, distribution etc. unless they have been shown not to effect too serious risks. However, it is far from clear what is meant by this. What determines whether or not the effecting of a certain risk (in order to secure some short-term gain) is too serious or not? - and what determines whether or not this has been "shown"? Some traditional decision-theorists would say that it is a question of traditional instrumental efficiency (i.e. rationality) in relation to morally respectable aims. Some ethicists would instead claim that it is a question of whether or not the severity of the scenario illustrating an actualization of the risk in question makes the taking of this risk morally wrong in itself. Others, yet, hint that they want to take a stand in between these two extremes, however, without specifying what this could mean. There is also a rather grim debate regarding whether or not it can ever be shown that a certain action does not effect too serious risks, and this of course depends on what requirements should be laid on someone who purports to show such a thing. In both cases, the questions seem to boil down to basic issues regarding what is required of risky decisions in order to make them morally justified. But, obviously, it must be a kind of moral justification different from the one dealt with by traditional ethical theories of the rights and wrongs of actions, since these only deal with justification in terms of actual outcomes, not in terms of risks for such outcomes.

2. Natural systems possess a value in themselves which makes them worth preserving also at the expense of human well-being and man-made constructs. This idea is less common in official documents than the former (although it is explicitely set out as a part of the basis of the Swedish Environmental Policy Act) than it is among environmental philosophers and ethicists. However, also this idea is far from clear, since it is not clear neither how a natural system is to be distinguished from a non-natural one and why this difference is to be taken as morally relevant, nor why preservation is the only recommendation which follows from the placing of an intrinsic value in nature. Although there are several suggestion on what it is that makes certain systems intrinsically valuable, it is has not been sufficiently explained, first, why these characteristics (typically complexity, self-preservation/replication, beauty etc.) do not justify preservation also of systems normally not taken to be natural (such as metropolitan areas, hamburger restaurants or nuclear power-plants), secondly, why this value does not imply a recommendation to reshape rather than preserve natural systems, in order to increase the presence and magnitude of the value-making characteristics. In particular, it seems to be a challenge for a preservationist to argue in favour of restoration of certain biotic variants, without leaving the door open also for reshaping, for example by the use of modern biotechnology.

The aim of this research-project is to attack these two families of issues, both connected to the justification of common ideas regarding the importance of preserving various parts of nature. In one part (carried out by christian menthe), the project will be aimed at mapping out moral intuitions regarding the moral responsibility of the taking of risks, in order to use these for developing a normative theory of the morality of risk-taking which can be used to underpin a more specific version of the precautionary principle. The other part of the project is instead aimed at systematically reviewing various proposals (and new home-made to how to distinguish between that (i.e. nature)) which should typically be preserved according to preservationists and that which does not need to be so preserved, and to resist the conclusion that reshaping of nature might be a better idea from the point of view of typically preservationist values than actual preservation. The focus here will be on ideas ascribing a value in itself to nature or certain natural systems.

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