



## Environmental Ethics: A Philosophical Analysis

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### Abstract

The present paper highlights the importance of environment and problems involved due to the human efforts such as technology upgration etc and stressed the Environmental ethics as a branch of applied ethics which examines the moral basis of environmental responsibilities. In the conclusion it is viewed that everybody has to make every effort to preserve our environment for human welfare. The scientific and technological progress by itself is not an evil but its improper use or inaccurate application is an evil. Human must learn how to use scientific and technological knowledge judicially to serve human need and purpose without causing harm to the natural world.

**Key words:** Environment, technology. Human beings, ethics, emotional disturbance, Man vs. Nature

### 1. Introduction:

The Environmental issues and crises have been recognized as one of the most contagious and dreadful diseases before the humanity. Every part of the world is suffering from stress, emotional disturbance, respiratory problems and extinction of some plants and so on. These issues are not only mind-boggling for

environmentalists, botanists, medical practitioners but also for philosophers. Environmental ethics is a branch of applied ethics which examines the moral basis of environmental responsibilities. It studies the moral relationship among human beings, environment and non-human counterparts. Humans are not alone living on the planet earth. We



live among a multitude of plants, animals and inanimate natural objects. The more use of technology has changed the natural environment, while medicine-technology, transportation and information technology and so on can help us to prosper. There is also no doubt that the use of technology can have a negative impact on the environment and therefore, on us. Thus, our interaction with the non-human and with the environment as a whole raises a variety of moral questions; such as:

1. What moral obligation do human have with regard to the environment?
2. Is it morally wrong to pollute the soil, water and air?
3. What kind of moral obligation do human have to the non-human form of life?
4. Do being and things of the human world have intrinsic value or worth?

The concept of environment is of course as old our life on the earth. We are more or less concern with one fundamental question in our moral sphere; whether our moral universe

should be content to human being only or it should be extended to non-human too. Here, we find three alternative views;

- i. Anthropocentrism, which states that everything is meant for human being.
- ii. Bio-centrism, which simply argued that environment, has its own value.
- iii. Cosmo-centrism, which states that everything is created by God, so nothing, is superior in this Universe.

## 2. **Man vs. Nature**

The concept of Man-nature relation constitutes the basis for any philosophy of life. In primitive age man identified himself as a part of nature; depended on nature for his survival; lived like a slave of nature. Gradually man evolved his attitude along with the rapid growth in man's knowledge of science and technology, he conceived nature as something to be conquered and exploited for his benefit. As a result, man is no longer regarded himself as a slave of nature rather a master of nature. Man-with-Nature attitude has evolved as reaction to the disastrous



consequences of the exploitation of nature in its previous stage where by man realized himself to be an integral part of nature, that is a member of biotic community which includes all animates and in animates thing of the ecological system including water, air and earth. Man becomes aware of the fact that human beings are not alone living on this planet but they are living among a multitude of animals, plants and inanimate objects on the earth. Hence, he felt that any responsible damage done to biotic community has its disastrous consequences on the survival of human existence.

### **3. The Impact of Man over Nature**

A thing is right when it tends to preserves the integrity, stability and beauty of public community; it wrong when it tends to otherwise. No doubt the world would be not in a position of endangered if human being is not born in this planet. Man develops science and technology but over the years since the *Industrial Revolution* (1870); he continue to plunder natural resources thereby polluted natural environment. He degraded lands, destroys forests, and threw toxic wastes into rivers and

seas and also harmful gas into the atmosphere. This continuous loaded of man-made pollutant into the environment brought adverse changes which ultimately backfire into series of disaster from time to time.

Some typical examples of man-made (anthropogenic) disaster are: London Smog, Minamata Disease (Japan), Nuclear exploitation, Bhopal Gas Tragedy etc.

### **4. Critical Evolution**

Environmental contamination posses a great threat to human survival. The protection of natural environment is an essential condition for the very survival and existence of humanity. Environmental interest very often clashed with economic interest such as strong economy that will produce goods, jobs and tax revenue; we like air conditioning, we like high ways to drive our car on them, we need projects and disposable goods. We weigh the collective human interest in a non polluted environment against interest of humans. The following example illustrates some of the complexities involved in the problem.



An industrial plant with large financial investment to produce a product essential to the society and providing large number of jobs but pollutes the environment to large extent. How far is the continued operation of the plant morally acceptable? In such situation the general public interest in the quality of the environment must be recognized. But what about the economic interest of the owner, the employees and consumers? Many of us with a utilitarian conception and thing are inclined to appeal for better cost benefit analysis.

The critics of utilitarian thinking and approach argue that a cost-benefit analysis is an inadequate system because it calculates only economic costs and benefits. In fact certain objects or goods can't be measured in terms of economic value. for example, how much is a human life worth? How much does an ornamental art effect like Taj Mahal cost? How much money does it cost for a hundred dying prematurely each year because of pollution? How much is it worth to swim or fish in a river? It is not possible to identify all the relevant cost and benefits to assign economic value to such goods. These

issues of human world involve question of risk rather than cost.

## 5. Conclusion

Ecology teaches us that human life is crucially intertwined with the eco system as a whole. The destruction of one part of ecosystem may lead to a chain of events that ultimately culminates in disastrous consequence to human wellbeing. Hence, we have to make every effort to preserve our environment for human welfare. The scientific and technological progress by itself is not an evil but its improper use or inaccurate application is an evil. Human must learn how to use scientific and technological knowledge judiciously to serve human need and purpose without causing harm to the natural world. The planet earth is just like a huge ship with a definite capacity to accommodate people. It can't accommodate more and more people beyond its capacity. A journey in an overcrowded ship is always risk and it may sink at any time. So, just bee extract honey from a flower without causing harm to the fragrance or beauty of the flower so also human must learn to use nature without inflicting damage or causing harm to



the natural world. And this noble goal can be achieved only through the internal change of our mindset, allegiance, inclination and convictions.

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