

Environmental Crisis: Exploring Applied Philosophy for a Sustainable Future

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ABSTRACT

The current environmental crisis, which is characterized by a growing number of issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion, is an imperative reminder that our ethical and philosophical perspectives on the natural world must be reevaluated. This investigation examines the moral responsibilities we have toward the environment and future generations, while also engaging with contemporary philosophical discussions on the rights of non-human entities, intergenerational equity, and justice. It also takes into account a variety of ethical theories, including ecocentrism, biocentrism, and deep ecology. The paper underscores the necessity of a comprehensive philosophical transition, promoting values that prioritize sustainability, interconnectedness, and long-term ecological balance. It implies that the environmental crisis can be resolved in a meaningful and sustainable manner through the transformation of our collective moral and ethical perspective, as well as through technological innovation, when viewed through an applied philosophical lens.

Keywords: Environmental ethics, environmental philosophy, climate change, environmental problems, moral values.

Introduction

Applied philosophy is an area of philosophy that aims to approach and resolve real-world issues using philosophical ideas, methods, and concepts. It acts as a link between practical problems in daily life, society, and global issues and abstract philosophical investigation. Applied philosophy's primary focus is on how philosophical reasoning may help comprehend and address real-world issues. In domains like politics, science, education, law, ethics, and more, it applies critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and conceptual analysis. Environmental ethics is a field of applied philosophy that examines the theoretical underpinnings of environmental values as well

as more specific concerns about social attitudes, behaviors, and regulations aimed at preserving ecological systems and biodiversity. The discipline of environmental ethics is a well-established area of practical philosophy that reconstructs the fundamental kinds of arguments that may be made in favor of the sustainable use of natural resources and the preservation of natural entities. The natural world and how humans fit into it are its main concerns. According to Chislenko, "The question of what role philosophers should play in climate change is itself a question about the methods and value of philosophy, or of how philosophy should be done," (Chislenko 2022, p. 781). Additionally, it calls into question what philosophy is all about. It must first be proven that the crisis falls squarely within the range of problems that philosophy is meant to address in order for the use of philosophy to address it to be significant and productive. One common definition of philosophy is the study of the fundamental ideas and theories that form the basis of our frameworks for understanding the world and establishing our interaction with it.

Environmental ethics investigates the ethical connections between humans and the natural world. Human-centered or anthropocentric ethical perspectives place humans at the center of the universe; hence everything else should be assessed according to how useful it is to us. All environmental research, however, ought to evaluate the inherent worth of non-human species. Environmental ethics, a subdivision of environmental philosophy, investigates the moral connections and interactions between humans and the natural world. This area of research must take into account, among other things, our responsibilities to future generations, other species, and even inanimate elements of the natural environment.

The Influence of Human Values on Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics is a philosophical field that investigates the moral and ethical connections between humans and the environment, argued otherwise, what moral responsibility does man have to protect and care for the non-human world? Environmental ethics and our perception of it are fundamentally shaped by human values. Values are the thoughts and beliefs that influence a person's behavior. Environmental issues are now significant political issues. As is typical in ethical discussions, the majority of people have different points of view. If there are naturally occurring groundnuts for a youngster to eat, it is obviously terrible for them to starve to death. Additionally, it is obviously unethical for an oil firm to release thousands of barrels into the ocean without cleaning it up, allowing natural fish populations to be destroyed. Between these two extremes, however, lie the majority of environmental ethics concerns. Hollander goes one step farther and claims that "poverty is the environmental villain, which is the primary source of the catastrophe. People in poverty frequently overcrowd their habitats, pillage their resources, and harm the environment. Their actions are motivated solely by their need to survive, not by deliberate disregard" (Hollander 2003, p. 2). Man's moral and ethical responsibilities to the environment are defined in part by environmental ethics. However, human values come into play

when considering environmental ethics. Human values are the things that people consider important and use to judge events or acts. To put it another way, people give things values and then use those values to determine what is proper or unacceptable. Because not everyone values every aspect of life equally, human values are specific to each individual. For instance, it might be ethically acceptable for a poor person in an underdeveloped nation to clear forest land in order to build a farm where he can provide food for his family. However, since the destruction of trees increases carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, which can have a detrimental influence on the environment, a person in a developed country might judge this activity to be morally unacceptable.

Philosophical discussions concerning how humans interact with the environment are made more difficult by environmental ethics and human values. The argument over environmental ethics includes issues such as air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, ecosystem devastation, depletion of natural resources, and global climate change. And we observe that there are difficult moral choices that people must make in the field of environmental ethics. Is it appropriate, for instance, for impoverished farmers in developing nations to clear forests to create cropland, even if doing so has negative environmental effects? Is it immoral for people to keep burning fossil fuels even while they are aware that doing so causes air pollution and climate change? Is it morally acceptable for humans to construct a hydroelectric dam when they are aware that it will cause some fish to go extinct by altering their migratory patterns? Is it morally required of a mining firm to repair the natural environment that their methods have destroyed?

Human Values as a Source for Sustaining the Environment

The basis of environmental policy is the reason we protect the environment. This paper can now be framed in two main ways: instrumental values, which relate to the worth of nature for humans, and intrinsic values, which represent the intrinsic value of nature regardless of humans. Some have opposed instrumental values because they can be confused with commercial values, turning nature into a commodity. There are other ways to express and realize the value of nature, and this paper makes the case that concentrating solely on instrumental and intrinsic values does not align with perspectives on human welfare or what people consider to be the right way to act towards the environment, and may not produce the most equitable or desirable results for environmental policy. Environmental change poses a threat to all social systems, although contemporary industrial societies are more susceptible than previous social structures.

In order to determine which of our beliefs about nature result in actions that harm the environment, philosophy must critically analyze these beliefs in light of the numerous theories of environmental ethics.

Furthermore, this function of philosophy turns out to be crucial given the widespread nature of the crisis's attitudinal causes—which have a major impact on all other types of causes. As Callicott writes, "So, who can lift the world out of the environmental crisis? While everyone must do their best, we philosophers have the most crucial and essential task. It is our responsibility to uncover, reveal, and test the faulty notions that we have received from the past regarding the nature of nature, human nature, and the appropriate interaction between humans and nature"(Callicott2010, p.34–35). Regardless of its usefulness to humans, all forms of life have intrinsic value. Principle La of the Earth Charter Natural habitats are no longer self-sustaining due to the overwhelming domination of humans, and human consent will be necessary to ensure their future survival. Such an agreement will necessitate new forms of moral reasoning on the relationship between humans and ecological systems given current commercial historical realities; it is clear that protecting natural ecosystems is highly beneficial to humans as a source of valuable items. However, there is currently no strong theoretical defense against human speciesism, the ongoing growth of capitalistic systems, and the current reliance of humans on artificially created physical and social environments for the survival of natural ecosystems and their inhabitants on the basis of their inherent value. Deep ecology proponents and traditional indigenous cultures have maintained the intrinsic value of natural ecosystems, but up until now, this advocacy has appeared to function in a cognitive dimension distinct from the rest of Western moral reasoning.

Conclusion

As virtue ethics has a better moral foundation and offers a viewpoint that allows us to esteem natural creatures completely independently of their utility to us, it appears to have greater promise. As a manifestation and extension of our best qualities, we may cherish them and instill that value in our kids. It's possible that in order for humanity to flourish, we must respect and value natural beings in ways that treat them with the highest moral and aesthetic importance. How we treat natural creatures shows whether or not we possess human qualities like empathy, humility, and thankfulness. The issue with the virtue ethics approach is that it appears to leave the preservation of the natural world and living things to the realm of sensitivity and manners. This facet of human existence is typically not given priority in the face of human need and suffering, and it only becomes personally and socially significant when urgent survival issues have been resolved. Even more problematic is the fact that maintaining natural beings as a component of the development of human morality still involves humans, not those natural beings. I might help preserve rainforests on a good day when I'm not under too much strain from issues that directly affect my livelihood. And for what reason, out of virtue? Because it would enhance my giving virtue, which is more essential, and it will reflect positively on me in situations where I have to answer for myself. If maintaining natural habitats is a significant moral

concern, then some sort of more compelling argument would seem to be required. Therefore, it would not alter the reality that philosophy plays a very valuable role if certain governments did not acknowledge it. The fact that some people do not take the environmental crisis seriously is essentially no different from this instance; this does not alter the fact that the environmental crisis is a severe problem. Second, philosophy will truly have an impact on addressing the environmental situation through education. It is specifically via sowing the philosophical seeds in the minds of students who would go on to become economists, businesspeople, politicians, etc. Given this, a government's national council for environmental protection may not have professional philosophers on its membership list. However, if the council members have a solid foundation in environmental ethics from their time as students, philosophy will undoubtedly be present and influence their thinking and choices.

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