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Environmental ethics is a new branch of applied philosophy that deals with the ethical problems surrounding environmental protection. It aims to provide ethical justification and moral motivation for the cause of global environmental protection. Environmentalist and Scientist Rachel Carson is the profounder of environmental ethics as a sub-discipline of environmental philosophy.

There are several distinctive features of environmental ethics that deserve our attention:

- (1). Environmental ethics extends the scope of ethical concerns beyond one's community and nation to include not only all people everywhere, but also animals and the whole of nature – the biosphere – both now and beyond the imminent future to include future generations.
- (2). Environmental ethics is interdisciplinary. There are many overlapping concerns and areas of consensus among environmental ethics, environmental politics, environmental economics, environmental sciences and environmental literature, for example. The distinctive perspectives and methodologies of these disciplines provide important

Inspiration for environmental ethics and environmental ethics offers value foundations for these disciplines. They reinforce, influence and support each other.

(3). Environmental ethics is plural. In which different ideas and perspectives compete with each other. Anthropocentrism, animal liberation/rights theory, biocentrism and eco-centrism all provide unique and, in some sense, reasonable ethical justifications for environmental protection. Their approaches are different, but their goals are by and large the same, and they have reached this consensus: it is everyone's duty to protect the environment. The basic ideas of environmental ethics also find support from, and are embodied in, various well-established cultural traditions. The pluralism of theories and multicultural perspectives is critical for environmental ethics to retain its vitality.

(4). Environmental ethics is global. Ecological crisis is a global issue. Environmental pollution does not respect national boundaries. No country can deal with this issue alone. To cope with the global environmental crisis, human beings must reach some value consensus and cooperate with each other at the personal, national, regional, multinational and global levels. Global environmental protection depends on global governance. Thus, an environmental ethic is, typically a global ethic with a global perspective.

(5). Environmental ethics is revolutionary. At the level of ideas, environmental ethics challenges the dominant and deep-rooted anthropocentrism of modern mainstream ethics and extends the object of our duty to future generations and non-human beings. At the practical level, environmental ethics forcefully critiques the materialism, hedonism and consumerism accompanying modern capitalism, and calls instead for a 'green lifestyle' that is harmonious with nature. It searches for an economic arrangement that is sensitive to Earth's limits and to concerns for quality of life. Thus, in the political arena, it advocates a more equitable international economic and political order that is based on the principles of democracy, global

justice and universal human rights. It argues for pacifism and against an arms race.

ISSUES CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:

We are cutting down forests for making our homes. We are continuing with an excessive consumption of natural resources. Their excessive use is resulting in their depletion, risking the life of our future generations. Is this ethical? This is the issue that environmental ethics takes up. Scientists like Rachel Carson and the environmentalists who led philosophers to consider the philosophical aspect of environmental problems, pioneered in the development of environmental ethics as a branch of environmental philosophy.

The Earth Day celebration of 1970 was also one of the factors, which led to the development of environmental ethics as a separate field of study. Today, environmental ethics is one of the major concerns of mankind. When industrial processes lead to destruction of resources, is it not the industry's responsibility to restore the depleted resources? Moreover, can a restored environment make up for the originally natural one? Mining processes hamper the ecology of certain areas; they may result in the disruption of plant and animal life in those areas. Slash and burn techniques are used for clearing the land for agriculture.

Most of the human activities lead to environmental pollution. The overly increasing human population is increasing the human demand for resources like food and shelter. As the population is exceeding the carrying capacity of our planet, natural environments are being used for human habitation. Thus human beings are disturbing the balance in the nature. The harm we, as human beings, are causing to the nature, is coming back to us by resulting in a polluted environment. The depletion of natural resources is endangering our future generations. The imbalance in nature that we have caused is going to disrupt our life as well. But environmental ethics brings about the fact that all the life forms on Earth have a right to live. By destroying the nature, we are depriving these life forms of their right to live. We are going against the true ethical and moral values by

disturbing the balance in nature. We are being unethical in treating the plant and animal life forms, which co-exist in society. Human beings have certain duties towards their fellow beings. On similar lines, we have a set of duties towards our environment.

Environmental ethics says that we should base our behavior on a set of ethical values that guide our approach towards the other living beings in nature. Environmental ethics is about including the rights of non-human animals in our ethical and moral values. Even if the human race is considered the primary concern of society, animals and plants are in no way less important. They have a right to get their fair share of existence. We, the human beings, along with the other forms of life make up our society. We all are a part of the food chain and thus closely associated with each other.

We, together form our environment. The environment is not the property of the humans alone. Humans exist because of all other nonliving elements of the environment. Therefore conservation of natural resources is not only the need of the day or time but also our prime duty.

Does the Earth exist for the benefit of humanity alone? Do humans have any ethical obligations with respect to the natural world? Have we the right to take all the Earth's resources for our own use? Do we have a responsibility to be good stewards over the Earth? Do other species have an intrinsic right to exist? Do trees have legal standing? What do various religions have to say about humanity's relationship to the rest of the living world? These are some of the questions addressed in the study of environmental ethics.

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: DESCRIPTIVE, NORMATIVE AND CRITICAL

Moral philosophers have found it useful to distinguish three "levels" of study in their discipline. The first "level," "descriptive ethics," consists of accounts of what people and/or their cultures do, in fact, value. For example, head hunting describes the values of certain tribe. Descriptive ethics can also be regarded as a specialized type of social science.

The second level, normative ethics (also called "prescriptive ethics") deals with moral issues in the conventional sense of that term -- that is, with questions of right or wrong, duties and rights, justice and injustice, virtue and wickedness, and so forth. On this level of ethical discourse, judgments are made and defended concerning the moral value of acts, motives and policies, or of the persons or communities responsible for these acts, motives or policies. When the philosopher seeks to clarify the meaning of normative terms or to examine the structure, grounds and justification of normative arguments, he is engaging in the activity of critical ethics, or meta-ethics." He is thus, in a sense, an intellectual spectator of the normative judgment. It is the task of the critical moral philosopher to take account of the logic, language and methodology of normative discourse and argument. Thus, if a moralist condemns capital punishment as "unjust" or head hunting as "barbaric," the meta-ethical Philosopher will ask the meaning of "justice" and "barbarism" in these contexts. He will also inquire as to the nature and soundness of the arguments offered in defense of these normative (i.e, moral) claims.

A failure to discriminate among these levels of ethical inquiry can lead to considerable confusion and error. For instance, a failure to distinguish between descriptive and normative ethics can draw one into a naive cultural relativism or even a subjective relativism.

Third level, Normative ethics from critical ethics can lead to hasty moral conclusions. For example, if someone (normatively) argues that dumping nuclear wastes in the ocean is "inherently unjust," we should neither accept nor reject his claim until we have (meta ethically) determined what he means by "inherently unjust" and have examined the structure of his argument and the premises and point of view from which it is argued.

Let us now apply these three levels of ethical inquiry to environmental ethics

Descriptive environmental ethics is not a significant problem in environmental ethics for the simple reason that, strictly speaking, "descriptive ethics" isn't really a part of moral philosophy at all. Rather, because it is "descriptive," it is really a type of social science.

Normative ethics deals directly with the "nerve" of morality; namely, the question "what should we do?" or example, such issues as: What is the optimum use of this canyon, or forest, or desert. How should we treat this natural area? Use it up? Protect it? Preserve it intact? What "good" is a "useless" endangered species? How much effort and cost should we devote to protecting it? What damage to the environment and what risk to future generations is acceptable in return for the development of synthetic fuels and nuclear power?

Critical ethics ("meta ethics") is concerned with the meanings of ethical concepts and with the justification of normative claims. Thus, environmental meta ethics brings to policy and legislative debate such questions as these: Upon what unstated moral assumptions are these contending positions based (e.g., the positions of the "developer" and the "preservationist")? We are now prepared to clarify a crucial distinction: "Environmental Ethics" is to be identified in this Introduction, as a meta ethical term designating any ethical position that expresses a viewpoint concerning man's responsibility to nature. "Ecological morality," on the other hand, identifies the particular normative environmental ethics of such writers as Aldo Leopold, who view man as a part of the natural community with duties of respect and forbearance toward that community.

Conclusion :

Thus, it is true that the theoretical representation of environmental ethics is a newly emerging moral idea and value orientation in the area of Philosophy .It is also the fullest extension of human ethics. It calls on us to think and act locally as well as globally. It calls for a new, deeper moral consciousness.