

# Natural resources and environmental ethics

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



Natural resources essentially belong to everybody else if we are to agree with the presumption that resources are originally made available for the inhabitants of the planet including animals, plants and humans (L. 172). Not surprisingly, contemporary movements have rapidly spread across the globe like wildfire, pushing for the proper allocation of resources as well as the proper handling or management of these resources. The foundation for the claims of several pro-environment organizations is the idea that natural resources are for public consumption under controllable or permissible amounts. But how do we know if what we are taking is just in the proper number? How do we know if we already exceed the threshold?

Part of the answers to these critical questions can be traced from the idea that human beings worldwide use various natural resources in many ways (Freeman 35). In more recent times, the global population of human beings has increased sharply, especially in countries that fall under the less-developed nations. With the economic status of every country responsible in a way to the total wealth of these nations, it is inevitable that an unstable economy will bring about harsh impacts to the living conditions of its citizens. And while the population mounts incredibly every year, the lowered economic stability of the less-developed countries will most likely prompt those who belong to the lowest point of the social ladder to obtain whatever they can from the natural resources (Burns 444).

As one will observe, an increasing number of people whose lives depend on the immediate or at least available natural resources will most probably result to a sharper decline in the quantity and quality of these natural resources. Take for example India whose population outnumbers almost

every country in the world. With a steady growth of the population and with a national economy just enough to supplement the lives of a few, the people of India tend to obtain whatever they can from the country's natural resources (Bach 157). Sum all of these individuals altogether by the millions and the decline in the quality and quantity of the natural resources will proportionally decrease—or perhaps even more than that.

This and other related issues involved in the dwindling of the natural resources have caught the attention of the world. This indicates that the problem is not a small one that easily abates. Rather, having the rest of the world pin their attention to the central problem of handling natural resources is a huge indicator that the problem existing are serious. Further, it also indicates the idea that the world may have taken more than what it needs or, at the least, the world has consumed beyond the amount it can handle. In fact, the very existence of the problem of the dwindling of the natural resources is enough to indicate that the limit has been reached and the time to recess from activities that consume a lot of these resources should be taken urgently (Randall 144).

Yet it remains a fact as well that people need these natural resources in order to live. Natural resources such as fossil fuels and water are primary elements that comprise the needs of almost every other nation in the world. While fossil fuels and water both share the primary goal of prolonging the life of man and the society, their depreciating amounts and quality both share several effects (Knight 183). Nevertheless, it is beyond question and doubt that these natural resources are needed to further the lives and activities of mankind. And in order to completely realize this goal, it must also be the

case that humanity should learn how to preserve what little they have left. Otherwise, these natural resources may soon dry up or degrade in quality.

Thus, numerous global efforts have since been established in order to meet and counter the unwanted effects of overusing or abusing the remaining natural resources. At the core of all these efforts dwells the central message that the environment must be protected in order to meet these established goals. One example to this is the fact that a number of countries resort to crafting legislations that seek to undermine the perceived ill-effects of a nation bereft of natural resources. Private entities and non-government organizations also share an equally significant role in deterring these unwanted effects of the decline in the natural resources. There are various measures being advocated and called for by numerous environmental organizations that operate in many different countries. Nevertheless, the point is that the environment must be preserved and protected for human life depends on it as well as the coming generations.

However, it remains a fact as well that there are already existing and proliferating problems with regard to the depletion and overconsumption of the natural resources that the world has left. This is why there are organizations that seek to combat these unwanted instances. Quite apart from the fact that the government has a significant role in countering the dwindling amounts of natural resources (Cotner 90), big and private corporations also share an equal amount of responsibility—if not more—in sustaining the natural wealth in the environment. Yet there is the presence of the negative conditions of these natural resources. This only indicates the

idea that tasks were not properly enforced or performed in protecting the environment.

The decline in the natural resources can be attributed to the lack of rules and regulations that prohibit and prescribe certain actions of man towards the environment. With the absence of laws that seek to sustain and uplift the status of the environment, it is no surprise that there exist the corresponding effects on the natural resources. Moreover, the lack of governmental commitment in addressing these issues also contributes to the continuing degradation of these resources (Toothman 69). Another thing is that there are corporations and other business establishments that utilize a certain fraction of the natural resources yet fail to meet or at least craft proper business ethics that will guide their company's actions in the proper path. Without these ethical principles of conduct, business establishments then have all the freedom to consume everything they want more than what they need and to use them in whatever possible way one can conceive of.

The protection of these natural resources should not be taken to mean as a sole responsibility of the government or of the corporations. Rather, public and private individuals should also take part in the call for the protection of the environment. Environmental groups can lobby in congress possible bills that will address the existing environmental problems or will ensure the protection of the natural resources by imposing functional sanctions to those who seek to deter the law with regard to the environment (Kinney A144). The congress is one of the most recognizable public places that give voice to individuals and groups that further goals that concern the entire nation and even the rest of the world.

One of the most notable examples to the volumes of campaigns that have been pushed forward under the banner of environmental protection is the campaign of Al Gore. In his seminar documentary entitled *An Inconvenient Truth*, Gore discloses before the public the root causes, existing conditions, and future implications of global warming (Tenenbaum A366). His campaign does not only involve the call for a larger and more unified response from the people all over the world. Rather, his campaign also gives full credit to the simple efforts individuals do in their homes and in their locality in order to preserve the natural resources and reverse the ill conditions that beset our natural environment today.

There are still many unheard-of documentaries and seminars worldwide that seek not only to inform the public and increase their awareness on the issues that tackle natural resources but also provide alternatives and solutions to the lifestyles and habits of humanity that appear as one of the root causes of the degradation of the natural resources. It remains a fact that there are already existing efforts in countering, or at least lessening, the current environmental degradation we have today. It also sends us the idea that while there are environmental groups that seek to promote the status of the environment our natural resources can never be safely returned to its healthy state.

The more important question remains: how do we save our environment for the coming generations? Before solutions can ever be thrown upon this question, one must first recognize the more essential question: who has the responsibility? The answer seems obvious as the fact remains that natural resources primarily belong to the public—hence, the idea that the

responsibility dwells not on a single group or individual but to every other person in the world, who has existed, is existing, and will exist. Part of being human is the necessity to preserve the natural resources that contribute to the very existence of the whole humanity. Yet the list of the responsible people does not simply end there. Rather, it is only the beginning of a grander scheme—that is, governments and corporations are also required to partake in the global efforts to salvage the natural resources and prevent them from eventually being consumed in whole with nothing left but memories in the basin of human forgetfulness.

This brings us back to the first question posed: how do we save our environment for the generations to come? The answer may seem trivial and difficult to comprehend at first. Yet, it seems that nothing can be easier to answer than the question just given basically because human consumption necessitates human awareness of what is being consumed. What are being consumed are the natural resources of the world which belong to the public. By being aware that these natural resources are in limited supply, proper care must be given to these resources through every possible means no matter how big or how small it may be. To save the environment for the next generation means to come up with all things possible in order to prolong the remaining resources, and to come up with these things is to be able to actualize them no matter where the individual resides or what group he or she belongs to.

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