

# The analysis of environmental ethics and green theory

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The Analysis of Environmental Ethics and Green Theory The Clash of Norms and Interest Agus Catur Aryanto Putro 0906524186 Department of

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Background The world insofar has been reflected into a different two sided coin, that each contradicts to another.

Utilizing natural resources for the sake of fulfilling human's needs has been drastically increasing even less since capitalism begins in order to maximize productions and profits. As a result, the environment becomes victims - the degradation towards nature appears. The United Nations Environment Program's Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, completed in March 2005, found that approximately 60 per cent of the ecosystem services that support life on Earth are being degraded or used unsustainably (UNEP 2005).

Likewise, the 1960s is typically taken to mark the birth of the 'modern' environment movement as a widespread and persistent social movement that has publicized and criticized the environmental 'side-effects' of the long economic boom following the Second World War. Such movements

demanded for the awareness of environmental degradations as impacts of massive natural resources exploration as well as to rethink the relationship between economy and the nature.

Thus, in early 1990s, the green International Relations theory emerged demanding a normative branch (concerned with questions of justice, rights, democracy, citizenship, the state, and the environment), and a political economy branch (concerned with understanding the relationship between the state, the economy, and the environment). Movements in the name of environment were inspired by the emerge of environmental ethics and environmental philosophy in the 1970s, based on anthropocentrism (human centre) until ecocentrism (nature centre) which guided the norms and ethics why human should take care of their environment. The philosophy of environmentalism begins from the question whether the existing environmental ethic is sufficient enough to provide justification for the environmental duties of humans. From existing issues on degradation of environment or ecological crisis, analysts then try to shape what we call environmental ethics and green theory in order to overcome the problems based on their consideration for betterment of the nature itself through their lens as humans. However, debates are still happening in the surface that all ethics and theories related to the conservation of the environment are made by humans themselves. One side argues that humans cannot be separated per se from their interests while another argues that humans can be neutral from their own interests.

. 2 Research Question Looking into the debates that are still ongoing arguing about whether humans' objectivity towards the judgment of the ideal human-nature relationship can be established, the writer will try to analyze why the debates happen based on their basis of thinking. Therefore, this paper will then question, " Do environmental ethics and green theory really contribute to the environment based on norms rather than interests? " 1. 3 Conceptual Framework To help the writer examine the problem above, this paper will use several concepts regarding to the key words that are then expected to enable provide comprehensive explanation towards the research question. Those several concepts including: norms and interest, of which then are used to as indicator how to determine what is norm and what is constitutes interests.

The term norms derive from the Greek norma which means percept, rule or sort of things. It is latter then by Oxford English Dictionary defined as a standard thing; a required or standardized thing. In the international relations perspectives, what constitutes the idea of norms is that norms might require people, states, or international and transnational actors to act in ways that do not promote the actor's self interest. While the term interest is defined as something concerned a group of people are desired to have or to get. Interest is something that is not universally acceptable because this uses only few perspectives on looking towards something whether it will be beneficial for them, or not.

The main different from norms and interest is the indicator of universal and standard things and particular perspectives. People establish norms in order

to be universally acceptable into looking to the reality. Norm teaches humans to be good, to have good behavior. While people have interests which mean they have several goals that are to be achieved through whatever means even if it sacrifices other entities' needs or rights. Interests may appear differently between one and another and really depend on how actors look to the benefit of something towards their existence. Therefore, it is concluded that norms teach humans to be kind and not take benefits above one's sacrifice, while interests go beyond anything that might be sacrificed so long as the goal is achieved.

CHAPTER 2 CONTENT To analyze the environmental ethics and green theory, whether they work based on norms or interests, in this chapter it will be first explained what actually environmental ethics and green theory are. The writer examines the development of both concepts by looking to the history; how they appeared and were established; and the current development of those guiding rules on environmental concerns. After describing the concepts, the writer then analyzes these concepts with the indicators of norms and interests into several constructing arguments.

### 2. 1 Environmental Ethics

The writer uses the concept of environmental ethics written by Donnelly and Smith which says that in recent development of environmental ethics, there are three moral traditions that exist including stewardship, utilitarianism, and respect for life. Stewardship is characterized by the West moral values that are largely shaped by Christian traditions.

The Christian attitude towards nature in general splits into two strands: one which the natural world is regarded as being there essentially for man' sole

instrument use; and another one where we have duties of stewardship to the natural world since Christian view regards nature as created by God. Nature was there solely for man use, while human needs and wants were paramount and nature, in one way or another existed to satisfy them. This is a formulation of what is being called “ strong anthropocentrism”. Human is there allowed to take utility from nature, however, there is no limitation to what extent human is allowed to exploit nature. Thus, stewardship principles are to take responsibility for the whole Earth; solidarity of all people; the need to take a long term view. Shortly, human should behave as steward to take responsibility of nature in the name of God.

Utilitarianism believes that the nature is there for human’s needs. Humans take advantage from nature to get maximum welfare in society through calculation of actions that lead to the greatest aggregate benefits or any scholar called this the greatest happiness of the greatest number. Although utilitarianism has been implied to human beings, there is nothing in principles that limits to non-human beings. The key point is that utilitarianism takes care of both human being and non-human beings into account of calculation. This moral believes that animals, that can feel pain and suffer, should also be included to the calculation of maximum welfare.

Humans should consider the interests of other beings including animals and plants. However, utilitarianism opens for further critics and one of the critics is to get required benefits, no longer maximum benefits. The next approach in moral tradition is the reverence for life that examines the interdependence between creatures and the environment. The interrelatedness of all living

and non-living entities could be seen as the basis of an inbuilt human sense of oneness with the environment where we are embedded. Mutual symbiosis is the key in the relations between creatures themselves and the environment. When talking about ethics, it cannot be separated from the values of nature.

There is division between three categories of values. The instrumental values are attributed whenever we regard the non-human world as valuable in so far as it is of use to human beings, strictly speaking it is referred to as anthropocentric instrumental value. By contrast, it is possible for human to appreciate aesthetically aspects of the natural world as what it naturally is. This is what is then classified as inherent, whilst if people combine those two categories as one value, it is named intrinsic. What is being debatable is that the existence of anthropocentrism as the only creature that have moral standing that are capable of valuing any interest. Thus, it is, based on writer's argument, hard to distinguish value from human beings since their existence is in accordance with their interest.

2. 2 Green Theory The environmental ethics lead to the latter development of the movements and thoughts about nature that is the establishment of green theory. The writer uses the concept of green theory written by Eckersley that explains the history of green theory which arose from the movements to give voice to the interrelated concerns of the new social movements (environment, peace, anti-nuclear, women's) that have shaped green politics in the late 1980s. These movements also spearheaded the formation of a wave of new green parties at the local, national, and regional

level (most prominently in Europe), based on the 'four pillars' of green politics: ecological responsibility, social justice, non-violence, and grass-roots democracy. These pillars have provided a common platform for new green party formations around the world, including in Africa, Latin America, and Asia.

Indeed, green politics is the only new global political discourse and practice to emerge in opposition to neoliberal globalization. While the term 'green' is often used to refer simply to environmental concerns, by the early 1990s green political theory had gained recognition as a new political tradition of inquiry that has emerged as an ambitious challenger to the two political traditions that have had the most decisive influence on twentieth-century politics - liberalism and socialism. However, the green theory itself does not seem as a real theory which consists of related concepts among existing phenomena in the reality, but rather, the term green theory is used as political movements which aim to create justice and equality on several things such as ecology, anti-nuclear power, peace, and feminist activism.

They were attributes that political party in Germany used as tools and means to voice their wants through creating jargons promoting equality and justice.

2.3 Analysis After the writer explains what environmental ethics and green theory (the writer prefers to use term "green movement") are, the analysis will now go on to the arguments which examine how both concepts of environmental issues based on the nature of norms and interests.

To look further, the writer offers three main arguments and reasoning which consist of the comparison between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, the



application of environmental ethics and green theory and how they are applied to the establishment of norms and interests, and lastly, the historical and development study about those two concepts; and eventually leads to analysis which plays more role; norms or interests The first argument will be examining the comparison between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. The term ' anthropocentric' was first coined in the 1860s, amidst the controversy over Darwin's theory of evolution, to represent the idea that humans are the center of the universe (Campbell, 1983). Anthropocentrism considers humans to be the most important life form, and other forms of life to be important only to the extent that they affect humans or can be useful to humans. In an anthropocentric ethic, nature has moral consideration because degrading or preserving nature can in turn harm or benefit humans. For example, using this ethic it would be considered wrong to cut down the rainforests because they contain potential cures for human diseases.

The point is that, anthropocentrism uses the human point of view on looking something. The centre of truth is based on what human judgment as something true. The ego of humans is very much reflected in the body of anthropocentrism since the desires and wants of human should be at the first place prioritized. This point of view was then criticized with the emergence of non-human point of view on looking to the preservation and conservation of the environment by ecocentrism. What is referred to here as an ' ecocentric' ethic comes from the term first coined ' biocentric' in 1913 by an American biochemist, Lawrence Henderson, to represent the idea that the universe is the originator of life (Campbell, 1983). This term was adopted

by the so-called ' deep ecologists' in the 1970s to refer to the idea that all life has intrinsic value (Nash, 1989).

In an ecocentric ethic nature has moral consideration because it has intrinsic value, value aside from its usefulness to humans. Using this ethic, for example, one could judge that it would be wrong to cut down the rainforests because it would cause the extinction of many plant and animal species. My analysis towards the debate between anthropocentrism and ecocentrism will focus on to the actor who judges the ethics. Anthropocentrism dominantly talk about the environmental ethics based upon the centre of human ego to examine the ideal human-nature relationship. Although recently there have been more developments on the centrism such as biocentrism/ecocentrism itself, but still the actor that values them is human. There are some reasons why human tends to preserve nature as the means for fulfilling the needs and wants.

First, they need nature to keep giving them resources for life, for instance good quality water. If human wants to get good quality water then they should protect the quality of water in order not to be polluted so that human can sustainably take advantage of water while on the one hand conserving it. My view is that; yes it is the ideal condition of what human should do. But, the growth of human needs and the ability of nature to provide what human needs is not that balance, surely human needs grow more rapidly. This then questions whether this ideal condition of ethics will remain the same that is to keep conserving nature. The influence of human kind's interests towards this case is very much strong because it is a means to survival.

Another idealist reason why human should care of nature is that because nature itself has rights to be preserved and protected, and shift from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism should be done. Also, ecocentrist activists deny that humans are still involving much of their interest into the ethics. They argue that ecocentrism means humans balance the interests with the needs of survival of other creatures either. However, since only human that can express their interests and judge what is important to prioritize in the first place, it will have no doubt that human interests will always be there and cannot be separated that easy even if anthropocentrism should be replaced by ecocentrism. The ecocentrism attempts to establish values and norms within the globe by trying to balance the needs of human and non-human. Still, on judging their needs, the main actor is human.

Therefore, in the point of debate over anthropocentrism and ecocentrism, the interest of human is still apprehending. The second argument of my analysis is about the application of environmental ethics and green theory in regard of the indicators that establish the norm and interest. In attempt to analyze this argument, the writer prefers to compare those who believe that environmental ethics and green theory are indeed important to solve environmental problems with those who oppose. Kassiola, a strong believer of environmental ethics, in his writing mostly opposes Barnabas Dickson's ideas that ' environmental ethics do not have a major contribution to make to the solution of environmental problems' and that ' the solution of environmental problems may not rest on ethical change'. Instead, Kassiola contends that humanity will not be able to save the world from

environmental catastrophe unless and until the normative (including environmental ethical) nature of environmental problems is recognized.

He believes that environmental ethics will surely overcome environmental problems but first thing to do is to recognize the essential normative nature of environmental problems and their solution because this ethics gives understanding to human to act ethically in relation to the nature and environment. What really differentiates Dickson's idea with that of Kassiola is that the root of viewing problems of the environment. Dickson believes that what makes sense to such problem is the human attitude whilst Kassiola believes in the ethics itself. Kassiola then consistently argued that ethics is the answer to the problem, not the attitude. He strongly argued that environmental ethics has normative nature, including prescriptive, assessment and obligatory that those then distinguish ethics from attitude. Environmental ethics is fundamental basis to overcome and find solution of existing problems in the environment since by establishing ethics would lead to create consciousness rather than implementing it directly to attitude.

For him, Dickson's argument incorrectly denies the main task of environmental ethics - to ethically assess and prescribe fundamental ethical and social changes that will produce an environmentally sustainable and ethically desirable social order. Therefore, he finally comes to conclusion that environmental ethics can, and must, play an essential role (with the other normative discourses) in saving the world. My analysis towards this stance is that yes norms should be in the very first place established to guide and rule behavior of humans in order to create ideal human-nature relationship.

Without normative approach, environmental ethics and green theory cannot be used that way. Technical mechanisms need philosophical approach that will give them guidance about things should be and should not be done. Thus, the importance of norms is accommodating human's interest and balancing it with the restrictiveness of natural resources to provide human needs.

The writer combines the debate over ethics and attitude that play more roles in sustaining green world by proposing the establishment of ethics (which reflects the establishment of norms) and by that, the human behavior will be based on. After the norms on environmental problems established, the next step for human is to adopt their attitude (which reflect the human interest) to the existing norms in environment and nature. Thus, the norm is then to balance the needs of both human and non-human in the sense of survival of human and other creatures and sustainability of nature. The third argument of the analysis is the development of those environmental ethics and green theory, and how these developments are looked from the point of norms and interests. The emergence of environmental ethics was to voice that the existing environmental norms were not sufficient to accommodate the needs of protection for the nature.

Thus, group of people came up to the surface demanding for the establishment of environmental ethics in regard to create better bounds for human in relation to the nature. These groups appeared new because they linked environmental problems to structural features of western society, such as excessive consumption based upon an economy driven by a

productivist logic, according to which material growth was an end in itself. But it was not only formally organized groups, but also in informal networks of those committed to an alternative lifestyle more in harmony with nature and less materialistic, that this new green movement could be identified. While the green theory emerged also from part of society that demanded the justice in several fields like what the writer has explained in the early of this chapter. The movements are characterized by a group of people who have shared values and goals in demanding their goals.

First they try to introduce the new ideas to ecology and then they try to collaboratively cooperate with other movements such as peace movements or women's movements. This indicates that both environmental ethics and green movements are to actualize some group's interest that they try to oppose governments by holding left wing political ideology. It can be said that way because the movements' concerns were not only in one specific issue, for instance they voiced for democracy, justice, peace, and ecology, that those four pillars in green movements represent what these parts of society demand. This demand shows how the groups want their interest to be accommodated by governments by doing pressured movements and protest. The analysis sees this as not universally accepted, because not all people demand the same thing.

Establishing democracy, preserving nature, and sort of things haven't been for every person's demand. Such movements create demands in several issues in order to actualize their interest in the name of establishing any supporting norms toward them. Therefore, the writer's analysis tends to

value these movements and environmental ethics as the means of part of society (group) to voice and actualize (perhaps to gain) their interests through actions that may arise other people's attention. But still, what constitutes norms is something universally accepted that does not sacrifice even little thing of thing, while interests can be run in some ways even if sacrificing others (though it is subjectively judged). Environmental ethics and green movement then have to be analyzed again whether they are really to establish what people are really in need of. CHAPTER 3 CONCLUSION The need of arising people's attention about the degradation of the environment is indeed needed.

The need to preserve and conserve the nature as friend of creatures should be prioritized in the first place somehow is acceptable, though some may say no. Environmental ethics and green movements are means to establish the needs. After analyzing what constitutes within both concepts and relating them to the nature of norms and interest, the writer figures out that yes, the attempts to create norms and rules that bind people's behavior counts. However, the interest of human within the establishment of the rule somehow overweighs their attempts to establish pure norms which people will base their attitudes into. Therefore, this paper's conclusion will answer that the interest of human in environmental ethics and green movements is likely to be much more existing rather than the norms.

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