

Ethics and the environment assignment

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With whole countries declaring states of emergency, countless of lives lost, billions of dollars worth of property damaged, hundreds of thousands of people and animals displaced, and whole landscapes wiped out overnight, one cannot help but wonder: Did nature betray us? Or did we betray nature? While most people will likely agree that the current environmental situation is bad, mankind still has yet to clearly define and collectively agree upon at least a basic set of standards for how humans ought to relate to their environment. This paper studies environmental ethics.

It includes a brief history on the rise of environmental ethics in the 1970s and a discussion on the two central themes that govern the study of environmental ethics. This paper also applies some ethical principles (as discussed in class) in the study of environmental ethics. A handful of case studies will be presented, where questions will be posed to the reader to (hopefully) facilitate thoughtful reflection on the realness of environmental issues. The group will be sharing our position in relation to the necessity of studying environmental ethics to us as future leaders and managers, as well as our take on the readiness of the

Philippines to adapt an environmentally ethical mindset. Attached as appendices to this paper are personal reflections from each of the group members. INTRODUCTION Theorists of environmental ethics would consider the first ever Earth Day celebration in April 22, 1970, as the start of the modern-day environmental movement. While there have been many a great men who have written about and of this topic throughout history, environmental ethics only developed into a specific philosophical discipline in the 1970s (Cochrane, 2007, “ Environmental Ethics”, Retrieved from: <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-and-the-environment-assignment/>

[http://www. Pep. Tm. Deed/nevi- the/](http://www.Pep.Tm.Deed/nevi-the/), on February 27, 2011 A study of Environmental Ethics merits an examination of the social and political situation in the United States at the time of the birth of this idea, to hopefully lend an understanding as to whys, hones, and what's that somehow lead people to feel the need to bring environmental issues such as air and water pollution, toxic sewage, extinction of wildlife, into the front and center.

A History of Environmental Ethics The sass is touted by historians as the Hippie or Flower Child Culture, and the hotbed for social revolution. In the United States, this decade is raked by the assassination of JEFF and the resulting presidency of Lyndon Johnson, the sharp turning away from the conservatism of the sass, the general observance of hippie culture, as well as the softening of the view on previous social taboos such as sexism and racism. The sass was also the epicenter for the growing disdain and disapproval of the Vietnam War.

The years leading up to the first Earth Day Movement was marked with the publication of thought-provoking ecologically-themed books and essays such as Rachel Carbon's " Silent Spring" (1 962), which examined the usage of homiletic pesticides and the harm it does to the environment; Lynn White's lecture-later-turned-essay on " The Historical Roots Of Our Ecological Crisis," (1967) where White suggests that the Industrial Revolution marked a key turning point in our " ecologic history," as the general mentality during the Industrial Revolution was that of nature being a resource that man can use to exploit; Garrett Harden's " The Tragedy of Commons" (1 968), where Hardin introduces the idea of overexploitation due to man, looking out for his own personal interest, maximizes his use of common (and finite) resources, <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-and-the-environment-assignment/>

thou any regard for the disadvantages brought about to the general population. Most popular of these “ echo-publications” is Aldo Leopold’s “ A Sand County Almanac. ” Originally published in 1949, Leopold’s book became widely available and popular in the sass. In his book, Leopold introduces the idea of “ Land Ethic,” wherein he says that the next step in the evolution of Ethics is the inclusion of non-human members of the community (“ The Land”). Leopold says: “ A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.

Aforementioned books and essays apparently invoked in the public, a sense of stewardship, and a responsibility to the environment. Good historical review. The First Earth Day: A Socio-political Movement In 1969, an oil spill in Santa Barbara, California prompted Earth Day founder, then US Senator Gaylord Nelson, to bring environmental protection into the national political agenda. (Taken from: <http://www.earthday.org/earth-day-history-movement>, accessed March 1, 2011). Senator Nelson realized that he could channel the anti-war energy to put environmental concerns forward. After recruiting Republican Congressman Pete McCloskey to co-chair the cause, and hiring Dennis Hayes as national coordinator, the Earth Day celebration was set into action.

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans took to the streets, calling for the preservation and conservation of the environment. It is noted that the first ever Earth day transcended socio- economic and political barriers, as it was able to enlist support from both Republicans and Democrats, rich and poor, city urbanites and provincial farmers, tycoons. The Earth Day movement also <https://assignbuster.com/ethics-and-the-environment-assignment/>

brought about the bequest creation of the IIS Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as well as the passage of the Clean Air, Clean Water, and Endangered Species Acts in the USA. THE THEORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS Environmental ethics is a branch of Philosophy that studies the moral relations between humans and their environment.

As a field of study, environmental ethics presupposes that humans have certain responsibilities to the natural world, and it seeks to help people and their leaders become aware of them, and to act responsibly when they do things that impact the natural world. (Taken from: [http://www. Chancelleries. Com/EI-Ex/ Environmental-Ethics. HTML](http://www.Chancelleries.Com/EI-Ex/Environmental-Ethics.HTML); retrieved February 25, 2011) In the book “ Environmental Ethics: Duties to and Values in the Natural World” (Temple University Press, 1988), author Holmes Ralston writes that humans have always had local impact on their environment, as they use the land as a source of food and resources. It is through this very interaction with the environment that humans contract a responsibility for nature.

Ralston goes on to say that “ What was for so long a given, has of late become an obligation. Great power, unconstrained by ethics, is subject to great abuse. (page xi). Throughout history, philosophers and thinkers like SST Francis of Cassis, Alan Marshall, Earn Names, James Lovelace, Richard Sylvan, J. Bird Calotte, and Peter Singer have pondered upon how man ought and should act in response to the environment. And there are generally two schools of thought that govern environmental ethics. Anthropocentric versus Obscenities In 1 949, Aledo Leopold wrote in his book A Sandy County Almanac, that “ there is as yet no ethic dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it...

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The extension of ethics to this third element in human environment is... An evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity. " (up. 238-239). More than 60 years later, this ecological necessity has not yet been realized. In deference to mankind, man's responsibility to the environment and environmental ethics has been studied in detail. At the backbone of these theories lie either one of two schools of thought: Anthropocentric or Obscenities. Anthropocentric In an anthropocentric stand point, a " morally correct" response to the environment is necessary because maintaining a healthy, sustainable environment is integral to the well-being of humans.

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). Anthropocentric (also known as Shallow Ecology), 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. (Coordinate and Moore, Journal of Environmental Philosophy, 2000). Also essential to the study of the anthropocentric perspective of man is to look at anthropomorphism's religious underpinnings. In the first account of creation, the book of Genesis states man's dominion over all other creatures.

Genesis 1:26 reads: " Then God said, ' Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the
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earth. " Dominion may be misunderstood as considering that the natural world can be treated however we wish and be tamed for our use. According to Peter Singer, in his book Practical Ethics, this is the root cause of our environmental problems, and it is true that the command to ' subdue' the Earth (Genesis 1 : 28) needs looking at (Robertson and Mailed, OCCUR-Religious for AS and AY, 2007). On the other hand, the second account of creation in Genesis says that " The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden Of Eden to till it and keep it" (Genesis 2: 15).

While it is true that the previous chapter gave man dominion over the earth, the succeeding chapter counterbalances this by suggesting that man was given stewardship of the earth – that man is only a caretaker, as everything ultimately belongs to God. In a nutshell, anthropocentric environmental ethics is the school of thought that stipulates that man's relationship to his environment is driven by the value of the environment in relation to man, in terms of utility. Anthropocentric will likely allow environmental damage to continue, for as long as humans benefit from it. Obscenities Earn Names, one of the most-recognizable fathers of environmental philosophy, published a short paper entitled " The Shallow and the Deep, Eng-Range Ecology Movement" in 1973.

In this article, Names stated that there are two ecological movements: Shallow ecology, which is primarily concerned mostly with pollution, the depletion of natural resources, and the usefulness of the Earth to humans. Deep ecology, on the other hand, deals with the intrinsic value and inherent worth of all things – that the environment ought to be preserved not because of its value and utility to humans, but because the environment, in and by

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itself, has worth. For Names, the idea that humans are more superior to everything else just because unmans have consciousness, was simply unacceptable. According to Names, “ every being, whether human, animal or vegetable, has an equal right to live and blossom. ” (Robertson and Mailed, OCCUR-Religious for AS and AY, 2007). Table below summarizes the major differences of shallow ecology and deep ecology. Figure A.