CHAPTER 4

Ethics and Environmental Conservation

Kibaba Makokha[1] and Nelson Muthiani[2]

4.1 Introduction

Over the last five decades the world has witnessed a number of significant and unprecedented environmental problems on scales not witnessed before, such as environmental degradation and pollution, loss of biodiversity, global warming and climate. Emerging environmental problems like HIV/AIDS poverty, and invasive species (for example water weeds in inland water bodies) pose a real challenge to economic development and sustainable living in poor countries. The most disturbing fact about environmental problems is that they are mainly human-caused. These problems are exemplified by increased pollution in all forms, wanton destruction of forests, depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, disposal of toxic wastes and garbage, extinction of numerous species of both flora and fauna, among others. These problems are attributed to many causes, such as technology, poverty, poor governance, and civil wars among others. Whatever the specific cause, these problems herein collectively referred to as 'environmental crisis' are intricately connected and have implications of up to global proportions on development.

In the period referred to above the world has indeed witnessed increased development and use of various forms of technology, which have affected human life immensely, both qualitatively and quantitatively. But most importantly in the context of this chapter, these developments have invariably increased human capacity to impact on the environment sometimes with dire consequences; the Chernobyl nuclear accident in the former Soviet Union 1986, being a case in point. The increased use and corresponding human capacity to impact on their natural environment raises questions that transcend the spheres of science and technology per se, and cross into the realm of moral and ethical values. It is in this light that a reknown contemporary environmental ethicist, Rolston Holmes III [1988] has argued rightly that: Power without ethics is profane and destructive in any community.

Indeed enough examples exist in our societies that easily validate the veracity of Holmes III's contention. For instance it is partly because of exercise of power

[1]Department of Philosophy and Religious studies. Email: ktadayo@yahoo.com
[2]Department of Environmental Science; Email: nelsonmuthiani@yahoo.com

unguided by ethics that we decry the abuse of human rights, lack of accountability and transparency in governance and management in most of our societies. In the same breath it can be argued that non observance of protocols and conventions designed to abate and possibly reverse environmental degradation like Montreal Protocol (1987) on substances that deplete the ozone layer; The Kyoto Protocol on global climate change (1997) continues due to increased exploitation of the natural environment by humanity unguided by ethical and moral values.

In the light of the foregoing, this chapter argues with White (1996), Agazzi (1994), De George (1994), Wiredu 1994), et al; that science and technology alone cannot alleviate the present environmental crisis. In short environmental problems raise questions of a moral and ethical nature. This chapter therefore examines and evaluates the place and role of morality and its justification in environmental management, protection and care.

4.2 Understanding the Concept of Morality

The notion of morality like most other philosophical concepts is appreciably not easily captured by a simple comprehensive definition. Indeed, there are varied attempts by moral philosophers to define morality. In this chapter morality is taken to refer to that human device that appeals to rational principles by which they determine what is right and what is wrong, what is good, and what is bad, duties and obligations and that aims at cultivation of desirable traits of character that may lead to harmonious relationships (Makokha, 1993:23).

Thus conceived, as Gruen (1987:93) has put it, morality represents a response to cooperation among competing persons and groups and aims at settling disputes...". To achieve this, morality helps to regulate human conduct by cultivating desirable traits of character by appealing to principles and rules that are regarded legitimate ... having a justification potentially acceptable to every member of the community [ibid: 94]. From this conception, one can discern three important criteria of morality that are central to the present chapter.

First, implicit in the above conception of morality, reason is seen as a necessary condition in the moral making process. Morality is dependant on the rational capacity which enables human beings to act deliberately, purposively and rightly, and this is what constitutes a human action and for that, a moral action.

The second inference is that morality does not obtain in mere observance of the rules and principles for this would reduce morality to the level of law, which in effect would undermine its profoundness. The profundity of morality lies in a way of living or attitude that exhibits desirable traits of character. In human relationships, this attitude is anchored in what Wambari (1997:3) calls a 'shared humanity', which compels humans to treat fellow human beings in some way (which is morally desirable) rather than in some other way, (which is morally undesirable).

Third, the above conception of morality also emphasizes the centrality of the human person in the institution of morality. This is to say that morality makes sense only in those relationships, which involve human beings. In other words, it is only human beings who make sense of right and wrong and hence constitutes the class of moral agents, that is, beings that have the capacity to discern moral values and act accordingly.

4.3 The Domains of Morality

One of the most controversial questions in environmental ethics is to do with the concept and practice of morality, and what kinds of beings are perceived as belonging to the moral community. The response to this question determines where to delineate the boundaries of moral considerations and the concomitant ethical orientation. The authors of this chapter sre aware of the controversy that this question has generated in environmental ethics discourse, but for the present purposes, would like to avoid getting entangled into it. In the process of this however, the chapter risks oversimplifying or even skirting around what are otherwise more complex, sophisticated and even baffling concerns.

This chapter discerns three domains or contexts within which morality operates. They are, intra-personal relationship, inter-personal relationships and human-natural environment relationship. A brief clarification of each of these should suffice to elaborate on the point. The first domain concerns the human person as he/she relates to oneself. The human person is said to possess intrinsic worth, which also gives every person his/her dignity as a person. Thus, the way a human person relates to oneself affects this worth and dignity, either positively or negatively. In the moral sense, therefore, the human person owes to oneself certain duties, the overriding one being the duty not to harm or destroy oneself capriciously. For instance, ordinary morality constraints a person from causing harm to oneself through suicide or by use of harmful substances such as drugs. In short, the way an individual relates to oneself generates moral concerns and invites the institution of morality as a guardian of one's duties and obligation to the self.

The first domain above necessarily coalesces into the second context of human-to-human relationships, what is generally referred to as inter-personal relationships. In this context, in the same way as the individual person has duties and obligations to the self, so also does a person have duties and obligations to fellow human beings. As observed elsewhere, human beings have a shared humanity as beings with intrinsic worth, which necessarily generate duties and obligations to one another. This way the institution of morality becomes central for these relationships to play important functions in regard to guiding human actions and obligations to their fellow human beings. This issue shall be revisited in the next section of this chapter.

The third and rather controversial domain of relationships is in the way huma beings relate to their natural environment. This dimension is the central conce of this chapter, and hence without getting into the controversy at this point, l it only be observed that human beings as moral agents act in ways that can b characterized as right or wrong. This way, the human actions towards the natu environment can be legitimately termed to be either right (in so far as they enhan their well-being or interests) or wrong (in so far as they undermine the realization their good). This is to say that insofar as humans are moral agents they are subje to moral constraints and hence their actions towards the natural environment a subject to general moral considerations. It is this broad context of relationships th gives rise to issues in environmental ethics.

It is important however to clarify from the onset that human-nature relationsh is not symmetrical, in the sense of nonhuman beings having a reciprocal mo obligation to human beings. This is for the obvious reason as pointed out above, th nonhuman beings are not the sorts of beings that can be moral agents; they simp lack the rational capacity to do this. In the same vein, therefore, relationships th involve nonhuman beings alone, say animals versus fellow animals do not genera moral consideration. Many of us have sometimes watched, with indignation ho cats treat mice with such great sense of callousness. The cat would corner i victim, in a position where it (mouse) has no chance of escape at all. Then as in an act of benevolence, would appear to let go, only to pounce back when th mouse makes a move to escape; and this time round inflict some more pain on i victim. This would go on for some time until the mouse succumbs to the tortur This done, the cat would walk away as if nothing had happened!

Indeed one gets disturbed by this callousness and yet in our perception of moralit it does not make sense to label and condemn this act as morally wrong, for it ca only be so from the point of a moral agent. One can imagine then, that in th absence of the moral institution, probably human beings would treat fellow huma and the rest of nature in such ways as described above. The philosopher Thom Hobbes once envisaged such scenario and characterized such as a state of natur in which human life would be, 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbe 19970:100).

4.4 Functions of Morality Its Effectiveness and Profoundnes

The majority of moral philosophers agree upon the role of morality in accountin for relationships. This means morality's role of setting criteria or standards b which to determine or delineate boundaries of human relationships. In this rol morality guides humans on how they ought to relate to each other, the principl that govern such relationships and so on. In this endeavour, as Vine (1987:3 rightly points out, morality also aims at regulating conduct, which affects the mo central concerns and interests of both the agent and other persons. In the absen

of this, Frankena (1995:14) observes that, "conditions of satisfactory human life for people living in groups could hardly obtain". Thus understood, the role of morality in making social life possible is invariably indispensable.

In addition, the moral institution supplies defensible criteria by which conflict can be resolved and hopefully harmonious relationships maintained or restored. It should be appreciated that, social life obtains under such conditions where mechanisms exist to resolve conflicts whenever they arise. The institution of morality has inbuilt mechanisms that make it the most suitable in fulfilling this function. Hampshire (1983:168) has accurately appreciated this point when he observed that "morality is inextricably involved with conflict so also is it inextricably involved with the control of destructive impulses". To accomplish the important role of resolving conflicts, morality relies on criteria, to determine what needs to satisfy or frustrate and when, in order that a person whose needs are so frustrated can be satisfied another time, thus appealing to the supreme moral principle of justice.

The effectiveness of morality in fulfilling these and other functions lies in its very foundation, namely that moral obligation is rooted in humanity and predates any other institution in guiding human action. Put differently, morality is indeed the quintessential human institution that guides human actions and obligations and harmonizes relationships. To say this is not by any means to suggest that morality is a panacea to all problems of moral concern, on the contrary, unethical conduct has persisted in human society in spite of moral consciousness.

The foregoing notwithstanding, the position of this chapter is that the institution of morality has inherent capacity to affect human attitudes in the very core of their sensibilities. This can best be appreciated when evaluated within the context of autonomy. Moral rules are said to be autonomous when they are self-emanating, self-action-guiding. This is to say, as Desclos (1993:23) emphasizes that; "obligations are from within, given and received by the same person who is both the legislator and the subject of the law". It must be clarified, however, that moral autonomy is not to be construed to mean that autonomous decisions, rules and principles are based on mere arbitrary whims or caprice of the acting individual. Sagoff (1992:2002) captures this point quite succinctly when he emphasizes that:

> *autonomy does not depend simply on a person's acting or wants, desires or interests he/she happens to have, but on the nature of those interests that have their origin in the self and their order and structure with respect to general goals and principles, which a person affirms and is willing to defend*

In other words, they must be based on rationality, which according to many respected philosophers notably, Aristotle, is the proper nature of human. In fact the very

notion of autonomy presupposes and requires that human beings have the capa to rise beyond being driven by such impulses as mere desires, wants and intere In a nutshell, moral autonomy requires an objective appraisal and assessment options (even if they happen to be contrary to the individual's interests) bef informed decisions are made.

The core argument considered here is that the institution of morality is the m deep and profound in addressing relationships. The profoundness of morality, efficacy and therefore preferability to other guides to human actions and obligati such as law, is poetically captured by Desclos (1993:54 ff) in the following words

> morality aims at the interior and not at the simple exterior conformity to ideals; it applies to every human person and to all humanity

The obvious inference from the above quotation is that morality transcends th simple schema of cataloguing the do's and don'ts, to "invite us to conform n to a commandment in its textual rigour but in a rational call to fulfil values whic are fully human" (Desclos 1993:42). This way, morality is not satisfied mere with transmitting information, but "it suggests values and imposes upon the wi obligations coherent with those values" (Ibid: 35).

In sum, morality transcends legality and its profoundness therefore lies in a way o living, a way of being; it is an attitude whose effectiveness can be realized only i praxis. That is, morality penetrates the interiority of the acting agent, enabling on to act deliberately and purposively. This is what is meant to say that the dictates o morality are self-imposed or self-prescribed; they affect moral agents from within in directing them towards the realization of the good. Therein therefore, lies the superiority of the institution of morality in guiding human actions and obligations.

In this section, an attempt has been made to underscore and qualify the centrality of morality in human relationships. The view of this chapter, as partly argued in this section is that morality though a human institution, must be invoked in addressing human-nature relationship and for the good of nonhuman moral subjects. Although the extension of the principles of morality to this domain of relationships remains controversial in philosophy, it is the contention of this chapter that the institution of morality provides criteria by which right and wrong human relationship towards the natural environment can be determined. But even more importantly, morality challenges us to re-think our relationship with the natural environment, to seek common ground with nature, that can act as a pivot on which human-nature relationship can be anchored. This way, morality affects us in our deepest rather than our superficial sense, impacting positively on our attitudes towards the natural environment. The following section explores the ontological foundations of an environmental ethics.

4.5 The Ontological Foundation of Human-Nonhuman Nature Relationship

The attempt to ground moral considerations to nonhuman nature takes this discourse into some ontological reflections on human-nonhuman nature relationship. To help ground this, this chapter is guided by Martin Heidegger's phenomenological approach, which, Fay (1988:149) contends, "probably represents one of the most powerful analysis of man –in-the world, which has emerged in the twentieth century thought".

Heidegger presents his analysis of Being in his well-publicized book, "Being and Time (1962)" in which he introduces two related notions; man as 'Dasein', a German word which translates literally as to-be-there and the notion of man as 'in-der-welt-sein'.literally meaning to be there in the world. In this ontology, Heidegger presents the universe as a unity, with various constitutive entities within it. Expressing this unity explicitly, Heidegger writes, "the compound expression Being-in-the world indicates in the very way we have carried it that it stands for a unitary phenomenon – this primary datum must be seen as a whole" (Heidegger, 1962:78). In this formulation, Being-in, is a state of man's existence; which to Heidegger is the first constitutive mode of man's existence. To explain further, Heidegger points out that 'in' is derived from innan, which means to reside or habitare, meaning to dwell, while 'an' signifies, I am accustomed to, am familiar with or I look after something (1962:80).

In this ontology, though man is conceived in his specifically and uniquely human mode of existence as Dasein, man is not in opposition to the natural world, which is presented as being an essential institutive element of man. Thus, man is rooted in this unity or totality, which also provides man with conditions by which he can fulfill his potentialities. In this ontology, there is no dualism between the mind and the body, subject and object in the sense of opposition between man and nature. This way, nature is not perceived as being alien to man, for man is essentially and necessarily a part of nature, to which he is familiar with and accustomed to. This amounts to a sharp rejection of an ontology, which opposes and dualizes the two, i.e man and nature. It is in this sense that Heidegger flatly rejects the Cartesian metaphysical dualism, which opposes man as ego cogito i.e man as "thinking being or substance thinking" and nature as res extensa i.e "nature as substance extended".

This being-in-the-world, as Heidegger points out does not mean that man is therefore a captive or imprisoned in nature, as the term 'throwness' may otherwise suggest. The term 'throwness' seems to imply that man is placed in nature on the same footing with the rest of nature such that beings cannot free themselves from the connectedness with nature. On the contrary, as Heidegger explains, knowledge is part of being-in; as one of the constitutive elements of Dasein, that distinguishes

Dasein from nonhuman entities in the natural world. It is through knowledge tha Dasein is able to know itself, and to develop a relationship with itself and others unlike other beings in nature that are incapable of this (see also Biemel, 1977:34).

Through knowledge therefore, even in the 'throwness', human beings have th capacity to transcend the limits imposed upon them by the natural world, eve though they still remain rooted in nature. Thus, we may correctly say that th relationship between man and the natural world is a primordial one that remain invariably in place notwithstanding the human capacity to rise above nature. It i not a product of man's knowing, although knowledge as a constitutive elemen of Dasein enables man to know not only the self but other beings in nature, b which capacity, human beings create their world, a world of meaning. Indeed, i Heideggerian formulation, it is only Dasein that can be described as meaningful o meaningless.

A relationship of care or concern is also presented in Heidegger's ontology of Being in-the-world. On this, Heidegger (1962:24) writes; "because being in the worl belongs essentially to Dasein, its Being towards the world is essentially concern" This statement has to be understood within the context of innan that present Dasein as the only being with the capacity to comprehend or understand the world This does not mean that the world belongs to Dasein in the sense of deriving it worth from him. Again within the context of innan, Dasein's capacity also implie responsibility towards the world, that of looking after the world. This concern o care is primordial, structural totality, which, as Heidegger points out;

> is essentially something that cannot be asunder, so any attempts to trace it back to special acts or desires like willing and wishing or urge and addiction or to construct it out of these, will be unsuccessful. Willing and wishing are rooted in the ontological necessity in Dasein as care (1962:238).

The concern as Heiddeger emphasizes is used as an ontological notion and i therefore not intended to be a moral exhortation. In the view of this chapter howeve even if not intended as an ethical imperative, Heidegger's postulation of Dasein a concern for the world, probably just strikes a moral relationship of being concerne with what happens in the world, this being rooted in the connectedness betwee man and nature. This raises considerations of an ethical and moral nature.

From the very onset, it must be clarified that Heiddegger was not formulating an ethical theory, leave alone a theory of human-nature relationship in the ethica sense. However, Heidegger's ontology lays ground on which a human-nature ethi can be constructed. This is precisely where Heidegger's relevance for this chapte lies. In the first place, the universe as a unity of various constitutive entities root

humanity in their natural environment. The ensuing relationship recognizes the intrinsic worth in nature, contrary to some perspectives that perceive the natural environment merely from the point of view of its usefulness to human beings i.e from instrumental point of view. This recognition is very crucial in laying the foundations of an ethic of environmental concern. The perspective, which calls for harmony and unity between humanity and the natural environment would readily find justifiable grounding in such an ontology. This view has been in recent times been articulately expressed by many environmental ethicists, particularly those of deep ecology persuasion. For instance, expressing this line of thought, Thomas Hill Jnr. graphically explains;

> as human beings, we are part of nature, living, growing, declining and dying by natural laws, similar to those governing other living beings... despite our awesomely distinctive human power, we share many deeds, limits and liabilities of animals and plants.

To Hill, this realization amounts to self-acceptance which is humility and a virtue he calls for and believes has a connection with preservation of the natural variety. Wambari articulates a similar thesis, when he contends that:

> a critical reflection on the part of it ... that is, our relationship to the totality of being is that we are part of a whole. For these relations to be satisfactory, ensuring the survival of both human and nonhuman natural world, there is need for moderation (Wambari, 1997:6).

The point being emphasized here is that although the thesis of man as being part of nature, sounds like a truism; it is only so in the biological sense. In the ecological sense, human beings take their point of departure from their biology as they intervene in the natural processes. This is what then results in a moral encounter and hence the moral consideration for human-nature relationship is predicated on this intervention.

The second thesis that is instructive from Heidegger's analysis is the notion of Dasein as care and concern. In Heidegger's ontological formulation, the notions of care and concern are used interchangeably. This care or concern is not exclusively to other Daseins. That is, from his ontology of unity of Being, a wider sense of care can be logically inferred; one which includes all beings. Dasein is presented as being rooted in the unity of Being, such that if this unity is broken, then Dasein is also affected, hence the need for concern for all beings in order to preserve the unity of Being. This concern, interpreted in ethical sense implies a responsibility

on the part of humanity towards other beings in nature. This is consistent with humanity's capacity to understand Being and in a sense also as moral agents. This is important in determining how humanity ought to relate not only to fellow human beings but to other beings in nature, with whom they share in Being. This too establishes a strong grounding for a moral consideration for nonhuman beings, thus, placing nonhuman nature justifiably within the moral domain.

Third, the rejection of the Cartesian dualism, which dichotomizes the subject and object is indeed a challenge to humanity to re-think their place in the natural world. The Cartesian dualism has been variously criticized in environmental ethics discourse, partly blaming it for the current environmental crisis. For example, in the words of Fay, (1988:150), this dualism "had split man from his world". In effect therefore, as Midgley (1991:6) quips; "the human soul then appears as an isolated intruder in the physical cosmos, a stranger far from its home".

In ethical sense, this dualism becomes even more problematic when in the words of Plumwood (1994:1470 "what is characteristically and authentically human is defined against or in opposition to what is taken to be natural, nature or the physical or biological realm". Thus conceived, the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature as Plumwood adds is:

> treated as an oppositional and value dualism ... the upshot is deeply entrenched view of the genuine or ideal human self as not including features shared with nature or in opposition to the nonhuman realm so that the human sphere and that of nature cannot significantly overlap [ibid]

Thus conceptualised, the critics of the dualism rightly argue that human beings are alienated or estranged, and set apart from and over nonhuman nature, thereby in the words of Sterling (1990:78) "opening the way for a relationship that is primarily exploitative and manipulative". This in turn, as Shiva (1994:35) poetically observes, is to blame for a new world in which nature is seen as "inert and passive, uniform and mechanistic, separate and fragmented in itself, separate from man, inferior to be dominated and exploited by man". This conception goes against the principle of humanity as part of nature and has in our view, far-reaching moral implications for human-nonhuman nature relationship.

To re-think the place of humanity in the natural world as pointed out above must involve among other things, the harmonization of human activities with natural processes. To do this involves humanity having a moral obligation to nonhuman nature. It is in this light that, increasingly today environmental ethical theorists are proposing an approach that takes into consideration multicultural perspective as the best way to solve the environmental crisis of our time. One great advantage

of such an approach is that it consolidates insights of moral sensibilities of diverse cultures to form the basis of the emerging environmental consciousness. Today, moving in this direction, important lessons drawn from cultural and value systems from African and Oriental cultures are being incorporated in policy and strategy formulation on environmental protection, conservation and care. These societies are reputed to ground their environmental consciousness on ontologies that emphasize restoration of humanity in their natural base.

The fourth issues is that Dasein is the only being constituted in such a way that it can develop a relationship not only with the self, but also with other beings in nature. Although Heidegger is here reiterating what might be viewed as a truism predicated on the fact of humanity's rationality, in ethical terms, two important points can be inferred. One that morality is basically a human phenomenon, for it is only human beings who can comprehend relationships by virtue of their capacity to understand Being. The second inference, which is a logical consequence of the foregoing, is that since relationships go beyond fellow human beings, then morality as a constitutive element of humanity must also cover human-nonhuman nature relationship.

The fifth point, which is closely related to the foregoing, is the idea that although human beings are rooted in nature, they have the capacity to transcend nature. This is an explicit affirmation of the thesis that the human capacity to comprehend Being sets them apart from the natural world. This view is instructive in recognizing important moral differences between humanity and nonhuman beings. Heidegger's ontology thus helps to ground the argument that humans are also apart from nature and that there is no contradiction between the two natures of humanity, i.e. as part of and apart from nature, for the two are harmoniously constituted.

In articulating an environmental ethic, this chapter then proceeds from this ontology to argue that to insist on the view that humans are wholly inextricably part of nature is to ignore the other equally important nature of humanity, which though has its foundations in the natural is central in charting out the destiny of Being. In any case, the very essence of humanity lies in the sharpened qualities that are uniquely human inter alia, rationality, moral reflection and freedom of the will. To ignore this fact amounts to the negation of personhood. It is in this sense that radical philosophers of deep ecology persuasion, who proceed as if human beings were exclusively inextricably part of nature theoretically entangle themselves in a sort of contradiction, for the whole idea of humans being 'inextricably part' of nature is a negation of the philosophical enterprise and striving which obtains only in the rational nature of man.

In the moral sense the cultivation of human rationality and the other uniquely human qualities does not necessarily alienate humanity from the natural world, for this endowment comes with moral responsibility. As Heidegger explains, only

humans can raise questions about Being and therefore can comprehend Being. The view that humans create a world, which is meaningful is instructive. The moral import of this position is captured by Hilhorst when he argues that only humans can reflect on their actions and retreat when it is prudent to do so. In the context of environmental protection, these uniquely human qualities bestow upon humans or moral agents added responsibilities of exercising those capacities for the benefit of both themselves and the natural environment. This way, humans can employ the moral institution to determine fair criteria that guide human to nature interaction. Without such moral constraints on the part of humans, the natural environment may forever lose out.

4.6 Role of Ethics in Environmental Protection and Conservation

It is the position of the authors that environmental conservation, protection and care ought to be the concern of all right thinking and conscientious persons and all fields of academic endeavour must offer their unique contribution. Philosophy, in general, as implied elsewhere in this chapter raises and attempts to address fundamental problems, issues and challenges that face humanity and the world in which they live. In this age, the question of the stability and well-being of the natural environment rank high among the most disturbing problems.

Specifically, however, this chapter has argued that environmental problems raise fundamental moral and ethical concerns. The moral dimension is best appreciated when we take cognisance of the fact that most of the human interference and destruction of the natural variety is not out of genuine need but often a consequence of short-term human expedience and selfish gratification. Thus a pertinent concern in the broad context of environmental ethics is to interrogate the nature of the relationship between human beings and their natural environment. Thus, how ought human beings relate to their natural environment becomes a central question in environmental ethics.

In the attempt to respond to the pertinent questions raised in the broad context of environmental ethics it suffices to interrogate what ought to be the right relationship between human beings and the natural environment. In this endeavour, we are guided by the words of Holmes III (1988) already quoted elsewhere in this chapter that power devoid of ethics can be very destructive. In the same breadth are the widely quoted and sagacious words of Mahatma Gandhi that there is enough in nature for human needs but not enough for their greed. With humanity's increased capacity to impact on the natural environment, one can argue in moral terms that humans have become overwhelming, pervasive and even abusive to the natural world. This is because humans tend to treat the natural world merely as objects of their satisfaction.

In response to the environmental crisis occasioned mainly by human excesses as pointed out, the institution of morality can help humanity clearly explicate and articulate the right relationship between human beings and their natural environment and thereby contribute towards ecological balance and harmony. This underscores the moral dimension to environmental crisis, as it should be and this is in agreement with the sentiments of Holmes III (1988), White (1990), Agazzi (1994), De George (1994) and Wiredu (1994) when they argue that science alone cannot alleviate the present environmental crisis. Wiredu, by way of exemplification, states the case quite succinctly when he says that "science sometimes grows ahead of knowledge which in turn grows ahead of wisdom and moral virtue". In short, exploitation of the natural environment raises questions of an ethical nature, which science and technology are not well equipped theoretically and conceptually to handle. The ethical component is required to deal with the value questions raised. Johnson (1991:288) captures the thinking of many environmental ethicists when he reminds us that:

> the best we should do is to develop an awareness of other beings and their interests, together with an attitude of respect and consideration for their interests. To live effectively, we must fulfill our own well-being needs, living in harmony and balance with ourselves and with, the world around us... morally we ought to allow others to thrive in richness, harmony and balance.

These words resonate well with environmental ethicists, considering the point that environmental problems are largely blamed on human actions and behaviour. For example, Wambari (1997), squarely lays environmental crisis on what he terms, selfish, uncaring and arrogant human attitude towards the natural environment. To alleviate environmental problems, he calls for change of attitude so that humans recognize the intrinsic worth of the natural world and live in cooperation with them. Herein, then lies the role of environmental ethics which, as Sylvan R. et al (1994) point out, rests in clearly providing indication of human appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and how these impact on the natural environment. The case or the need for environmental ethics is even made more urgent and apparent when we take cognisance of a number of important facts:

i. that a large number of natural resources are non renewable and hence as they diminish, competition over the remaining few increases thus undermining advancement towards sustainable living
ii. that human populations have substantially soared especially in the Third World in the last few decades, occasioning unprecedented competition over natural resources.
iii. The foregoing notwithstanding, there is every indication that environmental woes squarely lie on what is generally perceived as the reckless manipulation of the natural resources by human populations.

It is this manipulation and over-exploitation of nature that is largely responsible for the monumental environmental crisis that humanity has to contend with. This trend can however be reversed and available resources can adequately satisfy human populations. This however calls not only for judicious management but also a whole re-examination and re-conceptualisation of human-nature relationship and our value systems. The moral import of this process cannot be gainsaid; humans need the guide of ethical principles that have a particular bias to consumer habits and mannerisms, human population explosion, distribution of resources and so on.

An environmental ethic should make moral agents see the connectedness of human self-realization and well-being with that of the natural systems. In the words of Oruka (1991) the moral institution drives and motivates humanity into approaching the natural world with "the richness of his dimensions, a sense of contemplation astonishment in front of beauty, respect for beings, intellectual curiosity, and at the same time humble admission of the limitations of our knowledge of its secrets". And Sylvan et al (1994) add, that it (morality) provides checks to our behaviour, and freedom of "action in the struggle of existence by reminding us that we are part of and dependent on the web of life on the planet and our own moral obligation to maintain that web". Indeed, while it is true that morality is a human institution but it must also be used for the good of the rest of the natural variety.

To that end, environmental ethicists draw a lot of motivation and inspiration from those cultures that lay greater emphasis to the interconnectedness of life on the planet; human beings, being part and parcel of that integral whole. Indeed as already pointed out, lessons can be learnt from Oriental and African cultures and religions that espouse such philosophies and the concomitant value systems.

4.7 The Contribution of Feminism to Environmental Conservation

Broadly speaking, a 'feminist issue' is any issue that contributes in some way to understanding the oppression of women. Feminist theories attempt to analyze women's oppression, its causes and consequences, and suggest strategies and directions for women's liberation. By the mid 1970s, feminist writers had raised the issue of whether patriarchal modes of thinking encouraged not only widespread inferiorizing and colonizing of women, but also of coloured people, animals and nature. Sheila Collins (1974), for instance, argued that four interlocking pillars support male-dominated culture or patriarchy: sexism, racism, class exploitation, and ecological destruction.

Emphasizing the importance of feminism to the environmental movement and various other liberation movements, some writers, such as Ynestra King (1989a and 1989b), argue that the domination of women by men is the original form of

domination in human society, from which all other hierarchies -- of rank, class, and political power -- flow. For instance, human domination of nature, has been argued, is a manifestation and extension of the oppression of women, in that it is the result of associating nature with the female, which had been already interiorised and oppressed by the male-dominating human culture. But within the plurality of feminist positions, other writers, such as Val Plumwood (1993), understand the oppression of women as only one of the many parallel forms of oppressions sharing and supported by a common structure, in which one party (the colonizer) uses a number of conceptual and rhetorical devices to privilege its interests over that of the other party (the colonized). It is argued that male-cantered (androcentric) and human-cantered (anthropocentric) thinking have some common characteristics, such as 'dualism' and the 'logic of domination', which are also manifested in the oppressions of many other social groups, and that in being facilitated by a common ideological structure, diverse forms of oppression often mutually-reinforce each other (Warren 1987, 1990, 1994, Cheney 1989, and Plumwood 1993). A central target of feminist analysis is those patterns of 'dualism' that lie deep in patriarchal thought. Examples are polar opposites, such as male/female, human/nonhuman, culture/nature, mind/body, reason/emotion, freedom/necessity. These dualisms are not just descriptive dichotomies, according to many feminists, but involve a prescriptive privileging of one side of the opposed items over the other, which is often rationalized by alleged 'discovery' of some qualities of the dominating groups that are meant to justify the domination that the privileged wields over the subjugated. For instance, the male may be said to excel in rationality over the emotional female; the active Cartesian mind, being free from physical constrains, may be seen as superior to the mechanical passive body; the civilized and progressive human culture may be deemed superior to the primitive nonhuman nature.

The insight of feminism, however, is not just that the dominating party often falsely sees the dominated party as lacking (or possessing) the allegedly superior (or inferior) qualities. More important, according to feminist analyses, the very premise of prescriptive dualism -- the valuing of attributes of one polarized side and the devaluing of those of the other, the idea that domination and oppression can be justified by appealing to attributes like masculinity, rationality, being civilized or developed, etc. -- is itself problematic.

Feminism represents a radical challenge for environmental thinking, politics, and traditional social ethical perspectives. It promises to link environmental questions with wider social problems concerning various kinds of discrimination and exploitation, and fundamental investigations of human psychology. However,

whether there are conceptual or merely contingent connections among the differe forms of oppression and liberation remains a contested issue (see Green 199 The term 'ecofeminism' (first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974) is n generally applied to any view that combines environmental advocacy with femin analysis. However, because of the varieties of, and disagreements among, femin theories, the label may be too wide to be informative. Some feminist writers environmental issues are wary of calling themselves 'ecofeminists'.

4.8 Conclusions, Recommendations and Policy Implication

In conclusion, philosophy in general and ethics in particular has a major role to p in environmental conservation and protection. The premier role of environmen ethics, as implied in this chapter is to articulate the moral dimension to huma nature relationship. In this endeavour, a case is established, that humans ha moral obligations and duties to the rest of nature. This obligation must transce mere human egocentrism, which makes them to value the natural environm only instrumentally. Thus, part of the role of ethics to environmental conservati and protection is to articulate an ethic, which recognizes and appreciates t inherent worth of the natural environment. That kind of ethic not only affirms t worth of nonhuman beings, but also sharpens our positive sensibilities towa environmental conservation. This way, it articulates a profound vision that becom the basis upon which we can advocate for the welfare of our nonhuman kindr To achieve the right attitudes toward nature ought to be the concern of all rig thinking and conscientious persons. Thus concerted efforts should be encourag from all fronts including the media, wildlife clubs in educational institutions, Gre Movements among others.

In the old wisdom of live and let live, environmental ethics calls for the Aristoteli wisdom of virtue as living by the mean i.e. guiding human actions and behavio towards nonhuman nature by moderation. In our practical dealings with the natu environment it calls for radical changes in our consumption habits, and gene exploitation of the environment and in our attitudes towards nature. This way, ethi consciousness may transform persons, individually and collectively to rise beyo and resist the appetites that are driven by short term gain; the me/now syndro and pursue the virtue and ideal of sustainability.

For policy makers, there is urgent need to mainstream ethics and morality environmental conservation policies and strategies. This is because environmen issues raise fundamental value questions which only ethics is equipped to clarify a respond to. Finally there is also need to extend research in the area of indigen ecological knowledge. The rich values inherent in this knowledge can contribute today's efforts in environmental conservation and protection.

4.9 Review Questions

i. What sorts of beings have moral standing? Justify your answer by way of argumentation.
ii. Environmental challenges transcend the fields of science and technology and raise moral and ethical questions. Discuss.
iii. Discuss possible ways of how we can inculcate and market an environmental ethic.
iv. Conservation ethics formed the underlying arguments proposed by Governments at the Kyoto summit in 1997 and the three agreements reached in Rio in 1992. Discuss.

Bibliography

Agazzi, E. 1994. "Philosophy, Humanity and Environment" in Odera Oruka (ed.) Philosophy of Nature and Environmental Ethics Nairobi: Acts Press.

Collins, S. 1974. A Different Heaven and Earth, Valley Forge: Judson Press

De George, R. 1994. "Modern Science, Environmental Ethics and the Anthropocentric Predicament" in Odera Oruka (ed.) Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology Nairobi: Acts Press.

Eaubonne,F 1974. Le Feminisme, au la Mort, Paris: P Horay

Fay, T. 1988. "Heidegger: The Man -Nature Problem" in George McLean and Hugo Meynell (eds.) Person and Nature New York: University Press of America.

Frankena, W. 1995. Ethics (2nd Edition) New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India Private Limited.

Gruen, M.R. 1987. "Morality and Religion" in The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 10 edited by Mircea Eliade New York: Macmillan.

Hampshire, S. 1983. Morality and Confict Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Heodegger, M. 1962. Being and Time Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper and Row Publishers.

Hill Jnr. T. 1994. "Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving the Natural Environment" in Lori Gruen and Dale Jameison (eds.) Reflecting on Nature Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hobbes, T. 1970. The Leviathan. London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd.

Holhorst, M. 1994. "The Ethical Assessment of New Technologies: Some Methodological Considerations" in Wim Zweers and Jan Boersema (eds.) Ecology, Technology and Culture: Essays in Environmental Philosophy. Cambridge: White Horse Press.

Johnson, L. 1991. A Morally Deep World: An Essay on Moral Significance and Environmental Ethics, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

King, Y. 1989a. `The Ecology of feminism and Feminism of Ecology` in J. Plant (ed.) Healing the Wounds, Philadelphia: New Society Publishers 18-28

Makokha, K. 1993. Relationship Between Morality and Religion: A Case of Bukusu of Western Kenya. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University.

Midgley, M. 1993. "The Origins of Ethics" in Peter Singer (ed.). Companion to

Ethics Cambridge Massachusetts: Basil Balckwell.
Oruka, O. 1992. Ecophilosophy: An Essay on Environmental Ethics, Nairobi, Acts Press.
Plumwood, V. 1993. Feminism and the Mastery of nature, London: Routledge.
Plumwood, V. 1994. "Nature, Self and Gender: Feminism, Environmental Philosophy and the Critique of Rationalism" in Lori Gruen and Dale Jameison (eds.) Reflecting on Nature: Readings on Environmental Philosophy Oxford Oxford University Press.
Rolston III, H. 1988. Environmental Ethics. Philadelphia. Tempel University Press.
Sagoof, M. 1992. "Technological Risk: A Budget of Distinction" in David Cooper and Joy Palmer (eds.). The Environment in Question: Ethics and Global Issues London and New York: Roudledge.
Shiva, V. 1994. "Women, Ecology and Development" in Lori Gruen and Dale Jameison (eds.) Reflecting on Nature: Readings on Environmental Philosophy Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sterling, S. 1990. "Towards and Ecological Worldview" in Ronald Engel and Joan Gribb Engel (eds.) Ethics of Environment and Development, Global Challenge, International Response. London: Belhaven Press.
Sylvan & Bennett 1994. The Greening of Philosophy: From Human Chauvinism to Deep Green Theory. Cambridge: The White Horse Press.
Vine, I. 1983. "The Nature of Moral Commitment" in Hellen Weinreich-Haste and Don Locke (eds.) Morality in the Making: Thought, Action and the Social Context New York: John Weley and Sons Ltd.
Wambari, K. 1997."Natural Environment (Attitudes Towards) in V.Y. Mudimbe (ed.) Encyclopedia of African Religion and Philosophy. New York: Garlland Publishing Inc.
White, L. 1988. "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis" in Population and the Death of Man: Christian View of Ecology by Francis Schaeffer Illinois Tyndale House Publishers.
Wiredu, K. 1994. "Philosophy, Humankind and Development" in Odera Oruka (ed.) Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology: Philosophy of Nature and Environmental Ethics Nairobi: Acts Press.
Warren, K.J. 1987. Feminism and Ecology: Making connection
Warren K.J 1990: The Power and Promise of ecological Feminism., Environmental ethics 9: 3-21.