



GNOSI: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Human Theory and Praxis
 Volume 4, Issue 1, May (Special Issue), 2021
 ISSN (Online): 2714-2485

The Value of Nature: Virtue Ethics Perspective

Sukru Dursun^{1*}, Hysen Mankolli²

¹, Professor, Environmental Engineering Department, Konya Technical University,
 42031, Konya, Turkey.

Email: sdursun@selcuk.edu.tr^{1*}

², Professor, Ecologist, Plainfield, Illinois, USA; Health and Environment Association,
 Tirana Albania.

Consultant Scientist, Earth System Science Interdisciplinary Center (ESSIC), University
 of Maryland College Park, MD 20742, USA.

Email: hysenmankolli@yahoo.com²

(**Received:** December-2020; **Accepted:** March-2021; Available **Online:** May-2021)



This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License CC-BY-NC-4.0 ©2021 by author (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

ABSTRACT

Virtue ethics is an alternative to consequentialism and deontology. Both consequentialist and deontological theories consider concepts such as “goodness” and “rightness” of action as essential to morality. Virtue ethics, on the other hand, focuses on what kind of person one should be. Virtue ethics proposes to assess the ethical quality of actions in terms of concepts/virtues such as kindness, honesty, sincerity and justice. However, one major problem in environmental ethics is that human societies, as well as culture, are all said to be anthropocentric. This is because the man considers himself as an intellectual being and tries to exercise his control over everything in the environment. Such thinking has led to over-exploitation of the environment – environmental degradation. This has led to the rejection of the anthropocentric worldview by many philosophers. This paper argues against the rejection of the ‘anthropocentric’ worldview. This paper argues that the value of nature cannot be defined in an abstract sense outside of human interaction with nature. Hence, some level of ‘anthropocentrism’ is needed. This paper submits argues that virtue ethics can help solve the environmental problem. This problem can be solved if we construct the attitude of respect for nature as a virtue. Stewardship based on the virtue of respect ought to be the human being’s obligation so that the aim of all nations should become ecologically sound sustainable development.

Keywords: Environmental Ethics; Virtue Ethics; Value of Nature; Paul Taylor; Respect for Nature.

INTRODUCTION

Virtue ethics focuses on what kind of person one should be. Virtue ethics proposes to assess the ethical quality of actions in terms of concepts/virtues such as kindness, honesty, sincerity and justice. One central question of virtue ethics is - what is the moral reason for acting one way or another? From the perspective of virtue ethics, kindness and loyalty are two moral reasons for helping a friend who is in trouble. This theory is quite different from the deontologist's reason, i.e., the action is demanded by a rule. It is also different from the consequentialist reason, i.e., that the action should give rise to the welfare of the number of people. From the perspective of virtue ethics, the motivation and justification of actions are inseparable from the character traits of the agent. The focus of deontology and consequentialism is on other people or states of the world. But the central issue for virtue ethics is how to live a flourishing human life. A flourishing human life requires having the moral capacities, such as, the capacity to value, to love, to respect and to care for the nonhuman natural world as an end in itself.

From the very beginning of environmental ethics, we find that most discussions focused on the intrinsic and instrumental value of nature (Okeke & Akpan 2012; Basse 2020). The intrinsic value approach considers the destruction, and also excessive exploitation of nature to be morally wrong. The instrumental value approach on the other hand talks about the use and abuse of nature from the point of view of the use-value of nature. It talks about the protection and preservation of nature but it does solely from the anthropocentric point of view. Those against the anthropocentric school of thought argue that such a mindset is responsible for environmental degradation because it does not extend moral consideration to other beings outside the human species (Akpan & Basse 2020). Many environmentalists think that an ideal environmental ethic should reject any kind of anthropocentrism. In reply to this position, this paper will point out that if we want to fulfill the needs of our community we cannot keep such dogmas in the field.

In this study, we have argued that environmental ethics is not a mere theoretical study of the environment. It is because of its practical nature which involves the formulation of appropriate policies for the protection of nature. Formulation of policies is thus a part of environmental ethics. In this way, the theoretical pursuit of environmental ethics must not reject the anthropocentric reasons for the protection of the environment. This paper proposes virtue ethics for environmental management.

VIRTUE ETHICS

The deontological value approach towards nature focuses on the right act and the utilitarian approach focuses on the right consequences. Virtue ethics focuses on the individual and his or her attitude. In virtue ethics, the outcomes of our actions are less important than the right attitude (Halbig 2020). The right attitudes are those which help us to do things for the right reasons. In this theory the notion of "virtue" is primary. It is a view regarding the concept of "good" which sets the goal of our action. Virtue ethics also gives primary importance to virtue than the concept of "duty", "law", and "reason" which provides the rules for an action (Chen 2010). In the case of virtue ethics, virtue provides the concept with which we elucidate happiness, duty, and practical reason.

Virtue ethics is the oldest among deontology and utilitarian ethics (Chen 2010). It is started by Plato but developed by Aristotle. Its central focus is on developing a virtuous character. It means a good or a right action results naturally from its dispositions or a person's natural qualities of character. So the exercise of virtue is to produce a good person. According to Aristotle, a virtuous person is that person whose character possesses the four classical virtues: Temperance, justice, courage, and practical wisdom. The four virtues constitute *eudaimonia*. According to Aristotle *eudaimonia* means happiness, and wellbeing (Stamatellos 2010). Wellbeing means not only living well but also doing well. According to Aristotle, this kind of emphasis on character is not at all individualistic. According to the virtue ethics tradition, human beings are seen as social and political animals and the character of *eudaimonia* cannot be developed in isolation. At the same time if a person embodies it then he should also promote it to others. Virtue ethics seek to identify and explain morally praiseworthy personal characteristics. It tries to answer questions such as, what is the life worth living? Or what kind of person should I be?

Virtue ethics is the theory that emphasizes the importance of acquiring virtues or having a moral character in our life. This theory is different from the other two theories i.e., the deontological and the utilitarian theories. The deontological theory emphasizes duties or rules. The consequentialist theory emphasizes the consequences of actions. For example, let us take the concept of “help” and see how these theories approach this concept. Suppose, we should help someone who is in need. A deontologist's response to help a person in need means the agent acts in accordance with a moral rule, i.e., we should help a needy person so that it becomes a universal rule. To the same, a utilitarian points out the fact that the consequences of helping a person are to maximize well-being. Virtue ethics on the other hand emphasizes the very act of helping the person on the ground that it is a charitable and benevolent act. To help a person is itself a moral virtue. In view of this the question arises: What sort of a person should I be and how should we live? Virtue ethics constitutes of three central concepts. These are *arête* (excellence or virtue), *phronesis* (practical or moral wisdom), and *eudaimonia* (usually translated as happiness) (Chen 2010). *Arete* or Virtue is a character trait. It is a disposition that is entrenched so well in its possessor so that it becomes very difficult to change. Virtues such as honesty and generosity are not only a tendency to do what is honest or generous but also specified as a desirable or morally valuable character trait. It is concerned with many other actions as well. It is also concerned with emotions and emotional reaction, choices, values, desires, perceptions, attitudes, interests, expectations and sensibilities. Hence to possess a virtue is to be a certain sort of person with a certain complex mindset. The most significant aspect of this kind of mindset is the whole-hearted acceptance of a certain range of considerations as reasons for action.

Phronesis or practical wisdom is the knowledge or understanding that enables its possessor to do just act in any given situation (Birmingham 2004). Nowadays the deontologists say that the action-guiding rules cannot be applied correctly without practical wisdom. Because the correct application of action-guiding principles requires situational appreciation which means the capacity to recognize the morally salient features of any particular situation. So virtue ethics says that practical wisdom has two aspects. The first aspect is that practical wisdom comes only with the experience of life. It means with experience a person could know the consequence of a certain kind of action in a particular situation. With the help of his experience, a person could come to

know the consequences for the people involved. It is a part of practical wisdom to be wise about human beings and human life. A virtuous person should be mindful of the possible consequences of actions. The second aspect of practical wisdom is situational appreciation. It means that the practically wise agent should have the capacity to recognize some features of a situation as more important than others. According to Aristotle, a practically wise person has the above two aspects. Therefore, he understands what is truly important and advantageous in life. It means a practically wise man knows how to live well (Kim 2020). Therefore, in Aristotelian terms, a practically wise man has a true grasp of *eudaimonia* or happiness.

The concept of *eudaimonia* is a key term in ancient Greek moral philosophy, especially in Aristotelian philosophy (Johnson 2008). It is translated as happiness or well-being. The concept of *eudaimonia* is a moralized or value-laden concept of happiness. It is something like true or real happiness or the sort of happiness worth seeking or having. Living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for *eudaimonia*. *Eudaimonia* is conceived as the supreme good. It is not conceived of as an independently defined state of life. In virtue ethics, it is conceived of as a constituent of what is morally good. Virtue ethics insists on the conceptual link between virtue and *eudaimonia*. Living a life in accordance with virtue is necessary for *eudaimonia* or “happiness” (Ambrosio 1989). It is the supreme good. According to Aristotle, the virtue ethics theory says that the concept of virtue is central. The concept of virtue is not only concerned with living a moral life but also living a good life. According to this theory, a good human life constitutes developing a good character along with the right character traits. It involves developing and using the capacities of human beings i.e., the capacities of the human mind which distinguishes human beings from other living beings. Aristotle makes a distinction between the virtues of character or moral virtues and virtues of intellect.

According to Aristotle human personality is a wholistic concept and thus it should not be developed on the basis of any absolute value which leads to extremities. In this context, Aristotle's suggestion is that we should adopt a middle path while approaching human personality (Ambrosio 1989). Adopting a middle path for Aristotle is to arrive at a point that represents the average or mean value of the totality of different moral values. A person thus should not be too bold or too timid, neither too kind nor too hard. It is in this sense that Aristotle characterizes his approaches as a middle path. A follower of the middle path gets well-being and happiness i.e., *eudaimonia*. A person who achieves this should also promote it among others. This gives us a clue to extend this approach to nature. It can be argued that the Aristotelian approach has potential ecological importance. In an environmental context, we can interpret the Aristotelian notion of mean or the middle path as indicating the need to pay attention to resource conservation without exploiting the resources. It also holds that we should have an attitude of respect for living beings. Keeping virtue ethics in a wider perspective we can now put forward the claim that virtue ethics implies that we must have respect for the environment and further emphasizes the need to take note of the implications of our activities on the environment. According to virtue ethics for a thing to have virtue means that it enables the object to carry out its function adequately, for example, the sharpness of a knife. The same notion is applicable to the powers and capacities that we human beings have. For example, the capacities to experience fear. In our lives, fear has a function. It makes us avoid danger. At the same time, it can also

make us avoid things that are wrongly perceived as dangerous. So there are right and wrong ways to feel fear. Courage is the character trait that enables us to fear what we should and when we should not. It is therefore a virtue and called a character virtue.

Intellectual virtues are different from character virtues. For example, humans have the extraordinary capacity of constructing logical/rational arguments that other living beings do not have. We have the capacity to construct arguments, to draw conclusions, give reasons, and recognize inconsistencies in an argument. These kinds of developed ability to perform these operations are also considered to be virtues and hence they are qualified to be called intellectual virtues. We need intellectual virtues in theoretical thinking as well as in practical thinking. There is an important division among intellectual virtues. We have two kinds of intellectual virtues and these are theoretical intellectual virtues and practical intellectual virtues. In the case of theoretical virtues, we aim at arriving at the truth from a set of beliefs. In the case of practical intellectual virtues, our aim is to find out whether or not the action is correct. For example, if I am thinking about whether cutting trees indeed causes environmental damage, it is called theoretical thinking. If I am thinking about whether to take part in an anti-tree cutting demonstration then that is practical thinking. So in both cases, we need intellectual virtues to judge. Making a good judgment is to make a correct moral decision. This is also a very important intellectual virtue.

A person may have a good character with virtues such as justice and compassion. But in a particular situation, it may be difficult for a virtuous person to decide which action is just and which action may be regarded as compassionate. Taking a decision is difficult in situations where justice seems to demand one action, but compassion suggests a different action. In that situation, two different virtues demand two different actions. But some people are better at making such decisions than others. They are wiser and they have a better capacity for making judgments. The ability they have for better judgment includes many other capabilities. They can assess the situation, grasp the features that morally significant, and judge among them which are the most important. This ability is necessary for a person to exercise virtues such as justice and compassion. But this ability in itself is not a character trait. So this kind of intellectual virtue in Aristotelian terms is called “practical wisdom” or *phronesis*. This is expressed in our day to day life differently by the use of such words like, “judicious”, “having good judgment”, “prudent” and “sensible” etc. This feature shows that we need both, character virtues as well as intellectual virtue in our dealings with nature.

Traditionally we need those types of virtues that enable a person to do the right things and have the right feelings towards other people. For this reason, our traditional ethical theories focused on our relations with other human beings. Hence virtues involve actions and responses appropriate to the subjects of those actions and responses. In our earlier discussion, we have already argued the need for extending the moral domain to non-human beings. In view of this, our task now is to spell out what virtues enable us to act and respond appropriately to nature. This is how the need for environmental virtue ethics is felt in recent times.

THE NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUE ETHICS

According to virtue ethics, to be a good human being one should have certain virtues (Luo 2007). This theory was developed certainly in relation to other human beings. The role of virtue ethics in the context of environmental ethics is however different.

Environmental virtue ethics is also in an important way concerned with the involvement and responsibility of human beings in relation to the environment. The question that it asks is what virtues a good human being must have in relation to the natural world? The answer that is given is from the human point of view. Because it asks the question-What dispositions must an individual have towards the environment in order to lead a good human life? Environmental ethics, as a field of inquiry, is an attempt to understand the relation of human beings with the environment. It determines the norms that should govern the interactions of human beings with nature. These norms can be either norm of action or norms of character. Hence the study regarding the norms associated with the character in relation to the human-nature relationship forms the basic thrust of environmental virtue ethics. It is engaged in studying a particular account of the character dispositions that humans ought to have regarding the environment.

Environmental ethics is ethics concerned with human-environment interactions and relationships. In this respect, adequate environmental ethics may be said to require both ethics of action and ethics of character. Ethics of action is one that guides what we ought to and ought not to do to the environment. Ethics of character provides guidance on what attitudes and dispositions we ought to and ought not to have regarding the environment (Dzwonkowska 2018). Proper environmental virtue ethics asks the central ethical question i.e., how should one live? A complete answer to this question comprises not only what we ought to do but also what kind of person we ought to be. An account of right actions, such as a set of rules, or a general principle, or a decision making procedure does not answer it entirely. A complete answer will inform us not only what we ought to do but also what kind of person we ought to be. An adequate ethical theory must provide ethics of character where an individual's character is determined by the sum of his actions. People having character traits, attitudes, and dispositions perform actions. They perform actions, promote policies and formulate laws. How an individual interacts with the environment is largely determined by one's dispositions towards it. For example, the cause of environmental exploitation comes from the attitude that nature is merely a resource for satisfying human wants and needs. Hence, any significant change in our environmental practices and policies requires a substantial shift in our dispositions towards the environment. In this way, the need for environmental virtue ethics is gradually felt. This results in a widespread realization that a proper character is indispensable for facilitating the right action and behaviour towards nature.

Environmental virtues are not only valuable for instrumental reasons but they are also valuable in themselves (Haught 2011). These values serve the instrumental end because they are the dispositions that enable us to identify the right actions and to perform them accordingly. They may be characterized as life-affirming and life-enhancing virtues. The persons who possess these virtues are better than those who do not have these. The individuals who have these virtues are able to find satisfaction and comfort from their relationship with nature. It is their character that includes their capacity to appreciate, respect, and love for nature. In the words of Carson, 'Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life' (Gottlieb, p. 24). In the words of Muir (2019), 'Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike' (p. 32). From the above two phrases, we understand that we are related to the environment in our thoughts, actions and feelings. We need

environmental virtue because our actions affect human and all other sentient beings through the effects on their environment. We need those virtues that help us to deal appropriately with all human and nonhuman beings. In order to protect our common environment, it is necessary to have co-operation among ourselves. For this co-operation, we need to have virtues such as trust, reliability, and self-restraint. We need to have environmental virtues because we are dealing with natural things directly. In such a situation, we need to be concerned with their effects on other human and sentient beings. This raises a question: What are the attitudes and dispositions that constitute environmental virtues? In order to answer this, we require specifying the appropriate role of virtue in environmental virtue ethics.

STRATEGIES TO FIND OUT ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUES

The environmental virtues are the proper dispositions or character traits for human beings required for their interactions and relationships with the environment. The environmentally virtuous person is disposed to respond both emotionally and also through him/her action towards the environment as a whole. The question which arises is how does one establish which dispositions regarding the environment are constitutive of virtue? There are certain strategies to specify environmental virtues. These are as follows. The first and most common strategy for specifying environmental virtue is done by extending the standard interpersonal virtues that human beings cultivate. It means extending the applicability of virtues that are used in human relationships to non-human entities. Each interpersonal virtue is normative for a particular range of items, activities and interactions. That range is the field of applicability of that kind of virtue. For example, the field associated with the virtue “honesty” is the revealing or withholding of truth. Similarly, for “temperance”, the field that may be identified is bodily pleasures and pains. For “generosity” the field of activities includes giving and withholding of material goods.

The above description points out the strategy to be adopted for extending the range of ascribing certain interpersonal virtues to nature. The virtues when applied to the environment should be considered to be equally normative. For example, compassion is the appropriate disposition to have towards the suffering of other human beings. From the point of view of suffering it may be claimed that there is no difference between human suffering and the suffering of non-human beings. Following the logic, it may be now argued that if one is compassionate towards the suffering of a fellow human being then on the same consideration one should be compassionate towards the suffering of the non-human beings too. Gratitude is another appropriate disposition that an individual has towards other human beings. It is a well-accepted ethical practice in human society that we feel grateful towards those from whom we have got benefits. Now the argument is given that in a similar way we can extend this disposition of gratitude towards the natural environment because we get benefited from the environment. Thus extending interpersonal virtues to the natural environment can lead to the creation of environmental virtues and environmentally virtuous person.

The second strategy is based on the idea of how an agent can be benefited on the basis of possessing a set of environmental virtues/dispositions. An environmental virtue forms a particular character trait. By virtue of that trait, a person can be benefited. The environment not only provides material goods but also has its own aesthetic and recreational value or importance. The environment provides material goods such as

water and air. It also becomes the means for all-round development of a person that includes physical, intellectual, moral and aesthetic. The environment directly provides benefits to individuals in several ways. All these benefits justify cultivating the kind of character traits that allow one to enjoy the various products and aspects of nature. For example, the natural environment provides an opportunity for aesthetic experience. But a person can be benefited from this only if he possesses the disposition to appreciate the natural environment. Nature also provides the opportunity for intellectual challenge and reward but a person can be benefited from this if he has the urge to explore to understand nature. Hence the natural environment provides many opportunities to have meaningful relationships with its inhabitants. These relationships are possible only when individuals are willing to have them. There are religious and environmental thinkers who claim that nature provides opportunities for spiritual and divine experiences. However such experiences will be available only to those who are having adequate dispositions. In this way, through the process of human behaviour that we become aware of the importance of environmental ethics in its several dimension and not just on the issue of understanding nature. The above discussion shows that certain environmental virtues emphasize the role of enlightened self-interest in promoting or motivating environmental consciousness and its corresponding behaviour.

A third strategy for specifying environmental virtue is to argue from the considerations of human excellence. In this approach, a character trait that constitutes an environmental virtue is that which makes its possessor a good human being. It means a flourishing life is judged in terms of the characteristic feature of the life of members of the human species. For example, human beings are social beings. Therefore, as a human being, excellence involves character dispositions that promote the good functioning of social groups. As human beings, we should have dispositions to encourage an individual to maintain healthy relationships with members of the group. But some individuals are disposed to undermine social cohesion, disrupt the conditions that make co-operation among individuals possible. This disposition ultimately disrupts the relationship with others. So they are deviant human beings. Hence such a person fails to be a good human being because of his anti-social disposition. Many environmental philosophers said that a proper understanding of the naturalistic situation of human beings will show us that they are socially as well as ecologically good people. Socially they are members of the human community and ecologically they are members of a broader biotic community. Hence there is an extension of human excellence to the biotic community. But nowadays the harmony observed in ecology is threatened badly. It is threatened particularly by habitation and biodiversity loss. Hence a disposition to oppose these kinds of ecological threats would be the constituent of environmental virtue.

A fourth strategy for specifying environmental virtue is to study the character traits of individuals who are recognized as environmental role models. So by knowing and examining the life, work and character of exemplars of environmental excellence, we would be able to identify particular traits constitutive of that excellence. For example, the lives of John Muir, Rachel Carson and Aldo Leopold instruct us on how to improve ourselves and our approach to the natural world. It is not necessary that the environmental role models must be confined only to such renowned persons as Leopold. We can find exemplars of environmental excellence even in local communities. We can find them in organizations working for environmental protection and improvement. We

all get benefited by such people. We are benefited not only by their accomplishment but also by the guidance, inspiration and example they provide.

ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUES

One of the earliest books in modern philosophy devoted to environmental issues is Passmore's *Man's Responsibility for Nature*. In this book, Passmore argued in favour of nature in terms of virtue and vice. He argued that we have brought ecological disorders primarily through our vices such as greed, self-indulgence and short-sightedness. The vices were not questioned by environmentalists then. Therefore, they defended the human-centered utilitarian approach (Passmore 1980). In this approach, most of our practices are found to be short-sighted since they are considered from the point of view of our own interest. This position was readily accepted by everyone on the ground that it defended against all the ethical issues intrinsic to the environment in general. Utilitarianism in this respect leaves all the environmental problems to the government to resolve. But at the same time, it is not unconcerned about the role of government in relation to the environment (Holbrook 1992). It is said, for example, that government should pass any legislation regarding the environment strictly from the point of human interest. As a result to protect our own interest many of the compromises that seriously disturb the harmony of the environment have been thus admitted. But this is a fallacy based on the short-sightedness nature of utilitarianism.

There is no quick fixed solution that would help us to solve environmental problems in a short period of time. All environmental problems have arisen due to our abuse of nature over a long period of time (Edor 2005). There is no way in which all environmental problems can be stopped immediately. All the environmental problems have come from the vice such as greed. To avert these problems we need to avert the old-fashioned procedure and actions. We are compelled to adopt certain new virtues such as the virtue of prudence, practical wisdom and compassion. Hence there are different kinds of environmental virtues proposed in this connection and these are (a) virtues related to pleasures of the senses, (b) virtues related to emotions, and (c) wonder and associated virtues.

THE ROLE OF ENVIRONMENTAL VIRTUES IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

In the preceding discussions, we have discussed certain basic virtues in the light of Aristotle's theory which a person needs to inculcate in his character to live a good life. Based on it we then discussed some environmental virtues that we need in environmental ethics to maintain a good relationship with the natural world. Complete environmental ethics includes both an account of how one ought to interact with the natural environment and an account of the character dispositions that one ought to have regarding the natural environment. The question is what is the proper relationship between these two? What is the appropriate role of virtue in ethical theory?

The virtues are the dispositions to do the right thing. In the context of environmental ethics, the role of environmental virtues is the dispositions to act according to the rules, principles, or norms of action of environmental ethics. In this way, environmental virtues can be seen as instruments to do the right actions. Accordingly, a person first determines the right ways to act towards the environment. Then the person determines which character dispositions tend to produce that behaviour. Those dispositions are regarded as environmental virtues. The

environmental virtues thus become the instruments to the individuals to do proper action towards the environment. An environmentally virtuous person will always be disposed to recognize the right thing and accordingly he acts for the right reasons (Stafford 2010). He always tends to act like this because of his virtues. It is not always true that all these virtues form rules, principles and guidelines of moral action. An environmentally virtuous person may not act strictly according to the rules and principles. While performing his action he can go beyond them for example, it is not morally required that one should always appreciate the beauty of the natural world. We cannot make a rule such as everybody ought to appreciate the beauty of nature and thus we cannot make it a rule. But a person who is disposed to appreciate the beauty of nature benefited and therefore he is in a better position than those who are not like him. Except for such limited contexts, the environmental virtues provide the kind of sensitivity and wisdom that are necessary for the application of action-guiding rules and principles to concrete situations. We come to know which rules and principles are applicable to which situations. This also helps us to decide what actions we should adopt in conflicting situations. Virtues play a more fundamental role in ethical theories because according to virtue ethicists an ethic of character is theoretically prior to an ethic of action (Welchman 1999). According to this, an action is right if and only if it is the virtuous thing to do.

It may be observed further that in the context of environmental virtues, the character traits and behaviour of environmentally virtuous people inform us how we ought to behave with the environment. This shows that environmental virtues play multiple roles i.e., both instrumental and foundational within a complete theory of environmental ethics. At this point, we discuss Paul Taylor, his theory can be seen as environmental virtue ethics. We bring their theories to see how environmental virtues play instrumental and foundational roles in building up complete environmental ethics. All of them have contributed their theories in environmental studies. According to Paul Taylor, certain ethical positions may be interpreted as forming positions in environmental virtue ethics. These position are: (a) putting economic life in its proper place i.e., to consider economic life as a subordinate place within human life as a whole, (b) should cultivate scientific knowledge while appreciating its limits, (c) We should extend moral considerability to the non-human world and finally (d) we should support wilderness protection.

TAYLOR'S THEORY OF RESPECT FOR NATURE

There is a possibility of a new kind of environmental virtue, called *respect for nature* (Wan Hung 2017). The term was originally brought into environmental ethics by Paul Taylor. Taylor used the phrase *respect for nature* as an ultimate moral attitude rather than a virtuous character trait. According to Taylor's concept of respect, any living thing has a telos. It means a living being has a purpose to attain what is good of its own (Millard & Forsey 2006). Any living being can be benefited by that which enables it to achieve its telos. On the other hand a living thing is harmed by that which interferes with its telos.

All living being possesses inherent worth. They have inherent worth as members of the earth's community of life. According to Taylor to conceive all living beings as having inherent worth is to adopt the attitude of respect for nature. This is only extending our moral attitude towards nature. For this, according to Taylor we first need

to understand two concepts before having the attitude of respect for nature as our ultimate moral attitude (Arrese Igor 2019). Those two concepts are the idea of the good of a being and the idea of the inherent worth of a being. We start from the question-why should moral agents regard wild living things in nature as having inherent worth? The simple answer to this is that they have an attitude of respect for nature. It means when rational agents subscribe to the principles of moral consideration and intrinsic value on wild living things, they ascribe intrinsic moral worth to them. In this process moral agents are adopting a certain ultimate moral attitude towards the natural world and this particular attitude is called “respect for nature”. It is like the attitude we have in traditional ethical theories as “respect for persons”. Similarly, when we adopt the attitude of respect for nature as an ultimate moral attitude, we commit to living by certain normative principles. These principles constitute the rules of conduct and standards of character which govern our treatment of nature.

First, the attitude of respect towards nature is an ultimate commitment. It is ultimate because it is not derived from any higher norm. It is not grounded on any other more general or more fundamental attitude. All our responsibilities towards nature are based on this single attitude. Second, this commitment to nature is a moral one. It is to be understood as disinterested principles. The disinterested principle means the attitude of respect for nature is very different from the set of feelings and dispositions which constitute the love of nature. Love of nature comes from one's personal interest in the same way when we have affectionate feelings towards certain individual human beings. Hence the love of nature is a similar kind of feeling that we have about the natural environment and its wild inhabitants. Our love for a person differs from our respect for all persons independently of whether we love them or not. Similarly, we should have respect for nature no matter whether we love it or not. We should respect nature simply as moral agents. Here Taylor sounds like Kant. To adopt the attitude of respect for nature is to take a stance that one wills to be a universal law for all rational beings. This is a categorical imperative and it should be applicable to every moral agent without exception. Hence, the attitude of respect for nature is a disinterested and universalizable attitude.

Taylor says anyone who adopts this attitude has certain dispositions (Arrese Igor 2019). There are three kinds of dispositions constituting the attitude of “respect for nature”. The three dispositions are (a) dispositions to seek certain ends, (b) dispositions to carry on one's practical reasoning and deliberations in a certain way, (c) Dispositions to have certain feelings.

- The first kind of disposition is to aim at certain ends which are final and disinterested ends. The ends are like promoting and protecting the good of all organisms and living communities in nature. These ends are final because these are not pursued as a means to achieve some other ends. These are disinterested because they are independent of the self-interest of the moral agent.
- The second disposition is to act in such a way to achieve those ends as a primary obligation because they are final and disinterested.
- The third disposition is to experience positive and negative feelings towards the states of affairs in nature. Because they are favourable or unfavourable to the good of all living entities in natural ecosystems (Smerić 1991).

From this, we can see the logical connection between the attitude and the duties of a life-centered system of environmental ethics. According to this theory, moral agents

have rules of duty such as noninterference and standards of character such as fairness and benevolence that determine the obligations and virtues of moral agents with regard to the wild living things of nature. According to Taylor the attitude of respect for nature is expressed through the character of a moral agent. A moral agent's character has two aspects, namely deliberative and practical. The deliberative aspect is a steady disposition to think clearly and rationally about what action is right to do in a particular situation. The practical aspect of good character is having a firm disposition and the dispositions are the power of will that helps us to resolve and carry out one's decision. Taylor says an individual expresses the attitude of respect for nature when he has developed a firm, steady and permanent disposition that enables him to deliberate and act consistently with the four rules of duty. The four rules of duty are the rule of non-maleficence, the rule of non-interference, the rule of fidelity and the rule of restitutive justice. So Taylor says these dispositions are the good character traits or virtues and they give rise to two types of virtues. They are called general virtues and special virtues respectively.

The general virtues are deliberated and acted in the right way irrespective of any particular moral rules. General virtues are consist of two kinds of fundamental character traits. These are moral strength and moral concern. Moral strength consists of virtues such as conscientiousness, integrity, patience, courage, temperance, self-control, disinterestedness, perseverance and steadfastness in duty. These virtues we need in order to lead an ethically good life. In this work, we are not dealing with all these virtues because these are only concerned with human life. So here we need the second kind of fundamental virtues which consists of the general virtues expressing the moral concern. According to Taylor, it is due to this moral concern the moral agent consideration recognizes the inherent worth of all wild living things in nature. Hence general virtues forming the moral concern of agents consist of the ability and disposition to take care of the well-being of animals and plants (Ogar *et al.*, 2020; Akpan *et al* 2020; Bassey 2020). It is also the ability to look at the world from the perspective of the well-being of all wild creatures. There are four general virtues of moral concern and these are benevolence, compassion, sympathy, and caring.

Benevolence is the capacity and disposition of an agent to feel pleased with the realization of another's good. In this respect, it does not matter whether the good achieved is due to the agent's own action or by some other action. In this process, an intrinsic normative principle that emerges is that we should act in a way that will promote or protect another's good as an end in itself and for the sake of the being. Compassion is the virtue by which we feel sad at another's pain and suffering. It is also the disposition that makes us realized that any kind of harm is intrinsically bad and we should thus refrain from harming others. Taylor further says that to develop the virtues of benevolence and compassion in one's character will mean to have the disposition to have sympathy for others and to care about their wellbeing. Sympathy and care are the two virtues that motivate one to act benevolently and compassionately towards others. Taylor says when we develop the virtues of benevolence, compassion, sympathy and care for the wild creatures then we are disposed to take moral account of the standpoint of non-human living creatures and thereby we can make ethical judgments concerning how they should be treated (Rogoff 2011). These virtues formulate the emotive and valuational background for various actions that express the attitude of respect for nature.

According to Taylor special virtues are the character traits which we need for acting in accordance with a single rule of duty mentioned earlier. Hence a special virtue is a disposition or a set of dispositions that help a person to fulfill a particular kind of duty, for example, a duty such as fidelity, or non-interference. These are the special virtues we need in a confusing or uncertain situation where a moral agent is confused about what kind of duty he needs to judge. By possessing this kind of virtue a person possess the capacity to deliberate clearly and accurately which kind of duty he requires in that particular situation. The special virtues that are important in relation to nature are discussed as follows. Considerateness is the special virtue that is related to the rule of non-maleficence essentially implies not to interfere with nature. It is the disposition for being a concern for others that leads to the wellbeing of others. Otherwise, it means not to harm any living creature by acting in a particular way. It is also the disposition not to be negligent. Regard and impartiality are the two special virtues that are related to the rule of non-interference. Regard is the kind of respect for living beings which according to Taylor means showing a strong feeling of dislike towards any kind of action that interferes with the freedom of living creatures. It also says not to impose any kind of artificial constrain on their natural way of living. Ultimately it means we should consider nature as an independent whole existing in its own right. Impartiality is the special virtue that prescribes to have the disposition to be free from any kind of bias regarding any kind of species. Impartiality as a virtue recommends us to remain neutral in the conditions which are not controlled by human beings. We see many conflicting situations where the good of one living being is in conflict with the good of another living being. So human beings should be neutral by controlling their personal feelings and emotions while formulating any kind of judgment.

Trustworthiness is a special virtue related to the rule of fidelity (Mizzoni 2004). It means wild creatures should not be deceived or tricked or betrayed in their wild state. A trustworthy moral agent should have a steady, firm disposition not to take advantage of the animals by deceiving or using any tricks. Fairness and equity are the two special virtues related to the rule of restitutive justice. Fairness is the disposition to want to restore the balance of justice that is upset by an individual's wrongdoing. It means compensating for the damage by making amendments for those who have been treated badly. The virtue of equity is having a sense of the proportionate weighting of different claims of justice. This is also having the disposition to make restitution in accordance with those relevant claims. Hence we can consider Taylor's theory of respect for nature as a part of virtue ethics. From the above discussion, we can see how important the role that virtues play to build a theory of environmental ethics. To have an attitude of respect for nature, we need to develop certain virtues i.e. general virtues and special virtues. The general and special virtues constitute the character of a moral agent based on the four rules of duty that ensure the attitude of respect for nature. Taylor argues that virtues are morally obligatory because we need virtues for right conduct. He discussed an ethical system through which we can have an attitude of respect for nature. It is a system consisting of three components which are the basic rules of conduct, priority principles and the basic standards of virtue. According to him, virtues have a very important role to play in environmental ethics. His theory is thus not only viewed as a deontological theory but also a theory that has contributed to virtue ethics greatly.

CONCLUSION

In this work, we have seen the use of virtues for the impact on the environment. Aristotle developed his theory of virtues only in connection with the human moral domain. But his concept of virtue as a character trait can be used as well in our concern for preserving and protecting nature. Virtue ethics can provide a better kind of relationship between humans and nature. The virtues that we develop for the concern of the environment are called environmental virtues. Environmental virtues such as temperance, sensitivity, awe, wonder, respect, compassion, gentleness, humility and gratitude have a major role in formulating adequate environmental virtue ethics. Environmental virtue like respect has a great impact on an individual's attitude towards nature. For Taylor respect for nature is an attitude towards nature. But this attitude could only be built if we try to inculcate this as a character trait along with the other general and the special kinds of virtues. He says if we take respect as an environmental virtue rather than a simple attitude then it would be very effective in developing the attitude of respect for nature even among children.

Environmental virtue is the most needed thing in our modern day-to-day life. In practicing simple life we are helping directly or indirectly in protecting nature or to put it alternatively, helping in restraining our behaviour towards exploiting nature. We now see the role of virtue ethics in environmental ethics to have a more balanced relationship between human beings and nature. This aspect of valuing nature shows that the economic aspect of human life is only a support for a comfortable and decent human life. We should not place economic conditions before all other conditions. So the environmental virtues do not encourage more acquisition and more consumption. Ultimately all these encourage less acquisition and less consumption. Hence the result is a state of integrity among human beings with nature as a whole.

REFERENCES

- Akpan, C. O., & Bassey, S. A. (2020). The Quandary on Water Pollution in Nigeria's Niger Delta: an Environmental Ethical Analysis. *Bulletin of Pure & Applied Sciences-Geology*, (2).
- Akpan, C. O., Ogar, J. N., & Bassey, S. A. (2020). Examining the Ethics of Research in Animal Experimentation. *Bulletin of Pure & Applied Sciences-Zoology*, (1).
- Ambrosio, F. J. (1987). The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 27(2), 214–215. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq198727211>
- Arrese Igor, H. O. (2019). Multiculturalism and Recognition of the Other in Charles Taylor's Political Philosophy. *Critical Horizons*, 20(4), 305–316. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14409917.2019.1672272>
- Bassey, S. A. (2020). Technology, Environmental Sustainability and the Ethics of Anthropoholism. *Przestrzeń Społeczna*, 1, 19.
- Birmingham, C. (2004). Phronesis. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(4), 313–324. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487104266725>
- Chen, L. (2010). Virtue ethics and confucian ethics. *Dao*, 9(3), 275–287. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-010-9174-1>
- Dzwonkowska, D. (2018). Environmental virtue ethics and sustainability. *Problemy Ekorożwoju*, 13(2), 139–146.

- Edor, J. E. (2005). The inductive predicament as an indispensable subtle evil for practical life. *Sophia: An African Journal of Philosophy*, 8(1), 110-115.
- Gottlieb, R. S. (1996). *This sacred earth: Religion, nature, environment*. New York: Routledge.
- Halbig, C. (2020). Virtue vs. virtue ethics. *Zeitschrift Für Ethik Und Moralphilosophie*, 3(2), 301–313. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42048-020-00078-0>
- Haight, P. (2011). Environmental virtues and environmental justice. *Environmental Ethics*, 33(4), 357–375. <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics201133442>
- Holbrook, D. (1992). Utilitarianism on Environmental Issues Reexamined. *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 7(1), 41–46. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ijap1992713>
- Johnson, B. E. (2008). Aristotelian Philosophy. *International Philosophical Quarterly*, 48(4), 559–563. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ipq200848478>
- Kim, D.-H. (2020). On the Nature of Practical Wisdom (Phronēsis) in Aristotle. *Journal of the New Korean Philosophical Association*, 99, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.20433/jnkpa.2020.01.99.01>
- Luo, S. (2007). Relation, Virtue, and Relational Virtue: Three Concepts of Caring. *Hypatia*, 22(3), 92–110. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2007.tb01092.x>
- Millard, G., & Forsey, J. (2006). Moral agency in the modern age: Reading Charles Taylor through George Grant. *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 40(1), 182–209. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcs.40.1.182>
- Mizzoni, J. (2004). St. Francis, Paul Taylor, and Franciscan Biocentrism. In *Environmental Ethics* (Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 41–56). <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics200426140>
- Muir, J. (1996). *The Love of Nature: Selected Essays*. Prague: E-artnow.
- Ogar, J. N., Emina, K. A., & Bassey, S. A. (2020). An Ethical Overview of Animal Welfare and the Use of Antibiotics. *Bulletin of Pure & Applied Sciences-Zoology*, (1).
- Okeke, J. C., & Akpan, C. O. (2012). An Inquiry into the Moral Question of Xenotransplantation. *Online Journal of Health Ethics*, 8(1), 2.
- Passmore, J. (1980). *Man's responsibility for nature*. London: Duckworth.
- Rogoff, J. (2011). Paul Taylor, His Times and Timelessness. *The Hopkins Review*, 4(4), 583–589. <https://doi.org/10.1353/thr.2011.0079>
- Smerić, T. (1991). Paul W. Taylor, Respect for Nature. *Revija Za Sociologiju*, 22(1-2), 222–225.
- Stafford, S. P. (2010). Intellectual virtue in environmental virtue ethics. *Environmental Ethics*, 32(4), 339–352. <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics201032439>
- Stamatellos, G. (2010). Plotinus on Eudaimonia. *Ancient Philosophy*, 30(1), 207–209. <https://doi.org/10.5840/ancientphil201030122>
- Wan Hung, A. T. (2017). Language, meaning, morality, and community a philosophical note on Charles Taylor's phenomenology of language. In *Philosophia Christi* (Vol. 19, Issue 1, pp. 217–227). <https://doi.org/10.5840/pc201719116>
- Welchman, J. (1999). The virtues of stewardship. In *Environmental Ethics* (Vol. 21, Issue 4, pp. 411–423). <https://doi.org/10.5840/enviroethics19992146>