Enforcing environmental ethics in the objectives and concerns of environmental policies

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TRADITIONAL ETHICS

Ethics usually concerns **HUMAN BEINGS ONLY**

In **WESTERN THOUGHT**, the substantial identity between human beings and moral patients (recipients of actions judged from the ethical point of view) has historically prevented expanding moral concern beyond human communities.
TRADITIONAL ETHICS
CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE

Several environmental problems are currently seriously undermining the traditional belief that the moral community should be restricted to human beings only.

New scientific data together with recent scientific advances, indicating how human activities are jeopardizing ecosystem, urge for a paradigmatic change in our moral convictions.
If pets should be protected because they are moral patients, then we must admit that all animals are moral patients. If pets are not moral patients, then they have only an instrumental value to us (company, guard, affective surrogates, etc.). In this latter case we should not condemn cultures that eat dogs or cats or suppress them.
THE PROBLEM THAT YOU DO NOT SEE
A car with electrical motor seem to be a solution that respects the environment. In reality, the electricity which makes them move derives in large part from the use of fossil fuels, which in this case pollute far from us. So with electric cars we respect predominantly ourselves and our urban life.
ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental ethics has taken up the challenge and opened an extremely urgent and inspiring call for research.

This is the call for extending the status of moral patient up to 5 directions, identifying 7 new categories of moral patients, and approaching them from 4 different approaches.
DIRECTIONS
- beyond the geographical SPACE
- beyond the present TIME
- beyond human SPECIES
- beyond SENTIENCE
- beyond SINGOLARITY

APPROACHES
- WEAK ANTHROPOCENTRISM (space-time)
- ZOOCENTRISM (species)
- BIOCENTRISM (sentience)
- ECOCENTRISM (singularity)
NEW TYPES OF MORAL PATIENTS

- Planet Earth
- Ecosystems
- Evolutionary processes
- Living beings
- Sentient beings
- Future humanity
- Global humanity
LIMITS AND MORAL

The need to pose LIMITS to our interaction with nature, recognizing the intrinsic MORAL VALUES and therefore admitting that there are several entities, including non-human, with a MORAL STATUS

ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

By extending its interest in unusual dimensions and by decentralizing its focus from moral agents, their relationships, the actions they have performed and their consequences, environmental ethics questions who has a moral status and what kind of moral values we should preserve in nature.
LIMITS OF HUMAN ACTION
Generally speaking, human interests are not more important than nature interests, in the sense that promoting trivial human interests ought to not take always precedence over advancing nature interests: some human interests may give way to moral values of nature. Only survival interests justify actively thwarting nature interests.
DIFFERENT VALUES

RESOLVE CONFLICTS
Without denying the instrumental values which are also in the relations between human beings, we should resolve conflicts of interest referring to moral values: the most appropriate category to adjust our ethical behavior in both general and specific situations.
Environmental ethics and enforcement

Care for our environment is something on which we must gain consensus, but it is also something that could require considerable enforcement.

Could rules lead to and govern virtuous intentions?

How much environmental ethics should we put into environmental policies?

How far such enforcement has and ought to go?
Environmental ethics
Environmental goods

People will not and cannot be healthy in a sick environment.

Environmental goods have long been considered as nature's gifts but are now under threat.

Self-interest is easy enough to rationalize under the old rationale. This is the way we have been doing for decades.

Can what was right yesterday, be wrong today and tomorrow? What is social and legislative awareness about?
Enforcement and liberty

*Liberty* is a virtue word: everybody wants it. *Enforce* appears to be in contrast with liberty and has a negative perception: nobody wants to be forced.

An enforced ethics is incomplete. If people do not pollute in view of punishment their ethics may be considered only as nominal.

With enforcement, we can perhaps change habits, and then the behavior may be internalized.

Enforced ethics could be considered as necessary, and at the same time as not sufficient in the frame of environmental ethics?
Efforts towards a different behaviour

The need to harmonize environmental knowledge with ethical values, to achieve behavioral changes and internalize ethical values, is well present in some recent efforts and experiences, recently promoted by the European Union.

The European Union (EU) sets the policy frame for almost all environmental regulation in the Member States.
European EAP

- 1st EAP  1973-1976
- 2nd EAP  1977-1981
- 3rd EAP  1982-1986
- 4th EAP  1987-1992
- 5th EAP  1993-2002
- 6th EAP  2002-2012

The European Environmental Action Programmes (EAP) are political declarations of intent which take all the measures planned for a certain period, place them in an overall context and set priorities.
The priority objectives include: (i) Protecting nature and strengthening ecological resilience; (ii) Boosting sustainable, resource-efficient, low-carbon growth; (iii) and effectively addressing environment-related threats to health.
7th EAP priority objectives

Healthy environment for healthy people

Living well, within the limits of our planet

Information

Implementation

Resource-efficient economy

Natural capital

Investments

Integration

International challenges

Sustainable cities
The 7th EAP should support the implementation, within the Union and at international level, of the outcomes of, and commitments undertaken at, the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio + 20) and which aim to transform the global economy into an inclusive and green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction.
Sustainable development
Environmental ethics

Sustainable development is implicitly and explicitly present in different parts of the EU EAP and can be seen as an attempt to minimize the trade-off between economic growth and environmental protection and as the approach that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
Substantiable development
Environmental ethics

The action programmes to ensure the promotion of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable future for our planet attract consensus.

The environmental decision making by the governments, business companies or individuals cannot be separated from a level of ethics.
Substantial development
Environmental ethics

Environmental management also rests on questions of ethics.

Should reference to environmental ethics be explicitly incorporated into action programmes?

Should a greater emphasis on the environmental protection be desirable?

- A turn to ‘ecological sustainability’, may be a meaningful shift to prioritise environmental protection.
- An introduction on ethics attention to the more-than-humans (name proposed by UNEP as for non-humans) could bring new emphasis.
Substainable development
Environmental ethics

- The concept of sustainable development tries to put aside the perception given by ecological attention and environmental protection.

- The need to protect non-human species, now widely accepted, remains linked to an ethical approach perceived as something which rests on individual choices.
Integrating sustainable development and ecological sustainability: Sustainable Culture
“(1) ..... Article 30 of the Euratom Treaty defines "basic standards" for the protection of the health of workers and the general public against the dangers arising from ionising radiations.”

“(6) ... should take into account the new recommendations of the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) in particular those in ICRP Publ 103, and should be revised in the light of new scientific evidence and operational experience.”
Global needs towards the protection of the environment - ICRP

“(361) The Commission acknowledges that, in contrast to human radiological protection, the objectives of environmental protection are both complex and difficult to articulate. The Commission does however subscribe to the global needs and efforts required to maintain biological diversity, to ensure the conservation of species, and to protect the health and status of natural habitats, communities, and ecosystems. “

ICRP Recommendations, ICRP 103, 2007
Evolution of two parallel pathways

Planned, emergency, and existing exposure situations

Environmental radionuclide concentrations

Reference Male & Female, and Reference Person

Reference Animals and Plants

Dose limits, constraints and reference levels

Derived Consideration Reference Levels

Decision-making regarding public health and environmental protection for the same environmental exposure situation by way of representative individuals and representative organisms
In line with ICRP, as well as with the outcome of EU funded research projects, an enforcement in the EU DIRECTIVE was expected for the protection of the environment from the effects of ionizing radiation, with a specific attention to the biota.

In the DIRECTIVE 2013/59 “Protection of the Environment” is no longer included, with respect to the distributed drafts (2010 → 2012)

A missed opportunity for the enforcement of the protection of the environment?
FINAL REMARKS

Environmental Ethics seems **not to be fully present** and diffused in both the institutional policies and the public.

The involvement and confrontation of stakeholders can be useful **to stimulate reflection on this issue**, to increase the level of knowledge and awareness of the same.

Enforcing an approach to environmental protection based on environmental ethics could contribute to a good level of **understanding and awareness**, to support changes of habits, and to internalize such behavior.

Incorporate ethics into environmental awareness and education. **Increasing consensus**, understanding and knowledge.

**Promoting dialogues** between different cultures and different personal involvement.
Thank you for your attention