



CLIMATE CHANGE PROBLEMS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY: AN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICAL PERCEPTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Climate change is a change in the statistical distribution of weather pattern when that change lasts for an extended period of time. The issue of climate change is topical in this period when it becomes easy to describe the world climate as inconsistent and adverse to the human life. All these are increasingly impact human communities and eco systems, in particular loss of Bio diversity, loss of soil, floods, high-tide level and tropical cyclones etc. Environmental ethics is concerned with the moral relation between human and natural world. Our moral responsibility to nature and to the future is of great significance and urgency, and it is such a responsibility that we cannot escape. Ethical perceptive of environment includes environmental sustainability, preservation of natural resources, and mitigation of climate change and importance of future generation. This paper is demonstrates anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric ethical perceptive of climate change and notion of environmental sustainability.

KEYWORDS: bio-diversity, ethical perceptive, human communities, environmental sustainability.

INTRODUCTION:

The emergence of the global climate change is an area of scientific interests. It is a change in the statistical distribution of weather patterns and adverse to the human life over a long period of time ranging from decades to millions of years. From time to time a lot of environmental crises erupt thanks to the effect of the climate change. In modern era, the very use of expression climate change is problematic, with an ethical dimension in the scientific and political spheres that goes beyond mere description of a physical phenomena. Climate change has developed into social phenomena to be used to advance personal and political interest and not a physical problem to be overcome. Every aspect of climate change is shaped by ethical dispute. So, ethical considerations have arisen and continue to arise at every stage of climate concern.

Environmental Ethics is a branch of Applied Philosophy that studies the conceptual foundations of environmental values as well as more concrete issues surrounding socio societal attitudes, action and policies, to protect and sustain bio-diversity and eco-logical system. Two opposing approaches to Environmental Ethics become evident as the field emerged. The approach that sees the environment only in terms of how in the environment can benefit human beings is called the anthropocentric approach. The non anthropocentric approach, conversely considers the intrinsic value in every part of environment, from oceans to bacteria. But there are many variations of these main approaches. For example, strictly anthropocentric view holds that human beings alone are morally valuable because only they possess the property of rationalism, and they are only inhabitants of the environment that do. On the other hand, an eco-centric approach that requires us to give moral consideration to every living thing on the planet would be too broad to be of any practical value. It is interesting to note that there is time the both approach should arrive at the same conclusion regarding the moral justification for a certain action on the environment.

RESEARCH METHOD

The aim of this paper is to provide a mapping of the different takes to the moral aspects of global Environmental decisions. The analytic and descriptive methods are used in this paper. Discussing the both approaches of Environmental Ethics, this paper elaborated nature and causes of climate change and its impact of human being and natural world as well as notion of environmental sustainability. At this situation, necessarily arises some question such as: what is to be done? Who are the responsible for climate change? What is the responsibility of non- human creation? What is the duty for future generation? These questions illuminate the explicit ethical trust of any serious engagement with climate change and environmental sustainability.

DISCUSSION AND ITS RESULTS

Causes of climate change

Climate change is the direct consequence of global warming. Climate change may refer to a change in the average weather conditions, or in the time variation of weather within the context of longer time average conditions. Earth maintains a relatively constant temperature by the complex interactions of atmospheric gases, solar heat, and various terrestrial and aquatic processes (Pierce and Jameton, 2004, p-14). Certain human activities have been identified as primary causes of ongoing climate change, often referred to as global warming. Humans are increasingly influencing the climate and the earth's temperature, by burning fossil fuels, cutting down rainforests and fairing livestock. This adds enormous amounts of greenhouse gases (in particular: CO₂, methane, nitrous oxide, fluorinated gases) to those naturally occurring in the atmosphere, increasing the greenhouse effect and global warming. Undoubtedly, the problem associated with the climate change may not be entirely man – made, but it suffices to say that by scientific discoveries human activities contribute a great percentage to what results in the problem.

In brief, climate change is caused by human activity, as opposed to changes in climate that may have resulted as part of Earth's natural processes. It is radical but adverse effect of an imbalance in the interaction of the various spheres in the universe. The imbalance results in a palatable weather condition and adverse destruction of nature through the activities of some natural disasters such as flooding and so on. This climate change is essentially by some natural occurrences but most specially human activities adds greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere, no thanks to the industrialization and buring of fossil-fuel and forest clearing. At this situation, Peter Singer claim that we need international arrngements to deal with climate change, and we need a global ethic on which to base these arrngements(Singer, 2011, p-218).

The crisis of sustainability

The human activities of an increasing world population together with the accompanying rapid industrial development, are leading to degradation of the environment on a very large scale. Notwithstanding, some deny that degradation is happening; others that degradation is taking place. Scientists have an important role in ensuring the availability of accurate information about degradation and also in pointing to human beings can begin to solve the problems. Worried about the unfolding global environmental crisis, Van Potter called for coordinated responses from science and humanities (Potter 1971). So many things are happening in our modern world that is just not sustainable.

Some important causes of un-sustainability are: human induced climate change or global warming, deforestation, and land use change, over consumption of resources, excessive generation of waste etc. All these increasingly impact human communities and eco systems in particular. Changes in global atmospheric patterns are expected to affect human health in many ways. The expected flooding and denudation resulting from the sea level rise is likely to cause extensive harm to human health through food deprivation, pollution, relocation, and the spread of diseases (Haines, Mc Michal, and Epstein, 2000, p- 732-733). Of greater importance is the carbon dioxide of fossil fuel, coal, oil and gas which is leading to damaging climate. Pressures from rapidly increasing world population and over use of the earth's resources are making such problems more serious both to the natural world and human communities. The peril of human induced

climate change is now recognised much more widely (Houghton, 2011). It has been always important to look after our local environment only if so that we can pass on our future generation an environment at least as good as we have enjoyed.

Utility of ethical study of climate change and origin the notion of sustainability

Some responsible scientists and Politicians described that it perhaps is the greatest problem of the world. Considering the impact of climate change ranging from diseases, drought, flooding, intense heat, storms, rising oceanic damages, destruction of natural supply of water and food, and, so on, nations and indeed individuals must put into consideration primarily, the safety of the human lives and preservation of the environment for an improved human existence.

In this aspect, following the soft anthropocentric ethics of environment, there is an attempt for one to take care of oneself and equally seen as being saddled with an obligation towards one's environment. This obligation to the environment makes one responsible to the damage made on the environment. Since one is obliged to care for this environment as an entity that which serves one's life and those of others. This concept is called Sustainability. It is based on the branch of the Environmental Ethics that this work hinges to study how man actions have led to climate change and how the applications of the both approaches like, anthropocentrism and non- anthropocentrism can lead to a reduction in the effect of this climate change problem.

To achieve that, there must be a serious move towards the reduction of green house gas level that result in warming and could lead to lose of control over rising emissions. People, therefore must look beyond just domestic economic growth and take a more ethically, subjective stance as to held the motion of the world towards destruction by the unchecked human activities. To arrive at solutions it is necessary to address human attitudes very broadly for instance those concern with resource use lifestyle, wealth and poverty. They must also involve human society at all level of aggregation-international and national organisation, nations with their national and local government, large and small scale industries and business, non-governmental organisation, and individuals.

Some ethical values and its promoted principles

Ethical values form the basis of decision making and action in accordance with the ideal are accepted in a given moral system. They are expressed in the notion of good and evil, right and wrong, just and unjust, what deserves respect or not etc. Ethical values are implemented into practice e.g, individual and group behaviour, corporate and public through principles and rules, which together with values constitute an important part of Ethics. Among fundamental values are: - The good of the individuals and the communities; Solidarity and unity between individuals and within communities; Virtue or (character trait); Excellence in the good, solidarity and virtues expressed in moral ideals. These values are promoted through some ethical principles such as:- do not cause harm; contribute to good of others; be non- violent and just; be tolerant and respect the dignity of others. A further characteristic of the ethical domain is that it primarily deals with the human agency that is human action (including decision making and its effects).

Environmental ethics and climate change

Some eco-philosophers argue that our responsibilities to the natural world are only indirect, that are responsibility to preserve nature or resources, for example, is best understood with respect to the responsibility that we owe to other human. Anthropocentric ethics hold that only human beings have moral value, we do not have any direct responsibilities to the natural world. As a reaction to anthropocentrism, others eco philosophers opine that we have direct responsibilities to natural objects as well as to other human beings. Non - anthropocentric ethics grant moral standing to such natural objects as animal, plants and landscapes.

Anthropocentric environmental ethics and climate change

Climate change is really dangerous and it is rapidly worsening the problem with deep moral implication. Yet, no effort is made to check the crises. Industrialization has come to say that there is no moral responsibility with regards to the climate which literally functions almost independently. But anthropocentric environmental ethics captures those issues in relation to climate change which is related with the issues of distributive justice and trans-generational justice. On this basis, the focus that the anthropocentric environmental Ethics tries to achieve is:-1) to ensure that the people, who suffer most from the menace of climate change, are assisted to survive such menace. 2) To ensure that the next generation does not suffer terrible environmental crises from our misuse or abuse of the environment (Okoye, 2012, p-137).

The thinking about the respective role of human being and animals on this earth has historically led to many forms of anthropocentrism, the philosophy that the human beings are most important living creatures on earth, and others living creatures are subordinated to human. (Korthals, 2002, p- 64). Bearing this in mind, environmental ethics must focus its attention on the human person as an entity whose future lies in his hand. As such an understanding of the human person as a rational entity and moral being is what constitutes any environmental studies or at least involves any attempt to secure the environment

Non-anthropocentric environmental ethics and climate change

Climate change is a truly global phenomenon. Any action on climate change confronts serious ethical issues of fairness and responsibility across individuals, nations, generations and the rest of life. Environmentalist, developing a non-anthropocentric approach towards nature, animals, bio-system, argue that these objects are valuable regardless of their usefulness to humans. We have the obligations and responsibilities with respect to the wild animals and planets of the world (Taylor, 2011, p-12). Extending moral standing to animal also leads to the formulation of particular types of environmental obligations. Peter Singer suggests that it is just because moderns no longer find any correlation between the way they ought to live and the structure of the consequences of their actions for the welfare of others beings are all that they have for moral guidance. Animal welfare is relevant to responsibility environmental ethics because animals exist within the natural environment and thus form part of environmentalist's concern. Essentially these ethics claim that when we consider how our actions impact on the environment, we should not just evaluate how these affect human (present/future), but also how they affect the interests and rights of animals.

Ethical aspect on environment sustainability

Sustainability is a human construct in the human use their environment for a range of objectives, including subsistence, commodity, production, aesthetic pleasure and indirect eco-system service. These objectives have their basis in the desire to sustain human life, enhance standard of living, maintain culture and protect environmental quality for generation to follow (Nalukenge, 2009, p-100). It is the ability to continue a defined behaviour indefinitely. It is also an idea that can be applied to activities and communities as well as physical resources. There have been many definitions of sustainability. The simplest meaning is not passing on to our children or any future generation, an earth that is degraded compared to the one we inherited, and also sharing common sources as necessary with our neighbours and others inhabitants of the world and caring properly for the non - human creation.

There are three pillars of sustainability. These are namely, social sustainability, environmental sustainability, and economic sustainability. Environmental sustainability is the most important theory as an ethical issue. In spite of the fact that the unities of ecological, economical and social aspects are being outlined the sustainable use of natural resources is the central issue of the sustainable development. Sustainable development is said to be a pattern of resources use that aims to meet human needs while preserving the environment. So, these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations.

Environmental sustainability is the most important theory as an ethical issue. The term sustainability would encompass a number of aspects for environment, it would mean sustainability of natural resources which can be used by future generation or has regenerative value (Patra, 2014, p- 36). In others words, sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs. We need a more ethical way to carry out our relationship with the Earth, for the planet's sake and for our own. Instead of greed, let us consider the possibility of approaching the Earth with an attitude of gratefulness (Sibole, 2013).

All humans are given the gift of life, and the moral imperative to address this gift falls on all of us. Regardless of age, wealth, or upbringing we all experience the raw power of Earth's beauty. We all rely on the Earth to survive and thrive. Despite our differences, we are residents of the same planet, and that connection powerfully intertwines us all. All of our destination destinies are dependent on the future of the Earth. Sustainable practices are designated to help ourselves and the world while keeping the future in mind. Sustainability means granting the Earth the ability to endure, and with a sustainable mindset, we can ensure that respect for the planet and that respect for the humanity will continue long after we have departed.

CONCLUSION

Climate change is a contemporary issue which bothers any mind that cares. The result of climate change carries alongside several devastating effects and which can only be reduced or at least managed by regulating human activities. Environmental ethics is concerned with the issue of responsibility of the human beings their conduct with respect to others human beings as well as natural landscapes, resources, species and non- human organisms. Bearing in mind the role of human activities in causing climate change, the attempt should be, at this juncture, to see how far we can accommodate the environmental solution to make suggestions on how this climate change could be controled or at least minimized. When man lived in harmony with his environment, everything was regarded as good but when the man started manipulating nature, the relationship turned sour. A new ethics that is based on accountability and commitment must be revitalized so that life can be preserved and the beauty of natural environmental restored.

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