
Environment as Common good and Ecological Crimes

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Abstract

Certain human activities have a bad effect on the environment and result in a serious ecological imbalance, which can surely bring very dangerous consequences for the subsistence of human beings and risk the lives of other beings on the globe. In fact, there is a list of human activities that can be regarded as ecological crimes or crimes against nature. I will shortly mention the disposal of domestic or industrial waste in illegal landfill sites, direct disposal of wastewater in the sea or rivers, illegal trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora or other pollution incidents. What we should care about more is not to try to prevent environmental crimes by prosecuting those committing them or dealing with environmental damages, but to define our basic view of nature and the place of human beings within it, as well as our stance towards the environment itself.

The integrity of the natural environment is of paramount importance, not only as a background of human activities but also due to the fact that the primary resources, such as air, water and soil, are the conditions human lives directly depend on. In this paper, I discuss the view that the environment is a universal common good for human beings, and in fact it may be a liberal common good. Seeing things from the liberal point of view, it is easier to present convincing arguments against the view that some disparity exists between the natural world and the human beings that live within it. The natural environment as universal common good to every person has a higher-order value, which requires respect and concern. The commonality and the universality of nature as a common good imposes enduringly certain obligations to the present and the future generations, to anyone who lives or may live on this planet. Within this Rawlsian liberal perspective of the common good, I will try to elucidate how I understand an adequate distribution of rights and obligations towards the nature. Evoking a sustained and widespread commitment to "the common good" does not imply

sacrificing personal freedom or individual rights. On the contrary, in a liberal community, where there is an equal distribution of rights and obligations, one is free to pursue one's own personal ends, as long as one does not cause harm to someone else and respect the other. .

I

In this paper, I will attempt to define the environment as a common good and to establish the ways and the modes of the treatment appropriate to such status. In view of this, it seems also necessary to determine the meaning and the scope of the concept of ecological crime, which clarifies up to a point why the environment is considered as a common good. In this way, we would be able to correlate the two concepts and further to find effective ways of dealing with both individual and collective practices that lead to the deterioration, pollution or destruction of the natural world.

Starting with the meaning of ecological crime I would suggest that the following view is a quite good definition of what is an ecological crime. That is, any violation or infringement of a statute that is in place to protect the quality of our air, water, or any other kind of natural resources is considered a crime against the environment. Ecological crimes, i.e. crimes against Nature, refer to a list of illegal activities, such as waste and wastewater crimes (disposal of waste in illegal landfill sites, direct disposal of domestic or industrial wastewater in the sea or rivers without prior treatment), wildlife crimes (that can take many forms, such as illegal trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, crimes against protected native species, cruelty to wildlife and other fishing offences), and various pollution incidents.

Ecological crimes are and must be thought as a serious problem, even though the consequences of an offence may not be immediately obvious, or may have no direct victims that can be identified. What matters in the latter case is the accumulation of damages, since the cumulative costs of environmental damage and the long-range toll in illness, injury and possible death are not insignificant at all. Certain human activities have definite bad effects on the environment and result in a serious ecological imbalance, which can surely bring very dangerous consequences for the subsistence of human beings themselves and risk the lives of other beings on the globe. For instance, if the environment is transformed in such a way that exceeds the limit of its capacity of restoring its equilibrium, it may not be wholly recovered and ultimately human beings will most likely vanish from the face of the earth. Polluting the environment is our main problem, which we throw, so to speak, at the face of nature, and which we have to solve for ourselves.

In our effort to put an end to the incalculable damage and to establish

a meaningful relationship between human beings and the natural environment, we have to reconsider our approach to the whole issue of environmental pollution; so we have to discuss the following questions: 'what is the importance of the natural environment?' and 'what stance should we human beings take towards it?'

This means that we should not only care about the attempts to prevent immediate environmental crimes by prosecuting those committing them or dealing with environmental damages, but also define our basic view of nature and the place of human beings within it, as well as determine our stance towards the environment itself.

But, what is the importance of the natural environment? First of all, nature should be regarded as a background of human activities. We are living within and we are supported by it, utilising or consuming natural resources. It is important, because it provides us with the primary resources, such as air, water and soil, which are conditions human lives directly depend on. To explain this, we need to understand that, apart from several kinds of preconditions that are significant for what constitutes "the good life of human beings", such as the physiological health or know-how for ordinary activities, there are also some conditions that are collectively given and equally provided to every individual and formulate the baselines for human conduct. I will roughly distinguish three kinds of such conditions: the cultural, the social, and the natural. In the cultural field, language or life-forms are to be included; in the social field, norms or rules in the form of trust, relationship, community, laws or market are to be included; and in the natural field, the basic natural resources, such as air, water, or soil are to be included.

The value of these resources was early understood by humanity. Although in Ancient times the ecological crisis did not appear to have the extent and of course the intensity of that of our times, problems were still present; and this led the people to deal, among other things, with these problems at an institutional level. It is very instructive to refer to the following ancient Greek edict of 440-430 BC, which is an indication of the awareness of Ancient people towards environmental issues. The Decree says:

"...and let the king provide. The present decree should be transcribed on blocks of stone and placed on both sides. It is forbidden to throw out leather to rot in the Ilyssus river near the temple of Hercules, also the practice of tanning and disposing of the wastes in the Ilyssus river..."

This Athenian edict is not simply a sacred decree, but is the first ecological edict that the world has known¹. It was written in order to denigrate and to attack the lucrative business operations, such as tanning and leatherworks, intending to protect the environment. It is noteworthy that the sensitivity and a kind of awareness that nature is of paramount importance (and therefore should be protected whatever the cost) is depicted

in this decree. Similar elements of ecological consciousness can also be found in the Pre-Socratic thought (and even before that in the Greek myths).

Considering the importance and the vulnerability of these natural conditions, and the fact that the equilibrium of nature is connected with the well-being of human beings, the environment should be called "the common good" and be evaluated as more important than any other similar condition, such as the cultural or the social conditions. But what is the common good and why is the environment a common good?

I think that in order to clarify this question, it is very instructive and appropriate to refer to conceptions and views which have been expressed by thinkers in the Ancient Greek Antiquity.

In the ancient Greek thought the prevailing attitude may be thought as being a free and competitive society and culture that at the same time gives priority to *the common good* and *the public welfare* over the excessive demands of every individual to acquire even more goods. For example, Solon, the famous Athenian statesman and legislator, in his *Eunomia* refers in general to some civilians and rulers who behave unwisely (δήμου θ' ἡγεμόνων ἄδικος νόος²), caring only about money, while stealing the public property. Consequently, their intemperate greed drives the city to its own destruction (οὐθ' ἱερῶν κτεάνων οὔτε τι δημοσίων φειδόμενοι κλέπτουσιν ἐφ' ἀρπαγῇ ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος).³ Solon certainly gives priority to the *common good* of the political community without however downplaying the role and the interest of every member. The common good of the *polis* is its *eudaimonia*. This can be accomplished only *within* the principles of *metron*, *eunomia*, the principle of fair play and justice; only wealth itself cannot lead people and the city to *eudaimonia*.⁴

II

According to Platonic political thought, there is a mutual relationship and balance between the notion of the *private* and the *public* and between what is considered to be the *private* and what is the *common good*. People should live and act within the political community (in the republic), which certainly has priority. One may pursue one's own goods (goods of the soul (virtues), goods of the body, and other public goods)⁵ or choose one's way of life as long as this does not oppose *the common good of the community*.

In the Aristotelian conception of the common good, according to Professor Judith Swanson, it is acceptable for every individual to pursue goods that may be distinctive from the political community's good. Aristotle gives priority to the political community, considering it to be (i.e. its very existence) the common good, grounding his opinion on the view that it functions in such a way so as to promote the human good or what is

considered human good, that is, the individual well-being (*eudaimonia*). *The ultimate common good is the telos of every individual* and according to the political order of things one should freely enjoy one's private life and pursue one's own happiness (*Polit.* 1332a29-38 and *Nicom. Ethics* 1176b26-28) within the political community.⁶

From the above remarks, one can be led to understand that the concept of common good is traditionally confined to the bounds of moral and political community of human beings.⁷ However, I think that it is the right time for us to extend the meaning of the common good to include the natural world. Natural environment, in this sense, is to be shared by every possible human being of every possible community on this planet. It is the basis for all possible activities of any human being and an essential element for human subsistence. Thus, it should be called "universal common good".

In explaining the notion of common good, we should further distinguish three types of the notion of common good: the organic, the nomological, and the liberal.

By the organic common good, I mean that common good is, so to speak, the "pole" of the organic structure of beings. In this organic structure of beings, the units of being are hierarchically related and function according to a principle (*telos*), which is their common good. According to the Aristotelian understanding of *the telos* of all living beings and human beings, as mentioned above, the common good is the virtue and truth-seeking, as well as the pursuit of *eudaimonia*, which is considered the most important state of affairs for a rational being. To this common good every part of the organic structure of human beings is converged and integrated. But we should, of course, make a distinction between the structure of the human political society and the structure of the community of other natural beings. The political community does not have in actual fact organic structure, but in some respects and only analogically the same laws may apply to both the political community and the nature. In addition, the human good is not the same with *the natural good* or what is considered to be good for every other being. However, in the general perspective of *the end* of all beings, that is, the development of all their capacities and the fulfilment of their existence, there are similarities between the common good of human beings and that of all other living creatures.

By the nomological common good, I mean that common good is the norm that dictates and specifies the convergent relationship of beings. According to this conception, all beings are placed within the rationally created and hierarchically conceived order of things. For example, for the Thomistic understanding of *the telos* of human beings, the common good is the decency of human living through the realisation of reason given by God. All human beings are related to this common good by the norm which represents the

dictates of reason. Furthermore, regarding the nomological common good, we should mention the Heraclitean understanding of the world. According to him, nature is viewed as a unity and as a whole that has its own internal measures and order, as "being governed" by one universal law, *Logos*. Heraclitus states that "... one must follow (the universal Law, namely) that which is common (to all)".⁸ The good life of every being, including human beings, is essentially connected with *Logos* and "with the maintenance of this natural order".⁹ Hence Heraclitus would never have accepted the balance of the world to be disturbed, or be overridden by human actions. In the Presocratic philosophical thought nature has priority, although it is not clearly stated that nature is a good, the first good or the common good. This is perhaps, because nature, regarded as a universal common good, was then something quite obvious, and so did not require further clarification or explication.

Before analysing the third type of the notion of common good, that is, the liberal common good, I will further refer to and analyse the views of Plato and Aristotle regarding nature, since their views, in my opinion, have important ecological connotations and support the view that nature is a valuable common good.

According to Plato's *weak anthropocentric view*, nature as a whole has value in itself, that is, nature and all the beings that live in it have a value for themselves and all of us. To explain it further, Plato, in his dialogue *Timaeus*, refers to the structure of the natural world. He views the natural world as a work of *reason* and *balance*, as a work of art (according to the ingenious phrase coined by Professor T.M. Robinson¹⁰) from which we can learn to regulate our own vagaries:

"...reason is hovering around the sensible world", (Tim., 37b)

"...we, learning them [the courses of the intelligence] and partaking of the natural truth of reason, might imitate the absolutely unerring courses of God and regulate our own vagaries", (Tim., 47c)

Plato also sees the world as a living organic system that has a richly cohering living unity. The world is a Living Being (παντελῶς ζῶον); it is constructed in such a way so that it is good for every living creature, down to the smallest biological detail of the animal and plant kingdom:

"God desired that all things should be good and nothing bad...[and the universe is] a living creature truly endowed with soul and intelligence by the providence of God"¹¹.

Furthermore, the world is inherently good, beautiful, and it can be characterised as "the fairest of creations and the best of causes" (Tim., 29a6). All beings operate in harmony.¹² Consequently, nature should be respected and valued as such by all human beings.

In his other dialogue, the *Critias*, one can also find important ecological thinking and the strong awareness of what human intervention can do to the environment. In this dialogue, Plato argues that human intervention can cause the destruction of the natural world. He refers to the case of the overharvesting of timber that had led to the erosion in the lands around Athens, to a general degradation and a decline in their ability to sustain life. This affected the ecological system and environment of Attica. Plato recognised that the welfare of the human community depends on that of other living beings and that this, in turn, depends on human *prudence* concerning the consequences of what is done to other living creatures and beings. These views are stated clearly in the *Critias* (Crit., 110c3-111d8, and especially in Crit., 111a-d), where Plato says the following:

"Now since many huge cataclysmic floods have occurred in the last nine thousand years (for these events were that long ago), the earth that erodes during these times and events leaves no deposit worth mentioning, as it does in other places, and it is always carried away, spiralling into the depths of the sea. So, as in the case of small islands, the remaining lands (compared to those back then) are the bones of a body ravaged by disease, with all of the soft fat earth having wasted away, leaving behind only the earth's emaciated body. But then, when the land was still pristine, today's mountains supported high hills, and what we call the Stony Plains were full of rich earth, and in the mountains there was a good deal of timber, of which there are clear indications even now. Some of the mountains can sustain only bees these days, but it was not long ago that they were wooded, and even now the roofs of some of our largest buildings have rafters cut from these areas and these rafters are still sound. There were also many tall, cultivated trees, and the land offered a vast amount of pasture for animals. What is more, the land enjoyed the annual rain from Zeus, not lost, as now, when it flows off of the bare earth into the sea. Rather, much of it was retained, since the earth took it in within itself, storing it up in the earth's retentive clay, releasing water from the high country into the hollows, and supplying all regions with generous amounts of springs and flowing rivers. That what we are now saying about the land is true is indicated by the holy sanctuaries, which are situated where this water used to spring up".

Undoubtedly, if Plato was to live today, he would certainly have accepted the view that the natural world is and must be considered a global ecological good.

Aristotle in his biological studies shows great respect for every natural being in the world, even for the most trivial. According to Aristotle, nature does nothing in vain (ἡ φύσις μὴδὲν μῆτε ἀτελὲς ποιεῖ μῆτε μάτην)¹³ and all things embody something divine. In his work, *De Partibus Animalium*, he says to his students the following: ".... do not think foolishly regarding the most trivial and small animals; because within any kind of natural being exists something wonderful, good and divine" (PA., 645 a 15-23).¹⁴

A notion that can be regarded to have ecological connotation and does have a significant value in Aristotelian philosophy is the concept of *autarkeia* (self-sufficiency). For a species or an entire ecosystem to function properly and to continue to live it is essential that it should be self-reliant. The notion of *autarkeia* can be connected with the notion of *eudaimonia* (happiness, well being, flourishing), which for every being is an *end in itself*. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the Stagirite philosopher says that:

"the self-sufficient we now define as that which when isolated makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be" (Nic. Ethics, 1097b14-15).

Moreover, according to Professor Laura Westra, other basic concepts and notions of the Aristotelian philosophy, such as *ergon* (function), *excellence*, *potentiality*, *actuality*, *telos* and *eudaimonia* (happiness or well-being), can be interpreted in such a way as to support the notion of ecosystem integrity.¹⁵ These notions can be related not only to the good of an *individual organism*, but also to the good of the whole population (or the community) of organisms of the given ecosystem in which they exist in and interrelate. Thus, the *ergon* (function) of not only an individual, but an ecosystem as well is to reach its *telos* (completion) starting from various evolutionary stages and transitions. In general, the concept of integrity implies unity. To say that something possesses integrity implies that we are viewing something as unitary, and this has been one of the major claims of the recently accepted ecosystem approach, of which the value of integrity is the integral part. Disturbing the balance of an ecosystem means destroying the way that it supports itself and thus disrupting its growth, or reducing its biological richness and diversity.

Somewhere in the *Politics* Aristotle seems to state that nature is created for designated human purposes and that human beings should use nature's goods for their own benefit and according to their purpose.¹⁶ Many contemporary environmental philosophers attacked Aristotle for this view believing that the Stagirite philosopher is a strict anthropocentric (with the derogative contemporary meaning of the term). Nevertheless, in my opinion, Aristotle's admiration for nature is apparent and he would never have defended the unreasonable, extensive and excessive use of natural resources. On the contrary, nature is the necessary condition for the existence and health of human beings. Nature provides human beings with all necessary goods in order to accomplish all their goals and to fulfil their ends within the political community, that is, to be happy and live a virtuous life. This is the antidote to the strict and excessive utilitarian and individualistic welfare that is based only on how many goods one has obtained and not on the moral Good itself. Thus nature is a necessary

functional good for achieving happiness (eudaimonia), but its very necessity is regarded to be good in itself. The principle of *metron* (the famous Golden Rule), combined with *ratio* and respect that Aristotle proposed should be followed in our times and should govern every human action for safety, preservation, integrity and sustainability of natural environment.

III

Let me now refer to the notion of the liberal common good.

As liberal common good I understand that common good which as a meaningful principle embraces the particular pursuit of private good within a certain framework and limit of toleration. In this context, human beings co-exist and co-operate with each other. For example, diverse individuals in the political sphere can live in peace by accepting certain political principles, such as equality and liberty that exist to regulate the conduct of every individual member of the community.

It is common knowledge that within society there is no single "end-in-itself." There are many "ends." Ends projected by an individual may be in conflict or compatible with the ends of another individual. However, courses of action should be mutually reinforcing; we get more done when our energies work together. The projection of ends which work together increases the possibility of their fulfilment. This common good does not require that individuals suppress their individual interests and preferences, but only that they adjust their actions so as to be compatible with and to promote the development of the capacities of others. We try to make room for the concerns of others and to adjust our course so as, at the least, to bring no harm to others and, (optimally) if possible, to assist others in their progress. This common good includes two aspects, which are inseparable: the development of the capacities and powers of unique and irreplaceable human beings and the development of co-operative, fraternal, and mutually helpful ways of associating.

In other words, individual growth means the widening and expanding of one's horizons to include others and their concerns. Growth means deepening of character while extending and expanding the horizons of one's concern. The common good includes co-operation in promoting individual growth and enlargement and broadening of individual interests so that they include the interests of others. The big picture includes others. Interdependence is a fact. We are connected. Since co-operation works better than conflict of energies, individual courses of action are best achieved when modified flexibly in the face of the movement of the energies of others. The flexibility of unique individual striving adapted to work together with the unique striving of others, so that both are moved forward

rather than impeded and so that they are mutually reinforcing, is indeed the unity within diversity sought in the light of the democratic ideal.

The imaginative vision of the common good, which brings into view the possible development of many unique individuals together, is none other than democracy based on morality – which includes the development (liberty) of qualitatively unique (equality) individuals in mutually reinforcing association (fraternity) with one another. Unlike the narrow utilitarian ideal, it is objective rather than subjective. It looks to a future when human beings and their affairs will *be* rather than simply *feel* better. The satisfaction or pleasure taken in each success, though enjoyable in itself for the moment, is thereupon a means (not an end) or incentive for further striving.

In my view (and I am aware that this is a bold statement) the environment is and must be considered a universal common good for human beings, and in fact a liberal common good in the sense delineated above and with what follows. First of all, this means that the world and all things in the world are in such a way connected that they form a kind of community. Although the ends projected by the individual may be incompatible with the ends of another being, every being should adjust its actions in such way so as not to cause any great harm to the overall good of the other. Seeing things from the liberal point of view, it is easier to present convincing arguments against the view that some disparity exists between the natural world and the human beings that live within it. It is also easier in this way to find arguments against the view that there is no such thing as teleological and rationally created hierarchical order in nature or that the natural environment has no intrinsic value and is regarded merely as the fundamental resource to be exploited.

What does the recognition of the environment as a universal liberal common good imply for us?

Concerning this question, if nature is a universal liberal common good for human beings, then there is a presumption of shared responsibility for it by human beings, actual and possible. In the Part II of John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government*, where the legitimacy of private property is discussed, this so-called Lockean Proviso is very important, because the land (and I generalize it to include Nature *in itself*) is supposed to be shared by everyone in a certain universal way. If so, the natural environment as universal common good to every person (as the fundamental living condition, as the very baseline of every possible human life)¹⁷ has a higher-order value, which requires our mutual respect and concern.

To explain it further, the commonality of the environment should be understood in such a way that equality of environment (fair distribution of natural resources and the possibility of equal share for each person of unspoiled, unpolluted natural environment) is the first and foremost

presumption of our environmental thinking. Hence, use of the natural environment is not to be prohibited or denied to any people, because we are all entitled to use it due to its commonality. The universality of the environment should be understood in such a way that all human beings have equal standing towards nature. Thus, exploitation of natural resources by certain people or nations without respecting the permitted limits violates the right of others and so it is not acceptable. The commonality and the universality of nature enduringly impose certain obligations to the present and the future generations, to anyone who lives or may live on this planet.

Furthermore, the human stance should be neither tyrannical nor dominant or hostile. Human beings should not destroy nature or use unreasonably its natural resources. According to Professor Keekok Lee, it is important to view nature not merely as a resource that can be industrially exploited in order to produce goods for the increasing needs of human beings, or as *matter in motion* for the scientific processes and use only. In her view this is, in some respect, what the modern capitalistic society tried to do by legalizing Locke's privatization of public property and of natural resources, and this has led to the ecological crisis. The relation between human beings and nature should not be based upon domination or simple utility. This shows that the relation between human beings and nature should take at least the form of stewardship.¹⁸ So, there is no need for new ethics, as certain people believe. The weak anthropocentric view of stewardship is sufficient, according to Professor Robin Attfield, to protect nature, but he also believes that it is a necessity to expand our ethical view in order to include in our responsibility the care for the whole world, i.e. Nature; and so we are led to what he calls global Ethics.¹⁹

Within this liberal perspective of the common good, an adequate distribution of rights and obligations towards nature is required. According to Passmore, bacteria and humans have neither mutual obligations nor common interests;²⁰ however, this cannot exclude the case that the human beings are interested in the wellbeing of nature and all its beings. Thus, there is a need to formulate the well-balanced set of prerogatives and responsibilities among people that will result in the appropriate and harmless use of the natural environment. In order to do so, I follow, to some extent, the Rawlsian theory of Justice and the lexical ordering of his two principles of Justice.²¹ The first principle of justice can be adjusted in such a way as to assign the space of prerogatives including certain rights for the environment, while the second principle of fair equality of opportunity and of income differentiation can assign the space of responsibility in terms of the permissible limit of prerogatives. The lexical ordering and the inner connection of the aforementioned principles will serve not only for the development of the wellbeing of people, but also will secure the sustainability and the integrity of the environment.

Concerning the universality of the common good, there seems to be a difference between what is defined as common good and as public goods. There are many intermediate cases of public goods, sometimes called quasi-public goods or non-pure public goods. For example, air, flowing water, wandering animals, fisheries, wetlands, aquifers, parks are considered to be common and in a broader sense public goods. In reality, all the above-mentioned are quasi-public goods and not ordinary public goods, like education and health. However, this difference seems to be of no great significance concerning the environment. Since, either from the common good perspective or from the ordinary public goods perspective, the environment should be recognised, *expressis verbis*, as *the common good* and should be respected and valued *as such*.

Regarding the dominant attitude to the commons in the world, Aristotle, as we said before, acutely observed that these *common goods*, our so-called "common property", due to the fact that it is common to the greatest number, has the least care bestowed upon it. Everyone thinks chiefly of his own, hardly at all of the common interest" says Aristotle (*Politics*, Book 11, Ch. 3, 1261b33-35). That is, what is common to most people is accorded the least care, since the people take thought for their own things above all.²² This famous Aristotelian view that was termed later as "*the tragedy of the commons*",²³ has proven a useful concept for understanding how we have come to be at the brink of numerous environmental catastrophes created either by malicious and self-interested individuals or nations, or by innocent behaviours of many unreasonable and uneducated individuals. Apart from these, it advises us not to adopt towards the environment the attitude (of non care) described above by Aristotle but to awake in view of the impending ecological dangers.

IV

So, from now on all human beings as members of the global community should share responsibility and the common goal to support efforts to maintain its health and integrity of nature and preserve these commons not only for its own sake, but, of course, for our own sake. To paraphrase Aldo Leopold's view: a human action is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.²⁴ The new goal of protecting the integrity of nature should become the global, common good. This ecological ethics imposes changes to be made concerning the structure of society and its economy that aims not only to the profit (individual or public), but promotes integrity, sustainable development and social justice in such a way so that it becomes ecological social justice.

Finally, evoking a sustained and widespread commitment to “the common good” as mentioned above does not imply sacrificing personal freedom or individual rights. It is wrong to assume – as some are inclined to argue – that by promoting “the common good” one loses one’s personal freedom. On the contrary, in a liberal free community, where there is an equal distribution of rights and obligations, one is free to pursue one’s own personal ends, as long as one does not cause any harm to someone else and as following the just rules instituted by that society. Thus, egocentric activities towards the environment are permitted to a great extent, since not necessarily all egocentric activities are considered to be bad *in themselves* and harmful to the environment.²⁵

In conclusion, a universal ecological ethical theory should be formulated on the basis of the principle that the universal common good is the natural good (the necessary condition and the value for the proper function of every political community) that should, as a right of every human, be protected regardless of time and place. This also means that any kind of destruction of nature, in every possible form and with regard to any condition of life on earth, should be recognised by people and nations as a crime which must be punished according to the regulations of both civil and penal law.

Endnotes

1. See L. Rossetti, “The oldest known ecological Law in context” in T. M. Robinson and L. Westra (eds.), *Thinking about the Environment*, Lexington Books, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, M.D., 2002, pp. 43-57. The first reference to above-mentioned edict was in Karousos, “Ἀπὸ τὸ Ἡράκλειον τοῦ Κυνοσάργου” (Apo to Heraklion tou Kynosargous), *Archaïologicon Deltion* 8, 1923, pp. 96-98.
2. See West, Solon, fr. 4, line 7.
3. See West, *ibid.*, line 12-13. I would like to thank Professor Pratibha J Mishra, Participant in the 4th SASGPH International Conference for her remarks and comments concerning greed as an element of human nature.
4. For Solon metron and justice play a very important role, even when he refers to the sea he characterises it as just (θάλασσα ἀκαιοτάτη). Regarding Solon’s social and political conceptions see the following works: Simon Hornblower, “Creation and development of Democratic Institutions in Ancient Greece”, in John Dunn (ed.) *Democracy. The Unfinished Journey, 508 BC to 1993 AD.*, Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 1-16. See also V. Tejera, *The City-State Foundations of Western Political Thought. A Study in Intellectual Method and the History of Political Thought*, University Press of America, 1984, pp. 17-41; and Gregory Vlastos, “Solonian Justice”, in Daniel W. Graham (ed.), *Studies in Greek Philosophy, Volume I: The Presocratics*, Princeton University Press, pp. 32-56.
5. See G. Santas, *Goodness and Justice*, B. Blackwell, Oxford, 2001, pp. 21-22.

6. See Judith Swanson, *The Public and the Private in Aristotle Political Philosophy*, Cornell University Press, 1992, p. 205.
7. Mainly in Plato's and Aristotle's political philosophy and later in the works of the thinkers influenced by the classical and Christian tradition, like St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Augustine. See John Finnis, *Aquinas*, Oxford University Press, 1998, Chapters III & VII.
8. See Diels-Kranz, Heraclitus B, Fr. 2.
9. See M. Oeslchaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991, pp.55-60.
10. See T.M. Robinson, *Cosmos as Art Object*, Global Academic Publishing, New York 2004.
11. See Plato *Tim.*, 30a-b8, and especially 31b1.
12. "And harmony... to correct any discord which may have arisen..." (Plato, *Tim.*, 47c).
13. See Aristotle *Politics*, 1256b20.
14. See also the article of Professor Alex Antonites, "Do animals have moral worth? The contemporary debate with special reference to Aristotle", in A. Ladikos (ed.), *Phronimon*, Journal of the South African Society for Greek Philosophy and the Humanities, Volume 5 (2) 2004, Pretoria-South Africa, pp. 17-37.
15. See L. Westra, "Aristotelian Roots of Ecology: Causality, Complex Systems Theory, and Integrity", in L. Westra and T. M. Robinson (eds.), *The Greeks and the Environment*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997, p. 85 and p. 89.
16. "The reference must be that she [nature] has made all animals for the sake of man" (Aristotle's *Polit.*, 1256b20).
17. See Ronald Dworkin, *Sovereign Virtue*, Harvard University Press, 2001, Chapter 2.
18. See R. Attfield, *Environmental Philosophy: Principles and Prospects*, Avebury Series in Philosophy, Avebury, Aldershot, 1994.
19. See Attfield, R., *The Ethics of Global Environment*, Edinburgh University Press 1999.
20. See John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, Scribner, New York 1974, pp. 116-118. See also M. Oeslchaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991.
21. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, 1971, Chapter 2.
22. See Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord, University of Chicago Press, 1984, p. 57.
23. The famous economist and ecologist Garrett Hardin wrote an article about "the tragedy of the commons" and ecology (See G. Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons", in *Science*, 162:1243-48, 1968, reprinted in Robert N. Stavins (ed.), *Economics of the Environment* [selected readings], W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 2000, pp. 9-22).
24. See Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, Oxford University Press, 1948, p.165.
25. Although this liberal doctrine is considered sufficient to deal with environmental problems, it may need to be modified in a way to be consistent with the view of "the expanded self".