

Chapter 3 Religion Part A. Introduction Religions have traditionally played an important role in shaping the sense of ethics of followers. Whether religious principles informed and directed ethical stands, or whether ethical stands were actually the basis for the development of religions is a matter of debate, and beyond the scope of this book. This chapter will introduce some of the basic stands taken by religions and let the reader decide what to believe. This section discusses the three largest religions in the Western world—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all of which derive from a common root. These are the religions that grew out of the person of Abraham, and thus called the Abrahamic religions. Abraham was a man who lived thousands of years ago in the middle-east. He believed that God called him to leave his parents and travel to a place that God would show him. That place is what is now known as Palestine and Israel. Abraham and his wife Sarah lived in that area for many years and amassed a sizeable fortune, but they had no children to whom they could pass on their wealth. In their old age, God promised Abraham that he would have children—as many as the grains of sand. Abraham and Sarah thought this was impossible, so Abraham

begot a son, Ishmael, with Sarah's servant. Then several years later, Sarah gave birth to a son, Isaac. This is where history splits.

The Jews believe that because he was born of Sarah, Abraham's wife, Isaac is the first-born son who inherited the blessings of God, thus the heirs of Abraham are those born of Isaac. The Christian re-ligion, which developed out of the Jewish religion, follows that same logic. The followers of Islam, however, argue that Ishmael was the first-born son of Abraham, and thus the true descendants of the first-born are those born of Ishmael. Despite this split, all three groups revere Abraham as an important figure in the founding of these re-ligions. For this reason, their basic ethical views on environmental issues are quite similar.

Christian and Jewish Views

The Jewish and Christian views on environmental issues are, on the surface, a simple one. Their fundamental perception of environment and nature is based on the statements in the Book of Genesis in the Bible:

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so. And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creep-ing thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Genesis 1, KJV)

The Torah, which is composed of the first five books of the Bible, has the same creation story as does the Christian Bible. The translation may be slightly different, but the meaning is the same. Thus, the Jewish views about the environment, based on the idea that God created every-thing and humans were put on earth to care for all that, are the same as those of the Christians.

Naturally, there are probably as many different representations and interpretations of specific details as there are people, but the basics are still the same, underlying these differences. Two individuals—sharing the belief that God created the earth and everything in it and has made humans responsible for caring for His creation—may very well have op-posing views on how to carry out that mandate. Person A might believe we are supposed to care for them. Person B might believe that God created some animals for humans to eat, and therefore, killing them for food is not against the mandate of care. Who is right—Person A, Person B, or both? This is a disagreement that we will not solve here, so we just have to decide what we prefer to believe and act accordingly.

Islam

The following was written by a follower of Islam, with an emphasis on pollution rather than general ethical views on environmental issues, but should provide a sound basis for understanding the Islamist view.

Ethical Views on Pollution According to Muslims by Bouchaib Afrej

Environmental conservation is an issue of concern in many parts around the world. In the contemporary times, human activities have influenced and affected the natural balance of the environment in many negative ways. The restoration of balance in the natural world requires the inter-actions of human beings and the environment. Muslims account for at least 20% of the population of the world. Some nations in the world are predominantly Muslim with the result that the environmental degradation also affects the Muslim population. In many ways, capitalism can be blamed for the exploitation of the environment. Individuals exploit the natural resources in a bid to eke a means of livelihood for themselves and their families. However, according to Islamic beliefs, everything in the world that is a creation of God is beautiful and wondrous and hence should be protected (Quran: TaHa (20), ayahs 53–54). Keeping this in mind, this paper seeks to present the Muslim perspective on the environment, its pollution and environmental conservation.

It is the firm belief of the Muslim creed that all creation in the universe has value, is meaningful and purposeful as Allah created it in his wisdom (Quran: Surat ad-Dukhan (44), ayahs 38–39.). Various sections of the Islamic Holy book are cited to prove their cases and arguments towards handling of the environment. As a result, the Muslims feel obligated by their faith, if nothing else, to conserve the environment as instructed. Muslims also have a very strong belief in the teachings of their Prophet Muhammad, who taught that the dearest creatures to God are those that take care of other creatures (Hadith related by al-Bayhaqi in Shu'ab al-Iman on the authority of Anas). From the Quran and the teachings of the prophet, the Muslims believe that they should maintain a relationship with the universe and all that it contains in a way that promotes the sustainable utilization of resources, as well as the progress of mankind as he seeks to improve his life. Additionally, Muslims believe

that taking care of the environment is a way of obeying the teachings of their faith and that they shall be rewarded by Allah in the fullness of time.

In short, the Islam teaches the use of the environmental resources in a responsible way that ensures sustainable development of the human race. The Islamic religion is against exploitation of natural resources for economic gain, disregarding care of the environment or not considering the effects and consequences of human activities (Foltz, Denny & Baharuddin, 2003). To the Muslims, conserving the natural environment and its resources while also using it responsibly for purposes of development and the well-being of other creatures brings a promise of a blessing

from the Quran. Imam Bukhari states that, “If a Muslim plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, it is regarded as a charitable gift (sadaqah) for him.” Islam, through the Quran, also allows land reclamation and encourages farming and reaping harvest from such lands (Athar related by Yahya ibn Adam al-Qurashi). The preservation and management of the environment given by Allah is therefore a requirement for the faithful, and not simply a social responsibility.

Natural Resources

Natural resources are elements that are freely available for human use and exploitation, having no human involvement in their existence. Such elements include air, water, soil, minerals, forests, oceans, seas, rivers and animals. Muslims believe that during the period of creation, Allah created the entire natural environment and allowed human beings to use it (Finnegan, 2005). Muslims, as well as Christians believe that God handed over the earth and all its contents to humans for dominion. The Quran states that “It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth . . . that He may try you in what He has given you.” (Quran: Sura Al-'An`a`m (6), 165). Therefore, it is only natural that such a big privilege comes with an equally big responsibility, that of using resources wisely.

1. Water Water is the basic requirement for survival, for both plants and animals. As a natural resource, it is also the most widely used and the most crucial element for survival of life. Without water, no plant, animal or human would be able to exist in the world (Quran: Surat al-Anbiya' (21), ayah 30). In the Quran, it is stated clearly that it is God who sends down water from the sky for the benefit of mankind (Quran: Surat al-Baqarah (2), ayah 164.). According to Muslims, water, apart from being the basic unit of survival, is also an important part of Muslim religion. The other purpose of water is for purification and ablution (Ozdemir, 2003). Water helps to clean dirt from the body or clothes and at the mosque, water is used as a way of purifying the body of impurities so that one can enter into the temple pure and clean. According to the Quran, rain is sent by Allah to also cleanse human beings (Quran: Surat al-Anfal (8), ayah 11). Muslims also believe that water should be available to all people without discrimination or monopoly. The Prophet Muhammad instructs Muslims to always share water, pasture, and fire (Hadith related by Abu-Dawud, Ibn Majah, and al-Khallal). Muslims believe that the use of water should be moderate and regulated to avoid wastage. Water sources

should also be protected since they are also the habitat of animals in the seas and oceans and other aquatic areas.

2. Air Just like water, air is of crucial importance to the survival of life. Animals and human beings rely on breathing air to survive. Blowing wind results in important processes in agriculture such as pollination. The air also has religious importance to the Muslims. The Quran mentions Allah sending fertilizing winds (Quran: Surat al-Hijr (15), ayah 22). These winds signify abundant production of food and success in agricultural activities. As a result of the predominant importance of air in the life of mankind, it needs to be kept from pollution so as to avoid problems related to the respiratory system (Wersal, 1995). Pollution of the air is seen by Muslims as contravening the wisdom of God in creation.

. Soil and Land Land and soil are important to human beings in several ways. The land is the dwelling place of most land creatures, including humans. Soil is precious as it supports the growth of plants for human and animal consumption. The Quran emphasizes that the land is the habitat of living creatures (Quran: Surat ar-Rahman (55), ayah 10) and also for all terrestrial beings (Quran: Surat Nuh (71), ayahs 17–18). Vegetation grows in the soil, which is then consumed by both animals and plants. Pollution of the soil and the land occurs in various ways and some are due to ignorance (Rice, 2006). For instance, the constant use of agrochemicals on soil can cause pollution of soil, making the land infertile. Unsuitable farming practices lead to soil erosion and flooding. Soil degradation is also a result of mining, deforestation, and monocropping, among others (Mian, Khan & Rahman, 2013).

4. Plants and Animals

Animals and plants are also crucial for the survival of human beings. Basically, all human food is either from plants or from animals and their products. On the other hand, many animals depend entirely on plants for food. Hence, without a proper balance between animals and plants, human existence is at risk of starvation and extinction (Kula, 2001). In the Islamic religion, they believe that God allows the rain to shower on the seed planted on the earth so that it can grow and flourish for the benefit of mankind and terrestrial animals (Quran: Surat 'Abasa (80), ayahs 24–32). Plants are not only important for providing food, but also for providing nutrients to the soil through the process of decomposition. Plants also counter soil erosion—by either water or wind—by holding soil particles firmly by their roots (Al-Damkhi, 2008). Animals also help the plants by providing nutritious content

through their excretion. Plants and animals are very valuable to the ecosystem as their parts can also be used for manufacturing various items such as wax, oil, perfume, medicines, fuel, timber and fiber, to name but a few (Rathore & Nollet, 2012).

Taking care of animal and plant life is not just beneficial to the existence of the human race, but a prerogative. Muslims believe that they have a responsibility to take care of animals and plants, showing mercy to them so that mercy in turn shall be shown to them (Hadith related by Abu-Dawud and at-Tirmidhi on the authority of 'Abd-Allah ibn 'Amr). They also hold the belief that allowing an animal to die out of hunger or thirst is punishable by the fires of hell by God (Hadith of sound authority). Muslims therefore advocate for responsibility and moderation when fishing or hunting for the purposes of food but prohibits hunting for sporting activities (Hadith of sound authority). The Islamic law states that all animals have legal rights that can be enforced by the office of the hisbah.

Islam and Environmental Conservation

Islamic law aims at advancing the welfare of all creatures in their present state and even in the hereafter. According to the Islamic law, the term “all creatures” refers to all animals in the sea or on land as well as all human beings around the world. In this regard, the Muslim community is dedicated to ensuring the welfare of all animals in all aspects of development and progress. Islamic law recognizes individual responsibility in taking care of the environment as a religious duty. Muslims believe that they are responsible for their own lives and the decisions that they make, for which they will be answerable to God on the Day of Judgment.

Environmental degradation as a result of ignorance of Quranic

law is a common problem. Some Muslims do not know what Allah expects of them in regard to the environment and as a result they injudiciously exploit the environment. The Quran clearly states, “O children of Adam! . . . eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for Allah loves not the wasters.” (Quran: Surah Al-'A'raf (7), ayah 31). More education on Islamic instructions for environmental care is needed to ensure that more individuals are engaging in efforts aimed at conservation of the

environment. In this way, more individuals will be able to take up their proper responsibility in caring for the environment.

Based on Islamic law, God is the sole owner of the earth (Abu 'l-Faraj 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Rajab, in al-Qawa'id). The Quran and Islamic teachings agree that human beings are just mere custodians of natural resources,

which should be used responsibly and for purposes that are divine and pure. Despite the right to own property in Islamic law, the use of property can be restricted. Muslims also believe in pollution of the self. This involves pollution from eating too much food. Pollution of the self can also come from filling the mind with many negative things or ideas that are prohibited by Allah. Islamic teaching states that certain things are forbidden, in order to teach the value of self-control. Some of the forbidden things that Muslims believe have the ability to pollute the body include pork, carrion, (Quran Surah Al-Ma' idah (5), ayah 4) and alcohol (Quran Surah Al-Ma' idah (5), ayah 90).

Pollution of the environment is strongly forbidden by the Islamic religious teachings. Muslims believe that it is the responsibility of the human beings to take good care of the environment as it is essentially a command from God. Taking care of the environment is a way of pleasing God and acquiring blessings. In contrast, misuse of the environment in the Muslim religion is regarded as disrespect for the will of God, hence a very serious sin. One of the ways of taking care of the environment is through feeding and watering animals, using appropriate farming techniques to avoid soil erosion and flooding as well as avoiding food wastage. In doing this, Muslims believe that God will reward them for being faithful custodians of His earth.

References

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Part B.

In Part A, you read about views of the three Abrahamic religions on environmental issues. In this chapter, we look at the same issues, but through the lens of Native Americans, and non-religious people. To add to your knowledge and broaden your understanding, you are encouraged to do some research on the environmental views of other religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, and any others you can find information on.

Native Americans' Views of the Environment Mostafa Madani and Marion D. Schafer, Ph.D.

The Native Americans are considered the pioneers of environmental conservation initiatives. According to Barry and Frankland (2014), the Native American culture teaches about the existence and importance of harmony between humans and the natural environment. Native Americans view man as an integral part of the society to whom the re-sponsibility of protecting and conserving the environment is bestowed. This worldview by the Native Americans contributed to the inception of geology, which was a new area of study in environmental conservation.

Environmental ethics encompasses a series of interventions that inform humans on how they ought to behave or act towards the natural life. The core values of Native Americans are in agreement with environmental conservation strategies, at the same time adhering to a rich cultural heritage that champion for the conservation of resources.

Chief Seattle's Vision of Environmental Conservation

A study by E.J. Bruce (2010) reveals that Native Americans followed a set of unique ethics, which are highly attributed to Chief Seattle. The values propagated ideas that made people conscious of the need to conserve the environment. He further notes that Seattle gave the anal-ogy of society and man where he likens the relationship of man and the environment to that of blood family members.

Traditionally, Native Americans have primarily been farmers. They mostly practiced shift cultivation in which they carried out their farming activities on a virgin piece of land. Once the minerals were depleted, they abandoned the land and moved on to another fertile piece of land. This system led to massive deforestation and damage to the natural resources. Chief Seattle emphasized the need for the Native Americans

to appreciate farming practices that could champion harmony between man and his environment for posterity. His views that every part of the land has to be treated as a sacred place for his people cultivated the spirit of environmental conservation. Native Americans were not only concerned with the exploitation of resources, but also with ways of engaging in best practices that would lead to protection of the environ-ment and natural resources (Hoogland, 2013).

Besides farming, Native Americans have also been engaged in hunt-ing. Men hunted for game meat to supplement their diet. Despite the fact that there was plenty of meat, Native Americans only choose specific parts of it, leaving the rest

to rot. For instance, Boylan (2013) noted that Native Americans who hunted buffalos that inhabited cliffs and mountainous regions consumed only particular parts of the game meat. The rest would be left for scavengers, or left to decay. Chipewyan Native Americans, on the other hand, slaughtered muskox and caribou. An interesting aspect of their eating habits was that they would take a few tongues for consumption then leave the rest of the meat to decompose.

Efforts of conserving soil through the addition of organic matter can be traced back to the times of the Native Americans. This community understood the essence of humus in the conservation of the soil. Decaying organic matter from animal tissues could become humus. The manure helped in holding the soil particles together, thus preventing land degradation processes like soil erosion and denudation (Meier, Ute, Krause, & Merle, 2014).

Initially, the demand for hides, game meat, and fur was relatively small owing to the dispersed settlement pattern of the Native American population. B. Bunya (2011) further notes that the small number of Native Americans meant a moderate demand for wildlife compared to the abundant supply in the wilderness. However, depletion of game meat resulted from the tragedy of the “commons scenario.” Vivian (2009) describes this phenomenon as a condition that happens when no one can claim ownership of a particular natural resource and that anyone can

access it at will. The wildlife in this scenario was the commons. No one can claim ownership of animals in the bush until they have been killed. If you left an animal in the forest, it was likely that someone else would kill it.

The fact that no one had direct control over how exploitation of wildlife was to be conducted created a condition that threatened the population of wildlife. There was no incentive to responsibly take care of these natural resources. Animals like mastodon, mammoth, saber-toothed cat and ground sloth became extinct because of overexploitation by skilled hunters. The situation worsened with the coming of European settlers and colonial masters who had the capitalistic mindset that paid no regard to environmental conservation. Settlers created an instant demand for wildlife products. The Europeans wanted fur and hides for their textile industries. This development compelled the Native Americans to trap some of these indigenous animals in exchange for goods like clothes, firearms, beads, and knives. There existed neither structures nor legal frameworks that regulated the hunting. The process led to the extinction of a large number of fur bearing animals (Yael and Seideman, 2009).

A study by Serena and Warms (2009) was cynical of the idea that Native Americans lived harmoniously with the nature. They argued that claiming that Native Americans carried out their activities without causing any harm to the natural environment was synonymous with saying that they never touched anything that existed in the physical environment, a fact that would contradict history. The history of a community, according to Merchant (2013), is defined by the manner in which members of that particular community interact with the natural environment in shaping their future.

Although Native Americans often manipulated their environment to bring a desired change that could guarantee them existence and sustainability, their activities caused minimal impact on the environment compared to those of their colonial masters from Europe. The Europeans would exploit any resource they were able to lay their hands on, for the sake of their industries and for maximization of profits. The Europeans considered America a wilderness and the idea of conserving land or natural resources in such an environment was not only absurd, but also impractical. The Native Americans however shaped their perception of ecosystem profoundly since their culture worked in unison with a belief in posterity, and practiced accordingly (Bruce, 2010).

Incentives for Environmental Conservation

Native Americans were conscious of the need to develop a culture where members of the community took responsibility in matters concerning environmental protection. This drive existed despite exceptional conditions that caused a “tragedy of commons scenario, where no one bothered about being accountable for what happens to the natural environment. The Native American community in America emphasized that a person took responsibility in matters concerning ritual values and personal ethics (Meier et al. 2013). However, values and ethics were supposed to work hand-in-hand with communal and private ownership of properties and rights. The rights defined frameworks that clearly explained conditions one had to fulfill before exploiting any resource in the environment. These rights also provided structures used to identify and reward people who were engaged in good environmental stewardship.

There are many similarities in the way Native Americans traditionally organized their activities in comparison to the modern age. First, the modern government has the responsibility of protecting the natural environment through the establishment of legislation that governs exploitation of resources. For Native Americans, the

word nation referred to various Native American tribes even though they did not work through organized formal structures of a government. The majority of these tribes were composed of small groups with independent administrative structures. The only time that these tribes came together was during major celebrations.

Native Americans did not have a formal written language. Bunya (2011) argues that this barred them from developing a formal legal framework that could be useful in communicating their ethics on issues concerning matters of the environment to members of the community.

Rights to Resources

The existence of institutions that clearly defined who has a right to fishing, hunting territories, land and personal property made Native American amass a lot of wealth. Hoogland (2013) reiterated that the prevalence of structures in Native American history that guided people on judiciously exploiting particular resources, created the modern property ownership rights—a fact that conditioned interference in the natural ecosystem by human beings.

Rights to Land and Water

Land tenure system varied significantly among Native Americans. Land ownership was entirely communal. Individualistic ownership was highly discouraged by the community. There was a scarcity of land owing to the degree of private land ownership, a fact that made it difficult to enact legislation that governed the rights to land ownership. Those people who owned land made massive investments in the area since it was easy to demarcate. However, ownership of land in the Native American community was a reserve of the clan or the family, unlike the current individual land ownership. For instance, family members among Mohican Native Americans had the hereditary privilege of using well-structured tracts of land along riverbeds for cultivation. Europeans, however, acknowledge this system of land ownership. Whenever they wanted to buy land, they had to seek the consent of family heads (Boylan, 2013).

Those Native Americans who lived in the southwest engaged in settlement farming, and private land ownership was shared here. Every family harvested their produce and kept it in their personal stores. Contributions to the public store were voluntary, and the chief who was in charge of public needs used the produce here in the event of an acute food shortage. In the eastern part of this country, the chief assigned each family some land, since there were large tracts of

land. The chief used to oversee the cultivation process and allowed each family to harvest their plot.

The Pueblo Native Americans in Colorado developed land ownership rights, which reflected their aspirations to conserve the environment. The Hopi sub-clan took advantage of the periodic floods in Colorado basin during summer by erecting stone barriers, which was crucial in checking the speed of the water (Vivian, 2009). The strategy enhanced retention of moisture in the soil while at the same time protecting the crops from floods. This technique formed the basis of modern flood control and of irrigation as a strategy to conserve soil.

Rights to Hunting

In areas where Native Americans primarily depended on hunting and fishing, there was a need to control the access to hunting and fishing grounds to prevent overexploitation. This was in response to the “tragedy of commons,” a situation in which no one cared about nature, as every-one was for himself. The customary laws that governed hunting and fishing grounds were expressed in spiritual and religious spheres, unlike the conventional methods. These methods were relayed in science and technology. Nonetheless, the rules were effective in conserving the environment at that time. The strategies gave rise to modern aquatic and wildlife conservation plans (Bunya, 2011).

Establishment of hunting territories was a common scenario among Native Americans who lived in the northern part of the country. Individuals were allowed to hunt at a given place for a stipulated period and move to the next place. Rules guiding the hunting activities were established. Hoogland (2013) reports that whenever a hunter marked a territory, no other hunter would willingly or knowingly encroach on that region for

whatever reason, for generations. In some areas, families owned hunting grounds and the search for game meat would be done on a rotational basis. This practice helped to avoid depletion of the resources in a particular region. The ownership of such territories could be passed down through generations. The main essence of this ownership was to guarantee a constant supply of game meat and vegetables to the family while at the same time to protect the environment from external invasions by trespassers.

Paiute Native Americans who lived in Owen Valleys of California also protected their gathering, hunting, and fishing territories from trespass. Boylan (2013) reports that the community nominated individuals who would take charge of securing territorial borders. The protection of these hunting and gathering grounds

came with benefits to environmental conservation, since natural tree lines, ridges, mountains, and rivers bound the restricted areas. These are significant resources in support of biodiversity. No group was supposed to encroach on territorial grounds of boundaries belonging to a neighboring clan unless in exceptional cases like possibility of starvation. However, the chief still had the over-all say, as he was the one allocating the hunting territories, and he always advocated for the collective management of each area. Hunting was also controlled by norms and customs of harvest. The Native American communities had particular headmen who recommended and approved of best hunting times based on their experience in hunting and matters related to it.

Fishing Rights

Native Americans living in the Pacific Northwest had established effective fishing rights. Some of the fish that they captured included the salmons in the oceans and spawn in fresh water bodies. They used weirs, fish wheels and other appliances at shoals and falls where fish channelled naturally (Meier et al., 2013).

The fishing technology that the natives adopted was so effective that fishing threatened to deplete aquatic resources. The Native Americans realized the need to allow some fish to escape to encourage breeding. This aim was achieved through the practice that encouraged people to remove weirs from water, enabling some fish to escape upstream, once they had caught enough for consumption. The fish that escaped could lay eggs, which guaranteed the community a steady supply of fish in the future. Modern fish conservation strategies—like the use of standardized nets that capture only big fish and allow the small fish to go back to water—were borrowed from Native Americans. In addition, restrictions on fishing for some months, to allow fish to breed and grow, dates back to the time of Native Americans as well.

The Haida Native Americans mostly consumed salmons. The clan members restricted the access to fishing grounds to persons who were strictly members of their family. They excluded members of other families from accessing their fishing territories. Those found trespassing were severely punished. Yitsati, the head of the house, had the final say on issues regarding fish exploitation. He was empowered to decide on when to fish, levels of harvesting, and the best fishing methods. Although it is not clear exactly how powerful Yitsati was, a study by Yael and Seideman (2009) reveals that there was an adequate and steady population and supply of salmon for a long period—because a result of the rules enforced by these community leaders. Eventually, the population of the fish reduced tremendously

because of indiscriminate fishing by Europeans who exploited the fish for commercial purposes and with the intention of reaping maximum monetary profit.

Ownership of Private Items

Ownership of land and other natural resources varied, and so did ownership of personal items like clothes, women-owned utensils, and houses. Women for instance, gathered hides, scraped, and turned them, in preparation for a ceremony for sewing the hides by members of the community. Natural resources could be shared freely, but once a task was complete, the final product belonged to the family members who initiated the work, and not the community.

The culture of Native Americans institutionalized the concept of private ownership. Due to scarcity of resources, community members had to walk for long distances to get hard stones that they used to make arrows. This shortage led to the individualization of weapons and their properties. The use of horses also revolutionized the transport sector, whereby the horses could be used in chasing buffalo when hunting. This made the price of the horse go up, compared to other commodities (Bunya, 2011).

Incentives

The right to property played an integral part in encouraging environmental conservation in the culture of Native Americans. However, when an activity was undertaken communally, the society stipulated mechanisms to recognize individuals who exhibited exceptional abilities in the task. For instance, during the hunting of buffalo, an individual whose arrow killed the animal could have the privilege of taking the skin and other special parts of the game meat. This explains how Native Americans appreciated the use of incentives in developing institutions that fostered good relations between human beings and natural resources. Well-defined property rights encouraged community members to conserve scarce resources. Spirituality and ethics guided the manner in which an individual could relate to his environment.

Conclusion

From the discussion, it is evident that Native Americans were the pioneers of environmental conservation initiatives. The act of living in harmony with nature is deeply rooted in the Native American culture and religious beliefs. It emphasizes the need to conserve the environment for posterity. The need to have a safe environment prompted Native Americans to establish various initiatives for conserving the ecosystem. These consequently gave rise to modern conservation

structures. There is a crucial need in modern societies to creating institutions that will inform the state on how resources may be judiciously exploited, and to establish frameworks that recognize and reward individuals who take leading roles in conserving the environment.

The arrival of Europeans with their extreme capitalist ideologies ruined the gains that had been realized by Native Americans over years of living in harmony with nature. The colonial masters exploited natural resources without considering a need to protect the environment, since they viewed the region as a wilderness.

Ethical Views on Pollution According to Non-Religious People

Abdulrhman Alsomali Introduction

Environmental issues such as pollution are not held in high regard by non-religious people. They attach little meaning to environment and how it determines their lives. The ethical positions of those without a given religion on environmental issues are quite different from those who have religious standpoints (Bhat, 2015). Regardless of people's opinions, the issue remains that environment factors crucially in human survival.

This research paper will explore the subject of non-religious people and their views on environment. A number of critical issues related to the subject of ecology and environment will be highlighted to provide guidance on the correct position on ethics and religion. Nature and Anthropocentrism

An important aspect that sheds light on the views of non-religious people on matters related to the environment is the concept of anthropocentrism. According to anthropocentrism, human beings have more value compared to nature. Humans are regarded as the main components of the ecosystem, which is inclusive of factors such as water bodies, animals, and plants. Natural dynamics agree with this school of thought and show the connection provided by nature to various inhabitants such as animals, human beings, and plants (Chiras, 1992). Introducing pollution in the equation creates a different situation, resulting in poor functioning of natural elements. Environmental conservation is inevitable in creating a sustained system that abides by the principles of natural

integration. Pollution is undoubtedly a major threat to the environment and affects both nature and human beings in equal measure.

The ethical positions of those with no religious affinities are not similar to the principles proposed by those with religious backgrounds. Part of this research paper will look into the difference between religious and non-religious ethics by evaluating some of the issues at hand. For example, those with no religious insights may view nature in a way that is very different from others. They may have perspectives or arguments that other people with religious framework of thoughts might not. Depending on which side the issues emerges from, the bottom line is that the environment is a function of life that supports all organisms in the universe. Anthropocentrism is an ethical position taken by non-religious people. Adding spiritual angle in the debate on environment brings out a different picture of perceptions on the topic. Those with a deep spiritual background are better positioned in terms of understanding the environmental dynamics that shape various phenomena in the ecosystem (Elliot, 2011).

Proponents of non-religious views of environment argue that pollution is part of the environment, given that it is designed in the form of a system that eliminates waste materials. A self-sustaining system is therefore associated with the thinking of non-religious people on the issue of pollution. The question of ethical considerations with regards to the environment has taken a back seat within the thinking patterns of those not propelled by religion. Critics claim that such thinking is not accurate and fails to show the suggested evidence. Scientifically speaking, evidence is an important consideration made before quantifying a given research outcome. In the case of pollution, there are no ethical considerations included during the decision making process. Just to mention, the anthropocentrism approach lacks credibility in terms of providing logic and convincing ethical argument.

Scientific logic dictates that nature commands the recycling of waste products and is limited to the idea of continued pollution. An increase in pollution for a sustained period can lead to the emergence of dangerous toxins which can affect the environment (D'Angelo, 2012). There is no way in which nature can receive toxic chemicals for long without breaking down. An example of this is the pollution problems faced by developed nations such as China and America. Both nations have been grappling with the pollution problem after the realization that economic growth in a polluted environment would not be viable. A number of scientists and ecologists have presented evidence demonstrating the importance of environmental conservation.

Proponents of this postulation agree that humans determine the out-look of nature and thus, have an upper hand in the ecosystem. This im-plies that other non-human components are subject to the manipulation of humans. People with no religious views do not look at the environment as a support system but rather as a less significant part of the ecosystem. Research studies on ecology have shown that nature is an essential ele-ment in human life and can lead to disastrous consequences if not prop-erly managed. For example, cutting down trees affects the environment by killing organisms that depend on them for survival. In addition, soil loses fertility as a result of poor composition of organisms. Evidently, lack of proper care of environment leads to problems in terms of human survival. Environmental experts contend that nature offers the right con-ditions for human survival. Therefore, nature is a support system that provides humans with provisions such as food, shelter, and water. Life demands that human beings use these provisions for survival purposes. In contrast to this argument is the perspective offered by non-religious people. The views of non-religious people contradict with logical rea-soning based on ecology (Grandjean, 2013). Ecological patterns demand a sense of coordination between those within the ecosystem. A disruption of patterns of ecosystem would mean that human beings will end up suffering. There is no dividing line between nature and human survival. From this reasoning, it is evident that the perspectives of those who are opposed to environmental conservation are skewed and fail to align with reality. The value based argument regarding humans and the ecosystem has provided differing perspectives that lead to the same conclusion. Proposals on anthropocentrism have not been effec-tive in terms of proving the point of their argument. There is no way that nature and human beings can be divided and as seen from the above reasoning, nature is an integral part of the ecosystem.

Instrumental and Intrinsic Value

Non-religious people have different opinions on the value associated with environment. For example, the instrumental value approach looks at nature as a connected system that provides benefits to people and other stakeholders in the ecosystem. Despite this logical reasoning, people without religious views look at the environment as a system that offers value to a selected few while eliminating others in the process. Their ap-proach is meant to show the aggressive side of nature that humans ought to avoid (Gottlieb, 1995). For this reason, non-religious people do not see the importance of ecosystem in terms of supporting life.

Pollution, according to these people is not a threat, as no value is associated with the environment. It is imperative to note that ethical considerations with regards to ecology follow the outlined principles of developing a positive relationship with the environment. The creation story is another aspect that can be used to oppose the proposals offered by people with few or no religious standpoints. During the course of creation, humans were provided with the autonomy to command all nature including animals and water. This account shows that God intended human beings to take care of the environment. On this point, it becomes evident that the thinking patterns of non-religious people are wrong and their arguments fail to live up to the expectations of ecological principles (Neimark & Mott, 2011).

Intrinsic value on the other hand, means the importance of a given natural element and how well it can provide a sustained mechanism. Ecologists argue that the environment has the ability of providing a self-sustained system that is not possible with other components of nature such as humans and animals. It can be said that the opinions of non-religious people in relation to pollution are misguided and do not represent the ideals of nature. Studies conducted on the impact of pollution on nature shows that the latter has had a negative impact on the environment for a prolonged period. The resolve by governments and companies around the world to comply with the environmental laws of the United Nations is an example that shows the detrimental effects of pollution on nature. Strong ethical framework should be attached to consideration of matters related to the environment for the benefit of human beings.

Therefore, ethical considerations associated with the environment are supposed to mean that humans have an obligation towards developing nature. Nature is part of human and animal life and therefore, should be held in high regard at all times. Opinions of non-religious people have no credible or irrefutable foundation regarding explaining other ways in which human life can be sustained on the universe without the support of the ecosystem.

Pollution, as mentioned in the previous section, is harmful and affects the long-term functioning of the environment (Schaeffer, 1972). As scientists have discovered in recent years, threats to environment such as pollution have damaged the ozone cover that protects the ecosystem from dangerous UV rays. According to estimates presented in various environmental conventions, the world is in a much worse condition than in the past when such rapid industrialization as today had not taken place. It is for this reason that pollution and other threats affect the functioning of the ecosystem.

Moral Aspect of the Environment

Morality issues associated with the environment have often been used by those opposed to the idea of being accountable to the environment. Pollution as a threat to the ecosystem should not be ignored to avoid further problems. Ecologists have already proven the fact that the environment holds value in relation to the needs of human beings and animals. This implies that the issue of environmental morality is realistic and should not be taken for granted. Taking into account the description of creation mentioned in the previous section, every signal indicates that human beings need to realize the moral issues related to the ecosystem (Stadel & Rhoades, 2008). Understanding these principles is the first step towards enhancing harmony between people and the ecosystem. A case such as pollution causes disharmony between the environment and humans.

In other words, morality helps in promoting a sense of environmental cooperation that is much needed for efficient operation of societies. A detailed review of ethical considerations emerging from environmental issues shows that ecological issues play a vital role in the sustenance of life. Observing the moral principles of the environment is a sure way of showing respect for the environment. Like other issues that can be attached to moral and ethical considerations, the environment is one in the list and presents a range of diverse perspectives.

Those opposed to the concept of moral obligation towards the environment lack an understanding of how ecological issues are connected. The relationship between various components in the environment is what makes them a powerful force even within the sphere of human activity. Thus, logic dictates that the environment is comprised of numerous issues that raise the question of moral integration.

Sufficiency is an issue when it comes to discussion on moral tenets of a given environment (Sherlock & Morrey, 2002).

A close review of the ecosystem shows an increased need for environmental conservation that supports sufficiency within the chain. A less sufficient ecosystem may not be favorable to even animals and plants, let alone human beings.

Sufficiency, therefore, adds more evidence on the importance of merging moral issues with the environment. A self-sufficient ecosystem is an ideal location for organisms and human beings to exist healthily. Disrupting the system through pollution and other causes compromises the value of the environment. Destruction and loss of environmental cover hurts the inhabitants in the long run.

Resource availability and sustainability is another factor that comes into play when reviewing the moral considerations placed on environment. Sustainability is the signal that affirms that the environment is functioning well without major threats. Pollution does not bolster the environment but instead hampers the ecosystem from accomplishing various objectives. Global warming and extinction are some of the consequences associated with environmental pollution. Now a time has come when pollution has in fact increased manifold, regardless of provisions set out at climate conventions and commitments to them. It is unfortunate that stakeholders have failed in developing moral principles that are evident in the natural ecosystem (Van & Vorster, 2012).

Biologists argue that morality is subject to the response patterns of human beings towards the environment. The damning statistics on environmental destruction in various parts of the world show the scope of the situation. Finally, equal access to resources is another issue that shows the moral and ethical considerations that emerge from analyzing the environment. The fact that all components of the ecosystem such as plants and animals get the required resources for survival consolidates the viewpoint endorsing moral reasoning of the environment.

Ecology and Ethics

The principle of ecology and ethics is based on appraising the role of humans in environmental conservation initiatives. In the case of non-religious people, their actions show total disregard of environmental principles that foster balance in the ecosystem. Actions such as permitting or actually accelerating pollution and interfering with the system of nature affect the environment—pollution irreversibly and therefore should not be encouraged. The overview of ethics and ecology is a reminder of the voluminous work still remaining, in terms of protecting the environment (Sherlock & Morrey, 2002)

Those with inadequate religious conviction cannot comprehend the spirituality behind the ecosystem. As a home meant for human beings and animals, the earth means a lot to those residing in it. For example, it would be reasonable for stakeholders to promote environmental conservation rules that address urgent needs. Provisions barring all forms of environmental destruction should be included in the debate revolving around the environment and associated ethics. The common interests binding nature and humans can be mentioned

with regards to ecological ethics. A good way of implementing ethics would be improving the relationship between nature and the elements that depend on it (Walmsley, 2012). Being sensitive to the needs of the environment shows a resolve towards harnessing various subsystems of nature. Eventually, everything will depend on how stakeholders play their roles in terms of shaping the environmental sphere. A strained re-relationship is bad for both parties and brings negative consequences on board. Systematic thinking that looks into the needs of nature should be used when interacting with it. Doing this not only protects the interests of nature but all the sub-elements that depend on it for survival.

Conclusion

Ethical considerations made with regards to the environment have created mixed reactions among proponents and those opposing environmental ethical issues. As evident from the discussion, ethics should be closely related to the role of humans in protecting the environment. Religious views, or their lack, have also informed perceptions regarding the environment and as pointed in this research paper, have created a new set of issues. The debate on value associated with humans and animals contradicts with the opinions of those with different views on the right environmental structure. Morally speaking, the obligatory perspectives of the environment must be embraced by humans. An assessment of intelligence capabilities shows that humans are more endowed as compared to other elements in the environment such as flora and fauna.