

Ecological Moral Voluntarism is a Corollary of Ethical Education

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1) Concept of voluntarism and eco-voluntarism.

The ambition of the Enlightenment was to leave religion from ethics in order to search for a theoretical foundation of human Moral behaviour. Particularly Emanuel Kant rejected any heteronomy in moral judgment. making room for man's autonomy. Religion was just a derivative of "Das Praktische Vernunft". However, according to Hume passions are our only drive for ethical action. Any human is endowed with a particular moral ability to his human co-fellow due to human own power of empathy. The latter is so called sympathy. or the ability of putting oneself in someone else's judging shoes. Adam Smith translate Hume's moral sympathy to Common Feeling (Storig: p 24-25). Referring to Slote (1992,2001) we adopt rather the eudaimonic tradition of Aristotle, New Testament and Aquinas leaving alone Hume's intuitive accounts. Moreover, Hume's moral sympathy is a simple character trait of admiration, the eudaimonic human flourishing means happiness and according to Aristotle it emphasizes a human life of virtue (Huang, 2010). Virtues are "achievements not endowments", "acquired excellences" not "genetics endowments" (Holmes, 2005, p. 69). Within the adopted tradition virtue is a quality which enables an individual to move towards the achievement of the specifically human telos, whether natural or supernatural (MacIntyre,1997, p. 122). This is what we call human moral voluntarism (Verstraeten 2025). Besides, recently Delorme *et al.* (2024) searching for a non-anthropocentric approach for eco-ethics distinguishes three different types of virtues: virtues in moral, a-moral, or functional ways. We put forward the claim that moral virtues and furthermore moral care for all biotic and abiotic subjects result in a balance of mastering human's dual fundamental power to create or to destroy (de Caluwe&Verstraeten, 2015), provided there exists a heteronomous common authority. The latter statement implies the rejection of Kant's claim of human rational autonomy but it suggests a common general moral rationality embodied by a broader concept of 'the self' and reflective self-understanding. The nature of the self is the central philosophical question in eco-ethics (Callicott, 2023, p. 11) and in consequence ecological relationships become a part of man's one-ecological self (Naess, 1987). Summarizing the above mentioned speculations about moral virtue, heteronomous rational authority and the extended man's ecological self, eventually care for biodiversity and the whole

Planet require moral voluntarism of human beings, bridging the philosophical conception of ecological self, entitling moral value to all biotic life and abiotic subjects, eventually evocating the normative moral discours of Care for the Planet.

2.a) What does a moral value mean in the scope of Ecosystems and Biodiversity?

Care for the environment does not imply that value bearing private beings are good or bad but it presupposes a community that entitles beings with moral value. Moreover, what does it mean to be entitled with moral value? The latter can be an instrumental value for humans or for an other species according to their respective place in the food pyramid. Furthermore inherent value is independent of external entitlement but entailed by participating to a group or ecosystem. Finally intrinsic value is a priori entitled by it's existence.

2.b) Transpersonal Self-Identification in the scope of Moral Education

Callicott (2017, p. 214) defines the ecological self by its internal socio-environmental relations. However, adopting Warwick Fox's transpersonal self-identification (1994), we derive the ecological self by extending the personal identification to the particularity of the ecosystem to whom it belongs, including all biotic and abiotic subjects. Any participant reaches more self-understanding, the more he stands in mutual relationship with his environment. But by discovering his identity, a self-reflective being is faced voluntarily with the common power over non-reflective beings and landscapes. Voluntary care for those non-humans gives more insight in human's power to create and to destroy. Eventually, it's the balance of human relational and voluntary moral engagement and human insight in self-understanding and individual identity.

3) Non-denominated Ethics and the intrinsic value of Biotic and Abiotic subjects

Deep Ecology is attributing intrinsic moral value to non-human biotic life since Arne Naess' claims (1972) and even to the abiotic landscape as proposed by Aldo Leopold's Land-ethics (1949). Arguments for intrinsic value of biotic life can be aesthetical, historical, urge to live, subject of pleasure and pain, mental ability, impartiality of species (biocentrism of Taylor 1987), locally integrated into a community (ecocentrism of Rolston, 2012). However, non-denominated ethics just accept the autonomous moral subject endowed with intrinsic value. Despite free autonomous humanism of the private, morality requires heteronomous common feelings far from rational conceptions. it depends on human voluntarism.

4) Narrative Moral Education: Noah's Ark as Paradigm for Ecosystems and Biodiversity

Adopting the above articulated transpersonal ecological self-identification we developed a narrative approach based on the 'Myth of Noah's Ark,' a cross-cultural and interreligious educational project for primary school children in Flanders. It is the common metaphor of the three Mediterranean monotheistic religions referring to biodiversity, safety unless the disaster outside, hope for a dynamic Planet as common place of dwelling (Heidegger and others). Within Noah's Ark all subjects are entitled by inherent value as participants of a common home. Mutual ecological voluntarism is not derived by intellectual thought but by moral praxis, a conception of moral very common in the scope of ecofeminism as developed Ruether's pioneering work 'New Woman, New Earth' (1975).

I was with thirty children, from 7 to 9 years old, in a huge classroom on the second floor. We just had read and spoken about the big flood and Noah's Ark, where everybody -men and animals- were safe.

At the very moment a thunderstorm broke out. In complete darkness we all stood together in front of the big windows looking at the lightning over the playground and trembling at each clap of thunder.

We held each other and I said: "Now we are in Noah's Ark and we are all safe. Don't be afraid."

After the thunderstorm was over, the children went back to their tables and made a drawing of the story and the experience of being all together in Noah's Ark.

According to Gadamer's claims, two hermeneutic disclosures unfolded: a space-like and a time-like

By the first hermeneutical disclosure children chose which animals should be allowed on the ark. In addition to familiar and popular animals, they included less attractive species such as spiders, snakes, and bees, as well as animals considered unclean in some traditions, such as pigs. This showed an inclusive view of life.

Furthermore the children expressed their feelings through drawings of the ark during the flood. Although the storm was frightening, they saw the ark as a place of safety for all life. They then

imagined daily life on the ark, which helped them feel connected not only to other humans but also to animals and the natural environment.

Finally, By the second hermeneutical disclosure the children shared their thoughts and feelings with one another. This exchange helped them develop new attitudes of care and responsibility toward all life on Earth.

The reaction of the children demonstrated that moral religious narrative education is a way to create common feelings.

And as I am a teacher of Anglican religion, I concluded and all the children

agreed with me that God had saved us now and the whole biodiversity for ever.

Of course, my dear audience, it is up to you to draw your own conclusions...

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