**Environmental Ethics**

**Introduction:**

Ethics is a part of philosophy and guide us to follow righteous path which is in the larger interest of the society as a whole. Environmental ethics is related to environmental philosophy and defines what is right and wrong at ecological level. It is more amoral binding than legal compulsions. Practicing environmental ethics is, therefore, left to an individual. The outcome of such practices is always par excellence since it comes from voluntarily and hence with dedication.

**What Is Environmental Ethics?**

Environmental ethics is the part of [environmental philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_philosophy) which considers extending the traditional boundaries of ethics from solely including humans to including the non-human world. It exerts influence on a large range of disciplines including [environmental law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_law), [environmental sociology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_sociology), [ecotheology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecotheology), [ecological economics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecological_economics), [ecology](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ecology) and [environmental geography](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Integrated_geography).

There are many ethical decisions that human beings make with respect to the environment. For example:

* Should humans continue to [clear cut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clearcutting) forests for the sake of human consumption?
* Why should humans continue to propagate its species, and life itself?
* Should humans continue to make [gasoline-powered vehicles](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internal_combustion_engine)?
* What environmental obligations do humans need to keep for future generations?
* Is it right for humans to knowingly cause the [extinction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extinction) of a species for the convenience of humanity?
* How should humans best use and conserve the space environment to secure and expand life?
* What role can Planetary Boundaries play in reshaping the human-earth relationship?

**The Early Development of Environmental Ethics**

The academic field of environmental ethics grew up in response to the works of [Rachel Carson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rachel_Carson) and [Murray Bookchin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Bookchin) and events such as the first [Earth Day](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earth_Day) in 1970, when environmentalists started urging philosophers to consider the philosophical aspects of environmental problems. Two papers published in Science had a crucial impact: [Lynn White](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynn_Townsend_White_Jr.)'s "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis" (March 1967) and [Garrett Hardin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garrett_Hardin)'s "The Tragedy of the Commons" (December 1968). Also influential was Garett Hardin's later essay called "Exploring New Ethics for Survival", as well as an essay by [Aldo Leopold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aldo_Leopold) in his [A Sand County Almanac](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Sand_County_Almanac), called "The Land Ethic," in which Leopold explicitly claimed that the roots of the ecological crisis were philosophical (1949). The first international academic journals in this field emerged from North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s – the US-based journal [Environmental Ethics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_Ethics_(journal)) in 1979 and the Canadian-based journal [The Trumpeter: Journal of Ecosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Trumpeter:_Journal_of_Ecosophy&action=edit&redlink=1) in 1983. The first British based journal of this kind, [Environmental Values](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_Values), was launched in 1992.

**Views of Environmental Ethics**

Modern philosophy on environmental ethics has evolved in the second half of twentieth century. Population explosion, environmental degradation, resource crisis etc. problems drew the attention towards the environmental concerns. However, it also raised some challenges while deciding the environmental ethics in contemporary situation. Disparity among society, nations and region; basic right to procure the resources for daily livelihood; right to access to resources etc. were the key challenges in designing environmental ethics. This has led to different views on environmental ethics. And this also led to formulation of different approaches on environmental ethics.

There are primarily three views on environmental ethics:

1. Libertarian View
2. Ecological View
3. Conservation View

**Libertarian View**

This view is correlated to the principle of civil liberty. As civil liberty follows the commitment to equal rights to every member of community, development of an ethics to deal with men’s relationship with land animal and plant is absolutely essential. Social conscience from people to land and nature is equally inevitable. It is not right to see the natural world simply in the terms of its economic worth to human. Equal rights or liberty to all human and nonhuman members in the environment is the principle doctrine of libertarian view.

**Ecological View**

Ecological view demonstrates ecological functioning. On ethical ground, it is believed that earth has its own mechanism for functioning, growth and development. Nature has its own purification processes and recovery systems of life even in most adverse condition. Moreover it is believed that whenever the climatic change had taken place, it took place within a very narrow range of region to enable the life to recover before it gets totally destroyed. This theory is in contrast to Darwinian idea of survival of the fittest. In support of this view, ecologist argue that there are many types of algae that are resistance to ultraviolet radiation, and life would continue and new life would evolve even if the ultraviolet radiation possess the threat to the life on the earth. This theory warns human to change their perceptions and see them as a part of a whole system. However, later it was considered that as the global temperature rises higher and higher there are more climatic disasters, the planet may not be able to recover as it was previously thought. With a three degree rise in global temperature, the rainforest will start to die releasing vast new amounts of carbon dioxide; in the oceans the algae will fail and absorbing carbon. It is therefore, necessary to recognize fundamental interdependence of all biological and a biological entities.

**Conservation Ethic**

Conservation ethic is an extension of instrumental value to the natural environment. It focuses only on the work of environment in the terms of its utility and usefulness to humans Conservation is the oldest form of ethic that lead to creation of national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, responsible use of non-renewable energy sources, water conservation efforts. Conservation is therefore a means to an end and purely concerned with mankind and his future generations. Most of the international treaties are outline as consequences of this ethics.

**Conclusion:**

We are dependent on environment on daily basis. It’s our duty to protect our environment for our own selves. There must be some rules and morality to protect our environment. That’s what we deal in environmental ethics. We need to learn what is good and what is bad for us, for our society because we have free choices to make. We need to think that our free choices and actions do not affect our society, environment, ourselves. So we need ethics for environment too, which will build a harmonious, suitable living place for us to live peacefully in this earth.