Human Stewardship and Its Critics

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Traditional humanism or the human-centered approach to environmental ethics arose from a need to assess the convulsive changes brought about by centuries of industrialization. This model started in the West, particularly in the highly industrialized consumer societies. This worldview, popularly known as stewardship, has gained acceptance in these societies for the last 50 years. The environmental destruction that was happening demanded that a new way of looking and regarding nature has to be appropriated.

John Paul II, in his speech on the World Day of Peace in 1990, acknowledges that with the widespread destruction of the environment, a new ecological awareness has emerged from people who have understood that humans cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have in the past.[2]

The Pope identifies the indiscriminate application of the advances in science and technology as the foremost cause of the environmental destruction. The gains of science, for the Pontiff, are there to uphold the responsibility of humanity toward the rest of creation. He stresses that it is the lack of the respect for life that is behind the scheme to forward economic interests over the right of individuals. The ethic

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[2] John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis as A Common Responsibility," message for the World Day of Peace, January 1, 1990 [article on-line] (Alabama: Eternal Word Television, 1999, accessed August 2000); available from http://www.ewtn.com/library/PAPALDOC/JP900101.htm; Internet.

that emerges from him is therefore an ethic of life, which rests on the principle of stewardship.[3]

1. The Concept of Stewardship

Traditional humanism traces its roots to the concept of stewardship in the Old and New Testament. The concept of human stewardship of nature is frequently assumed to have a biblical foundation, and thus carry particular authority.[4] The Book of Leviticus 25:23 – "Land must not be sold in perpetuity, for the land belongs to me. And to me you are only strangers and guests" – inspired the title of the statement by a regional conference of the U.S. Catholic Bishops on land issues, *Strangers and Guests: Toward Community in the Heartland.*[5]

The often-quoted portions of Genesis chapters one to three were the bases of the message of John Paul II for the celebration of the World Day of Peace in 1990.

> In the Book of Genesis, where we find God's first self-revelation to humanity (Gen1-3), there is a recurring refrain: "and God saw it was Good." After creating the heavens, the sea, the earth and all it contains, God created man and woman. At this point, the refrain changes markedly: *"And God saw everything he had made, and behold, it was very good"* (Gen 1:31). God entrusted the whole of creation to the man and woman, and only then-as we read-could he rest "from all his work" (Gen.2: 3).[6]

The high point of creation is deduced from the text as the creation of human beings and the Pope highlights this particular event as a confirmation of the place of humanity with the rest of creation. By quoting *Gaudium Et Spes*, ... "God destined the earth and all it contains for the use of every individual and all peoples," he categorically substantiates his claim.

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[3] John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis as A Common Responsibility," 4.

[4] Clare Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics," in *The Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology*, ed. Ian Ball, Margaret Goodall, Clare Palmer and John Reader (London: SPCK, 1992), 69.

[5] U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference, *Strangers and Guests: Toward Community in the Heartland,* 1980.

[6] John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis as A Common Responsibility," 1.

In 1989, the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines issued a pastoral letter entitled *What is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?,* which bemoaned the environmental destruction in the country. The bishops reminded people that the Bible tells us that God created this world (Gen. 1:1); and that He created man and woman in His image and charged them to be stewards of His creation (Gen. 1: 27-28).[7]

Principles of Stewardship

In 1991, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a document, "Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching."[8] It stresses the implication of stewardship as caring for creation and at the same time requiring people to be resourceful in finding ways to make the earth flourish. The document admits that it is a difficult balance, requiring both a sense of limits and a spirit of experimentation and that stewardship places upon us responsibility for the well being of all God's creatures.

For American bishops, the universe is God's dwelling and as such the earth as home of the humanity, as well as, the rest of creation, reveal God's presence. Unfortunately, according to the document, Americans have grown estranged from the rhythms of nature because of the rapid technological advances. The document goes on further to state that the growing environmental awareness seeks to reawaken men and women to the "sacramentality of the universe" that is, to the truth that nature is a tangible sign of God's presence.[9] This sacramentality, according to Rosemary Radford Ruether, rests in the long sacramental tradition of the Catholic Church, which starts with community as a living whole, not only the human community first, but, first of all, the cosmic community. The human being, Ruether goes on, not only mirrors cosmic

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[7] Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "What is Happening to our Beautiful Land?" [article on-line] (Tagaytay: CBCP, 1988, accessed August 29, 2000); available from http://www.aenet.org/haribon/bishops.htm; Internet.

[8] U.S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action on the Environment in Light of Catholic Social Teaching"[article on-line] (St. John's Prep. Environmental Awareness Club, Nov. 14, 1991, accessed August 29, 2000); available from http://www.stjohnsprep.org/htdocs_eac/bishop.htm; Internet.

[9] Rosemary Radford Ruether, "Theological Resources for Earth-Healing," in *The Challenge of Global Stewardship: Roman Catholic Responses* ed. Maura A. Ryan and Todd David (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1997), 61.

community as a microcosm to a macrocosm, but also "intercommunes" with the whole cosmic body. Thus, God is seen not only as over against and 'making' this cosmic body, but also immanent within. The visible universe is the "emanational" manifestation of God, God's sacramental body.[10]

Respect for Life

The Catholic views respect for nature and respect for life as intertwined. John Paul II's message at the 1990 World Day of Peace stresses the moral implications of the ecological crisis rest on the lack of respect for life. Respect for life rests on the assumption that all living things manifest God's glory. The U.S. bishops quote Thomas Aquinas: "God produced many and diverse creatures, so that what is wanting to one in representation of the divine goodness might be supplied by another. Hence the whole universe together participates in the divine goodness more perfectly, and represents better than any single creature whatever."[11] The diversity of life is evident of God's plan for the world, and thus according to the bishops, invites respect.

Respect for life is also the focal point of the pastoral letter of Catholic Bishops of the Philippines in 1991. Hailed by bishops in other countries, it led other Church documents in recognizing environmental destruction as a moral crisis.[12] It states that the devastation of life on earth calls for the faithful to defend life as they reflect on the beauty of nature and partake of her bounty, which nourishes life. It analyzes that the annihilation of nature, which provides nourishment will lead to an increase in political and social unrest.[13]

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Sean McDonagh, *Passion for the Earth: The Christian Vocation to Promote Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation* (Quezon City: Claretian Publications, 1995), 110.

[13] Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, "What is happening to our Beautiful Land?," 2. Similarly, the New Zealand Bishops expanded the notion of respect for life as incorporating the issues of abortion and euthanasia. It is worthy to note though, that the official Catholic Church documents on the ecological crisis are always integrated with peace and justice issues. They are consistent with John Paul II's pronouncement that the respect for life is primarily respect for human life. The former assails the "sinfulness" of ecological destruction as emerging from the disrespect of the dignity of the human person and the trampling of the person's right to life. New Zealand Catholic Bishop's Conference, "A Consistent Ethic of Life- Te Kahu-O-Te-Orai," 1.

Authentic Development

For the U.S. Bishops, unrestrained economic growth is not the answer to improving the lives of the poor. Authentic development supports moderation and even austerity in the use of material resources. It also encourages a balanced view of human progress consistent with respect for nature. Furthermore, it invites the development of alternative visions of a good society and the use of economic models, which consider standards of well-being than material productivity alone.[14] For Drew Christiansen, authentic human development rests on the principle of equitable sustainable development. Global stewardship requires working expectations of development, creating equitable sharing in sustainable social and economic conditions.[15] He cites Vatican Council II, which states that: "God intended the earth and all it contains, for the use of every human being."[16] In the Catholic social teachings, authentic development is an essential goal of global stewardship, entailing economic improvements in poorer nations and lifestyle changes in the more affluent ones.[17] Authentic development, according to the U.S. bishops, also entails encouraging the proper use of agricultural and industrial technologies, so that development does not merely mean technological advancement for its own sake but rather that technology benefits people and enhances the land.[18] Social injustices and environmental injustices are interconnected and that the increasing environmental wrongs are the consequences of the social wrongs. The former cannot be addressed without addressing the latter.

Integrity of Creation

According to the New Zealand Bishops, integrity of creation is a central component of Church teaching. *Evangelium Vitae* demonstrate this assertion: "Use of mineral, vegetable and animal resources cannot be divorced from respect for moral imperatives."[19] The integrity of the

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[14] U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth," 4.

[15] Drew Christiansen, S.J., "Learn from the Lesson of the Flowers: Catholic Social Teaching and Stewardship," in *The Challenge of Global Stewardship: Roman Catholic Responses*, ed. Maura A. Ryan and Todd David (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Indiana Press, 1997), 30-31.

[16] *Gaudium et Spes*, 69.

[17] Ibid., 22.

[18] U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth," 4.

[19] *Evangelium Vitae*, 2.

ecosystem within which human life exists is vital to our survival, the well being of future generation, and a sign of respect the work of God.[20] John Paul II's message in the World Day of Peace, attempts to capture the definition of integrity of creation as resting on the Genesis recurring refrain: "And God saw that it was good."[21] For the New Zealand bishops, creation itself provides the primary source from which all life flows. This means that human actions and attitudes contribute either positively or negatively to the integrity of creation.[22]

John Paul II encapsulates the principle of integrity of creation by asserting that there is a harmonious universe, of a "cosmos" endowed with its own integrity, its own internal, dynamic balance. This order must be respected. The human race is called to explore this order, to examine it with due care and to make use of it while safeguarding its integrity.[23] The U.S. Catholic bishops agree with this statement.

> Finally, we are charged with restoring the integrity of all creation. We must care for all God's creatures, especially the most vulnerable. How then, we can protect endangered species and at the same time be callous to the unborn, the elderly or disabled persons? Is not abortion also a sin against creation? If we turn our backs on our own unborn children, can we truly expect that nature will receive respectful treatment at our hands? The care for the earth will not be advanced by the destruction of human life at any stage of development. As Pope John Paul II has said, "protecting the environment is first of all the right to live and the protection of life.[24]

Dominion as Stewardship

Other churches also explore their role in addressing environmental issues and rise to the challenge of developing a theological stance and response to these issues.

In 1986, the General Synod Board of the Church of England issued a report, "Our Responsibility for the Living Environment," where they articulated that the dominion given to human beings over the natural

[20] New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, "A Consistent Ethic of Life," 3.
[21] John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis as A Common Responsibility," 8.
[22] New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference, "A Consistent Ethic of Life," 3.
[23] John Paul II, "The Ecological Crisis as A Common Responsibility," 8.
[24] U.S. Catholic Bishops, "Renewing the Earth," 6.

order is that of stewards who have to render an account.[25] The report enumerates the steps that their members need to take to "render an account." These include working to establish a just and economical use of the earth's resources, as well as, minimizing the impact of environmental pollution. To act to curtail damage to flora and fauna and to extend this restraint to other parts of the world and to take all possible steps to encourage the world's population so "that human beings can live in sustainable harmony with the rest of the natural order and flourish without want."

For R. Albert Mholer Jr, a Southern Baptist, the Creator granted and assigned human beings a dual responsibility–dominion and stewardship. This can be gleaned from a reading of Genesis 1, where human beings, made in the image of God, are to exercise dominion and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. This extensive rule sets the human being apart from the rest of creation, and the other creatures.[26] However, dominion should not be equated with domination. Dominion as stewardship connotes that human beings as *Imago Dei* or image of God exercises responsible management over nonhuman creations. The concept of *Imago Dei* validates the argument of humans as the pinnacle of God's creation or the creation of humans as the summit of God's creative purpose.[27]

An ecological stewardship entails that humans are given the task to care for the earth, not to destroy it. Viewed this way, dominion means to rule as a good steward and stewardship means to serve. Earth dominion is to serve the earth. Moreover, dominion as stewardship does not mean ruling over that which belongs to humans, but is the care of what has been entrusted to us by the Creator.[28] According to

[25] Church of England General Synod Board for Social Responsibility, "Our Responsibility to the Living Environment," (London: Church House Publishing, 1986). In 1990, a statement *Christians and the Environment* was issued by a working party in the Church of England as an answer to the challenge posed by the General Synod's 1986 Report.

[26] R. Albert Mholer, Jr., "The Brave New World of Cloning: A Christian Worldview Perspective," in *Religious Perspectives on Cloning*, ed. Ronald Cole-Turner ((Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997) [book on-line] (accessed October 2002); available from http://www.pacinter.net/users/chawman/cloning.htm#N_27_; Internet.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Steve Swierenga, "Earth-Friendly Stewardship," [article on-line] (accessed October 2002); available from http://www-stu.calvin.edu/chimes/970307/o5030797.htm; Internet.

Calvin DeWitt, an Evangelical theologian, the concept of dominion in Genesis 1 requires a re-reading and in doing so, one can discover that the "dominion" described here has to do with service to creation rather than a license to abuse God's earth. He posits that Jesus, the incarnation of God as a man, is the best example of what ruling should look like. If Christians are to truly understand how to have dominion over the earth, they must look at the way Jesus exercised his dominion. DeWitt cites Philippians 2:5–8:

> Have this mind among yourselves, which was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross. (RSV)

To serve with great humility is what Jesus exemplified. For DeWitt, "dominion" does not need to mean "domination" or ownership–the message of Gen 1 is to serve and "to keep" the Garden. In order to do so, humans were instructed to be stewards to the rest of creation.[29]

True stewardship of creation entails the responsible use of the gifts of creation. A good steward does not coddle the resources entrusted to him or her and let them lie fallow and undeveloped. Rather, s/he uses them, and develops them to the best of one's ability.

2. Critique of Stewardship

Stewardship has largely been concerned with the ethical responsibility of humans to manage the planet as if it is a garden, symbolically referring to the Garden of Eden in the Genesis creation story. The moral implication is that if humans become responsible managers and stewards, we can make our planet a better place to live in. We can have enough resources for the incoming generations.

The dilemma of this particular approach is that it tends to situate humanity above the rest of creation, and assigns instrumental value to the latter. This means that the rest of creation is valuable only to

[29] Calvin Dewitt, "The Environmentalist's Bible: Does Dominion Equal Domination?" [article on-line] (accessed October 2002); available from http://www.onedeepwell.com/odw/framework/environmentalist.cfm; Internet.

the extent that they are useful to us. This implies that humanity is the most important specie, and we are apart and in charge of the rest of nature.

The Economic Underpinning of Stewardship

Clare Palmer underlines some flaws and difficulties in the concept of stewardship. The term "steward" in the Old Testament, usually refers to "the man over the house" with responsibility to the master for the affairs of the household and his possessions such as the case in Daniel 1:11.[30] This connotes some economic overtones of stewardship. This is worthy to note as the concept of stewardship has been incorporated in the economic paradigm. The economic paradigm rests on "responsible planetary management." This worldview acknowledges that we have serious environmental, resource, and population problems that we deal with by becoming better and more responsible planetary managers. This paradigm is sustained by the principle of enlightened self-interest, that is, better earth care is better self-care. As long as we can sustain our specie by using a mixture of market-based competition, better technology, and some government intervention to promote sustainable forms of economic growth, then earth's resources could prove to be limitless. She particularly cites the speech made by Pope John Paul II:

> Exploitation of the riches of nature must take place according to criteria that take into account not only the immediate needs of people, but also the needs of the future generations. In this way the stewardship over nature, entrusted by God to man, will not be guided by shortsightedness or selfish pursuits; rather it will take into account the fact that all created goods are directed to the good of all humanity.[31]

Palmer maintains that this speech clearly regards nature as a "trust account," which must be allowed to accrue interest for future generations.

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[30] Clare Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics," in *Earth Beneath: A Critical Guide to Green Theology*, ed. Ian Ball, Margaret Goodall, Clare Palmer and John Reader (London: SPCU, 1992),72.

[31] Pope John Paul II, speech at the United Nations Center for the Environment in Nairobi, August 1985.

Theological Dilemma of Stewardship

Palmer claims that the economic underpinning of stewardship is apparent in both Old and New testaments. Daniel 1:11-20 and Matthew 24:45-51 focus on the rights and responsibilities of a steward for his master's property. For her, the first difficulty with the stewardship focus is that God is viewed as an absentee property owner who has put human beings in charge of the rest of creation. This implies that having created the world God has absented Himself from its day-to-day and left this in the hands of humans. This sustains the idea of the separation of God and the natural world. God establishes distance from the world–a view that, for Lynn White, Jr., justifies Christianity's devastation of native religions that perceived God as indwelling, that is, God is in the world–a pantheistic or panentheistic model and that this God/nature dichotomy opened up nature for exploitation and abuse.[32] The theological quandary sets in, Palmer claims, when majorities of people regard "biblical" or "theological" premises as "absolute truths."[33]

The theological premise of stewardship has political consequences when it calls for God to be a "benign dictator," an absentee proprietor who rules the natural world. Palmer holds that this particular model of God–feudal, ruler, sovereign, dominating the world, and ultimately triumphant, helps to sustain, if not create, the oppressive, hierarchical societies in which we live. Feminist theologians, as well as, other liberation theologians, reject this particular model of God. Palmer argues that this model, which is used as a support for stewardship originates from a human relationship that is now condemned: slavery. She continues that what stewardship represents is unsuitable in a modern society that rejects a "feudal, despotic, authoritarian" government.[34]

The ecological consequence of stewardship is that nature is just a humans' resource – that humans are really the ones in control, and that nature depends on the latter for management. Palmer criticizes these assumptions by citing ecologists who declare that, on the contrary, humans are a part of nature and dependent on it for survival; that nature can very well take care of itself. She cites the work of James

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[32] Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," [article online] (accessed November 2001); available from http://www.zbi.ee/~kalevi/lwhite.htm; Internet.

[33] Palmer, "Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics," 75.

[34] Ibid., 75-77.

Lovelock, who proposes the GAIA Hypothesis,[35] which seeks to establish that elements in the natural world such as rainforests, contribute to the regulation of the earth's temperature that is very crucial for the existence of life, as well as, its continuity in the planet.[36] Seen from this perspective, humanity as specie is not really the most crucial element in the ecosphere, which is multipart and complex. For Palmer, it is foolish to assume that humans should dominate the natural world, owing to some theological premises, which justify subordination and eventually, exploitation of nature. She regards stewardship of the natural world ultimately, as profoundly anthropocentric and unecological because legitimizes increased use of nature by humans solely to serve economic purposes.

The Ecocentric Critique

Critics of human-centered worldviews believe that such worldviews must be expanded to recognize inherent or intrinsic value of all forms of life. Robyn Eckersley, author of *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*, [37] puts the basic tenets of the ecocentric approach as based on an ecologically informed philosophy of internal relatedness, according to which all organisms are not simply interrelated with their environment but also constituted by those environmental interrelationships. She uses the ideas of Charles Birch and John Cobb who forward that it is more accurate to think of the world in terms of "events" or "societies of events" rather than "substances," viewed as enduring patterns among changing events.[38]

[35] Ibid., 84.

[36] *Encyclopedia Britannica* defines Gaia Hypothesis as "Model of the earth in which its living and nonliving parts are viewed as a complex interacting system that can be thought of as a single organism. Developed c.1972 largely by British chemist James E. Lovelock and U.S. biologist Lynn Margulis, the Gaia hypothesis is named after the Greek earth goddess. It postulates that all living things have a regulatory effect on earth's environment that promotes life overall, the earth is homeostatic in support of life-sustaining conditions. The theory is highly controversial. See the full article in *Encyclopedia Britannica* 1999 multimedia ed. [CD-ROM] (London: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc.).

[37] Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany, New York: SUNY, 1992).

[38] Charles Birch and John B. Cobb, *Liberation of Life: From the Cell to the Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) as cited by Robin Eckersley in "Ecocentrism Explained and Defended," in *Debating The Earth: An Environmental Reader*, ed. John Dryzek and David Schlosberg (New York: Oxford Press, 1998), 376.

According to this picture of reality, the world is intrinsically dynamic, an interconnected web of relations in which there are no absolute, discrete entities and dividing lines between the living and the nonliving; the animate and the inanimate, or the human and the nonhuman. This model of reality undermines anthropocentrism insofar as whatever faculty we choose to underscore our uniqueness or specialness as the basis of our moral superiority (e.g. rationality, language or tool-making ability), we will invariably find either that there are some humans who do not possess such a faculty or that there are some nonhumans who do.[39] From an ecocentric perspective therefore, to single out only our special attributes as a basis of our exclusive moral considerability is simply human chauvinism that conveniently fails to recognize the special attributes of other life-forms: it assumes that what is distinctive about humans is more worthy, rather than simply different from, the distinctive features of other life-forms.

While Eckersley acknowledges that anthropocentric environmental ethics such as resource conservation, advocate care and caution based on an enlightened self-interest, the dilemma, according to her, is that they see the ecological destruction as a human one. This is where they differ from an ecological perspective, which sees the tragedy as both human and nonhuman. A thoroughgoing ecocentric perspective is one that, "within obvious kinds of practical limits, allow all entities (including humans) the freedom to unfold in their own way unhindered by the various forms of human domination."[40]

Eckersley points out that the philosophical premises of anthropocentric ethics posit humans as either separate from and above the rest of nature, and if not separate from the rest of nature nonetheless, the acme of evolution. These premises owe themselves from the mechanistic, materialistic worldview of the Enlightenment. It does not mean that ecocentrism is "anti-science." Indeed, the advent of science brought about a nonanthropocentric way of looking at reality, and it is in fact, the anthropocentric perspective that has come under challenge by the recent scientific discoveries. The scientific breakthroughs had made significant inroads into many of the assumptions of the Newtonian world. One of them is anthropocentrism – the belief that there is a clear and morally relevant dividing line between humankind and the rest of nature, that humankind is the only or principal source of value and

[39] Eckersley, "Ecocentrism Explained and Defended," 376.

[40] Ibid., 377.

meaning in the world, and that nonhuman nature is there for no other purpose but to serve humankind.[41] Clearly, for Eckersley and the rest of those who advocate an ecocentric approach to environmental ethics, a time has come to promote an ethic, which includes the relations with the rest of the biotic community and where the nonhuman world is no longer posited simply as the background for the means to the self-determination of individuals. Rather, the different members of the nonhuman community are also appreciated as important in their own terms, as having their own (varying degrees of autonomy) and modes of being. The implications of applying this expanded model of internal relations to social and political thought are far-reaching.

3. Conclusion

Stewardship as an ethical responsibility to manage the planet with love, care and knowledge aptly stirred the emotions and sentiments of the largely industrialized and prosperous nations to take stock and contemplate on the massive environmental destruction that lay before their eyes. The same nations who had for centuries, plundered the earth for the fulfillment of the aspirations for social and political development.

Stewardship proposes an ethic of responsible management or stewardship of these natural resources so that the next generations of humans can be assured of continued access to these resources. Philosophically, it cites lack of respect for life as the root cause of environmental crisis, where "life" means human life. Proponents of stewardship believe that a lack of respect for human life translates into

[41] Eckersley cites from Richard and Val Routley, who states that the dominant western view is simply inconsistent with an environmental ethic. Stewardship meanwhile view man's role, like that of a farm manager, is to make nature productive by his efforts though not by means that will deliberately degrade its resource. Although this position departs from the dominant position in a way which enables the incorporation of some evaluations of an environmental ethic, it does not go far enough... for it will lead to what a thoroughgoing environmental ethic would reject, a principle of total use, implying that every natural area should be cultivated or otherwise used for human ends, "humanized." See "Against the Inevitability of Human Chauvinism," in *Environmental Ethics*, ed. Robert Elliot (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 104-129. Eckersley also refers to Warwick Fox as he concludes in *Transpersonal Ecology*, that anthropocentrism is not only-self-serving but also empirically bankrupt and theoretically disastrous, practically disastrous, logically inconsistent, morally objectionable, and incongruent with a genuinely open approach to experience.

a lack of respect for the rest of God's creation. The strength of this ethic is that it brought to the attention of world leaders the interconnection of human misery borne out of massive poverty with the environmental crisis, yet the weakness lies in the emphasis on human tribulations and in effect, human being's superiority over the rest of nature. This particular problematic assumption is brought into the limelight glaringly by the ecocentric, environmental ethics. Yet, stewardship can rise to the challenge: it does not require a radical transformation on the part of Christianity as it already considers God and human beings subjects in themselves. All it takes is extending this consideration to nature. The commandment to love God and neighbor encompasses love to all God's creation. Thus, Christian praxis, when broadened to include nature, means care for nature. ❑