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Η ΔΙΑΤΡΙΒΗ ΕΚΠΟΝΗΘΗΚΕ ΣΤΟ ΠΛΑΙΣΙΟ ΥΠΟΤΡΟΦΙΩΝ
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ABSTRACT

THE COMMON GOOD FROM POLITICAL, ETHICAL AND ECOLOGICAL POINTS OF VIEW

This thesis¹ comprises the Prologue, the Introduction, six chapters, a Concluding part and closes with its bibliography (main sources and secondary bibliography) and a table of names.

In the Introduction (pages 11- 46) the author elaborates on the reasons which prompted her to choose this particular subject, supports its originality, overviews the relative bibliography, discusses the problem of methodology by which such subjects are investigated and poses various questions and problems that must ultimately be answered in order for the subject to achieve sufficient clarification.

In the First Chapter entitled “The concept of common, the common good, and the Pre-Socratic understanding of nature” she investigates how the notions of the common and the common good are formed amongst the Pre-Socratic thinkers in relation to both the city and nature. The reference to the notions of *collective, public, common interest and common good*, as opposed to that which is *private, individualistic and self-interested* is essential, because the notion, amongst other things, that is promoted in this thesis is that without our real interest towards what is common and what is the common good (of the city) as well as that of nature, there is no possible way out of our environmental crisis.

Within this framework the thesis discusses the views of Pre-Socratic thinkers and philosophers (including the Sophists) regarding the city (as a political community that embodies the common good) and nature that is

1. I would like to express my thankfulness to Dr. Kostas Kalimtzis and Mr. Panayiotis Zachariou for editing the English abstract of my thesis (Ευχαριστώ θερμά για την επιμέλεια της Περίληψης στην αγγλική τον Δρα Κωνσταντίνο Καλιμιτζή και τον κύριο Παναγιώτη Ζαχαριίου)

seen as a primary principle and as a precondition within which political society acquires substance and significance. According to Pre-Socratic thinkers that which is ordained by nature (φύσει) has axiological priority over what is conventional (θέσει). And as such, the thesis makes extensive reference to the texts of Pre-Socratic thinkers and philosophers (the Orphics, Homer, Hesiod, Solon, Anaximander, the Pythagoreans, Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Democritus, and the Sophists), interprets the relevant texts related to the subject, and shows the contemporary importance and value of the opinions expressed there.

In the Second Chapter, the author examines the concept of good and common good as it pertains to both the city and nature in the philosophies of Plato, Aristotle, and the post-Aristotelian philosophers (the Stoics, the Epicureans, the Skeptics, the Cynics, the Neo-Platonists and St. Augustine as a representative of early Christian thought and as a link between the Ancient Classical Greek and the Christian era). The examination of this subject is particularly useful for illuminating theo-retical problems that have arisen within political and moral philosophy and which are connected to contemporary efforts to theoretically overcome the impasse caused by the present day environmental crisis.

An analysis of the ideas of Plato, Aristotle and the other thinkers (Plotinus) sufficiently shows that nature is a *principle* (ἀρχή), that it is good and that it constitutes the very foundations of life and political society. On examining the particular issues in this section, many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of the views of Greek philosophers by present-day scholars are overturned or altered and thus the contribution of these philosophers in relation to the subject researched becomes quite evident. Reference to Greek thought concerning the present topic offers an important field of study, brings to light and establishes the concept of what is collective, public, common (as opposed to what is individualistic and private), and the common good within Greek thought and philosophy. This study not only contributes to the understanding of more recent, contemporary philosophical discourse on this subject, but also constitutes a substantial parameter that elucidates topics in contemporary conceptual investigation. Neglecting that which is the common good, for instance, or understanding it solely from a self-interested, individualistic perspective does not seem to lead to any kind of solution to the environmental problem humanity is faced with. The same can be said about the

constitution of the concept of nature (or of the cosmos) and humankind's relation to it. The views of Greek thinkers, free from dogmatic or ideological preconceptions, may very well enlighten many aspects of related environmental matters which are being broadly discussed in the present. This of course does not mean that we are seeking to find the beginning of today's environmental consciousness or an environmental crisis in antiquity (for such consciousness may not have existed at the time). The concepts of ancient Greek philosophy provide a broad spectrum of theoretical insights that can lend advance our own conceptual tools for investigations into the current problems that are being investigated by environmental philosophy. This body of related concepts enables us to "borrow", so to speak, views, which when appropriately reconstructed may be valuable and useful in our modern age.

Besides, without the proper conceptual definition of the private, collective, public, and common good there seems to be no possible theoretical escape from the problems of what we today call the "environmental crisis". It is furthermore obvious that such reference to the past (which is naturally contrary to the policy that could be pursued, that is to say, to simply put forward another *persuasive definition* for all these concepts) may bear vast importance, since it frees, as it has been said, the researcher from direct involvement with ideologies abounding within contemporary environmental thought; and thus, distanced from such a state of affairs, it seems that the opinions endorsed bear timeless values.

Of special note are the views examined and elaborated in the Second chapter regarding the contribution of Plato, Aristotle and the other Greek philosophers as to how the structure of the natural world and its creatures are conceived, as well as to how these philosophers understand the political community in relation to nature. According to Plato and Aristotle the world, nature, is perceived as a value in itself (the world is good and becoming, in other words, beautiful), and generally the natural creatures themselves share in this value. According to Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, the Neo-Platonists as well as St. Augustine, *being* and *value* coexist in the creatures of nature.

The Third Chapter delves on how nature is conceived from anthropocentric environmental ethics. These ethics regarding the environment are discerned in two views: One view is considered as strongly anthropocentric in the sense that nature exclusively serves humankind

and human interests; as noteworthy as it is, such an ethical position is closely associated with man's general relation to nature and his domination over it; this state of things predominantly characterises our contemporary world. The other view is called "ecological ethics" (see the Fourth chapter). In this way the thesis initially and synoptically refers to ethical views and stances regarding nature, which were held during the early Christian, the Byzantine, and the Medieval periods. Mainly based on the secondary bibliography, the thesis goes on to address the conceptions of nature that began to surface and predominate during the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation, the scientific revolution, and the Enlightenment. The view that gradually gained ground and eventually prevailed was that nature is an inanimate substance and a machine or simply regarded as *matter-in-motion* and that through the mode of science man must superimpose his domination and will upon it (G. Galilei, Fr. Bacon, R. Descartes, Is. Newton). Thus a conception concerning nature (rendered as a model) was consolidated, namely that nature is a deposited material to be exploited. This view of things, combined with the conception of Adam Smith and others (e.g. John Locke) in reference to the free Market and the Industrial Revolution, led to overexploitation and in a way the exhaustion of nature. As such, the anthropocentric view as a philosophical position became dominant and subsequently dictated an analogous stance towards nature. This stance, which continues to enjoy great acceptability in our days, is the "anthropocentric form of environmental ethics", which can be divided into two forms - that of a strictly anthropocentric ethical perception (which is called the *dominion assumption*) and that of a mild conception that would have man as the overseer of nature (which is called the *stewardship view*).

These aforementioned positions are sufficiently developed and the author goes on to address man's ethical stance towards animals, viewing things within the framework of anthropocentric ethics. Thus the thesis refers to the properties of animals (Plutarch, the Stoics) and the relation of man towards animals; it analyses Kant's and Bentham's views; and then concentrates on Peter Singer's views, who, seeing things from within a utilitarian perspective and the ethical principle of not *inflicting harm* to creatures that possess the sense of feeling, champions the protection and freedom of animals from states of captivity. Tom Regan's view, which champions a radical equality of all animals, holding that they have a

share in all the rights of humans, is regarded as an extreme ethical stance on the issue.

In addition, the author discusses the topic of our ethical relationship towards plants. Throughout all this research, it is clearly stated that man, as an ethical being, develops relationships with other creatures by viewing each one separately, that is to say, as individual or particular creatures. The network and the ethos of these relationships may differ and be differentiated, when one views things through the prism of anthropocentric ethics; however, seeing things from this perspective, man and his objective goals take precedence and priority. If value is attributed to the other creatures, this reveals not only what attributes they have, but also the quality of human feelings and the nature of human character, as Kant believes.

The Fourth Chapter deals with ecological moral philosophy and its position regarding nature. According to this conception nature must be considered as possessing a value in itself. The thesis holds that nature (and the environment in particular) is a principle and in *principle* must be perceived as a common good for all people whether they have consciousness of this or not.

In support of this position, the thesis conducts methodical research into many particular topics. Thus, it first discusses whether the existence of a new moral starting point that ordains man's relationship to nature is necessary and essential, or whether what is required may be a simple expansion of our anthropocentric moral concern in a way that nature is included in man's moral interests.

In relation to this topic, the author analyses the view of the Routleys and discusses the positions of Aldo Leopold, which advocate a new ethic that could be called "ecological" in the sense that it suggests that the "*oikos*" (hence *ecology*) is conceived as a biotic community. This new ethics views man not outside nature, but within it, and subsequently continues to define man's relation to this biotic community or biosphere. Such an approach towards the ecological-environmental problem seems to alter all the thus far existing theories in the domain of moral philosophy, because it does not examine human relationships to each particular, individual creature, but to the whole (which is the biotic community or the biosphere), which should be conceived as a good in itself. In this way, nature as a community assumes axiological priority, and this prioritization

is equated to a change of paradigm; this means that the anthropocentric model (with the meaning developed earlier) must be abandoned and its place the ecological model should be adopted.

The conceptions initiated by Aldo Leopold have been widely accepted by thinkers and philosophers and have since undergone further elaboration and development. To substantiate this new ethical conception, the author penetratingly investigates the positions of Eric Katz, John Baird Callicott, Holmes Rolston III, Robin Attfield, Laura Westra, Keekok Lee and the representatives of what is known as radical or deep ecology. The views of these philosophers are analysed and evaluated so that their main positions become apparent, which hold that nature has special value (that is, not only animals, but the ecosystems as well have value). This conception accepts the view that nature has a value priority and does not accept the utilitarian position that our stance towards nature will be considered as a *contingent fact*, since such a circumstantial and opportunistic ethical relation towards nature does not preserve nature and, of course, prevents us from accepting the correct view that nature is a principle and that must be absolutely protected. Without adopting this latter position, it does not seem that nature can be saved from harm and destruction. The ecological ethics, apart from the prioritization of the whole instead of just the part, accepts that creatures are related to each other and in a way this view seems to validate the doctrine, which in contemporary philosophy is called "the doctrine of internal relations". This is why the last part of the Fourth chapter discusses certain philosophical problems relevant to environmental ethics and ecological philosophy. It thus examines the problem concerning the relationship of facts and values or the so-called "naturalistic fallacy". The views based on ecological ethics imply that nature is a value in itself and subsequently its existence and value coexist. This means that from the existence of nature, humans, as intelligent beings, objectively judging things, attribute value to it, which is not simply a projected and a fictional mental state, but it is based on objective and irrefutable situations and processes. Through comprehensive support and in-depth analysis, the author examines the doctrine regarding the gap between facts and values with reference to contemporary theories (Hilary Putnam, Peter Singer, Holmes Rolston III, W. D. Casebeer, W. V. Orman Quine, George Rousopoulos, Keekok Lee, Robin Attfield, etc.). The view promoted in

the thesis is that, although the distinction between descriptive and value statements holds, there is no gap between facts and values and that nothing can prevent the formulation of value judgments sustained by the state of things in nature. This means that there is no fallacy when we accept the view that nature is both a principle and has primary value, and as such it is the common good for humanity at large.

This is why it is sustained that if nature is simply regarded, according to the views of logical empiricism and positivism, as deprived of every value, many things are definitely overlooked, although this view should not be taken to mean that science should necessarily abandon its own mode of research and succumb to metaphysical conceptions.

Besides all this, important observations are formulated when the thesis examines the doctrine of internal relations and how it pertains to issues raised by deep ecology.

The Fifth Chapter entitled “The main positions of contemporary ethical, political and social philosophy in relation to the common good and nature” examines the conceptions regarding the common good and nature within prevailing contemporary socio-political theories. Thus it addresses the ethical theories, the political conception, and various socio-economical of problems, as they relate to nature perceived as a common good.

The chapter firstly discusses the positions of utilitarianism, analyses Mill and Bentham’s positions and stresses the importance and the contribution of the utilitarian moral-political theory to social prosperity and human progress. This theory has a lot to offer as to the protection of nature (and mainly the creatures of the animal kingdom). However, left to itself this theory does not theoretically suffice due to its unswerving stance regarding the protection of nature, because, according to it, nature as a *good* must be looked upon in a *contingent* way. The chapter continues by discussing the positions of deontological ethics (of Kant and others) and stresses their value and utility in relation to the environment. Inspired by Immanuel Kant, certain thinkers adopt his ethical maxims and postulates and apply them to the environmental issues, after they have been imbued with axiological content relating to nature (such as, for instance, respect for nature, the recognition of nature’s superiority in a way that it may acquire a state of a person, etc.). Further on, the teleological ethical theory and the theory of natural law are examined, both of which have

their roots in Aristotle (and the Stoics) and in Thomas Aquinas. According to the said ethical theory, living creatures have their own good, irrespective of the uses natural creatures are subjected to by humans. Aretological ethical theory (or virtue ethics) is involved in the environmental issues, because the formation of man's ethical character has to do with what stance he can assume toward nature and the virtuous human's ability to exert control over his desires, whose satisfaction, of course, is related to the management and consumption of natural resources. It follows, therefore, that virtue ethics are related to the form of culture and education that dominates in a socio-political environment. If, within this framework, nature is thought of as a primary principle, as a primary good, and education is accordingly regulated, it is then that aretological ethics acquire importance.

Apart from these ethical theories, the thesis discusses contemporary political and social theories and views in relation to the environment. According to liberalism or neo-liberalism or libertarianism (which does not accept the principle of social justice and which sustains itself on the principle of utilitarianism, stressing privatization and free enterprise (see F. A. Hayek, R. Nozick), the environment may be thought of as a good (which can be endangered and therefore can sometimes be protected by the state), but it is always a good that can be bartered and which takes no priority over other goods.

John Rawls' liberalism (which bears social nuances) also does not seem to think of nature and the environment as primary principles. This is why environmental protection is not constitutionally instituted in John Rawls' thinking. It is however thought of as a value that is related to what is known as "comprehensive doctrines" or, in any event, to something toward which we must show an interest, always viewing things from an anthropocentric perspective. John Rawls furthermore gives priority to the meaning of what is *right* against what is *good* and subsequently he would not be able to accept that the environment is good in itself, irrespective, in fact, of the criteria existing within a free, open and democratic society.

Besides this, the predominating perceptions of liberalism are closely related to the positions of atomism and individualism, according to which the *self* is prioritized, which according to Nozick is a bounded self. But such a kind of self can see no interests of other persons and even more so no interests and rights of other natural beings.

In contrast to the views of individualistic liberalism (or libertarianism), social or communal political conceptions rooted in classical Greek thought (Aristotle and Plato) are explored. These views are found to have exceptional significance regarding the issues of our day and age and are extensively elaborated on. They are found to justly give priority to the common good (as opposed to what is simply and occasionally correct), without this necessarily meaning that what is socially correct must be ignored. Lastly, the author examines certain economic-political conceptions, which, in spite of their tenure within the climate of social and political freedom and of free enterprise and competitive market, accept the view that the natural environment requires special attention and care, because the principles and the competitive procedures of free market cannot be fully applied in relation to it. In fact, Amartya Sen's relative views are of special significance, as he supports the need for special adjustment measures for environmental protection and stresses that the development of environmental ethics can do many things for the safeguarding of the environment.

The Final Chapter of the thesis addresses certain topics of special significance, which govern the contents of the thesis and more analytically define the meaning of nature as a common good not only for the western world, but for the global community as a whole.

The author supports the view that the ecological good must be considered as the common good for the global community; the possibility of universalising the ecological common good, properly understood, rests upon the key conception of what is a moral human agent. In other words, if the moral consciousness and will of an agent (that is of a moral person), understands something as a *bonum summum* and thus as a duty, then this understanding theoretically can be universalised. Thus the ecological global good, as a good of utmost importance and priority, can be a universal (or ecumenical) common good, and the morality we need is the one dealing with the environmental problems of a global kind and the ethics of the present age must be global ecological ethics.