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**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES
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DEPARTMENT OF
PHILOSOPHY**
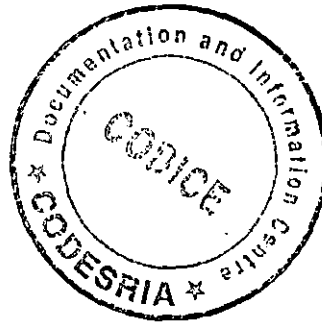
A moral response to the conflict of interests between human and nonhuman nature

MARCH 2002

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

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A MORAL RESPONSE TO THE CONFLICT OF INTERESTS BETWEEN HUMANS AND NONHUMAN NATURE

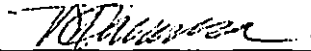A THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (Ph.D) OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

BY

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B. Ed (Hons.), M.A (Philosophy)
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DECLARATION

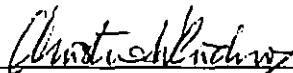This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university.

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MAKOKHA K.T.

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors

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PROFESSOR K. WAMBARI

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DOCTOR C.W. GICHURE

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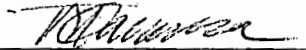
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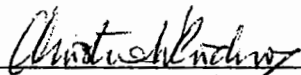
DEDICATION

To all conscientious men and women who humbly recognise
nonhuman beings as fellow sojourners in the universe.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Special thanks are also due to my family particularly to my parents for denying themselves to make me what I am. To my beloved wife Mildred and daughter, Nabukuye, I am appreciative of your patience and kind understanding.

Finally, many thanks to the entire team that was involved in the typing of this thesis. I am particularly appreciative of the effort that Janet Wanjiku put in the typing of the entire draft of this project.

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ABSTRACT

Environmental protection and care is increasingly becoming a major pre-occupation of many scholars and various fields of intellectual pursuit. This is mainly prompted by the current environmental crisis occasioned mainly by soaring human populations and increased capacity by human beings to interfere with the natural processes. This increased interference with nature has precipitated unprecedented increase in pollution in various forms, destruction of forests, problems of disposal of toxic wastes and garbage, extinction of both plant and animal species and so on.

Thus, human beings have become pervasive, overwhelming and abusive to the natural environment. This raises serious ethical concerns in particular; we discern serious conflict between humanity and nonhuman nature. It is against this backdrop that this study set out to argue for a moral intervention to the environmental crisis. The study is premised on the centrality of morality in harmonization of relationships, as exemplified in human relationships. The present study has endeavoured to demonstrate that ethical relationships transcend human to human to include the human to nonhuman nature category. Hence, the question of conflict applies to human to nonhuman nature relationship in as much as it does to human relationships. The central thesis of the study is anchored on the moral standing of nonhuman nature; the view that nonhuman beings have a value of their own, upon which their interests and well-being are predicated. It is on the basis of this that we have argued for the extension of moral considerability to nonhuman nature.

We have also endeavoured to concretise our thesis within the specific context of an African worldview to test the validity of some of our arguments. Specifically, a reconstruction of Bukusu environmental ethical values gathered through intensive oral interviews reveals an ethic, which recognizes intrinsic value in nonhuman nature, while emphasizing the unique place of humanity in nature. Thus, the ensuing ethic is in pursuit of principles aimed at achieving ecological balance and harmony. This is perfectly in line

with one of the central functions of morality, namely, harmonizing relationships. In addition, these findings perfectly fit into and reinforce the conceptual paradigm of ecosustainability, identified, clarified and argued for in this thesis. In sum, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter one outlines the general introduction, purpose, and scope of the study.

Chapter two, explores the centrality of the institution of morality in relationships involving humans, setting the ground for the central thesis of this study, namely, to invoke moral reasoning and guidance in attempt to surmount conflicts between humans and nonhuman nature.

Chapter three endeavours to clarify the problematic and controversial question of the basis of moral concern for nonhuman nature, thus grounding moral intervention in human – nonhuman nature relationship.

Chapter four, by way of exemplification reconstructs Bukusu environmental values as a way of concretising some of the central arguments of the study and as a contribution towards an understanding or theory of environmental ethics.

Chapter five on the other hand interrogates prevailing theoretical formulations in environmental ethics, with the view to showing their weaknesses in articulating human – nonhuman nature relationship. Then we present our considered conceptual framework of ecosustainability as this study's contribution towards an understanding of environmental ethics.

Chapter six in a recap, attempts self – assessment particularly in the light of the objectives and assumptions of the study, summarizes and concludes the main arguments of the study, with a final note on the recommendations and the way forward.

1.0 INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In the last few decades, environmental problems have ranked high among the greatest challenges facing humanity. The most disturbing issue about them is that they are mainly human – caused. These problems are exemplified in increased pollution in all forms, wanton destruction of forests, depletion of the ozone layer, disposal of toxic wastes and garbage, extinction of numerous species of both flora and fauna and so on. Some of these problems are technology related, others are attributable to such factors as poverty, poor governance, civil wars etc. Whatever the specific cause, however, these problems, herein collectively referred to as 'environmental crisis' have implications of global proportions.

In the light of the above scenario, it is our considered belief in the present study that the question of environmental care ought to be the concern of all right thinking and conscientious persons and fields of research. Indeed, it is gratifying to note that today studies on environmental issues from different perspectives abound, even though much more remains to be done. Philosophy raises and attempts to address fundamental problems, one of which is in our view human-nonhuman nature relationship.

It is the light of the above realization that this study has argued for a moral dimension to the question of human - nonhuman nature conflict. The moral concern is partly prompted by the realisation that most of the interference and hence destruction by human beings of the

natural variety is dictated not by genuine need but often a consequence of short-term expedience and selfish gain by some humans. This raises the question of abuse of nonhuman nature by human beings. This then is a pertinent concern in the broad context of environmental ethics, which basically interrogates the nature of the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature in ethical terms. The basic question then is; What ought to be the right relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature? The present study has endeavoured to argue that nonhuman beings have a good of their own and hence interests, which can either, be benefitted or harmed. It is in this light that we speak of human-nonhuman nature conflict.

In this light, the all - important question germane to this study is: How do we harmonise human interests with those of nonhuman beings, so as to achieve ecological sustainability? In the attempt to answer this question, this study has proposed recourse to ethics. In this endeavour, we are guided by Rolston III's (1988) contention that power devoid of ethics can be very destructive. And also reminded by the instructive words of Mahatma Gandhi that, there is enough in nature for human needs but not enough for their greed. There is however great controversy among moral philosophers concerning the nature, extent and effectiveness of environmental ethics. Hence, the next problematic question that confronts this study is: What sort of ethical orientation is viable to guide us in articulation and harmonisation of human-nonhuman nature relationship? This and other equally difficult questions have been attempted in this study.

To concretize some of our arguments and enrich our perceptions, this study has endeavoured to introduce into the debate on environmental ethics an African perspective. This has been done through a case study of the Bukusu people of Western Kenya, in which we have analysed their practices, beliefs, attitudes etc towards nonhuman nature and their role in environmental protection. Through this interrogation, we have been able to unveil the Bukusu environmental ethics, which has hopefully enriched our understanding of human-nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the contemporary world, owing to a myriad of factors *inter alia,* population explosions, poverty, poor governance, technological developments and so on, human beings have increased their capacity to impact on nonhuman beings. This has resulted in such problems as deforestation, pollution, extinction of numerous plant and animal species and so on. In ethical terms, human beings have become overwhelming, pervasive and even abusive of the natural world as they treat it merely as an object of their satisfaction. This in our view, among other things raises the question of conflicts of interests between human beings and nonhuman beings posing serious ecological problems.

In response to the above challenge, this study has argued that a moral solution could help to explain the right relationship between humans and nonhuman nature, alleviate human-

nonhuman nature conflictive relationship and thereby contribute to ecological harmony and balance.

To reinforce and enrich our arguments for a moral solution to human – nonhuman nature conflict, this study has introduced into the debate on environmental ethics an African perspective through a case study of the Bukusu people of Western Kenya. The rationale for this is that environmental practices of a community have relevance and meaning, which best reveal and reflect their ethic of environment.

1.3 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study is based on the following assumptions:

1. That increased exploitation of nonhuman beings unguided by an ethic is destructive not only of other forms of life but of humanity itself.

2. That an ethical solution to the conflict of interests between human beings and nonhuman beings and thus environmental crisis can be effective partly because it involves voluntary self-restraint.

3. That the conflict of interests between human beings and nonhuman beings are real and greatly contribute to ecological disharmony and imbalance.

4. That we find conservationist and preservationist attitudes and practices in Bukusu environmental value, which can contribute to an understanding of human-nonhuman nature relationship.

5. That a consistent and plausible paradigm to account for human – nonhuman nature relationship cannot completely avoid anthropocentrism.

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study seeks to achieve the following major objectives:

1. To show that morality has a central role in accounting for, and harmonizing relationships between human beings and nonhuman beings.

2. To explain the moral relationship that holds between human beings and nonhuman nature.

3. To account for the basis of a moral concern for nonhuman nature.

4. To show the inconsistence and implausibility of a nature – centred ethic propounded by some environmental ethicists.

5. To suggest a richer and consistent ethical paradigm of human – nonhuman nature relationship, in particular to help address conflicts arising thereof.

1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

1. As pointed out in the background to this study, environmental crisis is one of the greatest challenges facing humanity today. This study was therefore prompted by an urgent need and belief that the problem be addressed from all fronts. In this study, we are convinced that an ethical response can make significant contribution towards its alleviation.

2. It is also the contention of this study that in our environmental planning, we ought to take into consideration the interests of both humans and the nonhuman nature. This is useful in the adjudication of the conflicts between the various interests thereof. Consequently, we require a clear delineation of what interests to satisfy and what to frustrate at what time. In this endeavour, we need to be guided by moral reasoning in order to harmonize human activities and endeavours with nature as a way of addressing environmental problems.

3. In the light of the proposal to introduce environmental studies at all levels of the Kenya educational system, this study will hopefully provide useful reading material in the relevant area and level.

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

One major problematic in environmental ethics is the articulation of a perspective that can harmonize human-nonhuman nature relationship. This is partly because disagreement abounds among moral philosophers concerning the nature, extent and effectiveness of environmental ethics. This makes construction of a consistent and plausible theoretical paradigm to articulate the moral relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings quite controversial. It is in the light of this that this study set out partly to make a contribution towards the formulation of a viable conceptual paradigm. To set the dialectics in motion, however, we acknowledge and clarify the dominant perspectives that generally inform environmental ethical theory. The purpose of doing this is to show

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succinctly the extent to which the prevailing paradigms succeed and or fail in articulating human nonhuman nature relationship. This way we shall clearly see the gaps that our proposed paradigm will endeavour to close. Broadly, there are two broad schools of thought among environmental ethicists that have emerged, namely, shallow ecology and deep ecology.

Underlying the two perspectives is the question: What sorts of beings have moral standing? We note that both shallow ecology and deep ecology are concerned with relationships with the main distinction however, being that whereas shallow ecology is concerned with relationships that hold among human beings, deep ecology is wider in scope, being concerned with relationships among organisms i.e. humans, animals, plants and their interactions. Within these two broad perspectives, two theories are relevant to this study.

First, shallow ecology is represented by the anthropocentric theory whose main proponents in environmental ethics are Passmore (1974) and Attfield (1983). Anthropocentrism basically emphasizes the centrality of humanity in the universe, seeing humans as the focal point of reference. Given anthropocentrism therefore, all and only members of the homo sapiens species have moral standing. By implication therefore, nonhuman beings have no worth of their own save to serve and enhance the needs of human beings.

Consequently, within anthropocentric perspective, the basis of the moral relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings is not based on the respect for the latter **per se**, but rather on their resource or instrumental value. Thus, the duties human beings have regarding nonhuman beings are motivated by the need to "use (these) resources wisely for the collective human good for present and future generations" (Regan, 1982:211).

As a theory of environmental ethics, this study finds anthropocentrism in the above formulation deficient in a very fundamental sense, namely, its failure to recognize that nonhuman beings have intrinsic moral standing. This implies that we cannot accord moral standing to nonhuman beings and further, the duties we have towards nonhuman beings are contingent on human interests. Given this position, it would appear illogical and contradictory to speak of human-nonhuman nature conflicts.

Second, within deep ecology, we have ecocentric and biocentric theories both of which share some basic tenets. Among the most articulate proponents of biocentrism/ ecocentrism are Naess (1987) and Rolston III (1988). The two theories above take respectively, being an integral member of the ecosystem and being alive as the basic criteria of moral standing. Thus in terms of scope, ecocentrism is larger than biocentrism in that while the former extends the boundaries of beings worth moral considerability to all nature, the latter stops at beings with biological life.

Notwithstanding the above distinction between biocentrism and ecocentrism, the central tenet of deep ecology is that nature, together with its varied and complex ecological systems have worth of their own independent of human interests. What this means is that in relation to nonhuman beings, human beings ought to recognize that these beings have moral standing. In our view, to recognize that a being (whatever that being be) possesses moral standing has a number of implications with serious ethical considerations. Fundamentally, it implies recognition of the intrinsic worth of the being in question, attesting to its interest in continuity and well – being. It consequently demands that the interests of that being be accorded positive moral weight. Put differently, when moral decisions are made that affect that being, its interests must be taken into consideration. Thus moral agents have a prima facie duty not to harm, undermine or terminate its continuity and well-being.

Deep ecology perspective is not however, without its difficulties. For instance, whereas we can adequately and consistently account for a moral relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings within biocentric paradigm, it is not clear, however, how we can resolve conflicts between them i.e. human beings and nonhuman beings. The fundamental question is: How do we morally weigh and solve conflicts among beings with intrinsic value? Do we fall back to the great chain of being that is characteristic of anthropocentrism? In addition, the question of objectivity on the part of humans when adjudicating conflicts of interests between themselves and nonhuman beings also arises. To what extent will humans be impartial in the endeavour to resolve the conflicts?

In the view of this thesis, both anthropocentrism and biocentrism/ecocentrism on their own cannot adequately and consistently guide us in articulating human – nonhuman nature relationship, in particular to address the conflicts thereof. This study has endeavoured to transcend the limitations and difficulties inherent in both anthropocentrism and biocentrism/ecocentrism by introducing a third dimension, the Bukusu perspective into the debate. The result has been an alternative conceptual framework we have termed ecosustainability, which has been explicated on in details in Chapter Five of this thesis.

1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was carried out mainly in the library but with some fieldwork component. The nature of the study, being mainly conceptual and theoretical readily lends itself to the philosophical method of critical analysis, questioning and reconstruction. Thus, the library research concentrated mainly on analyzing the vast literature in the general area of environmental philosophy, in particular environmental ethics. From this, we were able to present our own arguments on the many relevant issues within the scope of the study.

The main libraries that were accessed are UNEP library, Kenyatta University, Moi University and University of Nairobi libraries. In addition, we also consulted the libraries at Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS), African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), Karura Forest Station and National Museums of Kenya (NMK).

The field study on the other hand was carried out among the Bukusu people of Bungoma District. Bungoma District is currently divided into five parliamentary constituents, that is, Kimilili, Sirisia, Kanduyi, Bumula and Webuye. The choice of this area was motivated by the fact that the researcher had carried out an earlier study on the relationship between morality and religion. Thus, apart from physical familiarity with the area of research, this researcher was also well versed with some ethical notions of the Bukusu people. This set the ground on which the present study (which is in the area of applied ethics) could be built on.

The nature of this research lends itself to a very specific type of informants, known as **Baswala Kumuse**. Through an earlier research referred to above, we identified **Baswala Kumuse** as the *de facto* leaders of Bukusu and Tachoni communities. **Baswala Kumuse** are ritual leaders of a time-honoured ritual performed in honour of a respected made elder and in some cases female (see Makokha 1993, Karani, 1992). These ritual performers are the acknowledged and respected sages of these communities. The ritual performers are accomplished professionals who undergo a long period of apprenticeship often spanning a period of more than fifteen years before they are allowed to practise. They are first and foremost great repositories of the communities' knowledge, on wide-ranging subjects. But most importantly, they are also social critics; they probe, question and critique the often taken for granted knowledge and values. In a word, they are philosophical.

This research relied on the expertise and knowledge of **Baswala Kumuse** as the principal informants. **Baswala Kumuse** as acknowledged leaders among the Bukusu and Tachoni communities are not restricted to particular geographical areas. They normally traverse the entire Bukusu and Tachoni land to perform the ritual, whenever they were invited. Thus, in the course of our research, no particular effort was made to allocate any specific number to each parliamentary constituency identified above. For example, we would attend a ritual ceremony in Kanduyi constituency only to find that the ritual leader presiding was from Sirisia constituency. In total, however, we managed to interview forty people, among them the recruits still undergoing training. In addition to **Baswala Kumuse**, we also managed to interview twenty respected and knowledgeable Bukusu elders. Often, **Baswala Kumuse** led us to these elders.

The method of inquiry involved mainly oral interviews, initiated dialogues and discussions. Through these, great insight in Bukusu human - nonhuman nature relationship was revealed. This formed the basis of our reconstruction of Bukusu environmental ethics as discussed in Chapter Four of this thesis.

1.8   LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed captures three broad themes. First, the nature of an ethic that can address environmental needs. Second, ethics as an ideal answer to environmental problems. Thirdly, what African ethical values and practices can contribute towards environmental protection and concern. It should be pointed out from the onset that there

is hardly any literature that directly address human-nonhuman nature conflict in ethical terms.

Passmore (1974), one of the pioneers in environmental ethics, after examining Western moral traditions and attitudes towards nature, is of the opinion that we can deal with environmental problems within the familiar, anthropocentric or human – human ethics. He argues that what we need is not a new ethic but a reconceptualization of the presupposition that human beings are absolute masters of nonhuman beings and recognition of the fact that manipulation of nature requires skill and care. Fox (1990) shares Passmore's view on this aspects calling for human responsibility for nonhuman nature.

Passmore's point of departure is Aldo Leopold's (1949) call for a new ethic to cater for environmental needs in his land ethic. As a basis of his idea of environmental ethics, Leopold had argued "a thing is right when it tends to promote the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (1949: 224ff). Passmore is critical of this view observing that it fails to generate ethical obligation because it is based on a fallacious premise that every relationship of mutual dependence automatically carries with it moral responsibility. Passmore's position on this issue is shared by other environmental philosophers e.g. Regan (1982) and Attfield (1983).

For instance, Regan (1982), though not an anthropocentrist, terms Leopold's land ethic as environmental fascism. Regan's main bone of contention is that Leopold's ethic involves two unacceptable implications. One, that the welfare of the biotic community is the only criterion of morality. Two, that individual members of the community can be sacrificed for the good of the biotic community.

Attfield (1983) concurs with Regan arguing that our principle loyalty should be focused not on the biosphere as an organic whole but on fellow humans and creatures. He further contends that environmental ethics cannot be given a hearing if it abandons the traditional concern for individuals in favour of an irreducible concern for biotic systems. Consequently, he advocates for the ideology of stewardship as the basis of environmental ethics.

In the same direction, Johnson (1991) is equally articulate in his critique of the holistic ethics of Leopold. He observes that there are different levels of interests despite the fact that all interests are morally significant. Further, although the different interests are interdependent, they are also distinct. Consequently, the interests of the whole are not necessarily summed up interests of parts.

The views of the above writers critical of the holistic ethics are generally termed by critics as anthropocentric and the proponents of holistic ethics argue that anthropocentrism is the biggest obstacle towards realization of an environmental ethic.

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This study shares this position only in part, in particular on anthropocentrism's failure to recognize the inherent worth of nonhuman beings. This is because granted anthropocentrism in the above form; it seems illogical to talk about conflicts between human beings and nonhuman beings.

This study argues that conflicts between human beings and nonhuman nature are real and hence a moral problem. By way of exemplification, Omondi (1994:14-16) has identified five possible scenarios of human-wildlife conflict in Kenya. Though not in the moral sense, these scenarios are instructive in our analysis of human-nonhuman nature conflicts carried out in this thesis. As Johnson seems to argue above, in our endeavour to sort out conflict of interests between human beings and nonhuman beings, we need to take cognizance of the fact that interests of the two groups are both varied and distinct. But unlike Johnson, this study holds that they are both of intrinsic nature. It is only on such realization, that we can come up with criteria to address human-nonhuman nature conflicts. As a matter of fact, the one main purpose of morality as demonstrated in Chapter Two is to harmonize relationships, for instance by morally resolving conflicts arising out of such relationships.

The present study proceeds within the conceptual paradigm, which recognizes the fact that human beings are essentially part and parcel of nature without denying that they are also apart from nature, hence positing an asymmetrical nature of the relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings. This realization is crucial to this study in two ways

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namely, in an endeavour to develop criteria for dealing with the conflict between human beings and nonhuman beings and in an attempt to influence the moral attitudes of human beings towards the natural world.

Johnson, for instance, aware of the asymmetrical relationship referred to above, poses a very fundamental question: Why should humans be condemned when they interfere with the environment and not nonhuman beings when they do the same? On this question, Johnson argues that nonhuman beings left on their own live in a balanced ecosystem. Indeed as pointed out earlier on it is true that human activities greatly disrupt this balance. Most importantly however, we argue with De George (1994) that it is only human beings who are that part of nature that have the capacity to make sense of the question of right and wrong. Thus nonhuman beings are not the sorts of beings that can either be praised or condemned for their actions in the moral sense. The implication is that morality cannot convincingly dispense with anthropocentrism. This is what De George terms 'anthropocentric predicament'. The present study has endeavoured to show the inconsistency and the practical implausibility of enunciating a nature-centred ethic advocated for by deep ecologists. This does not however mean that human conduct in relation to nonhuman nature is not subject to moral constraint. This is what Johnson calls for when he writes:

> ---the best we should do is to develop an awareness of other beings and their interests, together with an attitude of respect and consideration for their interests. To live effectively, we must fulfil our own well-being needs, living in harmony and balance with ourselves and with the world

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around us---morally, we ought to allow others to thrive in richness, harmony and balance (Johnson, 1991: 288).

Johnson therefore, is of the opinion that the principle of respect for interests ought to be at the core of a morality that will cater for both humans and nonhuman nature. This view corroborates Taylor's (1986) who has strongly articulated a theory of respect for nature. Taking environmental ethics to mean moral relations that hold between human beings and the natural world, Taylor holds that human conduct in relation to the natural world is truly subject to moral constraints. The present study not only shares this view but has endeavoured to demonstrate why this is indeed the case.

On the question of conflict between humans and nonhuman nature, Taylor suggests practical measures and principles that ought to be taken by humans. For example, he suggests imposition of limits on population, consumption habits and application of technology. This study has examined some of these suggestions in Chapter Five in the attempt to articulate an appropriate ethical framework that can help to harmonize and surmount human to nonhuman nature conflicts.

Rolston III (1988) aptly argues that power without ethic is profane and destructive in any community. This is obviously true and partly explains the abuse of human rights, lack of transparency and accountability commonplace in our societies today. In the light of Rolston III's position, we are in agreement with White (1990), Agazzi (1994), De George (1994) and Wiredu (1994) that science cannot alone alleviate the present environmental

crisis and conflict between the interests of humans and those of nonhuman beings. Exploitation of nonhuman beings raises questions of ethical nature which science and technology are least equipped to deal with. The above writers therefore, concur on the idea that we need the ethical component in the alleviation of environmental crisis, which the present study has explored in details.

The present study has proceeded from this contention, hopefully enhancing the views of the above writers by broadly examining the effectiveness and extent to which the moral component can contribute towards resolution of conflict between human interests and interests of nonhuman beings. Further, an interrogation of Bukusu environmental ethical values proved invaluable in our understanding of human-nonhuman nature relationship. This understanding has enhanced our theory of environmental ethics.

Coming closer home, Oruka (1992) seems to support the position held by many scientists that one need not be influenced by the ethics of deep ecology to be concerned with environmental preservation. Instead, that people can be inspired by the concern to ensure sustainable development and eradication of poverty. He however, fears that if the future generations discovered means that would guarantee their survival without ecological preservation as a pre-requisite then environmental concern based on sustainability would collapse. To say the least this fear is as implausible as it is remote. This study has in fact proceeded on the tenets of sustainability to present it (sustainability) as an ethical

framework that accounts for human-nonhuman nature relationship. The details of this, is the subject of Chapter Five of this thesis.

In the same work, Oruka's idea that traditional African wisdom has something to offer to environmental care is useful to this study. He sees unity between humans and nonhuman nature and a relationship of harmony in African ontology. Further, the spirit of communalism is extended to the rest of the ecological world. This view has also been articulated by Omari (1990) and Omo-Fadaka (1990) who seem to see a solution to environmental problems in African beliefs, practices and attitudes towards the natural world. They single out the principle of communalism e.g. in land ownership as an efficient system in ensuring environmental conservation. A detailed examination and analysis of the African worldview in (in the case study of the Bukusu) relation to human-nonhuman relationship has been carried out in Chapter Four shedding more light on the issues raised by the foregoing writers among others who express similar sentiments.

Espousing a similar line of thought, Wambari (1997) blames environmental crisis on the selfish, uncaring and arrogant human attitude towards nonhuman beings. This attitude, he contends is alien to the African worldview. In traditional African worldview, he argues, there is expressive recognition by humans of the rest of nature as fellow members of the universe. As one way of solving environmental problems therefore, Wambari calls for a change of attitude so that humans recognize the intrinsic worth of nonhuman beings and live in co-operation with them. Towards this, he concludes, traditional African

cultural values such as those related to agriculture and land concepts can provide a recipe for today's conservation measures.

Other studies have also recognized the role of culture in environmental conservation and preservation. Dorm-Adzobu (1991) reports about Malshegu people of Northern Ghana who have preserved a forest for cultural values. Similarly, a report on Kakamega forest in Kenya by Kenya Indigenous Forest Conservation Programme (KIFCON) has underscored the role of cultural practices in conservation efforts (Opole, 1992). In the same report, Opole claims that among the Luhya, "everything was evaluated in terms of its functional value, usefulness or harmful (sic) effects to the community---knowledge and use of natural resources to include (sic) the forest was thus connected to the goal of promoting the good life for the human community" (1992: 18).

The present study has in great detail endeavoured to underscore the role of Bukusu cultural practices towards environmental conservation and preservation. Further, a study of Bukusu who are a sub-section of Luhya as carried out in this study invalidates Opole's claim that the Luhya people are basically guided by instrumental value in the way they relate to other beings in nature. The study has demonstrated that the Luhya are not thorough - going utilitarians in relation to their environment, as Opole seems to suggest above. What is emphasized instead is the interconnectedness between humanity and nonhuman nature.

Last but not least, a study by KIFCON (Willy 1993) around Mt. Elgon on conservation and development funded by NORAD had as its main objective to identify local user community and opportunity for involving them in the natural forest management. The study recommended the need for greater involvement of the local community in identification of conservation problems in those areas of the forest they use and through this to share the responsibility of management. In other words, the study underscores the need to see the local community not as a threat but as a guardian of the forest.

Although there is not much to show on the ground, our study still believes that such an approach is conceivably a positive measure in environmental conservation. It can in fact help diffuse conflict between humans and nonhumans beings, which in the case of Mt. Elgon forest has resulted in the eviction of some local people from forest areas. The idea is that if people are part of the problem then they are in a way part of the solution to the problem. We hope that the findings of this study will help to illuminate and inspire the policy makers and the people of this area and elsewhere to consider the approach of incorporating some of their environmental values in modern conservation strategies and models.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0   THE CENTRALITY OF THE INSTITUTION OF MORALITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter endeavours to achieve one crucial objective, namely to show the centrality of morality in relationships involving humans. Put differently, the chapter attempts to demonstrate the indispensable role that morality plays in not only accounting for but also harmonizing relationships. This task is in tandem with the overall objective of this study, which seeks a moral solution to human to nonhuman nature conflicts.

To be specific, the chapter contributes to the overall purpose of this study by trying to show that morality, its imperfections notwithstanding, more than any other human institution or device is indispensable in the harmonization of relationships and arbitration of conflicts that arise out of human interactions. To argue for a moral approach to environmental crisis logically involves a leap from the familiar conventional morality to human to nonhuman nature morality. To further argue that humans need the guide of moral reasoning in their interaction with nonhuman nature is **ipso facto** to acknowledge the importance of morality as a guide to human action and obligation. By attempting to demonstrate the appropriateness of morality in harmonizing relationships, this chapter therefore proceeds from the more familiar and secure position to set the ground for the

basis of the central theme of this thesis, which calls for a moral solution to human-nonhuman nature conflicts.

2.2 MEANING OF MORALITY

The notion of morality, like most other philosophical notions defies a quick fix in terms of a single comprehensive definition. There are accordingly varied attempts to define morality by moral philosophers. In our sense, we conceive morality as a human device that appeals to rational principles by which they can determine what is right and wrong, what is good or bad, duties and obligations, and cultivate desirable traits of character that can lead to harmonious relationships.

Thus conceived, to use the words of Gruen (1987: 93), morality "represents a response to co-operation among competing persons or groups and aims at settling disputes ----". To achieve this, morality helps to regulate human conduct by cultivating desirable traits of character by appealing to principles or rules that are regarded legitimate---- "having a justification potentially acceptable to every member of the community" (Ibid: 94).

Thus understood, we discern three important criteria of morality that are pivotal to the central thesis of this study. Implied in the above conception of morality, we discern that reason provides a necessary condition in the moral making process. Morality relies on the rational capacity, which enables humans to act deliberately, purposively and rightly. This is what constitutes a human action and for that, a moral action.

The second inference from the conception of morality above is that morality does not obtain merely in observance of rules and principles. To conceive morality merely in terms of observance of rules and principles is to reduce it to the level of law, which in effect undermines its profundity. The profundity of morality lies in a way of living or attitude that exhibits desirable traits of character. In human relationships, this is anchored on what Wambari (1997: 3) calls a 'shared humanity'; which compels humans to treat fellow humans beings in some way (morally desirable) rather than in some other way (morally undesirable).

Third, our understanding of morality emphasizes the centrality of humanity in the institution of morality. This is to say that morality makes sense only in those relationships in which humanity is an active participant. In a word, it is only human beings who have the capacity to be moral agents.

It suffices also to make it clear that for the purpose of this study, we shall use moral and ethical interchangeably, for instance in such expressions as, moral/ethical point of view, moral/ethical perspective etc. The interchangeable usage of these two notions is a common occurrence in philosophical literature. This is principally because etymologically, the two concepts share common roots. The term moral is derived from a Latin word **mores**, which in Greek is **ethos** meaning custom or pertaining to character (see Gichure, 1997:16).

2.3 THE DOMAINS OF MORALITY

The ethical concern can be characterised into three broad categories of relationships. These are; the self, the other (human) and the natural environment. The later is the main concern of the present study. But first, a brief clarification of each one of the three. The first category as identified above concerns the human persons as he/she relates to oneself. The human person is justifiably said to have intrinsic worth which also gives every person his/her dignity as a person. The way a human person relates to oneself significantly affects this dignity, either positively or negatively.

In the ethical sense, therefore, the human person has certain duties and obligations to oneself. One such duty is not to cause harm or destroy oneself capriciously. Thus viewed, the way a human person relates to and treats oneself becomes a moral concern. The institution of morality justifiably enters into this, call it intra-personal relationship to be a guardian of the duties and obligations a person has to oneself. For instance morality constraints a person from harming oneself through the act of suicide or by use of destructive substances such as drugs.

The first category quickly gives way to the second, inter-human relationships. In this category, in the same way as the individual person has duties and obligations to oneself, so also does one have duties and obligations to fellow human beings. Human beings have a shared humanity as beings with intrinsic worth, which demands duties and

obligations to one another. Thus morality enters into this domain of relationships to play a number of functions related to these interactions (see section on functions of morality).

In general, however, in treatises on morality the first category is normally subsumed in the second category. This is because the underlying morality of both categories assumes the same principles and referents. In this study, we shall simply refer to the morality that combines the two categories above as human - human ethics or conventional ethics.

Then there is a third, controversial domain of interaction, involving human beings and natural beings. It can be inferred from conventional ethics that human persons emerge as moral agents, i.e. they act in ways that can be said to be right or wrong. Thus human actions are said to be intentional or purposive. Now, when human beings act in this manner towards natural beings in nature, then this generates moral considerations. This is to say that, human persons in so far as they are moral agents are subject to moral constraints and hence their actions towards nonhuman nature are to be evaluated on moral grounds. This then implies that nonhuman beings are to be treated as moral subjects. It is this kind of relationship that constitutes environmental ethics in the view of this thesis. As pointed out in the preceding chapter, this study is in general an attempt to show why this relationship is indeed subject to moral constraints and in particular how the principles of morality can be applied to address conflicts arising out of the said interactions i.e. between human beings and nonhuman nature.

It should be pointed out that the human-nonhuman nature relationship is not symmetrical in the sense of nonhuman beings also having a moral obligation towards human beings. This is for the simple reason that nonhuman beings are not the sorts of beings that can be moral agents. In the same way, therefore, the relationship among nonhuman beings does not generate moral concern. Once again this is due to the fact that among nonhuman beings there are no moral agents, a pre-requisite to establish a moral case.

In the latter case, let us give an illustration. I have many times viewed with indignation, a cat treat mice with great sense of callousness. This cat would normally corner its victim in a position where it has no chance of escape. Then it (cat) would chase around the victim, inflict some bodily pain on it, then pretend to walk away, but immediately the victim attempts to escape, the cat would be on it again. This would go on for some time until the mouse succumbs to the torture. Then finally, this cat would carry away the little carcass of its victim dump it in the nearby bush, and continue with its live as if nothing had happened. I marvel at this 'cruelty' and yet I cannot condemn it as a wrong act in the moral sense. You can imagine, in the absence of morality, probably human beings would treat each other and the rest of nature in the same way as the cat in the above scenario. This is reminiscent of the Hobbesian state of nature in which life is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short (Hobbes, 1970:100)

2.4 SOURCES OF MORAL VALUE

The question concerning the basis of morality is one that is as old as philosophy itself. In the history of philosophy, there are many theories that have been postulated in the attempt to explain the basis of morality. Many of these theories differ in nuances, or even contradict each other outrightly. It is not within the scope of the present study to venture into the intricacies and controversies that surround this subject. Our present interest is principally to have an understanding and appreciation of the fact that in spite of the disagreements concerning its source, morality remains central in relationships.

Traditionally, theories of normative ethics fall into two broad and opposing categories. These are teleological and deontological perspectives, which we now briefly elucidate in that order. The term 'teleology' is derived from the Greek word, *telos* that simply means an end or goal. It should however be noted from the onset, that there are different formulations of teleologism. The classic representative of teleologism is Aristotle, who conceived morality as a teleological process aiming at the attainment of the ultimate good. As Aristotle observes, however, there is a great disagreement among people as to what constitutes the ultimate good for humanity. The alternatives vary from wealth, health, honour, pleasure etc. (see Aristotle, NE BkA 109 4b II).

In Aristotle, the highest good for humanity is *eudaimonia* or absolute happiness, which, contrary to the other goods just mentioned is desired for its own sake not as a means to some other end. Thus the *telos* of a moral life for Aristotle is *eudaimonia.* To attain this,

as Aristotle emphasises, is a human striving, cultivated through habituation as human beings endeavour to realise their purposes or ends and perfect their nature. Thus teleological ethic in this sense lays emphasis on the cultivation of desirable traits of character and dispositions, which are in harmony with humanity's proper nature and the ultimate good. This way, the centrality of morality in human life is well grounded. The view of this thesis is that the ultimate good for humanity can only be realised when man is in harmony not only with the self, others but also with the natural environment of which he is also a part. The ethic hitherto has overly concentrated on the human-human dimension of relationships, hence overlooking the cultivation of the right relationship to nonhuman nature, which as we shall endeavour to argue is mutually beneficial to human beings and nonhuman nature.

Later teleologists are consequentialists who place the locus of morality on consequences of actions. Thus notable utilitarianists like J.S. Mill and J. Bentham emphasise not the cultivation of character, but the maximisation of good over evil, so that acts, which are thought to bring about the greatest amount of good over evil, are said to be morally right, and vice versa.

In relation to the central concern of this study, human to nonhuman nature dimension of relationships could apply the Benthamian utilitarianism, which points to the principle of egalitarianism. This principle basically advocates for equal consideration of similar situations. In the case of human - nonhuman nature relationship, it would mean that we

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accord equal regard to similar considerations as they apply to human beings and nonhuman nature. This can be positive in the strive towards developing an ethic of environment.

Without getting into details of the merits and demerits for this kind of ethic, however, it is imperative to point out that one main handicap of this ethic is its failure to recognise other criteria other than consequences in determination of morality. In the case of human - nonhuman nature relationship, it would be very difficult to resolve conflicts arising thereof. For instance, while probably clearing a forest for human settlement may bring about the greatest good to many people, viewed against alternative criteria, for example the integrity of the ecological system such an action may not be morally desirable. In addition, such an ethic lacks inherent capacity to enter into the interiority of humanity thus failing to change human attitudes. This is a major handicap of consequentialism for conventional as well as environmental ethics.

Deontologism on the other hand comes from a Greek word *Deon*, meaning duty, obligation or principle, hence deontologism is also known as the ethic of duty. This means that deontological conception rests the determination of morality on one's duty or obligation. Contrary to the teleological conception outlined above, deontologism considers the consequences of an action as being irrelevant to the determination of morality, by simply focusing on the action itself as our duty.

The classic example of the deontological conception of morality finds expression in the ethics of Emmanuel Kant (1952: 209) who insists on the principle of duty for duty's sake. Kant insists that it is our duty to act upon those principles that we will at the same time that they became universal law (Kant, 1952:260). This underlies the principle of universalizability as part of Kant's formulation of his supreme ethical principle, the categorical imperative. The central thesis of the categorical imperative is for humans to treat others as ends not as mere means to ends. The principle of universalizability on the other hand emphasises similar treatment of similar cases, namely that whatever we will, we should will that it becomes universal law. Thus what constitutes morality is our duty to others and our commitment to adhere to that duty.

The practical advantage of such an ethic lies in its capacity to establish general principles by which to determine either the right or the wrong action. By insisting on similar treatment of similar cases, this ethic aims at an objective application of morality so that we do not have to come up with new principles in every other conceivable moral situation. This would forestall a kind of relativism, which would otherwise render morality highly unpredictable if not outrightly capricious.

In relation to human – nonhuman nature relationship, the ethics of duty can be instructive in guiding moral agents towards common grounds between human beings and nonhuman nature on the basis of which an environmental ethic would be anchored. For example if the commonality is sentience, then a principle can be formulated to the effect that we have a

prima facie duty not to cause harm to sentient beings. Or if the commonality is a duty to protect all life, then again a principle could be formulated to the effect that we have a *prima facie* duty to protect all living beings.

In practical experience however, duties emanate from many sources, among others, supernatural, government, customs and so on. In case of conflict between these duties, operationalization of a duty – based ethic could prove problematic. A duty-oriented ethic such as Kant's could also be problematic owing to its rigidity on adherence to one's duty or obligation. Many times, what is our duty or obligation weighed against other criteria or considerations my not coincide with the morally right thing to do. And finally, the principles underwriting what is our duty do not explicitly set out criteria by which to determine what is right or wrong. Instead, they merely demand that once either the good or right on the one hand and bad or wrong on the other hand are determined, their pursuit or otherwise is our duty or obligation. The question regarding why they are either right or wrong therefore remains unanswered.

2.5 FUNCTIONS OF MORALITY

This section focuses on the functions of morality; on the role of morality. This aspect seems to admit less controversy than the source or basis of morality in the discourse on moral philosophy. For instance, moral philosophers almost take for granted morality's function of accounting for relationships. By this, we mean morality's role of setting criteria or standards by which to determine or delineate boundaries of human

relationships. Morality in this function guides us on how people ought to relate to each other, the principles that govern such relationships and so on. The undergirding premise is that in human relationships, there are certain principles which operate to enhance our endeavours to realize ourselves, our potentials but also which sometimes hinder and stifle these strivings. Morality in this sense therefore comes in to help us to clarify these relationships. In this endeavour to account for relationships, as Ian Vine (1987: 30) rightly points out, morality also endeavours to "regulate conduct which affect the most central concerns and interests of both the agent and other persons". Without this, as Frankena (1995:114) observes, "conditions of satisfactory human life for people living in groups could hardly obtain". Thus conceived, morality, as a human institution is responsible for making social life possible.

Second and directly arising from the above, morality applies the above criteria in resolving conflicts and creating harmonious relationships. Social life best obtains in conditions where mechanisms are in place to resolve conflicts whenever they arise, and *ipso facto* create harmonious relationships. Morality as a human institution, though not perfect, has inherent mechanisms that make it play this function. It is out of this realization that Hampshire (1983: 168) has correctly remarked "morality is inextricably involved with conflict; so also is it inextricably involved with the control of destructive impulses". To carry out the important function of resolving conflicts, morality relies on criteria, to determine what needs to satisfy or frustrate and when, in order that a person whose needs are so frustrated can be satisfied another time.

One core criterion that morality relies on in resolution of conflict is the principle of justice both in its distributive and retributive dimensions. Distributive justice involves the sharing of goods and benefits on the one hand and evils and burdens on the other hand. Retributive justice on the other hand has to do with making good what has gone wrong, for example by way of restoration or compensation.

In Henry Sidgwick's formula the paradigm case of justice "is the similar and injustice dissimilar treatment of similar cases" (c.f. Frankena, 1995: 49). In human-to-human relationships, this is realized pragmatically, when humans treat fellow human beings as if they were equal. Thus, the basic principle of equality becomes the principle of equal consideration or equal regard. This principle advocates equal weight in our moral deliberations and decisions to similar interests of all those affected by our action.

The principle of equal consideration does not, however, dictate equal treatment, which is obviously untenable in human relationships. In fact, equal treatment of human beings would in practice translate into the worst form of inequality; the very antithesis to the demands of justice. The famous Marxian dictum, 'from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' implicitly attests to this point.

The inevitable question that this study must grapple with at this juncture is; Why do conflicts arise? This question sounds simple, almost naive yet controversial in the history of philosophy. For instance, social contract theorists, in particular, Thomas Hobbes

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attribute conflict to humanity's egocentric nature; basing this on his very harsh view of humanity as being by nature selfish, motivated only by self-interest. This is sometimes termed psychological egoism that is the thesis that "we are constituted in such a way that we are inclined to pursue that which brings us the greatest advantage" (Frankena, 1995: 20). By this conception therefore, conflicts inevitably arise due to the fact that each and every individual human being is motivated by self-interest, in total disregard of the interest and striving of other human beings. Yet practical experience shows that what brings us the greatest advantage, if it runs counter to the interest of other humans can cause the greatest misfortune.

Bishop Butler, in **Fifteen Sermons Upon Human Nature (c.f. Brandt, 1961: 18ff)** is diametrically opposed to Hobbes' view. While acknowledging that it is part of human nature for people to pursue self-interest, this pursuit, which he calls self-love "never seeks anything external for the sake of the thing but only as a means of happiness or good" (Butler, in **Sermon xi, Brandt, 1961**: 159). Thus, pursuit of self-love does not of necessity preclude concern for fellow human beings. In fact, on the contrary, Butler argues that enjoyment or happiness tends to presuppose concern for fellow humans, which is in itself a form of happiness. This way, Buttler brings to the fore another dimension of human nature, namely that human beings have a sense of altruism or benevolence and are capable of love for others.

Without venturing deep into the controversy which revolves around these two opposing positions, we are in agreement with J.J. Rousseau (1994) and John Locke, (1970) the other social contract theorists who argue that human nature *per se* is innocent and it acquires the traits that can be described egotistic or altruistic only through interactions in existential conditions. In other words, human beings have freedom of the will by which they significantly contribute towards their destiny. They are not left at the mercy of fatalistic forces. The human faculties of rationality and freedom of choice however, cannot be innocent as far as conflicts are concerned. We are therefore inclined to agree with Hampshire (1983: 168) "the capacity to think scatters a range of differences and conflicts before us". This capacity is not in itself of necessity negative, it is rather positive and constructive in the sense that then, humans are able to open up avenues for new possibilities and sensibilities.

The common argument, however, that human conflicts arise from the fact that resources in nature are not so plentiful as to satisfy all human needs, hence conflict of interests is widespread. This is however, in our view debatable. Let us explain. To start with, we must acknowledge two undeniable facts, one, that a large number of natural resources are not renewable and hence as they diminish, competition over the remaining few increase. Two that populations have substantially soared especially in the last few decades, resulting in unprecedented competition over natural resources.

The foregoing notwithstanding, there is a strong indication of the woes of nature being predicated on what is generally perceived as reckless manipulation of the natural resources by humans. It is this manipulation of nature by humans that has in our view contributed to monumental environmental crises that we have to contend with. In our view, this trend can be reversed and the available resources can adequately satisfy human populations. This calls for not only judicious management but also a whole re-examination of human-nonhuman nature relationship. The moral basis of such a process is germane to this study underwriting the fundamental thesis being argued for. By way of preliminary suggestion, humans might be guided by ethical principles which have a particular bias to consumer habits and mannerisms, human population increases, distribution of resources *et al*. This way, the sagacious words of Mahatma Gandhi that 'there is enough in nature for peoples' needs but not for their greed' can be instructive.

2.6 EFFECTIVENESS OF MORALITY AS A GUIDE TO HUMAN ACTION AND OBLIGATION

This section proceeds on the awareness that apart from morality, there are other human institutions that guide human conduct in society. For instance law competes with morality in the above functions. The question therefore is: Why do we prefer the moral approach to other approaches that guide relationships? Based on our definition of morality in this chapter, we can see that moral obligation is rooted in humanity and pre-dates other institutions including the legal one; it is rightly therefore thought to be a universal human phenomenon. Thus, the thesis of this study is that morality is the quintessential human institution to centrally guide human actions and obligations and

harmonize relationships. This does not mean that the institution of morality is the panacea to all problems of relationships. Quite to the contrary immorality has persisted in human society, in spite of moral consciousness. Nevertheless, the position of this thesis is that the institution of morality has inherent capacity to affect human attitudes and hence relationships. This can best be appreciated if viewed within the context of autonomy and heteronomy.

In this study we view moral rules as autonomous when they are self-guiding or self - action-guiding. As Desclos (1993: 23) emphasizes; "obligation is from within, given and received by the same person who is both the legislator and the subject of law". Nonetheless it must be stressed that even if they are self-guided, autonomous decisions, rules and principles are not set on the arbitrary whims or caprice of the individual. As Sagoff emphasises;

> autonomy does not depend simply on a person's acting on wants, desires or interests he/she happens to have, but on the nature of those interests, their origin in the self and their order and structure with respect to general goals and principles which a person affirms and is willing to defend (Sagoff, 1992:202).

Rather they must be based on rationality, which is the proper human nature as pointed out by many philosophers including Aristotle. In fact the very notion of autonomy presupposes and demands that human beings have the capacity to rise beyond being controlled by such impulses as desires, wants and interests. Autonomy therefore

demands an objective appraisal and assessment of options before informed decisions are made.

Finally, then, it can be further contented that autonomy is not solely determined by the outcome of the decision made rather by conditions under which those decisions are reached. Thus, "a decision may be described as autonomous in so far as the conditions in which it arises come under the control of the agent or at least are not controlled by anyone else" (Desclos, 1993:20). Autonomy however does not preclude exhortations from other sources for they provide advice to enable humans make more informed decisions and choices, but within the exercise of autonomy. Thus, autonomy is not of necessity in conflict with sociality, for we realise that we live in a social context, which contributes, immensely to our well-being.

In sum, the basic argument of this thesis is that the institution of morality is the most profound in addressing relationships. The profundity of morality, its effectiveness, and therefore its preferability to other guides to human action and obligation is poetically captured by Desclos (1993:54-55) in the following words:

> morality aims at the interior (and not at the simple
> exterior conformity) at the ideals (it reaches out toward
> greater being) at the long term, at the universal (it applies
> to every human person and to all humanity).

Morality therefore transcends the simple schema of cataloguing the do's and the don'ts to "invite us to conform not to a commandment in its textual rigour but in a rational call to

fulfil values which are fully human" (Desclos, 1993:42). Morality is accordingly not satisfied merely with transmitting information, but "it suggests values and imposes upon the will obligations coherent with those values" (Desclos, 1993:35).

Put differently, morality is not legalistic and its profoundness therefore lies in a way of living, a way of being, it is an attitude whose effectiveness can be realized in praxis. This way, morality penetrates the interiority of the acting agent, enabling one to act deliberately and purposively. This is what we meant when we say that the dictates of moral values are self-imposed or self-prescribed; they affect us from within. This way, we argue that they are more enduring in guiding us towards the realization of the good.

To explicate further on the effectiveness and hence preferability of morality as a guide to action and obligation, we also argue that the differences in human cultures notwithstanding, there is sufficient commonality of moral values among human communities. This in itself is significant in making morality central or pivotal in addressing relationships. For instance the values of human life, the desire to protect it, condemnation of incest and so on, have been hallmarks of moral consciousness of human societies. This considerable commonality of ethical values engender a universal applicability and respectability of the institution of morality.

Heteronomous rules on the other hand guide human action by "directly regulating or prescribing acts or activities" (Stoljar, 1980: 14). Heteronomous rules are therefore

directive and regulative in nature and contrary to autonomous ones, are external to the individual person. This way, heteronomy is a negation of autonomy and therefore denies the human person the freedom to be one's own guide in his/her actions.

Be that as it may, however, heteronomous imperatives are not necessarily arbitrary, whimsical or capricious; they must be justified by reasons. It is in fact the reasons that underlie them that give heteronomous rules the moral force and legitimacy as guides to action and decisions. Consequently, morality cannot escape heteronomy since, as Desclos (1993: 30) rightly observes,

> no person is an absolute authority above all other persons...morality is part of cultural legacy passed from one generation to the next...as a social being, a person can live and grow only in the relationship with others...society generates laws by virtue of this mutual dependence.

Moral rules, just like legal ones guide interpersonal relationships "according not to personal preferences but to supra-personal principles by which we want to live--- their concomitant objective; to discourage or deter morally deviant acts". (Stoljar, 1980: 136). In view of this, both morality and law differ from prudence, which determines the right purely in terms of the individual person's desires and self-interests. This character precludes prudence from morality because of the moral demands, which sometimes are counter to our individual, personal interests. For instance, sometimes what we determine as virtuous informed purely by our self-interest may actually turn out to be vicious and hence obviously inimical to the common good and therefore morality. Therefore the

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basic criterion on which morality rests is rationality. Emphasizing the role of rationality

in morality, Stoljar (1980: 1) graphically explains;

> without the capacity to reason, to direct or guide our
> actions, we would have no sense of what it means to act
> for a purpose, nor of the rules or principles that
> distinguish between right and wrong actions---we would
> only have feelings and desires, doing our things not as
> self-conscious or self-starting individuals but as animals
> and plants do.

Thus, morality presupposes rationality in the sense that without the rational capacity

morality is not conceivable. Rationality is therefore the guide, the eye of morality

because it is through its power that humans can identify the right and the wrong. This

way, rationality illuminates morality, which would otherwise be blind. Additionally,

rationality justifies morality by setting criteria or standards by which either the morally

good or bad, right or wrong is determined. To say therefore that human beings are moral

is **ipso facto** to affirm that humans **qua** human are rational beings, and therefore moral

agents. This precludes human beings who are devoid of the rational capacity from the

responsibility of being moral agents. The advantage of heteronomous rules over

autonomous ones lies in the capacity of enforcement. It is easier to enforce legal rules

because they are clearly stated and their penalties unambiguously stipulated. This is not

the same with moral values except those that outrightly coincide with legal ones.

In the same way as morality ought to play a central role in accounting for and

harmonizing human–human relationships, so does this study argue for the same in

human-nonhuman nature relationship. Extending the principles of morality to this

relationship is ideal in providing criteria by which right and wrong in our relationship with nonhuman nature is determined. But most importantly, morality challenges us to re-think our relationship with nonhuman nature, to seek a common ground with nonhuman nature that can act as the pivot on which human-nonhuman nature relationship ought to be grounded. This way morality affects us in our deepest rather than superficial sense, impacting positively on our attitudes towards nonhuman nature.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 BASIS OF MORAL CONCERN FOR NONHUMAN NATURE AND CONFLICT BETWEEN HUMANS AND NONHUMAN NATURE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, an attempt was made to understand the notion of morality, its nature and functions and effectiveness in a word, to appreciate the importance of the institution of morality in relationships. The present chapter informed by this discourse proceeds to argue that moral reasoning and guidance ought to be invoked in human-nonhuman nature relationship, in particular, to address human-nonhuman nature conflict.

The task of this chapter is therefore threefold: it involves articulation of what ought to be the right relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature; a justification of the basis of moral concern for nonhuman nature and an explicit clarification of the problematic question of human-nonhuman nature conflict.

3.2 HUMAN-NONHUMAN NATURE RELATIONSHIP

It is imperative that we begin with the clarification of a number of concepts germane to this study. In this study, when we speak of nature and its derivative natural, we proceed from Harris' (1988:25) conception of nature as 'self – sustaining, self – activated producing its own phenomena according to its own intrinsic laws of activity". By this meaning, man is as part of nature as are trees, animals etc, but artificial things, which

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would otherwise be included in the overall inventory of the universe such as buildings, cars, pens, and so on are excluded.

In addition, this study makes another distinction, between human beings and other natural beings. To do this, we have employed two phrases, 'nonhuman nature' and 'rest of nature', which are used interchangeably to connote collectively, all natural beings or existents that do not belong to the class of human beings. These phrases imply that man is a part of nature but also contrasts nature with man, thus underscoring man's distinctiveness and uniqueness that set him/her apart from nature.

The second is the phrase 'human-nonhuman nature relationship'. Proceeding from the notion of 'relation' and hence relationship as simply meaning a 'connection', we discern two levels of relationships between human beings and nonhuman nature. At one level, we have what we might term an ecological relationship, in which we see a connection of all living beings, man included, to their natural environment. This is a primordial relationship in which all beings in nature are subject; for example all are equally bound by the laws operative in nature, biological, physical and so on.

At another level, humans actively and reflectively respond to this natural world. This relationship is asymmetrical, and is characterized by purposiveness or intentionality. In this relationship the human being is an acting agent while nonhuman nature is his/her subject. It is at this level as pointed out previously that we talk of the moral act. This

brings us to two other concepts that require clarification, namely 'moral agent' and 'moral subject'.

This study has adopted Taylor's (1986:14 & 17) definitions of these two concepts as follows: a moral agent is defined as "any being that possesses those capacities by virtue of which it can act morally or immorally, can have duties and responsibilities and can be held responsible for what it does". It happens that only human beings satisfy these criteria and therefore they are the only ones who belong to this category. A moral subject on the other hand is defined as "any being that can be treated rightly or wrongly and toward whom moral agents have duties and responsibilities". This definition makes it clear that a being need not be a moral agent in order to be either benefited or harmed. As a matter of fact, any part of nature can be either benefited or harmed therefore every part of nature is a moral subject by this definition. This study partly sets out to demonstrate this view, which is not as obvious as it sounds in the definition.

The history of philosophy can aptly be summed up as the history of human endeavour to understand, comprehend themselves and the world in which they find themselves. The relationship between humanity and nature as shown in our definitions above, dates back to the time that human beings appeared on the scene, be it through the act of evolution or creation, as the two opposing views hold. Thus, philosophical reflection on this relationship must be as old as philosophy itself. Needless to delve deep into details, we mention in passing that the human-nonhuman nature relationships have been

characterized differently in different epochs and milieu, probably reflecting the various levels of human consciousness of the issue.

In the history of Western thought, for instance, the ancient Greeks conceived nature, in the sense of a living organism, with different entities, including humans as constitutive parts of this whole. This is clearly represented in their mythologies (see Harris, 1988:26). In philosophical reflection, humanity's preoccupation at this point was basically to attempt to understand or comprehend the reasons and laws underlying the system of the universe in its unity (see Tymieniecka, 1970: 191).

In the course of time however, the preceding conception of nature began to change; with man emerging more and more as a distinctive entity, free from what was then perceived as enslavement by nature. This is evident in the thoughts of Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine to mention but the prominent ones. By this conception "the universe on the one hand and the human self on the other became two central points of philosophical reflection" (Tymieniecka, 1970: 192). Thus, the separation of man from nature became the hallmark of this conception.

It was not however, until the modern period, with the birth of modern science that the separation of man and nature was complete, producing a new conception of nature. This was most articulate in Cartesian metaphysical dualism that dichotomized the mind and the body. This, in the words of Tymieniecka (Ibid), "brought about the irreconcilability

of human self (consciousness) and nature". By this conception, nature was seen as an object to be known and as an opponent to be conquered and dominated by the subject. Although the Cartesian metaphysical dualism has been greatly discredited, the above conception of nature, as we shall argue elsewhere in this chapter, has had great implications on human to nonhuman nature relationship, specifically from the ethical perspective.

The mention of part/whole relationship reminds us of the well-known sociological theory, the systems theory. It is instructive at this point to briefly clarify this theory in the light of the present study. The systems theory is a more refined form of structuralist-functionalist theory of society, whose main protagonist was Auguste Comte, considered the father of modern sociology. The theory was developed by Robert Spencer, Emile Durkheim and more recently perfected by Talcott Parsons as systems theory.

The systems theory draws from a holistic approach to social reality, whereby societies and social systems are viewed as having characteristics similar to those of organic matter or organisms. This is diametrically opposed to the mechanistic or atomistic conception, which likens society to mechanical objects i.e. made up of identical and replaceable parts, which can be assembled in different ways. Systems theory looks at society as a system, i.e. an entity that is made up of interrelated parts, each of which in some way affects other parts and the system as a whole. Thus, if a system is to survive, its various parts must

have some degree of compatibility. In social systems, this compatibility according to systems theory is based on value consensus.

Without delving into the traditional critique of the systems theory, it is clear to us that the proponents of this theory did not expressly address the human-nonhuman nature relationship. This study has previously demonstrated that relationships transcend the mere category of human-human to include human-nonhuman nature. In context, therefore, the basic argument of this thesis is that the integrity and survival of the ecological system much like the social system requires the harmony of the different parts that constitute it. This harmony as argued in this thesis is anchored on the intrinsic value of all beings. This in our sense elevates the part/whole relationship between human-nonhuman nature to the ontological and ethical levels. It is in this sense that we think that our study transcends the systems theory in conceptualizing the problematic question of relationships.

Against the foregoing background this study attempts to present man as both part of and a part from nature as the viable basis on which to ground a moral concern for nonhuman nature. To do this, we are guided by Martin Heidegger whose phenomenological perspective, as one writer, Fay (1988: 149) observes, probably "represents one of the most powerful analyses of man-in-the-world which has emerged from the twentieth century thought". But most importantly, Heidegger's conception of man-nature

relationship bears close resemblance to the Bukusu conception as demonstrated in Chapter Four of this thesis, hence our interest in his analysis in this study.

Heidegger presents his analysis of Being in his well-known book, **Being and Time** (1962) in which he introduces two related notions; man as **Dasein**, a German word, which translates literally as to - be - there and the notion of man as **'in-der-welt-sein'**, literally meaning, 'to-be-there-in-the-world'. In this ontology, Heidegger presents the universe as a unity, with various constitutive entities in its structure. Expressing this unity, Heidegger puts it succinctly when he writes, "the compound expression Being-in-the-world indicates in the very way we have carried it that it stands for a unitary phenomenon --- this primary datum must be seen as a whole" (Heidegger, 1962: 78). In this formulation, Being-in, is a state of man's existence; the first constitutive mode of man's existence. To explain further, Heidegger points out that 'in' is derived from **innan,** to reside or **habitare,** meaning to dwell, while 'an' signifies, I am accustomed to, I am familiar with or I look after something (1962: 80).

In this ontology, though man is conceived in his specifically human mode of existence as **Dasein,** man is not in opposition to the world, which is presented as being an essential constitutive element of man. Thus, man is rooted in this unity or totality, which also provides man with conditions by which he can fulfill his potentialities. In this ontology, there is no dualism between the mind and the body in the sense of opposition between man and nature. This way, nature is not an alien to man, for man is essentially and

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necessarily a part of nature, to which he is familiar with and accustomed to. This amounts to a rejection of the ontology that opposes the two, i.e. man and nature. It is in this sense that Heidegger rejects the Cartesian metaphysical dualism, which opposes man as *ego cogito* i.e. man as a thinking being or substance thinking, and nature as **res extensa**, i.e. nature as substance extended.

This being-in-the-world as Heidegger points out does not mean that man is therefore a captive or imprisoned in nature, as the term 'throwness' may otherwise suggest. The term 'throwness' seems to imply that man is placed in nature on the same footing with the rest of nature such that human beings cannot free themselves from the bondage of nature. On the contrary, as Heidegger makes it clear, knowledge is part of being-in, as one of the constututive elements of **Dasein** that distinguishes **Dasein** from nonhuman entities in nature. By knowledge, **Dasein** is able to know itself, and develop a relationship with itself and others, unlike other beings in nature that are incapable of this (see also Biemel, 1977: 34).

This way, even in the 'throwness' human beings have the capacity to transcend the limits imposed upon them by nonhuman nature, even though they still remain rooted in nature. Thus we may say that the relationship between man and nature is a primordial one that remains invariably in place despite the human capacity to transcend nature. It is not a product of man's knowing, although knowledge as a constitutive element of **Dasein** enables man to know not only the self but other beings in nature, by which capacity,

human beings create their world, a world of meaning. It is only **Dasein** that can be described as meaningful or meaningless.

A relationship of care or concern is also presented in Heidegger's ontology of being-there-in-the world. On this, Heidegger (1962:84) wrote; "because being in the world belongs essentially to **Dasein**, its Being towards the world is essentially concern". This statement has to be understood within the context of innan that presents **Dasein** as the only being with capacity to comprehend or understand the world. This does not mean that the world belongs to **Dasein** in the sense of deriving its worth from him. Again within the context of innan, **Dasein's** capacity also implies responsibility towards the world, that of looking after the world. This concern or care is a primordial structural totality, which, as Heidegger points out:

> is essentially something that cannot be torn asunder, so
> any attempts to trace it back to special acts or desires like
> willing and wishing or urge and addiction or to construct
> it out of these, will be unsuccessful. Willing and wishing
> are rooted in the ontological necessity in **Dasein** as care
> (1962: 238).

The concern as Heidegger emphasizes is used as an ontological notion and hence as he presents it, this concern for the world is not intended as a moral exhortation. Even if not explicitly expressed as an ethical imperative, Heidegger's postulate of **Dasein** as concern for the world probably just serves to achieve this ethical dimension. The postulate implies for man a relationship of being concerned with what happens in the world, this

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being rooted in the connectedness between man and nature. This in our view raises considerations of an ethical nature.

In short, Heidegger was obviously not formulating an ethical theory of man-nonhuman nature relationship. In any case, Heidegger, did not formulate any theory of morality. Nonetheless, Heidegger's ontology lays ground on which a human-nonhuman nature ethic can be constructed. This is precisely where Heidegger's relevance for our study lies. Let us endeavour to demonstrate just how this is the case.

In the first place, the universe as a unity of various constitutive entities roots humanity in their natural base. The ensuing relationship recognizes intrinsic worth in nature, contrary to seeing nonhuman nature merely from the point of view of its usefulness to human beings. This as argued at length in Chapter Five, is crucial in grounding an ethic of environmental concern. The view which calls for harmony and unity between humanity and nonhuman nature would seem to take its point of departure from such an ontology. This view has in recent times been greatly expressed by environmental ethicists especially those of holistic persuasion. For instance, expressing this line of thought, Thomas Hill Jnr. graphically explains:

> as human beings, we are part of nature, living, growing,
> declining and dying by natural laws, similar to those
> governing other living beings despite our awesomely
> distinctive human power, we share many needs, limits and
> liabilities of animals and plants (Hill, 1994: 107).

To Hill, this realization amounts to self-acceptance which is a humility and a virtue he calls for and believes has a connection with preservation of nonhuman nature. Wambari articulates a similar thesis, when he contends that:

> a critical reflection on the part of it ----that is, our relationship to the totality of being is that of part to a whole. For these relations to be satisfactory, ensuring the survival of both human and nonhuman natural world, there is need for moderation and harmony in the human-environment interaction (Wambari, 1997:6).

The point to emphasize is that although the thesis of man as being part of nature, sounds like a trusim; it is only so in biological terms. In ecological terms, human beings take their point of departure from their biology as they intervene in natural processes and hence implying a moral position. This makes a case for a moral consideration for human-nonhuman nature relationship. Whether or not the ethical paradigm that is exclusively grounded on this thesis is tenable or realistic is a question we have attempted to answer in Chapter Five of this thesis.

The second thesis that is instructive is the notion of **Dasein** as care or concern. In Heidegger's ontological formulation, the notions of care and concern are used interchangeably. This concern or care is not exclusively to other **Daseins**. This is because in his ontology of unity of Being, it is logical to infer a wider sense of care; one which includes other Beings. **Dasein** is rooted in the unity of Being, such that if this unity is broken, then **Dasein** is also affected, hence concern for all beings to preserve the unity of Being. This concern, interpreted in ethical perspective implies to us a

responsibility on the part of humanity towards other beings in nature. This is in view of their capacity to understand being and in our case also as moral agents. This in our view is crucial in determining how man relates not only to fellow human beings but other beings in nature with whom they share in Being. This too establishes a ground for a moral consideration for nonhuman beings, thus placing nonhuman nature within the moral domain.

Third, the rejection of the Cartesian dualism, which dichotomizes the subject and object in our view, is a challenge to humanity to re-think their place in the natural world. The dualism has been at the centre of criticism in environmental ethics literature, blaming it for the current environmental crisis. For instance, in the words of Fay, (1988: 150), this dualism, "had split man from his world". In effect therefore, as Midgley (1991: 6) quips; "human soul then appears as an isolated intruder in the physical cosmos, a stranger far from its home".

In ethical terms, this dualism becomes problematic when in the words of Plumwood (1994: 147) "what is characteristically and authentically human is defined against or in opposition to what is taken to be natural, nature or the physical or biological realm". Thus conceived, the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature as Plumwood adds is:

> treated as an oppositional and value dualism---the upshot is
> deeply entrenched view of the genuine or ideal human self
> as not including features shared with nature or in

opposition to the nonhuman real so that the human sphere
and that of nature cannot significantly overlap (Ibid).

In the ensuing scenario, the critics of dualism rightly point out that human beings are
alienated or estranged from, and set apart from and over nonhuman nature, thereby in the
words of Sterling (1990: 78) "opening the way for a relationship that is primarily
exploitative and manipulative". This in turn as Shiva (1994: 35) poetically observes, is
responsible for a new world view in which nature is "inert and passive, uniform and
mechanistic, separate and fragmented in itself, separate from man, inferior to be
dominated and exploited by man". This conception goes against the principle of
humanity being part of nature and has in our view far-reaching moral implications for
human – nonhuman nature relationship as this thesis has endeavoured to show.

To re-think their place in the natural world as pointed out above involves among other
things harmonization of human activities with nature. To do this involves humanity
having a moral obligation to nonhuman nature. This can be founded on an ontology,
which endeavours to restore man to his base in nature. This thesis is pursued further in
the next two chapters.

Fourth, the idea that **Dasein** is the only being constituted in such a way that he can
develop a relationship not only with the self but also with other beings in nature is also
instructive. Although Heidegger is here reiterating a truism, predicated on the fact of
man's rationality, in ethical terms, two important points can be inferred. One, that

morality is basically a human phenomenon; for it is only human beings who can comprehend relationships by virtue of their capacity to understand Being. The other, which is a logical consequent of the foregoing, is that since relationships go beyond fellow human beings, then morality as a constitutive element of humanity must also cover human-nonhuman nature relationship.

Fifth, and closely related to the foregoing is the point that although human beings are rooted in nature, they have the capacity to transcend nature. This is an explicit affirmation of the thesis that humans by virtue of their capacity to comprehend Being are set apart from nature. This as we shall make clear in the next two chapters is instructive in recognizing important moral differences between humanity and nonhuman beings. Heidegger's ontology on this issue helps to ground the argument that humans are also apart from nature, and that there is no contradiction between the two natures of man i.e. as part of and apart from nature; the two natures are harmoniously constituted.

In ethical terms, concerning human to nonhuman nature relationship, we can proceed from this ontology to argue that to insist on the view that humans are inextricably part of nature is to ignore the other nature of humanity which though has its foundations in nature is more profound in terms of charting out the destiny of Being. In any case, the essence of human lies in sharpened capacities that are uniquely human, **inter alia**, rationality, moral reflection and freedom of the will. To ignore this fact amounts to the negation of personhood. It is in this sense that radical philosophers of deep ecology

orientation who proceed as if human beings were exclusively inextricably part of nature theoretically, entangle themselves in a contradiction; for the whole idea of humans becoming 'inextricably part' of nature is a negation of the philosophical enterprise and striving which obtains in the rational nature of man.

The paradox engendered in the foregoing is that the radical holistic thesis should either demand that philosophy abandons its insistence on sharpening and refining of human qualities mentioned above or that the essence of philosophy which insists on reason is anti-environmentalism and thus should abandon deep ecology movement. This study endeavours to argue that the supposed contradiction is only apparent because cultivation of human rationality need not necessarily estrange humanity from the natural world; for this endowment is not without moral responsibility hence the two 'natures' of man ought to be harmonized in the overall good of nature.

As Heidegger rightly points out, it is only humans who can raise questions about Being and who can therefore comprehend Being. This view is instructive because in this sense, humans create their world, which is meaningful. In this world of man, all beings in nature acquire meaning but this is not necessarily their received meaning. For instance, man gives names to different elements and beings in nature. This characterization of nature is not necessarily for the sake of nature but to enhance man's understanding of nature often for his purposes. This is not however, to say that man uses his rationality and linguistic capacities to give value to beings in nature.

This thesis endeavours to demonstrate that any ethic which can help address human-nonhuman nature conflict must be grounded on the conception of humans as part of and apart from nature and that this dual nature of humanity ought not be of necessity conflictual. What is lost in human beings perceived as apart from nature is compensated by the fact that only humans by virtue of creating meanings can provide guidance to and care for nature. Given this argument, the fact that humans are apart from nature is not necessarily a liability and an impediment to the full realization of nonhuman nature. Rather, it bestows upon humans an added responsibility of exercising their capacities to the benefit of the whole, i.e. both themselves and other beings in nature. This way, humans for example can use the institution of morality to determine fair criteria to guide human-nonhuman nature exploitation. These criteria can help resolve conflicts between human interests and nonhuman nature interests. Without such moral constraints on the part of humans, nonhuman nature will forever lose out, this being s logical consequent of humans being apart from nature.

3.3 THE BASIS OF MORAL STANDING FOR NONHUMAN NATURE

3.3.1 Arguments that Deny Intrinsic Moral Standing to Nonhuman Nature.

To have moral standing as conceived in this work simply means to count morally, that is to say that a being's interests are positively considered in matters of right and wrong. This thesis has also employed the use of the expression 'intrinsic moral standing' to mean that nonhuman beings deserve our direct moral considerability by virtue of their

possession of intrinsic worth or ontological goodness. This expression can be appreciated against the backdrop of the position held by some philosophers who recognize in nature ontological goodness and yet still hold the view that humans have no direct moral concern for nonhuman nature. This is to say that human concern for nonhuman nature in ethical terms is only secondary, i.e. insofar as nonhuman nature serves instrumental value for humans. Thus by intrinsic moral standing we emphasize the point that holding that nonhuman beings possess intrinsic worth of necessity implies that humans have direct moral obligation to them by virtue of their being and existence. The succeeding arguments in this chapter will explicitly show the context of the use of the expression 'intrinsic moral standing. The question of whether or not, nonhuman nature have moral standing is also tied to the issue of whether or not nonhuman beings have intrinsic value. This is because as we have shown some philosophers have gone to the extent of denying intrinsic value to nonhuman nature. Having defended the need for a moral considerability for nonhuman nature arising from human-nonhuman nature relationship in the just concluded section, we move on to explore the possibility of grounding that concern in nature itself. The question is: Do nonhuman nature have moral standing or are they to be considered merely on grounds of their usefulness to human beings?

As pointed out in the preceding section, human-nonhuman nature relationship has occupied the minds of philosophers for all times, hence a recourse to selected prominent philosophers helps to shed more light on the position which tends to preclude intrinsic

moral standing from nonhuman beings. A few specific examples suffice to illustrate the point.

In classical times, we have Aristotle, who presents a teleological conception of nature in which all beings in nature have a specific end which is also their goal. However, nonhuman beings do not have intrinsic moral standing in Aristotle's ethics. For instance, Aristotle (1962: 40) commenting on human-nonhuman nature relationship had the following to say:

> plants exist for the sake of animals----all other animals exist for the sake of man, tame animals for the use he can make of them as well as for the food they provide; and as for wild animals, most though not all of them can be used for food, and are useful in other ways; clothing and instruments can be made out of them. If then we are right in believing that nature makes nothing without some end in view, nothing to no purpose, it must be that nature has made all things specifically for the sake of man.

In Aristotle's thought nature is presented as having an overall purpose, which however, culminates in the human person. Thus, nonhuman nature is at its best when it serves to fulfill human ends. This metaphysics presents humanity as being at the centre of the universe, a focal point from which the perfection of nonhuman beings in nature is defined and determined, in a sort of ordered gradation, for example with plants being lower to animals in that hierarchy. This hierarchy seems to be dependent on the usefulness of each of these beings to the human beings, which also coincides with their proper end. From this presentation therefore, human beings have no direct duty to nonhuman nature

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but to work to perfect it, a perfection that is measured in terms of how best they fulfil human needs.

In a related passage, Aristotle makes it clear that men, in the restricted meaning of male are superior to the rest of nature. He puts it succinctly when he writes:

> as between male and female the former is by nature superior and ruler, the latter inferior and subject---- wherever there is a wide discrepancy between two sets of human beings as there is between mind and body or between man and beast, then the inferior of the two sets those whose function is the use of their bodies can be expected of them, those I say are slaves by nature (1962:33/34).

This view is articulated against the backdrop of Aristotle's definition of man as a rational animal. By this conception, the essence of man obtains in rationality, which is a polar opposite to instinct, which characterizes behaviour of nonhuman beings, in particular, nonhuman animals. Thus, rationality is for human a mark of greater worth, than other beings in nature whose worth is measured in terms of their usefulness to man. In this passage also, we see Aristotle's chauvinistic attitude not only to nonhuman nature but also to women pervasive at his time. It is in the light of this, that some feminist writes often draw parallels between their movement and environmental ethics. They compare the conditions of women, to those of nonhuman nature as the oppressed, the exploited and so on. In other words, men, in the restricted sense of male treat them merely as objects. The question of human superiority over nonhuman nature is pursued elsewhere in this study.

St Thomas Aquinas presents yet another position which denies intrinsic moral standing to nonhuman nature. He expresses this even more succinctly than Aristotle, when he writes in **Summa Contra Gentiles** (Bk 111 P. 11, 112, 12 P11q) that:

> we refute the error of those who claim that it is a sin for man to kill brute animals - for animals are ordered in man's use in the natural course of things according to divine providence. Consequently, man uses them without any injustice either by killing them or by employing them in any other way. For this reason, God said to Noe, "As the green herbs, I have delivered all flesh to you" (Gen., 9: 3).

Aquinas upholds Aristotle's teleological view of nature, that is; that all beings have an end, which gives them their worth. This, Aquinas also explains from the perspective of divine order and providence. The end of nonhuman beings is to serve the needs of human beings, this being their proper end. This conception denies intrinsic moral standing for nonhuman beings in nature.

In a related passage, Aquinas reinforced his position arguing that human beings have no direct moral obligation to nonhuman nature. This is how he puts it in the following passage;

> man's affection may be either in reason or of sentiment. As regards the former, it is indifferent how one behaves towards animals, since God has given him dominion over all as it is written; thou has subjected all things under his feet. It is in this sense that St. Paul says that God has no care for oxen or other animals----. As to affection arising from sentiment, it is operative with regard to animals----. And if he is often moved in this way, he is more likely to have compassion for his fellow men---. Therefore, the Lord in order to stir to compassion the Jewish people,

> naturally inclined to cruelty, wished to exercise them in
> pity even to animals by forbidding them certain practices,
> savouring of cruelty to them (ST. 11, 1, q 102 q 8).

The point is that human beings can only have an indirect moral obligation to nonhuman beings, which is in fact a duty to fellow human beings. By not being cruel to nonhuman beings, humans perfect their own nature of not being callous to fellow men. Only for this reason then do humans have moral responsibility towards nonhuman nature. In our sense therefore nonhuman beings are denied intrinsic moral standing.

In Kantian ethics, the view that nonhuman beings have no intrinsic moral standing is even more categorically articulated. This is expressed in his categorical imperative, which advocates for the treatment of all other beings, except humans as mere objects. On a technicality however, Kant's definition of person as a self-conscious rational being would exclude some humans from moral standing. Nonetheless, he makes it clear that his category of things i.e. objects excludes humans but includes animals, categorically saying that animals are man's instruments (Kant, 1979: 240). In Kant's scheme, personhood is opposed to thinghood with thinghood being the paradigm case of absence of moral standing. Thus, things or nonhuman nature are to be seen and treated as mere means to the ends of human persons, the only beings to be valued intrinsically. Thus to Kant, like Aquinas, moral duties, if any to nonhuman nature can only be indirect, deriving from the duties we owe to human persons as ends in themselves. Kant writes:

> destructiveness is immoral; we ought not to destroy
> things, which can still be put to some use. No man ought
> to mar the beauty of nature; for what he has no use for

> may still be of use to someone else. He need of course
> pay no heed to the thing itself, but he ought to consider
> his neighbour (Kant, 1979:241).

It may be prudent at this point to put this thinking in the historical context of philosophical thought. Kant's philosophy was propounded within the period of modern philosophy, a period which was generally characterized by the discoveries which then emphasized the superiority of human capacity to know. This period saw the history of thought transiting from and shedding off the medieval era, characterized by dogmatism, which put great premium on the authority of revealed knowledge. Thus, the rationalist attitude became the dominant feature of Western thought systems in this period. Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes, the acclaimed fathers of modern philosophy, best represent this perception.

In Bacon for instance, the capacity of man's knowledge is best expressed in his widely quoted perception of science as power, meant to equip humanity with the means to conquer nature. Thus, science as power was expressly meant to help human beings to overcome the limitations imposed upon them by nature. Descartes, like Bacon, was emphatic that knowledge had a practical goal of enabling humanity to control and benefit from the rest of nature. He wrote;

> I perceive it to be possible to arrive at knowledge highly
> useful in life and in room of speculative philosophy
> usually thought in the schools, to discover a practical
> means of which knowing the force and action of fire,
> water and air, the stars, the heavens and all other bodies
> that surround us distinctly as we know the various crafts
> of our artisans, we might also apply them in the same way

to all uses to which they are adapted and thus render
ourselves the lords and possessors of nature (Descartes,
1912: 149).

In this epistemology, nonhuman nature is presented as material to be known, manipulated

and exploited for the human good. As envisaged, the vision of Descartes' epistemology

is for humanity to finally have a complete control over nonhuman nature. In Descartes as

in Bacon and other philosophers cited, nonhuman nature has instrumental value only as

means to human ends or goals. Descartes even entertained a mechanistic conception of

nature in which he saw animals as automata i.e. machines. This epistemology was

reinforced by a metaphysics, which dichotomized the subject and object as we have

pointed out previously.

It is instructive to point out that this dualism was not only in secular thought but also a

feature of the dominant Judeo-Christian tradition, implicit in the biblical account of

creation, which presents it as a divine order. We have already referred to St. Aquinas

grounding his argument in divine order. Robert Moore (1990) traces this attitude through

Christians of puritan leaning of the Calvinist reformation, through later Catholicism and

Protestantism. This dualism pervasive in Judeo-Christian tradition (though critics argue

that it is essentially not Judeo-Christian in origin) reinforces the special worth of

humanity in the universe, drawing a sharp distinction between the mind/soul and the

body. But most devastatingly, in this distinction, is the fact that the body and the mere

bodily tend to be criminalized, and therefore, disvalued. Nature belongs to the bodily

realm, which is then viewed as the abode of the demonic and evil. Nature according to

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these theologies, in the words of Moore (1990: 105) represents a downward gravitational pull against which both the soul and the mind had to struggle constantly "the soul to achieve purity of life and the mind to achieve clarity of thought".

In sum, this attitude was fully secularized during the age of enlightenment, with its insistence on reason. With this development, the dichotomy referred to above not only became more sharply defined, but new developments in science and technology, meant increased knowledge of the natural world by humanity, resulting necessarily in increased impact or power over the natural world. With this development, more than ever before, the separation between the subject (human-knower) and the object (nature-known) became not only quite evident but a human striving. On the whole, this had great implication on the human-nonhuman nature relationship.

The detailed exposition we have so far had on the denial of intrinsic moral standing for nonhuman nature should not be construed as a problem, only of the earlier philosophers. Quite to the contrary, in contemporary philosophy, and specifically within environmental ethics, voices abound that deny intrinsic moral standing to nonhuman nature. It is basically by virtue of the controversy ensuing thereof that there is a problem in the articulation of a suitable theory of environmental ethics. The justification for the present study partly lies in this controversy. The theoretical implications arising from this position are considered in details in Chapter Five of this thesis. However, by way of exemplification, we just mention in passing the name of John Passmore (1974).

Passmore, one of the greatest defenders of environmental ethics on an anthropocentric model echoes the basic sentiments of the earlier philosophers cited in this section arguing that human beings have no moral obligations to nonhuman nature **per se**, except from the point of view of human interest. This is because to him nonhuman beings in nature have no intrinsic value and hence no moral standing.

We have gone to great length in the foregoing discourse if only to demonstrate that there are philosophers and shades of philosophies that deny intrinsic value to nonhuman nature, yet others recognize in nature intrinsic worth and still deny them intrinsic moral standing. Both positions influence conceptualization of and response to the question of conflict between humans and nonhuman nature in the moral sense, and hence partly justify the present study.

In recap, the above epistemological and metaphysical orientations logically engender a human to nonhuman nature ethic modelled purely from the point of view of humans. This way, the sole motivation for protection of nonhuman nature is prudential, namely that it is right to protect and wrong to abuse nonhuman nature, because the human good is respectively benefited and harmed.

In the view of critics of this position, mainly radical environmental ethicists (we have discussed this in Chapter Five) the rationalist attitude towards nonhuman nature, expressed in the philosophies of the writers cited above is seen as the root cause of

environmental crisis. Expressing this position, Val Plumwood, a feminist/environmental

rights defender is candid in stating the case when she writes;

> ---it is in the name of such reason that other things, the
> feminine, the emotional, the merely bodily or merely
> animal and the natural world itself have most often been
> denied their virtue and accorded an inferior and merely
> instrumental position (Plumwood, 1994: 144).

The critics view the instrumentality and dominance engendered in the rationalist attitude

as expressed in the dualism of subject and object as the real obstacle to the articulation of

a holistic ethic that can positively address the concerns of nonhuman nature. The general

perception is that the rationalist attitude sets humanity against nature such that in the

words of Plumwood (Ibid) "what is human is defined against or in opposition to what is

taken to be natural, nature or the physical or biological realm".

The rationalist attitude as condemned by critics as shown above requires our preliminary

comment, to a wait a more detailed discourse in Chapter Five. In our sense, a rational

attitude germane to human-nonhuman nature relationship is a logical consequence of the

fact that humans are moral agents by virtue of their rationality. In this sense, a rational

view of nonhuman nature is in itself positive, because rationality ought to guide and

direct humanity towards acting in morally acceptable ways. In addition, rationality ought

to guide humanity in determining the quality of life they would like to pursue. It is the

cognitive element that informs humanity that acts, which are destructive to the natural

variety are also antithetical to the dictates of morality. The natural world is the very

foundation of human existence and survival and **ipso facto**, a necessary determinant of

the quality of life they may strive for as rational beings. Thus acts, which are destructive to the natural world, are also detrimental and inimical to humanity. This realization should provide a reasonable motivation and basis for humans to evaluate their relationship to the natural world in terms of right and wrong. In other words, humans are to exercise a rational control of the natural variety within the constraints imposed by morality, hence invoking the guide of moral reasoning in their relationship with nonhuman nature.

What is required therefore, is to harmonize epistemology and morality grounded upon a metaphysics, which recognizes intrinsic moral standing in nonhuman nature. This as we shall endeavour to demonstrate, will maintain the distinction between humanity and nonhuman nature based on rationality. This is because in our view, any moral system, which attempts to obliterate the fundamental distinction between humanity and nonhuman nature, turns out to be anti-human. In the same vein therefore, it is unrealistic to expect human beings to instinctively succumb to the limitations imposed upon them by nonhuman nature. This would amount to a negation of humanity both as rational and moral beings. The next section endeavours to show that nonhuman nature have intrinsic moral standing. We have also attempted to reinforce this in Chapter Four in a reconstruction of Bukusu environmental values.

3.3.2 Arguments for Intrinsic Moral Standing for Nonhuman Nature

The simple question that confronts us here is: Where do we locate moral standing in

nonhuman nature? In other words: Do we have grounds on which to infer intrinsic moral

standing in nature? Underlying these questions is a dilemma, which, Tom Regan, a

contemporary defender of animal rights helps to express more candidly;

> if we could establish that there is something x such that
> whenever an object y has x it is inherently good, we
> could then go to try to establish how we can know that
> any object has x (Regan, 1981: 33).

In this dilemma is the challenge raised concerning the basis or ground on which to

predicate moral standing for nonhuman beings. We have just seen how conventional

ethics treats nonhuman beings merely from the instrumental point of view, in which

nonhuman nature is protected in moral terms not as itself, but because of its usefulness to

human beings. The question then being pursued is: Can we enter into a moral relationship

with nonhuman nature irrespective of its usefulness to humans? On what foundation

shall we predicate such considerability?

To help us in the search for locating moral standing in nonhuman nature are

contemporary champions of holistic ethics, whose basic postulate is that human

relationships extend beyond the human to human, to include nonhuman beings in nature.

This means that the domain of morality does not stop at the human-to-human

relationship. In this category, we have many writers, prominent among them,

Schweitzer, Leopold, Naess, Taylor, Rolston III just but to mention a few. This study has

examined in details the thrust of the arguments of the above writers, and their implications for environmental ethical theory in Chapter Five. For the purpose of establishing value of nonhuman nature, however, we proceed with the guide of Rolston III (1992).

Rolston III takes his point of departure on a critique of what he terms 'conservative' ethical position which holds that the worth of nonhuman nature obtains only in human preferences and interests, that is to say, in its usefulness. While accepting though with great caution the view that man is the only measure of things, Rolston III poses a cynically rhetorical question; Is man the measure of all things? The view that man is the measure of all things is quite old in the history of philosophy. It can be traced as far back to the most well-known and outstanding sophist, Protagoras as expressed in his famous dictum; 'man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are and those that are not that they are not. It must be pointed out that this view was refuted in his time especially by Socrates; mainly because of the subjectivism that such a position would introduce in moral values.

Nevertheless, as a re-statement of anthropocentrism, Protagora's pronouncement has had many apostles as this thesis has pointed out. Anthropocentrism has reigned man's worldview for centuries and in the context of environmental ethics, it is still the central point of contention; since it remains engendered in the familiar human to human ethics. In response to anthropocentrism, which tends to view nonhuman nature, only through the

eye of their usefulness and hence defending nonhuman nature as having worth of its own,

Rolston III explains;

> an organism is a spontaneous self-emanating system,
> sustaining itself and reproducing itself, executing its
> programme, making a way through the world---the
> organism is an ecological, evaluative system; so that it
> grows, reproduces, repairs its wounds and resists death---.
> The physical state that the organism seeks, idealised in its
> programmatic form is a valued state; value is present in
> this achievement (Rolston III, 1992: 137-138).

In this characterization, every being in nature is considered to have value of its own,

embodied in its very being. This idea is present in Aristotelian - Thomistic metaphysics

in the notion of ontological goodness (see also Gichure 1997:59), which is present in all

beings in nature. In the two philosophers, however as pointed out earlier on, possession

of ontological goodness is not equivalent to having intrinsic moral standing for

nonhuman nature. This is our point of contention with the Aristotelian – Thomistic

conception of human – nonhuman nature relationship.

To concretize the notion on intrinsic value for nonhuman nature, it suffices by way of

illustration, to cite a documentary on plant life by a botanist, Dr. Simon in the series,

World of Wonder. In this documentary you view with consternation how intriguingly,

the plant kingdom defends its own well-being. For instance, you see those plants that

fold their leaves when harmed, or those that comflouge in different ways in face of

danger, or flowers that incredibly trap their adversaries or victims such as insects,

strangling them to death. To me, these amazing examples demonstrate one thing; that

nonhuman beings in nature have at least an interest in well being and hence value of their own irrespective of whatever other value that we humans assign to them.

In our interrogation of Bukusu environmental values in the next chapter, we have unveiled in Bukusu cosmology, the notion of intrinsic goodness in nonhuman nature. This is engendered in the idea of common ancestry or origin for all beings in nature, in the notion of sacredness of nonhuman nature, both idealised in a sense of human kinship with the rest of nature. These principles are rooted in a metaphysics, which recognizes value in nonhuman nature **per se**. This as explained in Chapter Four is crucial in charting out how humans ought to relate to nonhuman nature in ethical terms.

It is on the foundation of such goodness that we predicate moral standingness, on the basis of which we extend the domain of direct moral considerability to nonhuman nature. This perception is a denial of the principle of human preference and interest as the sole determinant of worth of nonhuman nature espoused in some philosophical reflections interrogated in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis. It is in this perception that this study talks of conflict between human interests and interests of nonhuman beings and hence defend its preferred theoretical orientation in looking for moral criteria to address such conflicts.

It should be critically argued however that advocating for an ethic which recognizes intrinsic moral standing and value in nonhuman nature does not in any way imply or

mean equality of all beings in nature, as biocentric egalitarianism tends to argue. The point is that predication of moral standingness on spirituality, rationality, self-consciousness and freedom of the will so as to restrict moral standing only to human persons in our view tends to ignore the human – nonhuman nature dimension of relationships in ethical sense **per se**. It also tends to ignore the fact that nonhuman nature has intrinsic worth. Consequently, it fails to conceptualize and recognize possibility of conflict between human beings and nonhuman. This in our sense undermines efforts at harmonizing human activities and those of nature to achieve ecological balance. In our view, however, acceptance of the position that human beings have superior value on account of possession of the just mentioned qualities is not inconsistent with the view that nonhuman nature deserve our direct respect as possessors of intrinsic moral standing. The uniquely human qualities mentioned above enhance humans **qua** human and are well integrated in nature and are charged with responsibility of enhancing the overall good of nature.

In addition, this study holds that the conception of the value of being founded on intrinsic goodness does not deny human beings a unique place in nature. Far from it; we concur with Heidegger that human beings have a unique dignity, owing to the fact that, it is only in them that the truth of Being is revealed and Being comprehended in its truth. Put another way, it is only humans who make sense or attempt to comprehend this world by virtue of their intellect as rational beings. This as argued earlier on, gives humans a

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special worth, which cannot without absurdity be put on equal footing with other qualities, possessed by nonhuman nature.

In our view, however, the diversity of qualities and capacities that beings in nature posses ought to be viewed positively because they ought to enrich rather than undermine the universe of which all including humans are a part. The different goods are designed to work in harmony to bring about stability, equilibrium and balance in nature. There is therefore a kind of unity in diversity; whereby there is no necessary conflict or contradiction between diversity and unity, rather harmony to which the diversity contributes.

This granted, to view nonhuman nature merely in its usefulness to humanity as demonstrated in the preceding part of this chapter is to undermine the unity and harmony intended to perfect the universe. In any case, as Rolston III rightly observes;

> intrinsic and instrumental values shuttle back and forth,
> parts-in-wholes and wholes-in-part, local details of value
> embedded in global structures gems in their setting and
> their setting situations a co-operation where value cannot
> stand alone (1994: 83).

From a metaphysical point of view, we have seen that all beings in nature have a good and worth of their own. It is therefore human beings who impute badness in nature, from the perspective of their interest, seeing nonhman nature from purely instrumental value point of view. Rolston III is categorical on this point when he writes:

---badness as used is an anthropocentric word; there is nothing at all biological or ecological about it and it has no force evaluating objective nature, however much humanistic force it may sometimes have (1992: 137).

This study shares Rolston III's thesis only in part posting that indeed it is human actions and reactions that are on a larger scale responsible for bringing about imbalance and disunity in nature. It is accordingly the human intervention rather that the merely natural processes, that necessitate the intervention of morality not only to account for the human-nonhuman nature relationship but also to restrain humanity's excessive exercise of diversity so as to bring about harmony in nature and thereby address the ensuing conflict between human and nonhuman interests. The point is that it is the presence of humanity in nature that introduces moral order in the universe. Thus, any possible solutions to conflicts arising from human beings' interaction with nonhuman nature will of necessity emanate from humans and not any other way. In a way therefore, while human beings are a major cause of environmental crisis, they are ironically the only ones who hold the key to the solution.

In addition to the uniquely human qualities and capacities mentioned earlier on, only humans have the aesthetic capacity, which is reflected in the valuing process in nature. This in our view must be recognized because it positively contributes towards enhancing the value of some nonhuman beings. The aesthetic sense of humanity combines with rational and moral sensibilities that are pertinent to enhancing the quality of nonhuman nature rather than downgrading the quality of humans. An ethic, which proceeds on this

premise, recognizes the reality of human-nonhuman nature relationship and can pragmatically engender the principle of conservation, an ethic that this study attempts to articulate. The following section then explicitly clarifies the issue of human-nonhuman nature conflict.

3.4 THE PROBLEMATIC OF HUMAN-NONHUMAN NATURE CONFLICT

In the foregoing sections, we have focused on building a case for moral standingness in nonhuman nature. We have in particular endeavoured to demonstrate that nonhuman beings, specifically living beings are teleological centres of life. Proceeding on this we have further posited that nonhuman beings have a good of their own, and hence an interest in well-being. On this note, we can posit that conflict between human beings and nonhuman nature is as a mere conceptual problem but an existential reality. The notion of having an interest is crucial in this context because in our view the notion of conflict is inextricably connected with the idea of having an interest.

To say that Y has an interest in X implies two meanings. One, that X is conducive to Y's good. In other words, X will contribute to Y's well-being or welfare. Thus, Y can be harmed by what is denied him/her or it or benefited by what is given to him/her or it. The other is that Y likes or desires X. This implies a deliberate or conscious effort on the part of Y (the desiring agent). It implies the capacity to express those desires, wants, likes and so on. In this study, we speak of interests of nonhuman nature in the first sense. By

this clarification, we take cognizance of the fact that nonhuman beings cannot articulate their wants, desires, etc. Nonetheless, what is given or denied to them can either enhance or undermine their well-being. In other words, their well-being can either be enhanced or undermined. The moral dimension, however comes in only when it is human activities that are either beneficial or detrimental to nonhuman beings. This study accordingly adapts Taylor's conception of interest as elaborated in the following words:

> it will be convenient if we speak of those events and conditions in the life of organisms that are conducive to the realization of their good as furthering, promoting or advancing their interests. Events and conditions detrimental to the realization of their good will be described as being adverse to, opposed to or unfavourable to that interest (1986: 270).

Thus conceived, we are in agreement with Taylor (Ibid) that an interest is attributable to a being irrespective of "whether or not an organism feels pleasure or pain, has any conscious desires, aims, goals, or cares about or is concerned with what happens to it, and whether or not it is even conscious at all".

In the same way as having an interest is not predicated on a being's self-consciousness, autonomy or capacity for reciprocity, so also do we view a conflictual relationship. Proceeding from the above conception of interest, a modified conception of a conflict situation by William (1994: 47) can best serve our interest in this study. William characterizes a paradigm case of a conflict as obtaining when "an activity conducted by person A and which is profitable and beneficial to A and perhaps others as well, imposes a cost on someone else, B---". This characterization of conflict is couched exclusively in

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anthropocentric language in keeping with conventional ethics, which recognizes conflict only in human relationships.

In the light of human – nonhuman nature ethics, we can characterize a conflictual relationship as obtaining in a situation where an activity or action by a being, whether or not beneficial to A, but is harmful to another being, with an interest, say B. To understand conflict in this broad sense is to admit that conflicts between human beings and nonhuman nature are real. This is because human beings and nonhuman nature necessarily interact in the process of which certain interests are undermined or harmed and hence conflicts inevitably arise. For Taylor (1986: 256) by way of example, "such conflicts occur whenever actions and policies that further human interests or fulfill human rights are detrimental to the well-being of organisms, species-population and life communities in the earth's natural ecosystem". For instance, clearing of forests inhabited by varieties of flora and fauna to pave way for human settlements could occasion such conflicts.

To analyse the concept of conflicts further, this study has benefited from a Ph.D. thesis on Human-Wildlife Conflict in Kenya by Omondi. In this study, Omondi (1994: 14-16) focusing on human-wildlife relationship, identifies five possible scenarios in which human-wildlife conflicts can occur. One, when human activity impinges directly on wildlife well-being, in such cases as hunting and poaching. Two, when wildlife activity impinges directly on human well-being in such cases as attacks leading to bodily injury

or death. Three, when there is a competition between human and wildlife for limited resources, notably land space, water, grazing and shelter (natural landscape). Four, when wildlife protection legislation or aspects of the wildlife based industry impinges on local land users' access to resources or freedom of land use. And finally five, when the population perceives wildlife conservation in antagonistic ways, that is in the form of negative attitudes towards wildlife, protected areas and wildlife authorities.

A philosophical reflection on the above characterization would reveal important inferences with ethical import to human-nonhuman nature relationship. The first inference is quite obvious, that nonhuman nature, in particular animals have interests of their own which can be harmed by humans either directly or otherwise. This as we have pointed out in the previous sections is crucial to the question of human-nonhuman nature conflicts. Apart from recognizing reality of conflict between humans and nonhumans nature, it also points to the need to re-think if not to re-work the ethic that governs our relationship with nonhuman nature.

The second is the portrayal of some nonhuman nature, animals to be specific as active conflicting agents. This is expressed in the second category of conflicts outlined above. This position is denied, quite understandably by the anthropocentric view, which denies intrinsic moral standing to nonhuman nature. The deep ecologists however, readily embrace this view. For example, Dijk (1994: 61) puts it quite bluntly when he says; "nature is a conflicting party not purely a dead material which can be used by humanity

without reserve". This study finds such admission of reality of conflict between humanity and nonhuman beings useful in pointing towards inclusion of nonhuman nature **per se** in the moral domain. Specifically it helps towards working out moral criteria by which human and nonhuman nature conflicts can be sorted out. Indeed, we concur with Hooker (1992: 162) that "ethics abounds in tensions which also concerns our relationship with the environment".

Nevertheless, it should be made clear that the fact that at least some part of nonhuman nature is an active conflicting agent should not be construed to raise any possibility of reciprocity from nonhuman nature to humans in ethical terms. In view of our conception of human-nonhuman nature relationship, such reciprocity is a logical absurdity, for ethical relationships between humanity and nonhuman nature is only one directional, emanating only from the point of the moral agents who happen to be only human persons.

It may however, be interesting to provide one specific example that validates the above view of nonhuman animals as conflicting agents. There is this familiar case of the Maasai woman, Nellekia Wuaparia, from Kajiado that has been persistent in the local media in the last five years. The predominantly pastoral nature of the Maasai economy exposes them to very close contact with wild animals with whom they compete for pasture, water and habitation. In 1995, in one such encounter, the woman in question was mauled by a hyena, which left her incapacitated, with both hands lost. To compound the problem has been the issue of compensation from Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS),

the official legal custodian of wildlife. After a long delay, the Kenya Wildlife Service handed her fifteen thousands (Ksh. 15,000), quite a paltry amount as compensation. This has raised a lot of concern about fairness and justice, portraying KWS as valuing wildlife more than human beings. This conflict raises moral issues, which in our view point to the need for moral intervention. Probably there is need to come up with a moral code that clearly spells out conflicts between human beings and nonhuman beings and how these can be resolved.

Lastly and most importantly from Omondi's categories of human-wildlife conflicts; it is implicit that human beings have an upper hand in the human-nonhuman nature conflicts. This is simply because it is humans who control the process. They do this for example through legislation, and they are the ones who have the capacity to moralize about this relationship. This supports the view that ethics is necessarily a human institution, which can only be extended to nonhuman nature. This view is pursued in Chapter Five, in relation to a suitable theoretical orientation of human-nature relationship in ethical terms.

In sum, in the light of the preceding, we view conflict between humans and nonhuman beings as practical and real and not mere conceptual, theoretical problem. This is because as it were it arises out of real interaction between humans and nonhumans nature and it is inevitably unavoidable. Human beings cannot meet their goals or ends without impacting on the environment, either directly or indirectly. In this striving, humans compete with other beings in nature whose very existence also depend on the same

environment. Hence there is need for a moral system that can cut across human to nonhuman beings, providing criteria by which such relationships can be harmonized. This as we saw in Chapter Two, is one central function of morality.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0   BUKUSU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: A RECONSTRUCTION

4.1   INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapter of this thesis began the search for the basis of an environmental ethic. In our detailed discourse, we have endeavoured to argue for moral standingness for nonhuman nature. The present chapter continues with the search for an environmental ethic but now from the perspective of an African worldview. We specifically focus on a case study of Bukusu environmental values with the hope of contributing to an understanding or theory of environmental ethics.

4.2   THE BUKUSU AND THEIR SENSE OF MORALITY

The Bukusu people belong to the larger Luhya speaking group. The Luhya in turn are generally believed to belong to the larger Bantu speaking peoples of Eastern and Central Africa. The Bukusu speak **Lubukusu,** a distinct **Luhya** dialect, although they relate closely with other Luhya groups in beliefs, practices, in a word, culture. Presently, the Bukusu people are predominantly scattered in the three districts of Bungoma, Mt Elgon and Trans Nzoia.

The traditional Bukusu lived in fortified villages, called **chingoba.** This set-up provided a communal context within which all their activities, be they social, economic, political or religious were defined and carried out. The traditional Bukusu were mainly agriculturalists, who practised both crop farming and raising of livestock, especially

cattle. These activities, which had great economic, socio-political and religious implications, were generally carried out on a communal basis arrangement.

In my earlier work, **The Relationship Between Morality and Religion: A Case Study of the Bukusu of Western Kenya** (Makokha, 1993), a detailed discourse on the basis of Bukusu morality was attempted. In this discourse, it was clearly demonstrated that Bukusu morality, like most other African moralities, takes its principal point of departure from the context of the community. This is to say that morality is centred on the community rather than the individual. Hence individual welfare is measured in the context of societal welfare or well-being. Thus, in Bukusu perspective, moral virtue denotes traits of character, which enhance peace, order and harmony in the community. That is to say, virtue aims at sustenance and promotion of **kumulembe**, this being the embodiment of the above values. Consequently therefore, the goal of Bukusu morality is "to bring about **kumulembe** i.e a state of calmness, implying order, harmony, peace, solidarity and prosperity. In other words, "an indication that all is well in the community" (Makokha, 1993:69).

Thus, moral rules are pursued because they reflect an essential part of human nature (traits of being) and their practical utility are recognized in the community and confirmed by human welfare. The emphasis on human welfare underscores the centrality of humanity in morality. Thus, we clearly see that morality is a human institution as it were.

The ethics so far described makes no direct reference to human to nonhuman nature relationship. It should be pointed out from the onset that there is no systematized ethics

of environment in Bukusu worldview. This does not however mean that the Bukusu have no notion of human to nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms, far from it. Thus, part of our task in this work is to unearth this ethic engendered in Bukusu attitudes, practices, beliefs etc towards nonhuman nature in order to reconstruct and construct Bukusu environmental ethics.

4.3   A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF BUKUSU COSMOLOGY

There are many myths in Africa, which try to account for the origin of the universe. These myths differ a great deal in nuance and detail. The Bukusu, like most other African communities attribute the origin of the universe and all its inhabitants to the creative power of an ultimate supernatural being. The Bukusu call this supernatural being, **Wele Khabumbi**, making reference to his creative power, for **khabumbi** is a verb from **khubumba,** which means to mould or create. In this work, we shall however, simply refer to the Bukusu ultimate being as **Wele**.

Principally, Bukusu cosmology presents a universe that is divided into two broad categories, namely the visible or material **(liloba)** and the invisible or immaterial **(likulu).** The Bukusu in opening their prayers and entreaties to **Wele**, always make reference to these two realms saying, **Wele owaumba liloba nenda likulu (Wele,** who created the earth and the heaven).

The notion of **likulu** as the visible or immaterial reality requires clarification at this point. Ordinarily, when reference is made to a place designated as **mwikulu**, people look up to the sky, as if to confirm that **likulu** refers to such bodies as the moon, sun or the stars. If

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this were the case, then **likulu** would refer to physical rather than spiritual entities. However, when the Bukusu inter their dead in the ground, they say that the deceased is destined to **mwikulu**. Therefore, the exact position or location of **likulu** appears paradoxical. In essence, however, one thing is clear, namely that whatever of the remains of the dead person believed to go to **mwikulu** must be spiritual in nature. Additionally, **mwikulu** is presumed to be the dwelling place of **Wele.** Yet in Bukusu metaphysics **Wele** is portrayed as being present and manifested in all beings in nature. This simply affirms the spiritual nature of **Wele** who can aptly be described as being both transcendent and immanent.

Therefore one can clearly see that the Bukusu notion of **likulu** does not refer to some specific physical entity or existent such as the moon, sun or stars, neither does it refer to some spatial place. It rather refers to some immaterial or invisible reality. Thus, **mwikulu** denotes a place, which physically is neither here nor there, to which humans cannot actually pinpoint or apprehend but rather merely speculate about.

In Bukusu cosmology, the two realms of existence, i.e. the visible and the invisible are not divorced or separated from each other. The invisible reality as described above is principally the abode of spiritual entities notably **Wele** and ancestral spirits (**Bisambwa).** The material reality on the other hand consists of the earth together with all its inhabitants including humans, animals, plants and so on. These two realms exist in an intricate and delicate balance and harmony.

To ensure balance and harmony in nature, **Wele** is said to have put in place mechanisms to uphold, sustain and further this process. The **Bukusu** readily point to the succession of seasons as evidence of this eternal process. Through this process, consisting of what we call laws of nature, the natural universe is self-regulated, maintaining balance and harmony.

Further to the laws of nature, the Bukusu believe in the permanent or eternal presence of **Wele** in all beings in nature. This eternal presence is significant in that it helps to further maintain the natural order of being. To help **Wele** in this process, the Bukusu believe in the authority of elevated humans in the form of ancestral spirits. They too are thought to play a role in ensuring balance and harmony in the order of being. The overall purpose of the prayers and sacrifices the Bukusu direct to the spirit world is to uphold the said balance and harmony. This theme will be developed further in later sections of this chapter.

Further still, the Bukusu believe in the presence of some invisible power in all created beings. This invisible power is generally responsible for the living, creative and rejuvinative power of the created universe. It is this invisible power thought to be present in all beings that partly accounts for each being's unique contribution to the overall balance in nature.

In concluding this section, we posit that the Bukusu cosmology described above presents us with a universe, which is a well-integrated system, essentially because of the common origin of all existents. Each being in nature plays a role, which is integrated in the overall

purpose of nature. Thus, the various existents co-exist with others in a delicate balance and harmony, to ensure the realization of the overall purpose in nature.

4.4   HUMANITY: FELLOW SOJOURNERS OR INTRUDERS IN NATURE?

At a first glance, we can infer the place of human beings in the natural order of beings from the Bukusu myth of creation. The myth vests the origin of the universe including all its contents in the creative act of **Wele**. According to this account every existent owes its being to this creative activity. In essence then, we see a close connection between human beings and all other beings in nature, since all beings in nature owe their direct origin to the same common source. From this account, it can be inferred that, all beings in nature, have inherent worth.

The Bukusu present the above position more forcefully in the maxim which asserts that, **Wele kawela mubindu biosi mala kechulamo**, this is to say, God is fully present and manifest in all beings in nature. Thus, all beings in nature as **Wele's** creation manifest and embody the very presence of **Wele**. To this common ancestry, which all beings share and conform to, all beings in nature derive their worth. We reckon that it is philosophically implausible to argue that beings in nature, humans included have worth of their own merely on account that they are created by God and share a common ancestry. The point being made however, is that, whatever their origin, all beings in nature are presented as having inherent worth, independent of each other. Each of those beings is unique and contributes in its peculiar way towards the integrity of the ecological system.

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In ethical terms, this perception is significant in that it locates in all nature a locus of worth by virtue of being. This inherent worth in turn gives all beings in nature a purpose in which all participate. By this inherent worth, we can posit that all beings in nature emerge as having their own independent good or well - being. This endowment further imbues in all beings a natural right to exist, which cannot be dispensed with without ethical consequences.

In the light of environmental ethics, this perception is significant in that it passes as an expression and recognition of the moral standing of all beings in nature. To express this differently, we infer in Bukusu conception of nature a worth or goodness in all beings in nature obtaining in their very existence or being. This goodness is independent of any utilitarian value attached to various species by human beings.

The picture that comes through is that of humanity as being an integral part of nature. In response to the question about humanity's place in the natural order of things, one informant, Francis Makhanu, philosophically observed, **omundu alisindu sititi musibala**. Literally this means, human beings constitute a very tiny part of the natural world. That this is the case is indeed a truism, which cannot be denied without absurdity. Fundamentally, however, this response raises a serious philosophical question concerning human to nonhuman nature relationship.

In our view, this perception of human beings vis-à-vis other beings in nature construes a part-whole relationship in which human beings together with other beings in nature incrementally add unto the totality of nature. By implication, the various parts of nature

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therefore contribute in different ways towards the realization of the overall status of the totality. This, in our view further attests to the connectedness of the different parts of nature owing to their sharing in this totality. Thus perceived, the vast expanse of the universe emerges as home to all beings in nature, human beings, being integral part of this totality. In this light, it becomes clear then, that the Bukusu conceive of the universe as having a larger overall purpose, which transcends humanity. This understanding makes nonsense of the argument that other beings in nature are created solely for the purposes of human beings.

The Bukusu view of nature can therefore be described as holistic in which humanity and other beings in nature are internally connected and intimately intertwined. The emphasis then, is not on the systemic properties of nature, but rather on nature as a collectivity. The bondedness that exists between the parts of the whole emphasizes the importance of not only the parts but also the whole itself. This leads us therefore to conclude that the functioning and well-being of the universe entirely depend on the harmony among the different parts of this collectivity.

The view that humanity's position or even value in the natural order of being is comparable to other beings in nature seems to be in line with the central theme of ecocentrism. This position however is highly contentious. For instance it poses a serious challenge to the thesis which stresses the centrality of humanity in the universe articulated mainly by the anthropocentric perspective or even common sense. Prompted by this challenge, we raised the issue of centrality and superiority of humanity in nature with our informants. Responding to this issue, one informant, Francis Makhanu gave a

twofold observation. First, he observed that humans, like other beings in nature are subject to the basic constraints imposed by the laws of nature, which are indiscriminately operative in the created universe. Second, he observed and argued that human fallibility cannot allow them absolute control over the rest of nature. He then concluded that any claim of human superiority over the rest of nature is mere human arrogance. To reinforce Makhanu's argument, another informant Samson Ulula, cited instances in which humans are at the mercy of nature, their ingenuity notwithstanding. For example, he observed that **omundu anyala khwituya khwibale mala kafwa** i.e. human beings stumble over rocks, falling down to death!

Our reading of the above explanations and arguments is that in Bukusu worldview, the harmony of the relationship between the various parts of nature, humans included is measured in terms of how well integrated the different parts in the overall good of the ecological system are. Thus great premium is placed on the well functioning, welfare and harmony of the universe as a whole. In other words, the individual well-being can only be accounted for within the context of the functioning and harmony of the collectivity. The connectedness and the bondedness of the various parts in nature discussed above supports this interpretation. This in essence explains the superfluity of the question as to whether human beings are central or superior beings in nature.

The preceding analysis notwithstanding however, the Bukusu are not oblivious of the unique characteristics that are the preserve of humanity as a species among the collectivity of beings in nature. The Bukusu recognize in humanity a unique quality, which is thought to be either absent or only a limited possibility in other beings in nature.

To express this, the Bukusu say, **omundu alinenda limanya**, this is to say, humanity has knowledge or rationality. The notion of **limanya** as conceived by the Bukusu does not simply refer to the cognitive activity of the mind. Over and above, the Bukusu conceptualize reason or **limanya** in terms of morality. Thus, to the Bukusu **omundu we limanya** (i.e. a rational person) is one who has the capacity to discern the right and the wrong, the good and the bad. This is pragmatically determined in both the person's speech and actions. Thus, mere knowledge or cognition of the moral imperatives devoid of the concomitant exercise of those imperatives does not qualify one as a rational person. The evaluative function of rationality is therefore more significant than the mere cognition, for this can be inter-subjectively scrutinized within the moral fabric of the community.

The moral order engendered in the notion of **limanya** therefore forms the basis of the second nature of humanity in the universe. This way, morality is necessarily a human attribute, which distinguishes humanity from the rest of nature. It is only human beings who possess **limanya** and *ipso facto*, the capacity to discern, appreciate and pursue moral value. This in our view is not without a purpose in the overall order of being. Our source, Pius Namwinguli guides us in his response to the question regarding the usefulness of **limanya**. He observed quite truistically that, **omundu anyala khubaya esimba** i.e. the lion with all it physical strength can still be tamed by humans, and that **embwa senyala khuruka kumukoye tawe** i.e. a dog cannot weave a rope. The basic inference that we can draw from these observations is that humans by endowment of **limanya** can give meaning to events or phenomena. In other words, human actions are charged with meaning, intentionality and purposiveness.

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The Bukusu therefore recognize significant distinction between humanity and other beings in nature, principally as it obtains in the capacity of **limanya**. The inevitable concern at this juncture however, is whether there is a paradox between this dimension of humanity and the earlier nature of humanity presented above? Put differently, does the capacity of **limanya** necessarily abstract or alienate humanity from nature, setting them in opposition with the rest of nature?

On one occasion, during the field research, we had the opportunity to walk with our prospective informant, Shem Wekesa, conversing with him about general issues of life. Then, we came down to a stream which once used to be big but over time is on the verge of drying up. Along the riverbank was a wetland, which once blossomed but had been freshly cleared bare of its vegetation to prepare it for crop cultivation. Our prospective informant, apparently disgusted, looked up to the field and remarked; **babandu bano baremire kumusiru kuno anga babandu bakhali nenda limanya tawe**. Literally – (these) people cleared this vegetation as if they are devoid of **limanya**. This discussion was taking place before the interview which Shem Wekesa had no prior knowledge about its content.

Then, much later during the interview, we asked Wekesa whether the sense of right and wrong is extended to human - nonhuman nature relationship. As if anticipating that question, he promptly invited us to a recollection of his remark about the vegetation. The presence of **limanya** as analysed above as being defined in terms of moral order in the universe extends beyond the human-to-human relationship to include the rest of nature. This explains the expectation that people would be guided by moral virtue in dealing with

their immediate environment. That is why the people who had cleared the vegetation described above had failed this moral test.

In the light of this, we are inclined to argue that the underlying moral imperative is that human beings endowed with **limanya** have responsibility not only to fellow humans but also to the rest of nature. This responsibility is implicit in nature's overall purpose to which all beings contribute by virtue of their origin. Importantly also, this responsibility directed to nonhuman nature indispensably contributes towards providing for the good of humanity. Resultantly, we have some sort of dialectical relationship in which both humanity and nature benefit.

From the above analysis, we can infer the role of humanity as custodians or stewards of nature. This emanates from their unique place in nature as beings with **limanya**, which confers upon them with this responsibility. To act otherwise towards nature would amount to the negation of this uniqueness. Thus viewed, **limanya** does not in any way give humanity a blank cheque in so far as relating to nonhuman nature is concerned. The rational capacity does not make humanity operate in accordance with the Thrasymachean motto of 'might is right'. Rather it is meant to reinforce humanity's role as stewards or custodians of the rest of nature. The contrary view as the above discourse shows negates humanity's humanness as beings with **limanya** rather than make them see themselves as overcoming the handicap imposed by nature. This way, there seems to be a contradiction for humans to conquer nature because it also necessarily means conquering themselves. Thus, it is abundantly clear that destruction of nature necessarily implies the destruction of humanity.

Thus far, we discern in the Bukusu view of humanity's place in nature presented above two realms of interaction and meaning. First, we have the human as part of nature thesis, which holds that humanity are essentially an integral part of nature. This is affirmed by the common origin, which all beings in nature, humans included are thought to share and conform to. Second, it can be inferred that the presence of **limanya** as explained above sets human beings apart from nature. This view is simply recognition of the unique place of humanity in nature as possessing capacities by which they can interpret, and reflectively respond to the natural world rather than instinctively submit.

From the above, it can be observed that there is no contradiction arising from the dual position of humanity in nature. Humanity's second nature, apart from distinguishing them from the rest of nature, is perfectly engendered harmoniously in the overall purpose of nature. The very qualities and capacities that set humanity apart from the rest of nature constrict them from acting against this overall purpose of nature. Thus, rather than abstracting and alienating humanity, opposing them to nature, **limanya** ought to guide humanity in their contribution towards enhancing the harmony and balance in nature. In this, human beings are accountable to themselves, nature and their creator.

Conclusively, the Bukusu do not perceive humanity and the rest of nature as two totally separate realities. This does not however, obliterate any distinction between humanity and the rest of nature like the extreme radical environmental ethics e.g. ecocentrism tries to do. Thus humanity cannot be absorbed by nature neither can the rest of nature be defined merely in terms of human purposes or ends. There is an internal unity that coalesces in the balance and harmony in nature. This way, we can argue that the ethical

concern for nonhuman nature in Bukusu moral thought is informed by a fusion of the two realms of interaction and meaning just discussed above. The following sections will endeavour to show this even more explicitly.

4.5   THE BUKUSU AND EARTH: THE INEXTRICABLE BOND

This section proceeds on the position that there exists an inextricable bond between the Bukusu and the earth that forms a natural basis for their environmental philosophy, in particular an environmental ethic. As intimated in Bukusu cosmology above, land is the single most significant entity of the material world. This is not difficult to comprehend since to the earth, all beings owe their continued existence. It is to the earth that humans directly owe their livelihood and hence their existence, and it is to the earth that they return when they pass on. This is why to the Bukusu the earth is symbolically presented as both the father and mother of all existents. This father/mother principle portrays the earth as the cornerstone of survival and continuity.

To emphasize the foregoing point, the Bukusu with a sense of finality say **liloba lilinda omundu mubulamu nenda mwifwa**. This is to say that the earth sustains humanity both in life and in the hereafter. This way, the bond between humanity and nature transcends the mere mundane relationship in which human beings reap certain benefits from the earth and natural resources to eke out a living. Rather the relationship encompasses all other dimensions including spiritual, thus establishing a strong bond between human beings and other beings in nature. The common denominator is their rootedness in the earth. To the Bukusu, the earth forms a meeting point for all beings in nature, be they humans or nonhuman.

Further still, to the Bukusu the earth defines an individual's sense of identity. This identity is multifaceted, encompassing the social, economic and spiritual dimensions. To demonstrate this sense of identity, the Bukusu insist on burying their dead in their homestead. If a person died away from home and the body was never found, a ceremony was performed to bring his spirits 'home'. In such a case, a banana stem, symbolizing the body was buried with all the requisite burial rituals. For instance, this was done for the Bukusu who died and their bodies never retrieved in Burma and other places while serving in the British army fighting alongside British soldiers during the Second World War.

The grave is the equivalent of a death certificate and its presence at the homestead qualifies the deceased's family inheritance of the place he is buried. This is an affirmation of belonging, hence identity. But most importantly, burial within the familiar environment links one to his ancestral spirits. There is no doubt therefore that this sense of belonging and identity enhanced the bond between the Bukusu and their land. This may partly serve to explain why at the dawn of independence, many Bukusu people refused to move to the settlement schemes that were created out of the former White Highlands. They considered those places as **mundaa** (bush) even in view of the full knowledge of possibility of enhanced economic gains in terms of owning bigger farms with greater agricultural potential. The prevailing thinking was that by moving to these schemes **(mundaa)**, they would fundamentally alter and disrupt their lives especially socially and spiritually. In a word, they feared being disconnected from their home, and hence losing their sense of belonging and identity. This serves to confirm our

observation that land to the Bukusu was not a mere commodity for economic benefit, but rather the very foundation of their identity. It was therefore held in sacrosanctity.

To emphasize the bond between the human beings and the earth further, the Bukusu believe that, **sobwabwa namwe sotunyila liloba tawe**, that is, one can neither curse nor get angered with the earth. **Khubwabwa,** from which the verb **sobwabwa** is derived, refers to an extreme kind of curse, which is meant to completely sever the relationship with the victim of the curse. It arises out of extreme desire to see the victim perish entirely. Likewise, **khutunya** from which the verb **sotunyila** is derived expresses excessive anger, again arising from intense feeling of hate.

Therefore the belief that human beings can neither curse nor get angered with the earth is an expression of humanity's rootedness in the earth to which they are inextricably bonded. The Bukusu further believe that a child's curse to his parents is of no consequence. Analogously therefore we can infer that the Bukusu view and treat the earth in the same way as they view or relate to their parents and hence the futility of any attempt to curse it. The earth as already pointed out above, connects humans to the spiritual world and this relationship is invariably permanent, it cannot be severed whatsoever. Finally, the above belief emphasizes human dependence on the earth, their transient nature notwithstanding, because this extends to the hereafter.

Further still as alluded to above, the earth was also thought to provide a meeting point between the living and the departed members of the community. As the living walk on the earth, they walk on the dwelling place of their ancestors and hence the earth

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metaphysically binds the living to the spiritual world, to their past, present and future. The Bukusu for instance symbolized this unity by burying the placenta and umbilical cord in a fertile banana plantation. This also symbolized fertility and continuity, implicitly attesting to the vitality, the procreative and living power, in a word, the fecundity of the earth, which holds the key to enhance and sustain being.

The picture that comes through from this discourse is that the Bukusu people held the earth in sacrosanctity, this pointing to its inherent goodness. The earth as portrayed above was valued not only for the benefits that humanity reaped from it, rather as a sacred entity. As a sacred entity, the earth was valued and respected on the basis of its inherent worth. The father/mother principle of the earth further emphasized the earth not only as the very foundation of existence and survival of all beings in nature but its own worth as such.

In ethical terms, the above conception enhanced the Bukusu people's direct respect for the earth. This determined the way people related to the earth in particular and to other beings or existents in nature in general. These other existents were logically first and foremost, perceived as fellow sojourners in existence. They share in common their rootedness in the earth. The concomitant respect for the earth and other beings in nature provides the fundamental basis for the underlying environmental ethics. Consistent with humanity's pro-active position in nature, this ethics implies that human beings in pursuit of their needs should treat the rest of nature judiciously. The representation of the earth as mother/father implies that humans are naturally obligated to relate and to treat the earth and its other inhabitants as such, that is, that humans ought to take care of, respect,

love the earth and its existents the same way as they would their parents in keeping with our morality.

These values are natural and logical contents of Bukusu environmental ethics generally engendered in their cosmology, but specifically expressed in their attachment to the earth. We are therefore at this point inclined to argue with McLuhan (1994: 310) that "to be exposed to nature and to live your life in its rhythm develops humility as a human characteristic rather than arrogance". Indeed, the Bukusu attitude of humility to the earth, to nature is explicitly engendered in their ties to it as explicated above. This attitude is diametrically opposed to the Western man whose attitude is manipulative, exploitative and arrogant as pointed out in Chapter Three of this thesis.

4.6   HUMANITY AND NATURE: A SACRED BALANCE

The Bukusu cosmology presented an orderly created world, which existed in harmony and balance. This as we saw entirely depended on the harmony and balance of the two realms of existence, i.e. the visible and the invisible categories, which are so to speak, inseparable. This inextricable connection is for example expressed in the succession of seasons, which determine and guide the link between natural phenomena and human activities. This connectedness is not only a pointer to but also actually enhances the harmony and balance in nature.

To the Bukusu, knowledge about rhythms of nature was largely available to the majority of the people, who exhibited a great mastery of knowledge about plants, animals and so on within their locality. This was in addition to specialized knowledge available only to

'experts' e.g. rainmaking etc. For example, when people fell ill, many of them would readily know what types of herbs they would draw their medicine from. When I was a young boy in the 1970's I used to look after cattle with my grandfather and he would do this quite often. Most of this ecological knowledge was learnt from the characteristics that natural phenomena presented. For example, the Bukusu would not depend on the expertise of a meteorologist for knowledge about changing weather patterns. This knowledge was readily available to the majority of people through observation of natural phenomena. For example to signal the impending arrival of rainy season, an indigenous tree called **kumukimila** would normally begin to produce some smell. From this smell the people would begin to prepare their farms for the imminent planting season. This way, people were able to harmonize their activities with natural rhythms, thus maintaining a delicate balance between the two. This helped to minimise human – nonhuman nature conflicts.

The bondedness of humanity to nature already referred to has real impact on human to nature relationship for it "opens possibilities for the accumulation and application of ecological knowledge. Such knowledge flows synergistically among the different 'users' of different 'resources' (Chapeskie, 1999:78).

The many rituals performed at different times were in essence meant to ensure and enhance the harmony and balance between human activities and nature. By way of exemplification, the Bukusu gathered to perform an important ritual ceremony to mark the planting season. On this occasion, a goat was slaughtered and the blood together with some traditional beer was sprinkled on sample seeds mixed with some herbs, This ritual

as we gathered from our informants aimed at bringing about a twofold effect. First, it was a sacrifice to the spiritual world to bless the soils for their fertility and therefore an abundant harvest. Second, our sources had it that the ritual was also meant to apologise to the soil and other lives, because in the process of ploughing, a lot of these lives are destroyed.

Western scientific thinking would make nonsense of this explanation because it cannot rationally account for the relationship between the ritual as described and the abundant harvest. There is no causal relationship between the cause and the effect. To explain the Bukusu ecological knowledge in terms of cause-effect is however, in our view to miss the point. This knowledge is holistic in the sense that it does not draw a hard and fast distinction between the knower and the object of knowledge; the knower is an intimate participant in the whole process.

Coming back to the two-pronged purpose of the ritual described above, two related meanings germane to the ritual could be discerned. In the first instance, the ritual aims at harmonizing the visible and the invisible realities. In the light of the inseparable nature of the two realities, this harmony is crucial in achieving an overall balance in nature. To the Bukusu, a non-functioning or non-performing natural phenomenon expressed for example in crop failure, drought etc is an expression of disharmony between the two worlds. Therefore the presumed intervention or invocation of the invisible world into the physical world greatly influenced the Bukusu conception and utilization of the natural resources, which we can conclude had an underlying conservation ethic of sustainability.

The above explanation of the malfunctioning natural phenomena as a signal of a mal-integrated ecological system is not different from what we learn from the science of ecology. Today the science of ecology directly links environmental problems such as erratic rainfall patterns, drought etc to a mal-integrated ecological system.

Second, the idea of apologizing to the soil and other lives is a re-affirmation of the sacredness of all lives including human beings. This is significant in terms of human to nature relationship. In ethical terms, it points to an ethic that controlled humanity's intervention in the natural world. With this ethic, humans were guided by need rather than mere accumulation. This is consistent with the overall good in nature, which aims at a sacred balance between humanity and the rest of nature.

When the above balance in nature was achieved, human beings co-existed with nature, thereby minimizing conflicts between the two categories. Accordingly, a situation of conflict between humanity and nature would not necessarily require a restraint on humanity from their environment, rather to harmonize patterns of resource use. This is because humans' survival patterns were necessarily interwoven in the ecological relationship. In most cases however, the subsistence practices operated in harmony with nature and hence an ecological balance. The elders look back with nostalgia about the many species of flora and fauna that were perfectly maintained and conserved (for example on the slopes of Mt Elgon). Many of these species have since disappeared from their environment.

Today there is a serious conflict between humanity and wildlife as a result of encroachment on the forest by over-populating humans and yet the paradox is that you cannot simply kick out these people some of whom have drawn their livelihood on these resources for all their lives from time immemorial. With the upsurge of racketeers and profiteers on the scene, the precious indigenous Elgon teak is today threatened with extinction. This will greatly alter the ecological system, including rainfall patterns.

One way of resolving the compounded human to human and human to nature conflict in this area is perhaps by controlling the market forces and patterns that encourage the over-exploitation of this environment. This way, natural beings such as wildlife are not pushed to the periphery, and yet the local people's socio-economic and spiritual needs drawn from this environment are not unjustly curtailed.

4.7 BUKUSU COMMUNALISTIC PRINCIPLE AND THE UNDERLYING ENVIROMENTAL VALUES

In the words of Omo-Fadaka (1990:178), the African community is not to be understood as a group of individuals "clinging together to eke out an existence". Rather, as Peterson adds, the African community "is imbued with certain bondedness--- (which) entail respect, which in turn entails taking responsibility for one's fellow human being, not as atomized individual, but as a member of the common fabric of life. Life fabric is one piece hence connections within the fabric have to be maintained. If there is a social or personal disharmony or illness, something has become disconnected and needs restoration" (1999:95).

These perceptions capture the basic tenets of the much talked about communalistic principle thought to be at the heart of African's socio-economic, political formations. Indeed, the Bukusu livelihood systems exhibited the communalistic principle, which embraced such values as co-operation, family bonding including the dead members, collectivity and concern for posterity. But most importantly, for our present concern, the communalistic principle was a central tenet in the sharing of, right and access to land and natural resources. It is within this context that we see the communalistic principle as being central in determining the way the Bukusu related to their environment. This relationship engendered Bukusu environmental values, which this section endeavours to reconstruct and bring to the fore.

It is a well-documented fact that the pre-colonial African land tenure systems were essentially communal in arrangement. This is generally true of the Bukusu land tenure system as our field research established. Thus, land among the Bukusu was controlled at the level of the clan unit. This communal unit, includes the living, the ancestors and the yet to be born. Land therefore was a rallying point for the past, present and the future. We should however, hasten to add that the clan control of land was only on a kind of trusteeship basis in that, ultimately, land was thought to belong to **Wele**, the creator

The overall purpose of the communal arrangement as we gathered was to ensure the right to, access and control of land by all members at the clan or kinship level. To ensure this, individual families were allocated pieces of land on which they cultivated, raised livestock and carried out other economic activities to meet their survival needs. These activities were however, carried out within the communal framework that determined the

social and ethical norms that regulated communal use. This way, the individual families did not have absolute control of land, rather had what Omari (1990) has termed 'possession right'. Land **per se** was never sold among the traditional Bukusu; it was not to be seen as a mere commodity to be sold. It is no wonder therefore that individuals (or families) who failed to or rejected the communally prescribed social and ethical norms related to land holding were promptly and summarily ostracized from the community.

In addition to the foregoing, certain parts of the land even though within the jurisdiction of a particular family or clan, remained open 'proper' (i.e. no individual or family had possession rights over it) for utilization by the entire clan or the wider community. These places included among others, watering points, forests and the resources therein including hunting grounds, places where initiation candidates were bathed before circumcision **(asitosi)** and so on.

From the land tenure system explicated upon above, engendered in the underlying communalistic principle, we discern values that constitute the Bukusu ethic of conservation and preservation of natural phenomena. The communalistic principle ensured that every member shared with every other member of the community a sense of belonging and perceived the land and other natural resources in possessive terms of first person 'ours' rather than third person 'theirs'. In a very fundamental sense, this sense of belonging enhanced the peoples' bondedness to the land and the natural resources in question. This in turn, not only enhanced the value and respect for land and natural resources but also implied collective responsibility and solidarity in the care of land and other natural resources. The communalistic principle thus set out the criteria by which

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sharing of the family's, the clan's or community's resources and the recognition of and reciprocal response of the community to the individual's contribution to the community were defined. Thus, as Makila (1982: 96) observes, "every member of the family had to play his role and co-operate with other members effectively". This communalistic principle evolved an egalitarian Bukusu community and a concomitant "code of conduct whose ultimate objective was to foster discipline, goodwill and harmony both within the family as well as amongst the broader group" (Ibid: 95).

Of great significance also is the conception of land as binding the people to their past, present and future, thus transcending the merely physical category to include the metaphysical realm. Invoking this deeper metaphysical reality reinforced the Bukusu attitude of reverence to the land and other natural resources. The natural child of the communalistic principle becomes a deep sense of mutual responsibility. Concomitant to this mutual responsibility are such values as sustainability, stewardship, co-operation, collectivity, concern for future generations and so on.

These values demanded that every member of the community endeavoured to maintain harmony and balance of the ecological system. This is because life was seen in a holistic and dialectical rhythm. For instance when something happened such as rainfall failure, crop failure perhaps as a result of over-use of land, a mere illness or an epidemic and so on, the whole fabric of life was disrupted and disconnected. It required the intervention of the entire community to restore the balance and harmony.

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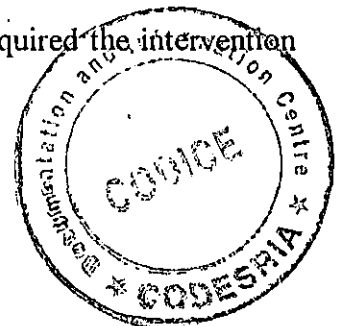
Further, the communalistic principle as the central tenet in sharing of, right and access to land and other natural resources not only helped to check wastage and over-exploitation of nature but also to sort out conflicts that would often arise in the process of sharing these resources. The principle ensured that there were no landless people in the community because this would be inimical to the community as a whole. Thus the system was replete with in fact an embodiment of the principles of egalitarianism, fairness and justice. The role of these principles as sure recipes for resolution of human to human conflict over natural resources need no justification. It must however, be pointed out that human to human conflicts arising out of access to and utilization of natural resources necessarily lead to the human to nonhuman nature conflict. Therefore, to check human-to-human conflicts over access to and use of natural resources is *ipso facto* to reduce or minimize human to nature conflict.

The Bukusu communalistic principle can therefore be said to result in a double-edged ethic, aiming at enhancing the opportunities for humanity, including future generations to meet their needs while at the same time protecting the land and other natural resources from over-exploitation and abuse. The overall basis of this ethic is in our view, the principles of stewardship and sustainability.

Another important aspect of the Bukusu communalistic principles as expressed in their land tenure is the idea that individuals and families held land on a trusteeship kind of arrangement. By this arrangement, as outlined above, individuals were directly answerable to the community (remember the traditional Bukusu attitudes towards utilization of land and resources promulgated by the community). This system secured

and upheld the community's age-old values concerning land and its resources and the human relations to them. In addition, the community reserved the right to punish wrongdoing in violation of these values. Essentially then, land among the Bukusu was the locus of social relations and dynamics, which also had real implications for environmental protection and care. The Bukusu environmental ethics was engendered in these social relations and dynamics defined by the communalistic principle.

At the dawn of the colonial era, however, the complex relationships expressed in land tenure systems were either adversely disrupted or simply overturned. As Kakai (2000) in his Ph.D. thesis correctly observes, European colonizers made nonsense of the African values embedded in their land tenure systems. In particular, the collective decision hitherto a pre-requisite in land matters was quashed. And most significantly, a monetary value was put on land, henceforth, land becoming a commodity or property to be purchased.

The propertization and commoditization together with the concomitant commercialization of the value of land shifted land control from the communal to the individual level. This way the principle of equity underlying accesss to the use of natural resources as discussed above collapsed. And to uphold this new dispensation, appropriate legal frameworks and structures were put in place. For instance, the notion of trespass hitherto unknown in Bukusu social relations was introduced. This heralded new human-to-human conflicts, which as we argued above have a direct bearing on human to nonhuman nature conflict.

In sum, besides the disruption of the social relations predicated on the land tenure system discussed above, the new system fundamentally undermined the ontological and ethical values attached to land and other natural resources. The categories of the domesticated and the wild became more sharply defined and distinguished. Consequently the notion of wild as not 'mine' or 'ours' encouraged an irresponsible and reckless attitude towards nature. Most significantly also, the new land tenure system shifted the human to nature relationship from a partnership to subject-object, thus making nonsense of the Bukusu values that sustained the partnership and in turn the ecological harmony.

4.8   HUMAN KINSHIP WITH NATURE AS BASIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN

In an earlier section in this chapter, we discussed the Bukusu belief in a common ancestry or origin for all beings in nature and its implications for human to nonhuman nature relationship. This commonality established some lateral relationship between human beings and nature in which human beings identified themselves as being part and parcel of nature. The theme of humanity as part of nature central to this thesis was re-affirmed by this belief. Informed by this belief in common ancestry, the Bukusu perceive themselves as being kins to nature or at least aspects of it. This perception, which is widespread, is generally expressed in Bukusu tales in which beings in nature especially animals, birds etc are featured as if they were family members. But most concretely, various Bukusu clans actually identify and associate certain animals, plants, birds etc with their origin and treat those beings as their kins.

The rules and norms of kinship that bound humans to fellow human beings extended to human as they related to these beings they identify with. For example, a Bukusu clan known as **Bakoyi** associates its origin with **enjofu** (elephant). It was generally believed that if you wronged or intended to harm a person from this clan **(omukoyi)**, he would turn around the house and transform himself into an elephant. The point seems to be that they relied upon their kinship with the elephant for protection. As a result of this kinship relationship with the elephant, **Bakoyi** cared for and protected the elephant. They were neither allowed to eat nor kill the elephant. They drew their strength as a clan from the elephant. As we pointed out above, almost every Bukusu clan identified itself with a natural being in this manner. Underlying such belief and practice, we can infer an ethic of conservation and preservation. This way, many species of nonhuman nature were either conserved or preserved in Bukusu environment. Perhaps it is worth noting that some of these beliefs and practices persist today although in attenuated forms.

To illustrate the notion of human to nonhuman nature kinship further, perhaps the way the Bukusu people as a whole related to and treated a cow would be more apt. First, we begin with drawing a parallel from human to human relationship. In Bukusu social life, when a morally deviant person had sexual intercourse with his mother or niece, this was considered an extreme form of incest. Accordingly, this action was beyond any form of cleansing prescribed by the Bukusu moral system. The curse that was handed down to such a person summarily amounted to a capital punishment.

Interestingly, our research revealed that in Bukusu community, a man who committed a sexual act with his cow was dealt with exactly as in the above case. That is to say that

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sexual intercourse with a cow was viewed and treated similarly with sexual intercourse with one's mother or niece. It was considered an extreme form of incest, which was beyond cleansing. This is an interesting parallel, which as our informants emphasized, more than anything else, underscored a strong tie of kinship relationship.

In recapitulation, the case explicated above and many other parallels between treatment of human beings and nonhuman nature reinforce the human to nature kinship theme. This in turn points to a Bukusu environmental ethic underwritten by such values as respect for nature, care and protection of the rest of nature, human stewardship of nature and sustainability of nature. Further still, this ethic helped to resolve conflicts between human beings and nature. The kinship principle was particularly explicit in determining how to resolve conflict between human beings and nature. The above case of sexual intercourse with a cow and the subsequent punishment of the offending human is one classic example.

4.9   THE NOTION OF *KHUSOOLA* AS AN EXPRESSION OF BUKUSU ECOJUSTICE

To be able to comprehend clearly the notion of **khusoola**, as a basic tenet of Bukusu ethics, we shall begin with an illustration from the human-to-human ethics. In an earlier section of this chapter, we discussed the communalistic principle and its role in Bukusu social relations and dynamics. In Bukusu social life, the community was obligated to punish wrongdoing and help to harmonize broken relationships between individuals, groups etc lest they disrupted the entire community. One such example is in sexual

morality. Sexual intercourse with another man's wife was not only morally reprehensible but punishable. When a man was found in an act of sexual intercourse with somebody's wife, the community's leadership summoned and promptly obligated the offending couple to go through a ritual known as **silukhi.** As part of this ritual, the community seized the randy man's best milking cow, which was then slaughtered and eaten by the gathered community members. In addition, the adulterous woman's relatives were made to give back to the husband one cow from the dowry he had paid. This ritual was considered by the community an exercise of **khusoola** the husband whose exclusive right to the woman's sexuality had been violated. This then marked a restoration of normal relationships in the community, i.e. reconciled the warring parties.

To give a brief interpretation of the above ritual, the reader is reminded that the Bukusu greatly valued the cow. The cow represented wealth hence taking the man's best milking cow symbolized an act of impoverishing him and the entire family. Taking his milking cow was considered a severe punishment, which also embarrassed the man before his family. Similarly, to retrieve one cow from his in-laws was to take away their wealth so as to make them enforce good morals in their daughter. It was additionally meant to compensate the man for the transgression committed against him. This, as we said, constituted **khusoola** the man. From this example, we can infer some important salient elements germane to the notion of **khusoola.**

From the onset, the practice of **khusoola** emerges as an embodiment of important moral principles. Ideally, **khusoola** is prompted by an individual's or community's willingness and preparedness to stand in the position of the other(s) when he/they are aggrieved or

being harmed. As the Bukusu say, **khusoola** is provoked by **khuulila burafu buli khumundu okundi,** literally meaning, to feel another person's pain. From the onset, **khusoola** involves empathizing and taking action to stop the suffering or hurting of the other person. A person who does this, displays moral courage in Bukusu community. Thus, **khusoola** implies an awakened and acting conscience in the person.

The notion of punishment is also engendered in the notion of **khusoola** exacted by the individual or the community e.g. by making one pay for the harm caused to another person or his property. In this, the community is driven by a sense of justice, particularly retributive justice directed at normalizing the relationships in the community. Restitutive justice is in this context understood in Taylors's (1986:186) sense as imposing "duty to restore the balance of justice between a moral agent and a moral subject when the subject has been wronged by the agent"

Besides, **khusoola** also embodies the element of reconciliation. In Bukusu moral fabric once a person has been punished appropriately for example by way of going through an appropriate ritual, the ritual symbolically normalizes the broken relationships between the warring parties. Reconciliation is a central tenet of **khusoola** to which the Bukusu attest, when they say **khusoola khuosia kumoyo** i.e **khusoola** calms, or heals the (broken) soul. These values embodied in the notion of **khusoola** further help to either resolve or forestall bitter conflict that would inevitably arise out of harm caused to another person or his property. Underwritten by the myriad moral values outlined above, **khusoola** is a central tenet or principle of Bukusu morality; it underlies Bukusu justice.

The present concern however, is: Where do we draw the boundary of **khusoola**? Does it stop at human-to-human relationship, or does it extend to the human to nonhuman nature relationship? We posed this question to our informants who were generally in consensus that the notion of **khusoola** extends to human to nonhuman nature relationship. To drive this point home, one informant, Joseph Waliaula drew our attention to a very commonplace daily experience.

The majority of Bukusu people in our area of study use oxen to plough their farms. And normally to avoid harming and exhausting the oxen, people would begin ploughing at dawn so that by say around 10 a.m. or earlier, as the sun begins to get hot, the oxen are released for grazing. Occasionally, people would extend beyond this time and this would promptly cause concern, even from passers-by. Often you would hear even those who do not know you remind you about the time, they would say, **yakela** literally meaning the sun is hot. This is not however, a mere reminder about the time, rather it is directed at asking you to release the oxen. In other words, they are expressing a moral imperative, i.e. a pricked conscience and provoking you to exercise your moral obligation not to harm the oxen. In the olden days, my informants were emphatic that when the collective voice had the all-important say, a person who over-used oxen with impunity was banished from using ox-plough and forced to dig his farm by hand. This way, the entire family suffered both physically and materially because then they were not able to realize enough harvest for their upkeep.

Another informant, Pius Namwinguli recounted for me a more profound and dramatic enactment of **khusoola** a nonhuman being. Our other informants corroborated this

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account. An old cow in a Bukusu homestead was treated with respect and reverence almost equal to the status of an elder in the clan. Such a cow would normally be left to grow old and die a natural death. But if it had to be slaughtered, then an elaborate ceremony expressing **khusoola** was enacted. In such a case, a gathering of clan members was arranged which involved sharing of traditional beer. Sharing of beer was traditionally a sign of oneness, which also incorporated the ancestors. On such occasion, as they shared the beer, they pleaded with the cow to accept the fate that was about to befall it as the Bukusu say, **bakikokonjelela.**

The owner was not allowed to be present to witness the slaughter of the cow lest it would look up and expect him to protect it, failure to which the Bukusu believed the cow would never forgive him. After the cow had been slaughtered, the owner would then come running enacting a war scenario (**kepupusia**), threatening revenge to those who had killed his cow. Then he would bring milk and sprinkle on it before it was skinned. And normally, a younger cow would be slaughtered together with it. This apparently paradoxical position will be clarified in a short while.

The owner's absence and subsequent enactment of vengeance was an act of putting himself in the position of his cow and feeling its pain. It was a sort of belated exercise of his conscience. This action further meant to apologize to the cow for the terrible misfortune that had been caused to it and show that he would have exercised his role as protector and guardian had he been around.

Then, **khukhwikokonjelela** as he sprinkled milk on the cow was an act of seeking

forgiveness and reconciliation. It was like saying, now that these 'enemies' have killed

you in my absence, please accept the fate but do not go with a heavy 'heart'. This was

meant to calm or heal the broken 'heart'. The milk on the other hand represented the

other animals in the pact because it was believed that if the cow was not reconciled to the

owner, it would cause the remaining cows in the homestead to die. The sprinkling of the

milk was some sort of pledge and reassurance that he would provide care, protection and

custodianship to the dead cow's kins left behind by their patriarch or matriarch.

Finally, the younger cow was understood to provide 'companionship' to the older cow so

that it does not feel 'lonely'. To me this points to some sort of retribution, i.e. making

good the harm caused by appeasing the dead cow. The provision of a second cow to be

slaughtered can also be seen as some punitive measure, to make it expensive to slaughter

such an old cow in the homestead so as to discourage people from the practice. The idea

is to leave such a cow, to die a natural death.

The point that the practice of **khusoola** extends to include nonhuman beings in nature is

significant to this study. It is an implicit expression of the Bukusu moral concern for

nonhuman nature. Specifically, it is recognition of the human moral concern for

nonhuman nature predicated on the principle of kinship with nature. This is in turn

founded on the common ancestry that humanity share with other beings in nature as

discussed earlier on in this chapter. The practice further affirms the status of nonhuman

nature or at least elements of it as moral subjects that therefore deserve moral

considerability from human moral agents. This is a further affirmation of the inherent

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worth possessed by nonhuman nature, to which humans as moral agents have responsibility.

In Bukusu moral fabric, therefore, the basic values engendered in **khusoola** charted out above ought to apply not only to the human-to-human relationship but also to the human to the rest of nature relationship. According to our informants, all beings in nature including the earth itself are subjects of **khusoola**. The significance of this extension of the ethical boundary to nonhuman nature as exemplified above is a pragmatic and logical recognition of the fact that beings in nature can be harmed or wronged and hence, are moral subjects. More importantly to this study too, is that the Bukusu take cognizance of the reality of conflicts between human beings and nonhuman beings either conceptually or practically. The principle of **khusoola** as explicated above can be viewed as an explicit attempt to resolve such conflicts.

In recapitulation, we can assert that the examples recounted above help to bring to light Bukusu people's implicit environmental ethic. This ethic is motivated not merely by human utilitarian gains from their natural environment but rather a genuine regard and care for nonhuman nature. This regard imposes a moral responsibility on humans, obligating them to ensure that the good of nonhuman nature is protected and enhanced. This way we can infer humanity's role as custodians or stewards of nature. The concern, as it were involves not merely a negative duty not to cause harm to other beings in nature, but also a positive duty or obligation to make good for the harm humans cause nonhuman nature. The principle of **khusoola** is partly meant to put to praxis this obligation. This in

our view points to what we may call the Bukusu sense of ecojustice. This ethic as pointed out aims at sustainability of the ecological system.

It needs to be clarified however, that the Bukusu ethic of regard and care of nonhuman nature presented above does not in any way imply that humans cannot whatsoever cause harm to nonhuman nature. On the contrary, humans are justified in many respects to cause harm to other beings in nature as pre-requisite for their own survival. This is inbuilt in the part-whole relationship that we discussed in an earlier section of this chapter.

The important point as we have observed is that the Bukusu operated on strict moral principles by which the use of nonhuman nature was guided. For instance, from the exemplifications above, humans guided by need rather than exploitation in their utilization of the rest of nature resulted only in minimum harm to the rest of nature. They were guided, so to speak by the principle of proportionality or moderation. This is an important ethical principle in determining the amount of human benefit from nonhuman nature.

In addition, the Bukusu seem to appeal to the principle of self-defense in causing deliberate harm to nonhuman nature. For example, one informant, Samson Ulula was categorical when we posed the question: On what occasions are humans morally allowed to kill wild animals? He retorted; **chisang'i chemundaa sechilima tawe mala chonaka biakhulia bie babandu**, this is to say; wild animals do not farm, yet they destroy peoples' crops. That way, humans are morally justified to defend their kind, for self-

perpetuation. This is an example of a conflict situation to which the principle of self-defence helps to resolve. This principle has its parallels in the oft-quoted situation ethics in conventional ethics.

4.10 UNDERLYING ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES IN NAMES AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS THROUGH NATURE

The practice of naming of people after various parts or aspects of natural phenomena, including animals, plants, birds and even inanimate things such as rocks is prevalent in Bukusu social life. Our field research revealed that many of these names carried coded messages with underlying environmental value. There are many contexts within which names could be located. For example, a person was named after sighting or appearance of a rare animal or bird. Or a person was named after a big animal had been killed.

These names are important for the obvious reason that they help to keep in memory such phenomenal occurrences. But most importantly, besides acting as repositories of memorable events or incidents, this naming serves to identify certain human characteristics with those of nonhuman nature. By such naming, it is like the person being named has special connection with the animal, bird etc in question. This is sometimes a positive prayer that the person takes on the admirable qualities of the being in question. It could also be negative, in the sense of discouraging the person from such qualities as exemplified by the being he/she is being named after. This phenomenon is comparable with the practice that is commonplace where people name their children after people they have great admiration for. These could be people of great moral virtue,

wisdom, statesmen and so on. Names like 'Mandela,' 'Reagan' etc are commonplace in Kenyan families.

In our research, we established that in indigenous Bukusu community when one was named after a particular animal, bird etc, a special relationship was initiated, for example the person was supposed to assume the role of protector of that creature. They were for instance forbidden from hunting or eating the meat of such animals or birds. Conversely, it was also believed that a particular animal, bird, or snake became the guardian and protector of the person named after it. Sometimes this happened at the clan level so that a whole clan identified itself with a particular animal, bird, snake etc., which became their totem. We have previously provided the example of **Bakoyi** clan and the elephant.

In sum, this practice of naming establishes a special bond of kinship between the person and clan with that animal, bird etc. In ethical terms, this enhances a sense of commitment to those species with whom humans shared a special relationship by such identification. In addition, there is a recognition of their inherent qualities and therefore worth. In a nutshell, an ethic of conservation, stewardship, sustainability and even preservation underlay this practice.

In addition to the practice of naming, the Bukusu also communicate, often projecting their social lives through natural phenomena. This principally serves human social functions. They also help people to execute both their good and evil intentions. For example, diviners and sorcerers respectively use ordinary objects from the natural world e.g. plants, snakes, birds etc to carry out their good and evil intentions.

The story of the squirrel, the elephant and the hippopotamus suffices to illustrate further the point we are making. The story goes as follows; the squirrel is said to have argued with and challenged the elephant that he could pull him (elephant) in a sort of contest. The squirrel was prepared to demonstrate this and promptly produced a long rope, giving the elephant one end of it purportedly to go and pull from the other end. At the other end, the squirrel are did a similar thing to the hippopotamus. Unknown to either of his victims, the squirrel stood at a strategic place where neither could see him and tapped on the rope. This heralded fierce pulling from both ends to the delight and amusement of the squirrel that later got a standing ovation from both his victims separately.

This story has both negative and positive coded messages. While both the elephant and the hippo emerge as symbols of strength, they are also portrayed as foolish having been duped easily by the squirrel. The squirrel on the other hand emerges as ingenious but also as a trickster (morally not a positive attribute). These are lessons that ought to impact on people's social lives. For the present concern, however, we note that some of these qualities elicit some admiration in human beings about the animals etc in question. This in turn inculcates in people, positive attitude of reverence for these animals. Alternatively, humans dread some of these qualities and hence keep away from the animals etc in question. For example, impressed by the ingenuity of the squirrel, the **Bakhurarwa** clan identify their origin with it. They see themselves as relatives of the squirrel **(emuna)**. They accordingly neither kill nor eat the meat of **emuna**.

4.11 TABOO, SACREDNESS AND SYMBOLISM AS EXPRESSIONS OF ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

There were many places designated scared in Bukusu worldview. Although they varied in terms of the specific expressive functions and roles they symbolised, they shared the underlying significance in terms of sustenance of harmony, order and hence balance in nature. These places were often sustained by taboos that also played an important role in enforcement of social and ethical values that in our view transcended the human-to-human category. A few examples suffice to illustrate this point.

In general, we note with our informants that there were many taboos and other social sanctions on gathering of plants, hunting etc that generally controlled the over-utilization of these resources. One common example concerns hunting. Among the Bukusu, when a hunted animal has been slaughtered, the hunters are obligated to share the meat with any other persons present. It was a taboo for any person to consume hunted meat alone; he would never hunt successfully again. This is quite consistent with the communalistic principle discussed in an earlier section of this chapter.

In a lager context, however, we can clearly see in this sharing a conservation measure. This very act would curb unnecessary competition in hunting by different groups. The result would be minimum wastage and sustainability in wild game. The present and future generations will then be assured of a sustainable supply of these game to hunt.

Another example related to hunting comes through by way of an example told about a Bukusu clan called **Baala**. These people are said to be **basila emande** i.e. a bird species

known, as **emande** is taboo to them. One day, a randy man from **Baala** clan disappeared into a bush with somebody's wife. In their rendezvous, **emande** spotted them and yelled out at them, **akhoo! akhoo!** i.e. I have seen you! I have seen you! Unfortunately, this illicit sexual act resulted in conception. The woman then gave birth to a baby boy who grew up to become a ruler (**omwami**). In the Bukusu community, a baby who is born out of an adulterous liaison legally belongs to the rightful husband of the adulterous woman. In the case in question therefore, **Baala** clan lost **omwami** to a different clan. The **emande** had exposed them and as punishment they were never to be given leadership positions. For **Baala, emande** henceforth became a taboo because it was responsible for the loss that befell them. Henceforth, **Baala** neither hunted nor ate **emande**. Through deeper questioning of our sources and our own analysis we established that **emande** was seen as a symbol of beauty and yet a rare species. Thus, besides the obvious social and moral lessons for humans in this story, this taboo wittingly helped to preserve **emande** bird species in the ecosystem of these people.

One other common taboo, which persists todate in conservative Bukusu homes, though in attenuated forms is a prohibition from eating meat and drinking milk at the same time. The belief is that the cow that produced the milk would 'dry up'. The real reason underlying this taboo as our sources explained is to guard against wasteful use of resources. Thus this taboo has an obvious conservation message, which has a strong scientific basis. Meat and milk share basic nutrients and hence it makes no dietary sense to consume both at the same time. The prohibition therefore helps to check wasteful consumer mannerisms. Once again we see a conservation ethic grounded on rational, wise principles, aiming at sustainable use of natural resources.

Finally, we consider **asitosi** as an example of a sacred place, which is sustained by a taboo. This is a place where boys are bathed early in the morning or at dawn before they are presented for circumcision. This place, which is carefully selected by elders, is normally a place with plenty of vegetation and water that never dries up. The Bukusu call it **asirende.** This place, rich in biodiversity symbolizes continuity of life and generally belongs to the entire community within the locality. The belief is that if this place dried up, then it would result in the demise of all persons who were bathed there at circumcision. For purposes of the past, present and future generations, this place is specially protected from any disturbance. For instance, no farming, hunting or cutting of vegetation around this place is allowed. Any person who attempted to go against these regulations was promptly cursed and ostracised from the community.

This place (i.e. **asitosi**) portrayed above as having plenty of indigenous trees and rich in biodiversity represents an ideal ecosystem that guarantees continuity and sustainability. The importance of such a place as a water catchment area cannot be gainsaid. In our view, therefore the belief surrounding this place conveys a symbolically coded ethical message; namely that continuity and sustainability are engendered in a harmonious ecosystem. An ethic of conservation, drawing from the principle of continuity and sustainability seems pretty explicit from this analysis.

To summarize our discourse on the notions of taboos and sacredness we note that sacred places convey values that humans attach to nonhuman nature. The designation of certain places as sacred underlies the values with which such places are viewed. The sacredness

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however, also obtains from the inherent worth in nature that we have consistently alluded to in this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis.

Turning to the notion of symbolism, we note for instance that certain trees are believed to symbolize certain values and qualities. Two examples suffice to illustrate the point we are making. First, we have **lusoola (markhamia)** tree. The term **lusoola** is derived from the verb **khusoola**, which we have explicated with illustrations in the preceding section of this chapter as a central tenet of Bukusu morality, which transcends the human category to include the rest of nature. The **lusoola** tree is well known for its capacity to multiply rapidly, thereby providing a serene physical environment. Thus, to the Bukusu, **lusoola** symbolized peace, calmness and harmony as expressed by the environment that it created. The Bukusu use **lusoola** tree for a number of functions but principally it is planted at **namwiima** (a hut where sacrifices and prayers are made). It was also used as the central post in the traditional round huts. These two functions are symbolically significant.

As the central post in the hut, **lusoola** symbolized the centrality of the virtues of **khusoola** identified earlier on. This emphasized a harmonious kinship bond, be it at the level of the family, clan or even the larger community. The Bukusu community so to speak is anchored on the values of peace, harmony and justice all of which were represented by the **lusoola** tree. The **namwiima** as a meeting point between humanity and the spiritual world is meant to be calm, serene, in a word, an ideal environment. The presence of **lusoola** at this point therefore emphasizes a bond of harmony of humanity, nature and the spiritual world. The point seems to be that the virtues identified with

lusoola transcend humanity as a family, clan or community to extend to nature and the spiritual reality. This way, therefore, lusoola represents the harmony of all beings in nature.

Second, we consider lukhendu (palm) tree. The lukhendu tree normally grows around wet places like riverbanks etc. These places called asirende are permanently wet, never dry up, withstanding prolonged drought. Lukhendu tree thus, represents longevity, continuity and sustainability of life. The thriving lukhendu tree even during the drought season is a living manifestation of the foregoing values in the ecosystem.

The presence of lukhendu at namwiina is therefore an expression of the richness in nature and human well-being. Likewise, it is placed around the centre post of the traditional hut to emphasize longevity, wealth and abundance. The lukhendu tree, just like lusoola multiplies rapidly growing numerous branches. This, to the Bukusu is a symbol of abundance of cattle wealth and life. To emphasize this, lukhendu branch is used for scouring milk gourds (Makila, 1982: 184).

These tree species and many others not mentioned here that symbolize different values were treated specially with great regard and reverence. The Bukusu considered these trees as some sort of kins, because through them communication with Wele and other spiritual entities was maintained. This way they teleologically served important social, ethical and religious functions in Bukusu value system. They contributed to the human good, either as guardians of good values, protectors or in forestalling bad/evil things from happening. To maintain the status quo the continuity and sustenance of these tree species

was paramount. As pointed out above, codes of conduct towards them were enacted and are expressed in the beliefs and practices that surround them. For example the trees discussed above were not cut down anyhow: if they had to be cut down, appropriate rituals like the one cited in the case of the tree in an earlier section of kinship were performed. This in our view evolved an ethic of conservation or even preservation.

4.12 A SYNTHESIS OF BUKUSU ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

This chapter was an attempt to reconstruct Bukusu environmental ethics. To do this, we carried out indepth descriptions, interpretations and analyses of various Bukusu practices, beliefs and attitudes in relation to nonhuman nature. Through this, we have been able to bring to the fore what we believe constitutes Bukusu environmental ethics. This section recapitulates in a synthesised manner what comprises this ethics.

The indigenous Bukusu conceptualised nature in a holistic and dialectical manner expressed in a well-integrated and functioning ecological system. This way, it was believed, any interruption, emanating either from human beings or natural phenomenon disconnected the balance and harmony of the entire system.

The basic premise on which human – nonhuman nature relationship in the ethical sense can be elucidated draws from the Bukusu view of all nature as being sacred. The Bukusu believed in'lifeness' in all beings in nature, and therefore a fundamental connectedness of all beings in nature. In this, we can see quite explicitly the idea that all beings in nature have inherent worth. This worth, gives every existent in nature a right to exist irrespective of any other use humans may make of such a being. This further established an explicitly

recognised sense of kinship between human beings and nonhuman nature, with appropriate moral norms in place to guide this kinship relationship. It is in view of this that there was in Bukusu communities a strong belief in totemism.

In view of this kinship relationship, to address the concerns of nonhuman nature, we have the practice of **khusuoola**. Through this practice, the Bukusu had an ethic with appropriate penalties to be meted out on humans who desecrated or abused nonhuman nature. In this practice, we see a sense of justice, what we have referred to as Bukusu ecojustice. This is a moral principle deliberately aimed at protection of nonhuman nature from abuse and misuse by humans. These beliefs and practices support an ethic, which directly cares for nonhuman nature.

In addition to the foregoing, there are other specific principles that constitute Bukusu environmental ethics that can be said to address nonhuman concern indirectly. We single out for elucidation, the communalistic and the stewardship principles.

The communalistic principle as a moral imperative ensured fairness and equity in the distribution of resources by humans including future generations. In the specific sense of furthering Bukusu environmental ethics, this aspect of the communalistic principle helped to put under check human - nonhuman nature conflicts by keeping to the bare minimum undue competition by humans over natural resources. In essence, the inevitability of human use of nonhuman nature for their purpose was recognised but was furthered under the guide of a moral system, which operated, on principles of need rather than desire for accumulation.

In addition, the communalistic principle ensured communal responsibility towards nonhuman nature. Human beings were obligated by a moral system to be accountable to their God, to nature and to the community in their interaction with nonhuman nature. The foregoing values were embodied and furthered through the practice of communal ownership of land and natural resources.

We can also discern a developed sense of stewardship of nonhuman nature by human beings as a central pillar of Bukusu environmental ethics. The principle of stewardship embodies an attitude of caring for nonhuman nature. For instance in the mother/father principle that defines human -earth relationship in Bukusu conception, we see also the attitude of caring for nonhuman nature. The stewardship principle is further grounded on a concern for future generations. In this concern, however, the well-being of nonhuman nature cannot be precluded, or otherwise the entire ecological system is disconnected as noted above. Thus, the earth as the meeting point for the past, present and future underlies basic principles of continuity and sustainability.

To help uphold these values, the Bukusu also appeal to the presence of the hawkish eye of **Wele,** the creator of all existents as the overall guardian of order and harmony of the universe. We saw how various rituals were performed meant to maintain harmony between the physical and spiritual realities.

In sum, we can say that in Bukusu environmental ethics the elements of conservation and preservation are subsumed into each other giving birth to an ethic of care for nonhuman nature. Thus, to the Bukusu, the ultimate purpose of a right relationship between humanity

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and nonhuman nature in ethical terms was the well-being, continuity, harmony and sustainability of the entire ecological system.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 TOWARDS AN ETHIC OF ECOSUSTAINABILITY

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, we developed an understanding of environmental ethics from the perspective of an African worldview, with specific reference to the Bukusu people of Western Kenya. In this discourse, a reconstruction of Bukusu environmental values revealed an ethic of environment, which recognized the intrinsic worth, and moral standing of all beings in nature while at the same time acknowledging the unique place of humanity in the universe. Accordingly, we saw that deliberate attempts were made to harmonize human activities with nature, within the framework of care, stewardship and sustainability in the use of natural resources.

This chapter picks up from this point and our main concern presently is to attempt a richer conceptual paradigm of human-nonhuman nature relationship, with particular emphasis on the human-nonhuman nature conflict. To begin with, we have critically interrogated the widely known theoretical formulations with the view to highlighting their weaknesses and strengths in the process of constructing our proposed conceptual framework.

5.2 THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHIICS

In accordance with our discourse so far, it has become clear that theorizing on human-nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms remains one of the most contentious issues in environmental ethics. A quick glance at the enormous literature on the subject however reveals two broad paradigms, namely, shallow and deep environmental approaches. The two paradigms present a polarized view of human – nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms as briefly outlined in Chapter One of this thesis.

Proceeding on the polarized positions and in the light of our discourse in the preceding two chapters, the present chapter proposes its preferred viable conceptual framework of human-nonhuman nature conflict. Let us point out from the onset that this chapter and indeed the entire thesis is guided by the awareness that humanity, particularly owing to developments in science and technology can and have impacted on nonhuman nature in alarming proportions. This indeed necessitates a re-thinking in ethical perspective to guide the human-nonhuman nature interaction. The study is also aware that we cannot without the risk of inconsistency deny that morality is agent-centred and therefore in the apt words of Vermeersch (1994:283), humans" have the advantage over all other animals, possessing the ability to anticipate the catastrophe". Thus to quote Sylvan and Bennett (1994:14), "the environment remains---mere backdrop to actions of agents". Finally and unavoidably, any such ethic must take into cognizance the fact that "it involves practical as well as theoretical changes in human treatment to the environment, hence the principles for doing this are both theoretical and practical" (Sylvan and Bennett,

1994:14). Before we articulate our considered approach, let us begin by closely interrogating both deep and shallow environmental theoretical paradigms.

5.2.1 How Deep is Deep Ecology Paradigm?

In characterizing the deep ecology movement, the concept of intrinsic moral standing is central, for depending on what sorts of beings are thought to have it; we distinguish between biocentrism and ecocentrism. The biocentric theory, by virtue of its inherent meaning, limits intrinsic moral standing to beings in nature with biological life. Ecocentrism on the other hand views all beings in nature as having intrinsic moral standing. It will however be evident shortly that the proponents of deep ecology movement often use biocentrism and ecocentrism interchangeably. We intend to do the same in this study for the added reason that in our reconstruction of Bukusu environmental ethics, it was evident that the Bukusu believe in lifeness in all beings in nature. This makes any distinction between biocentrism and ecocentrism superfluous.

Although deep ecology as a clearly formulated theory of environmental ethics is a very recent development, its roots are present in earlier writings by thinkers concerned with the nature of the relationship between human beings and nonhuman nature in ethical terms. This study explores thoughts of two such thinkers for illustration.

The first one is Albert Schweitzer, one of the pioneer writers on the subject of the possibility of extension of ethics beyond the familiar human-to-human category. Reflecting on this issue, i.e. human – nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms, as early as 1915, Schweitzer tried to work out on ethic that went beyond the human-human

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category of relationships. In his search for its basis, he concluded that such an ethic must be anchored on the principle of reverence for life, positing impassionately "reverence for life did not end with human beings" (Schweitzer, 1993: 185). To arrive at this position, Schweitzer postulated that all organisms possessed the will to live. This will to live put a moral obligation on humans as moral agents towards nonhuman beings. Accordingly therefore, he saw a morally good action as obtaining in "giving to every will to live the same reverence for life" (Ibid).

To bolster his argument, elsewhere, Schweitzer wrote; "the ethical person shatters no crystal that sparkles in the sun, tears no leaf from its trees, breaks no flowers, and is careful not to crush any insect as he walks" (1923: 254). It is out of this conviction that Schweitzer faulted conventional ethics regretfully observing that "the great fault of all ethics hitherto has been that they believed themselves to have to deal with only the relations of man" (1933: 185). And in an attempt to marry theory and praxis Schweitzer in his daily life experiences and encounters endeavoured to live his ethics. He would for instance in a rather desperate move help insects and worms that he found struggling in a pool of water and so on (Nash, 1989:61).

In our view, Schweitzer's contribution to environmental ethics lies in two fundamental points: the first is the recognition of intrinsic moral standing in other beings other than humans. This is captured and expressed in what Schweitzer calls 'a will to live' that he recognizes in all living beings. The other is a logical consequence of the above, namely that we humans have to re-think our relationship with the rest of nature in ethical terms. The point raised here is that boundaries of legitimate moral concern extend well beyond

the human category. Thus, ethics must take into account the intrinsic moral standing of

nonhuman beings, which puts a moral obligation on humanity. The philosophical

justification of these two points has been explored in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Nevertheless, as a program of action dealing with human to nonhuman nature

relationship specifically from the perspective of conflict between the two, we find

Schweitzer's theory limited in a number of respects.

To begin with, Schweitzer's idea that all life forms are equally valuable has come under

heavy criticism by commentators on environmental ethics. Reacting to this position,

Roderick Nash, poses two rhetorical but challenging questions: How would Schweitzer

eat, and as a doctor, how would he justify taking lives of germs? (Nash, 1989: 61). As if

he had anticipated these challenges, Schweitzer had already written:

> in the process of living, one did on occasion kill other
> forms of life. But this should happen only with a
> compassionate sense of responsibility for life, which is to
> be sacrificed (Schweitzer, 1933: 271).

Schweitzer went further to justify the killing of animals for medical research, but as he

said, "only when really and truly necessary" (Ibid). The challenge raised by Nash in the

above questions tacitly raises the question of possible conflict between human beings and

other beings in nature. For instance, eating and killing other living beings in nature

obviously curtail their well-being as postulated by Schweitzer and hence a source of

conflict between the two. The dilemma then is: If all beings in nature were to be equally

valued, how would we resolve conflicts that would inevitably arise in the ensuing

interaction between the different and competing categories?

Schweitzer's response is that we can justify undermining, even killing of other animals for human purposes when 'really and truly necessary'. This is quite justifiable, as human beings cannot meet their needs otherwise. In view of Schweitzer's ethic, however, the question is: How do we determine when it is 'really and truly' necessary to take away another life that is equal in worth as our own? Are we not condemned to use human standards to determine that very position? The point is that the notions of compassion, necessity etc on which Schweitzer seems to ground his response are familiar ethical principles emphasizing a human-centred rather than a nature-centred approach to ethics. In the final analysis, therefore, Schweitzer does not succeed in justifying a nature – centred ethic that he endeavoured to present.

In addition, one can also see the impracticability of putting into practice Schweitzer's theory as a program of action. Consider for instance Schweitzer's own effort to avoid conflict with nonhuman nature by avoiding to step on insects, worms etc. To have any impact, Schweitzer's approach ought to be adopted by the majority of moral agents and yet to demand of moral agents such a conduct would not only make live simply impossible but also morally unjustifiable, as this would alienate humanity from nature.

The other and arguably better known and more influential thinker in environmental ethics circles is Aldo Leopold, whose views are highly acclaimed and directly linked to what has later come to be known as biocentric ethics (see Nash, 1989: 70ff). Leopold, unlike Schweitzer before him was neither trained in philosophy nor theology. He was science-oriented, having trained in forestry and pursued a career as a manager in forests (Nash 1989:64). It was however during his acquaintance with studies in ecology that Leopold

developed his ideas concerning the ethics of environment. These ideas are basically contained in the 'Land Ethic' a belated chapter in his celebrated book, **A Sand County Almanac**, 1949. This book, or rather the chapter referred to is highly acclaimed by environmental ethicists of his persuasion for what is thought to be a forceful articulation of the case for extension of ethics beyond the human domain.

Leopold's theory presents an organic view of nature, which revolves around the notions of the earth, which he preferred to call land, which he perceived, like an organism possessing life. The theory further emphasizes the relationship of different elements of nature as a unity or totality. The different elements of this whole, humans included are sub-ordinate to this totality playing different roles towards the good of the whole in the same way a living organism functions. This totality is what Leopold called the biotic community.

It should be pointed out that Leopold's sense of biotic community extends far beyond the conventional conception, which limits biotic to the biologically living as evidenced say by the process of growth. Leopold's sense of biotic community like Naess' (we shall come to this in a moment) sense of living being includes even landscapes, mountains, rivers, rocks etc. Leopold's view that all these beings posses some sort of life is reminiscent of the Bukusu cosmology discussed in the preceding chapter. We saw that in this cosmology, all beings in nature are believed to have some force, which can be equated to Leopold's extended sense of life. It is to the above extended meaning of biotic community that Leopold places the locus of moral considerability and therefore the

boundary of moral concern. On this, Leopold differed with his predecessor, Schweitzer who emphasized the place of the individual in his moral scheme.

To develop the thesis of extension of moral concern, Leopold uses the analogy of Odysseus a Greek-god like being, who although morally conscious still hanged a dozen slave girls because in Odysseus sense, slaves were properties and therefore not within the bounds of morality. Thus, we humans in the same way as Odysseus, Leopold observes, "--- abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us; (but) when we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect" (Leopold, 1949: 203).

Thus convinced, Leopold argued that human obligation to land must transcend self-interest to be "grounded on the recognition that humans and other components of nature are ecological equals" (1949: 204). Hence, Leopold's supreme principle of ethical concern is that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community---it is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Ibid: 224)
Leopold was however, not oblivious of the fact that technological development in human civilizations set humans apart from nature, hence the further conception of ethics as self-imposition of limitations on the part of humans arising out of the realization that they are integral parts of a larger community of mutual interdependence.

In response, we see that Leopold's theory of extended ethics not only re-affirms the moral standingness of nonhuman nature but also the mutual connectedness and interdependence of the different elements of nature, humans being integral parts of that mutuality. This

interconnectedness, as we saw in Chapter Four in the case of Bukusu environmental ethics, plays a major role in bringing humanity closer to nature, and thus shaping their attitudes and sensibilities towards the natural environment. These, in our sense provide crucial recipes in articulation of an ethic of human-nonhuman nature relationship. For instance, humans refrain from treating the rest of nature as mere means to human ends; taking a leap into recognizing that nature has a purpose of its own, which cannot simply be reduced to human good. This reminds humanity of their obligation to maintain a balance and harmony in the ecological system. Nevertheless, as a comprehensive platform on which we can address specific human-nonhuman nature ethical dilemmas, in particular, conflicts, we find Leopold's theory inadequate in a number of respects.

In the first place, Leopold's sense of community is problematic. In our sense, we find the assumptions on which Leopold's sense of community is grounded to conveniently ignore fundamental differences between humanity and nonhuman nature. The point is that apart from some physiological and biological similarities between human beings and some nonhuman beings, there are crucial differences emanating from the fact that humans are rational, cultural beings, which must be incorporated in any conception of a community that includes humanity. To bring this to realization, we necessarily need human standards, and hence a human-centred ethic. In view of this, Leopold's sense of community cannot engender a nonhuman-centred ethics it proposes.

Reflecting on Leopold's idea of community, Passmore (1974: 116) maintains, "it does not generate ethical obligation". In his view, the idea of moral obligation is predicated on two conditions, which Leopold's sense of community fails to satisfy. These two

conditions are; common interests among members and recognition of mutual obligation between the parties.

While we concur with Passmore that Leopold's sense of community is problematic as argued above, we do not agree with the two conditions on which he grounds his denial for moral obligation to nonhuman nature. While acknowledging crucial differences between humanity and nonhuman beings as pointed out above, we believe that there exist commonalities between human beings and nonhuman beings sufficient to generate a sense of moral obligation on the part of humans as moral agents. Principally, these commonalities derive from the principle of inherent worth that all beings posses. Specifically in addition to a common origin, living beings in nature have a continued interest in well-being and so on, which as we argued in the preceding two chapters impose on humans, as moral agents, a responsibility.

The second condition on the other hand implicitly raises the question of reciprocity, in the sense that one's right is another's duty or obligation. Reciprocity implies a two – way or give and take sort of relationship, it is a mutual relationship. In general, we observe some sense of mutuality in human – nonhuman nature interaction. For instance, when human beings treat animals, both domesticated and even wild in a good way, e.g. by giving them food, helping them out of difficulties, they do respond appropriately by identifying with you, appreciating what you do for them. A kind of reciprocity is quite evident in their actions.

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The important point to note however is that, this reciprocity is not in the moral sense. In our characterization of moral relationships in Chapter Two, we pointed out that a moral action in respect of human – nonhuman nature is a one-way affair. This is because morality presupposes a moral agent of which nonhuman nature is incapable. Hence, actions by nonhuman beings directed at human beings or any other being including their own kind cannot be characterized as moral. This also means that nonhuman beings are not under moral obligation, towards human beings, for this is inconceivable.

Yet again, those of us who are moral agents owe moral obligation to those amongst us who are incapable of entering into a relationship of mutual obligation with us. Thus to predicate moral obligation on reciprocity would preclude from moral standingness not only all nonhuman beings but also a good percentage of human beings.

Further still on Leopold's problematic sense of community, Taylor, whose ethics of respect for nature is inspired by Leopold's writings argues that Leopold's conception undermines the place and good of individuals within the context of the community. In Taylor's view, "unless individuals have a good of their own that deserves the moral consideration of agents, no account of nature-as-a-whole can explain why moral agents have a duty to preserve its good" (Taylor, 1986: 118). This thesis argues that moral agents owe duties and obligations to both individuals and collectivities. In our view it is individuals who have interests, rights, a good of their own that put moral obligation upon moral agents. Nonetheless collectivities such as communities, species and so on have these qualities in the secondary sense, arising from recognition of the same qualities in

the individual entities that comprise them. It is in this sense for instance, that we speak of rights of indigenous people.

Further still, taking a similar line to Passmore's attack on Leopold's sense of community, Attfield poses the problematic in the following:

> if the sole moral criterion is the preservation of the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community, then suffering will count only as an evil where its effects are ecologically bad and where they are held to be good (e.g. culling) it will not even count as a negative moral factor at all (Attfield, 1991: 180).

Additionally, "neither individual creatures (human or otherwise) nor their states will be of intrinsic value, and their value will consist solely in their relative contribution to ecological stability" (Ibid). In our sense, in addition to Attfield's foregoing observations, the part - whole problematic posed by Leopoldian sense of community as pointed out earlier on, leads to lack of clearly spelt out mechanisms by which to relate the different entities of the community. In the specific case of conflict between the elements, say between human beings and nonhuman nature, it is difficult to see how they can be surmounted. This is confounded by the fact that on Leopoldian formulation, one deals with collectivities rather than individuals and hence if humans violated nonhuman nature without significantly interfering or altering the biotic community, then such actions would not be morally wrong. This would be contrary to the hallmark of a nature-centred ethic, once again putting the depth of the Leopoldian ethic on the line. Having explored the seeds of deep ecology, in the preceding two writers, let us now interrogate two main proponents of deep ecology as a theory of environmental ethics. These are, Arne Naess and Paul Taylor, beginning with the former.

Deep ecology as an environmental philosophical system proper was formulated in the 1970's by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher. In spite of the use of the term 'ecology' which is a scientific terminology, Naess was clear in his mind that deep ecology was a normative rather than a scientific principle (Naess, 1995: 154). The philosophical basis of deep ecology is expressed in Naess' notion of 'ecosophy' a concept he coined from two Greek words, 'ecos' meaning household and 'sophia', meaning wisdom. Thus, ecology in Naess' own words is "philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium" (Ibid: 154). This philosophy is rooted in Naess' intuitive believe that "all living beings have a right to blossom that is the same for all" (1995: 223). By living beings, Naess, like his predecessor, Leopold, means a category larger than the conventional one, to include such beings as landscapes, rivers, wildernesses, mountains and so on. (Ibid: 124). All these in his formulation are internally related. Naess, however, probably aware of the problematic posed by insisting that "the right to live is one and the same for all individuals, whatever the species" (Ibid: 223), added the rider; "but the vital and interests of our nearest have priority" (Ibid). Naess (1995: 68) presents his theory in an eight-point platform as follows:

1. The well being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on earth have value in themselves. These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes.

2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of their value and are also values in themselves.

3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs

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4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantially smaller human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires a smaller human population.

5. Present human interference with nonhuman world is excessive and the situation is rapidly worsening.

6. Policies must therefore be changed, affecting basic economic, technological and ideological structures to realize a deeply different state of affairs from the present one.

7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling on situation of inherent value) rather than adhering on increasingly higher standard of living will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.

The eight point platform outlines both the theoretical as well as practical steps that ought to be undertaken in order to realize his philosophy of harmony and equilibrium of nature which in Naess' theory culminates in what he terms self-realization. Naess' sense of self-realization as he explains it is meant to be an expanded sense of the self. This sense of self transcends the traditional progression of the self from the ego to the social-self. The self in Naess' formulation reaches maturity only when it identifies with the nonhuman living beings, hitherto, ignored by a narrow sense of self. Hence Naess speaks of ecological self (Naess, 1995:226).

On deep reflection, Naess' notion of self-realization is presented both as an ontological as well as a normative concept. As an ontological notion, it is rooted in the view that human beings are integral part of nature, thus calling for human identification with nature. As a normative process on the other hand, the development or progression of the self from ego, to the other, to the social and finally, according to Naess, to the ecology is an expression of the expansion of the domain of morality. An ecological self is therefore achieved when humanity recognize their rootedness in nature, nature as having inherent worth and living in harmony and equilibrium with nature.

Naess' theory reiterates the views of earlier writers, two of whom we have discussed above affirming the intrinsic moral standing of nonhuman nature. It thus emphasizes an expanded scope of morality, by showing that nonhuman nature rightly belongs to the domain of morality. Further, Naess, is credited with the first systematic formulation of a theory of environmental ethics on the principles of deep ecological movement. While the depth of his system is in my view problematic, as we shall try to point out shortly, the formulation itself is a major attempt to articulate an understanding of human-nonhuman nature relationship that addresses both theoretical as well as practical considerations.

Responding to Naess' formulation above, from the point of view of conflict between humanity and nonhuman nature, a number of objections can be raised. In his response on how to deal with conflict between human beings and nonhuman nature, Naess appeals to what he terms the principle of vitalness and nearness. He writes:

> there are two rules which manifest two important factors
> which operate when interests conflict; vitalness and
> nearness. The greater vital interests have priority over the

more remote in space, time, culture and species (Naess, 1995:223).

Just by this prescription one is left wondering whether Naess is still answering to or has abandoned his biospheric egalitarianism; and by extension, deep ecology. To do what Naess advises, one requires a standard or criterion by which to establish not only what is priority, but what is vital and nearer. To determine such standard or criteria is to necessarily rely on human judgement. The point of reference is humanity and the nearer and vital are accordingly defined in human standards. Further still, the nearer and vital as used are exclusive criteria, which are inconsistent with the principle of equality of all beings in nature. Yet this goes against the anti-hierarchical vision of Naess' and other deep ecologists. Thus, Naess' prescription cannot be relied upon to provide criteria to surmount human-nonhuman nature conflict, consistent with the basic principle of deep ecology he formulates. It is against this backdrop that we are inclined to support Attfield's sentiments on what he refers to as the "mystical depth of deeper movement of Naess' characterization" (Attfield, 1991: 160).

On a different note, we also find Naess' notion of ecology as ontology on which he anchores his thesis of self-realization as the ultimate norm of his moral concern problematic. On this, Naess (1995: 80) writes; "Ecology T has only one ultimate norm: Self-realization (which) embraces all forms of life on the planet together with their individual selves".

The problem with this ontology in our sense is that it tends towards reductionism in which the individual or the self is sort of lost in the invisible, ecological self. This

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ontology in our view ignores fundamental differences that exist between human beings and nonhuman nature. Naess' own eight-point formulation recognizes these fundamental differences, which cannot be so to speak lost in the invisible ecological self, without absurdity. The eight-point platform on which Naess develops his deep ecology ethics is in a way denied in this ontology. There is a further inconsistence in the sense that Naess' theory insists on the "supremacy of the individual rather than the collectivity" (1995: 215). In view of the above inconsistence, Vermeersch (1994: 279), though without elaboration has dismissed it as a "vague metaphysics".

The inconsistence is also discernible in the view of ecosophy as a normative principle in which the self matures, culminating to the ecological self. This is presented as a purely human endeavour, which implies improvement and refinement of human values towards these goals. This way we see self-realization as an anthropocentric rather than a deep ecology principle and programme. Once again, aspersions are cast on the depth of Naess' theory of deep ecology.

Finally, let us consider Paul Taylor's version of deep ecology theory, which is anchored on respect for nature. To arrive at his theory of respect for nature, Taylor postulates and defends important theoretical and practical considerations. The respect for nature in Taylor's theory is presented as a natural outcome of the adoption of what he prefers to call, a biocentric outlook as guided by moral standards, which ought to be adhered to by all moral agents. In a rhetorical question, Taylor asks, why should moral agents accept the four principles (to be discussed below) that make up the biocentric outlook? In his view, the answer lies in the fact that "moral agents are rational, factually informed and

have developed a high sense of reality awareness, (hence) they will find those principles acceptable" (1986: 100).

Central to his biocentric outlook, are the four principles, which we now wish to examine (Ibid: 99ff). The first principle views humans as members of the earth's community of life in the same sense and terms in which other living organisms are. By this postulate, Taylor underscores the commonality of human beings and other organisms as biological beings.

The second principle, states that human species along with all other species are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each being as well as its chances of faring well or poorly are determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but by its relations to other beings. This principle lays emphasis on the mutuality of the different elements of nature. This interconnectedness undergirds a balance and harmony, such that any disruptions to any, potential or actual, causes disharmony and imbalance to the entire system. In other words, this principle derives from the view that 'things in nature hang together' and human beings are seen as essentially being integral elements of nature. This view is akin to the Bukusu conception, which as we saw in the last chapter emphasized the interconnectedness of the different entities of nature.

The third principle views all organisms in nature as teleological centres of life in the same sense that each is a unique individual pursuing its own end in its own way. In essence, what this means is that "its internal functions as well as its internal activities are

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all goal-oriented, having the constant tendency to maintain the organism's existence through time to enable it successfully perform these biological operations whereby it reproduces its kind and continually adapts to changing environmental events and conditions "(1986: 121-122). This principle is in line with Schweitzer's position emphasizing the distinctive nature of individual organisms as having moral standing worth of respect from moral agents. The principle can further be interpreted as an attempt to guard against reductionism in which individuals are lost in the collectivity.

Finally, the fourth principle that humans are not inherently superior to other living things is a denial of a fundamental assumption of anthropocentrism. In a spirited argument, Taylor endeavours to show the illogicality of arguing that human beings are superior to the rest of nature on account of possession of certain capacities, principally, rationality, aesthetic creativity, individual autonomy and free will (Ibid: 130). To grant human superiority on the above account, Taylor argues, should logically lead to granting superiority to some nonhuman beings as predicated on capacities that those beings have in greater propensity than humans. He singles for illustration, the capacity of birds to fly, the speed of the cheetah, the agility of monkeys and the power of photosynthesis in plants (Ibid: 29). Taylor concludes that the capacities mentioned for both humans and nonhuman beings are merely distinguishing characteristics rather than measures of superiority of one species over the other. This view is as radical as is contentious, as we shall see in a short while.

To translate these theoretical formulations into a platform and program of praxis to guide human conduct in relation to nonhuman nature, Taylor presents what he terms five

priority principles. These principles, Taylor believes would give guidance towards resolving conflicts between human beings and nonhuman nature within the biocentric paradigm. They rest on biocentric egalitarianism, which emphasizes that:

> as moral agents, we see ourselves under an ethical requirement to give equal consideration to the good of every entity, human and nonhuman alike, that has a good of its own---- when the good of one conflicts with that of another, we recognize the duty to be initially unbiased in our approach to finding a way to resolve the conflict. Since all are viewed as having the same inherent worth, the moral attitude of respect is equally due to each (Taylor, 1986: 158).

The five principles are as follows:

First, the principle of self-defense grants that it is permissible for moral agents to protect themselves against dangerous or harmful organisms by destroying them (p. 264-265). The second is the principle of proportionality, which holds that in a conflict between human values and the good of (harmless) wild animals and plants, greater weight should be given to the basic than nonbasic interests, no matter what species, human or other competing claims arise from (p. 278). Third is the principle of minimum wrong, which permits humans to pursue values that may be harmful to nonhuman nature only so long as doing so involves fewer wrongs (violation of duties) than any alternative way of pursuing those values (p. 282/3). Fourth, we have the principle of distributive justice, which provides that when interests of the parties are all basic ones and there exists a natural source of good that can be used for the benefit of any of the parties; each party must be allotted an equal share (p. 292). And finally, the fifth is the principle of restitutive justice whose central idea is restoring the balance of justice after a moral subject has been wronged (p. 304).

Taylor's theory, consistent with other deep ecologists, re-affirms the view that nonhuman beings have intrinsic moral standing and a good of their own. Logically, therefore, their goods deserve our respect as moral agents. This is a view, which we have argued for in this thesis and in our view provides a springboard on which humans as moral agents can nurture positive attitudes towards nonhuman nature. Taylor's theory, like other deep ecological versions discussed earlier on, does not in our view succeed in its endeavour to completely shed off anthropocentric assumptions. And in our view this (i.e. shedding off anthropocentrism) is not possible.

In the very first instance, for acceptance of his biocentric outlook, Taylor appeals to human rationality, knowledge and consciousness (Ibid: 108). This appeal in our view is an explicit affirmation of the human-centredness of morality and therefore to purport to present a nature-centred ethic would amount to a contradiction. Further to this, if acceptance of the theory is dependent on the rational nature of humanity, as Taylor himself posits, then how could he possibly turn around and argue that human rationality is not superior to say the agility of a monkey or the speed of a cheetah?

Taylor is right in positing that human beings are in the biological and probably physiological senses integral parts of nature in the same way as other organisms. Humans however, by nature of their capacities, principally rationality, which Taylor himself relies on for acceptance of his biocentric outlook, stand apart from nature. We cannot therefore without inconsistence, downplay this crucial fact of human nature.

On the whole, Taylor's theory does not satisfactorily convince us on the mechanisms and modalities of how some of the priority principles can be effected in praxis. On the principle of proportionality, in particular, to define what is basic and what is nonbasic is a rational and therefore a human judgement. The criterion of defining what is basic and what is nonbasic from the point of view of humans may differ from when looking at it from the nonhuman perspective. The standards, measures or criteria cannot therefore be realistically the same for the two categories. This is in accordance with anthropocentrism or better still, the great chain of being.

In our sense, the principle of proportionality should focus more on restraining the amount humans ought to take from their environment rather than on the rhetoric of basic and nonbasic interests. This way, the principle of proportionality together with that of minimum wrong can act to restrain human excesses that impact negatively on nonhuman nature collectively.

The principle of distributive justice assumes and presupposes equality of all beings involved. This, in the case of human beings vis-à-vis nonhuman nature as previously pointed out is problematic. It tends to ignore morally relevant differences making its tenability unacceptable. Deep ecologists should therefore accept the principle of gradation in which we have levels of worth. This is however repudiated by deep ecologists as hierarchical, chauvinistic thinking, which negates the principle of equality they try to articulate. In any case, even common sense shows the indefensibility and impracticability of the idea of equality of all beings in nature. The basic example is our subsistence habits, which involve humans slaughtering and eating other animals. This is

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quite a natural practice, which in our view cannot engender the principle of equality of all beings in nature.

On the principle of restitutive justice on the other hand, we see the very notion of restitution as presupposing a claimant to the right so violated. Now in the case of wrong or harm done to nonhuman nature, one wonders how the compensation is to be worked out, who makes the claim and who gets compensated. We are thus in agreement with Attfield that Taylor's theory does not succeed in convincing us on "how the principles are severally to be defended, and how conflicts between them are to be resolved by rational means" (Attfield, 1991: 208). This failure is not unique to Taylor's theory; rather it is a larger problem that all those who subscribe to biocentric or biospheric egalitarianism have to contend with. As we have endeavoured to show in the discourse in this section, while purporting to grant equal worth and rights to all beings in nature, in particular in the context of conflict, biocentric egalitarianism quite often, lapses into hierarchical thinking, which is anthropocentric, making a nature – centred ethic difficult to conceptualize.

5.2.2 Environmental Ethics in the View of Anthropocentrism

The term 'anthropocentrism', combines two words, 'anthropos', meaning man and 'centre,' hence anthropocentrism simply means man-centred. This view proceeds on the perception of man as a central being in the universe and hence provides a focal point of reference for everything else that exists in the universe. In relation to environmental ethics, anthropocentrism can be characterized as a theory that treats humanity's place as central in the interaction involving humans and nonhuman beings in ethical terms.

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As an environmental ethical paradigm, anthropocentrism has been greatly discredited and condemned by deep ecologists, accusing it of being the root cause of all environmental woes. Such voices, have however, not succeeded in silencing those who defend the anthropocentric vision.. In the following pages, we evaluate the position of anthropocentrism and what it portends for human to nonhuman nature relationship. There are many voices among environmental philosophers in support of the anthropocentric paradigm e.g., Regan (1982), Attfield (1983) and so on. For the purpose of this study however, we shall examine only the theory of Passmore, for two reasons. One, anthropocentrism is generally a well-known ethical framework since all of what we call conventional ethics assumes anthropocentric characteristics. And in relation to environmental ethics, Passmore presents the most detailed and pioneer formulation of an environmental ethic in defense of a human-centred approach that can be extended to nonhuman nature concerns. To attest to this is Attfield, himself as cited above, a prolific supporter of anthropocentric persuasion when he terms Passmore's book **Responsibility for Nature** (1974) "the one authoritative treatment of environmental ethics so far produced" (Attfield, 1991: XXI).

Passmore's theory of environmental ethics seems to be developed against the backdrop of a strong conviction that:

> a morality is not a sort of thing that one can simply conjure up. It can only grow out of existing attitude of mind as an extension or development of them, just because unlike a speculative hypothesis, it is pointless unless it actually governs men's conduct (Passmore, 1974: 111).

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Against this background, Passmore flatly rejects the view of some environmental writers, among them, Aldo Leopold, who advocate for a new ethic. Passmore was convinced that "no moral consideration bears upon man's responsibility to natural objects except where they happen to be someone else's property or except where to treat them cruelly or destructively might encourage a corresponding attitude towards other human beings" (1974: 254). This is a strong anthropocentric statement, which definitively denies intrinsic moral standing to nonhuman nature.

Nonetheless, this is not to say that Passmore advocates an ethic, which has no regard for nonhuman nature at all. He actually presents his theory of responsibility for nature, which has a bearing on the well-being of nonhuman nature. By responsibility for nature, however, Passmore should not be construed to be saying that human beings owe direct duties and obligations to nonhuman nature. Rather, what he means is that humans have duties to fellow humans and therefore have responsibility for nature only in the secondary, indirect sense insofar as nonhuman nature is beneficial to human beings.

This way, we can interpret Passmore's central thesis of the idea of responsibility for nature to be that humans need to be stricter in their adherence to the familiar conventional ethical considerations, lest they undermine themselves by misuse or destruction of the natural kind. To ground his thesis, Passmore has attempted to show how human consideration in relation to their environment can constitute reasons for environmental protection. He considers the following factors; economic, scientific, recreational/moral renewal, aesthetic and posterity.

The economic consideration draws from the basic truth that nature provides humanity with the material conditions on which their economic activities are sustained, and hence their very survival. By this position, therefore destructive activities to nonhuman nature would necessarily amount to undermining of this crucial resource base. Passmore is thus convinced that "a purely economic argument will suffice to establish at least a prima facie case against the clearing of wilderness, the destruction of species" (1974: 102). This argument presents two major weaknesses.

One, Sylvan and Bennett (1994: 65) point out that "a prima facie case does not hold if it is more economic to destroy wilderness or species on immediate gain". The two challenge Passmore with the example of poaching that has driven elephants and rhinos to near extinction, simply to provide humanity with ivory. The other challenge is, if we are merely motivated by economic considerations, what happens to those wildernesses that are deemed to be of no economic value to humans? Common sense, especially in the Third World will readily show that most destruction that have been meted out on the environment have been accelerated rather than restrained in the pretext of the pursuit of economic consideration. In Kenya, we can readily cite the destructions that have been meted by greedy individuals on Karura, Mt. Kenya, Aberdare and Mt. Elgon forests to mention but a few that are today feared to be precipitating highly irregular rainfall patterns.

The scientific consideration is probably the most appealing to Passmore. This is in line with Passmore's high regard for the scientific enterprise, declaring that science is "perhaps the greatest of man's achievements" (1974: 175). The scientific consideration

emanates from the recognition that nature provides a great repository of material for scientific inquiry. The regard for biodiversity is engendered in this awareness. As a ground for protection of nonhuman nature, the scientific motive, if followed can go a long way in protection of biodiversity, rare species and so on, if man were to continue to have the base for pursuit of more scientific developments and discoveries. For this to be realized, however, we concur with Sylvan and Bennett that it depends upon "sufficient interest and good will from humans (which is) not presently conspicuous" (1994: 67).

Then there is the argument from recreational/moral renewal by which Passmore correctly observes that "there is refreshment as well as enjoyment to be found in wondering through wild country not only recreation but re-creation; it renews one's sense of proportionality" (1974: 107). This position seems to present two fronts; the recreation aspect and the moral/spiritual revitalization or inspiration that are supposedly derived from our interaction with nonhuman nature.

In our sense, works of art and modified wilderness can perfectly bring to realization these values. Passmore on his own admission is not convinced of the force of recreation/moral renewal as motive for protection of the natural environment. He wrote; "it is not at all clear that to sustain this experience the wild country needs to be a wilderness in the full sense of the words: were it for example to be purged of flies, I for one, would not find the refreshment diminished" (Ibid: 107).

Closely related to the recreational/renewal thesis is the argument that emanates from the aesthetic consideration. On this motive, nature is presented as a source of aesthetic

experience and satisfaction. The natural kind present beautiful scenery for human enjoyment and contemplation. Passmore, however, has doubts as to whether this attribute of valuing wilderness aesthetically can go on forever. The response provided above concerning the recreational/moral renewal also stands on this account. And further, on the aesthetic account, Passmore is categorical that "to justify action against beauty –destroying pollutors at most, what is needed is a strengthening of existing moral principles" (1984:56). This is a re-statement of his anthropocentric conviction.

Finally, the posterity argument draws from the moral obligations that humans ought to have towards future generations of fellow humans. Hence Passmore's argument from posterity is that, the present generation of human beings have an obligation to hand over the world to our successors in a better condition" (ibid: 91). One way of achieving this is of course, by avoiding activities that are destructive to the natural variety. Two points ought to be clarified about the posterity argument.

First by posterity, Passmore does not seem to talk of a long distant future, rather he talks of immediate posterity, but without delineating, how far immediate extends. This is probably Passmore's deliberate way of avoiding the controversy concerning whether or not humans have moral obligation to very distant, future human beings. Second Passmore's idea of handing over to successors the world in a better condition, means a more humanised world rather than nature in its pristine condition. On this he writes "our obligations are to immediate posterity, we ought to try to improve the world so that we shall be able to hand it over to our immediate successors in a better condition and that is all (ibid: 91). By this view, we contend that Passmore seems oblivious of the real cause

of the myriad of environmental problems that we experience and that are on an increasing trend especially in the so-called Third World. It should dawn on Passmore that most of the environmental destruction that has taken place in our time has been done in the guise of development, improvement or over-coming of the handicap that nature puts in the way of human progress.

On the positive note, Passmore's formulation and indeed the anthropocentric vision is an exhortation to human beings to protect nonhuman nature owing to the fact that humanity entirely depend on nonhuman nature for their very survival. At least a case is made for better treatment of the rest of nature although it remains clear to them (anthropocentrists) that man is at the centre of the universe.

Nonetheless, in addition to some criticisms we have raised against Passmore's theory, anthropocentrism has generally been attacked on various themes. In as much as it calls for better treatment of the rest of nature, anthropocentrism is incapable of addressing environmental problems **per se**. In the words of Norton (1982:11), it "leaves nature vulnerable to the ravages of ever-growing human consumptive demands". This is because, concern for nonhuman nature is only in the secondary sense, being contingent on human welfare and goodwill which practical experience shows are rare. This is evident in our country as demonstrated by the tenacity and zeal with which people gratuitously plunder the natural environment for their own personal selfish ends. The local media are replete with cases of individuals who are allotted or grab huge chunks of forests to clear for personal gain in total disregard of the environmental ramification arising thereof. A few examples have already been alluded to above. These cases

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sufficiently validate the foregoing arguments that nature, to use the expression of Zweers (1994:64), is reduced to "pure factuality and instrumentality" i.e. as a mere means to human ends, however defined.

These weaknesses tend to demonstrate that environmental ethics based purely on anthropocentric principle as interrogated in this section cannot adequately harmonize human-nonhuman nature relationships. This is mainly because as Sylvan and Bennett (1994:63) emphasize; "few constraints are imposed upon the treatment of the environment, providing that that treatment does not interfere with the interests of others"

Implied in the foregoing discourse, the question of conflict between human beings and nonhuman beings becomes logically inconceivable. This is because nonhuman nature has no standing of its own, and hence has no interest, which can be conflicted. Thus what would appear to be human to nonhuman nature conflict would simply turn out to be human to human conflict insofar as humans are the only beings who have interests which can be conflicted. Thus, acts of destruction to nonhuman nature do not harm the natural kind but human beings who own them either individually or severally. Hence when a human being causes such destruction, it is a fellow a human being either present or future who is harmed, thus causing a conflict scenario. The view of this thesis as argued in Chapter Three is that nonhuman beings have a good of their own which confer upon them a status of moral subjects and hence have interests that can be conflicted as characterized in that chapter.

5.3 THE ANTHROPOCENTRIC PREDICAMENT AND THE ETHIC OF ECOSUSTAINABILITY

5.3.1 The Anthropocentric Predicament

In our search for an ethic of environment that can help us to surmount human-nonhuman nature conflict, we have shown how both deep ecology and shallow ecology paradigms have limitations. Does this then imply a futility or dead end in our endeavour? This study believes that there is hope and the leads of Holhorst (1994) and De George (1994) are instructive in pointing towards this direction.

Holhorst (1994: 81) rightly argues that values, standards and rights must be seen to emanate from the existential conditions as people interact, not only amongst themselves but also as they try to adapt to their ecosystems. These actions and interactions definitely influence our value systems and therefore our ethical orientations. Thus, morality does not exist in a vacuum, but in a specific existential context.

In this context however, as Holhorst (Ibid: 280) further observes, we must as a matter-of-factly acknowledge the following self-evident truths about nature:

1) That human beings are the only creatures on earth capable of reflective thinking and able to inform others of the contents of this thinking.

2) That humans are the only ones who can act on the basis of decisions taken after rational consideration, possibly under the influence of rational persuasion.

3) That human beings' decisions may provoke other's reactions thus prompting them to retreat when prudent to do so.

In the light of these three truths, Holhorst concludes, "between humans, there exist relations that are not possible with any other living creatures---human beings form a closed community. This means that only humans can have access to it" (Holhorst, 1994: 281). In our view, the above three truths do not necessarily deny humanity forming a community with the rest of nature but that that community, does not engender reciprocity in the ethical sense between human beings and nonhuman nature. In short, human beings stand above the rest of nature. Expressing a similar line of thought even more candidly, De George (1994: 23-24) emphasizes that:

> extending morality, which is a human institution to the land, to animals, to species, is something that we humans can do. And in extending our ethics in this way, all we are extending is a human ethic. Ethics must place humans at the centre, at least in the sense that ethics is a human institution.

This is what De George has termed the 'anthropocentric predicament.' This study shares De George's position that we cannot without being inconsistent speak of a nature-centred ethic, which ignores this predicament. Thus, to articulate any theory that can address human to nonhuman relationship that is realistic and can translate into practice; we cannot ignore or wish away the anthropocentric predicament. With this in mind, we now turn to the last section of this chapter, which endeavours to present our considered paradigm for an ethic that can help to address conflict between human beings and nonhuman nature.

5.3.2   The Ethic of Ecosustainability

In the light of the conundrum posed by the deep ecology theory, shallow ecology theory

and the anthropocentric predicament as argued in the foregoing sections of this chapter,

we propose an understanding of ethics that we shall call ecosustainability.

5.3.2.1 The Concept of Sustainability

The concept of sustainability in the context of environmental discourse is relatively new.

The concept was first used in the 1970's, as a conservation strategy. It was not however,

until the 1980's that this notion was greatly popularized, particularly with the emergence

of the Brundtland report; **Our Common Future** (1987). Since then, the concept of

sustainability has been conceived variously.

To understand the notion of sustainability, however, we need to pose a fundamental

question: When do we characterize something as being sustainable?   The then

International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (ICUN), now re-

named World Conservation Union states that "an activity, structure or process is said to

be sustainable if for all purposes, it can continue for ever" (Achterberg; 1994: 140).

From this perspective, ICUN defined sustainable development as "improving the quality

of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems"

(Tryzna, 1998: 76).

The Brundtland report, (1987:43) on the other hand, defines sustainable development as

development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the

ability of future generations to meet their own needs". For the purpose of conceptual

analysis, let us for a while disengage sustainability from the notion of development and informed by the two definitions above, conceive ecosustainability as improving the quality of human life, present and future while maintaining ecological harmony.

5.3.2.2 Ecosustainability as a Moral Principle

The notion of sustainability as a moral principle is implicit in the three themes engendered in the definition cited above. First, the idea of improving quality of life while maintaining ecological harmony is indeed a moral imperative. Viewed this way, as Tryzna (1998) rightly points out one cannot successfully divorce issues of environment from socio-economic questions to do with equity and poverty. These issues are inextricably related and ecosustainability i.e. ecological relationship based on the principle of sustainability is in our view an attempt to harmonize these dynamic interrelationships.

The second inference relates sustainability to the principle of justice, what Achterberg has termed, an intuitive idea of justice. According to Achterberg, this intuitive sense of justice is based on the principle that "we should not hand the world that we have exploited to our successors in a substantially worse shape than we received it" (1994:152). This sense of justice is at two levels as implied in our definition. At the first level, it is justice between present and future generations of human beings, such that destruction of the environment by the present generation would violate the principle of equal opportunities for future generations. In human conduct, this principle calls for judicious use of the natural environment. In Chapter Four, we saw how the Bukusu ethic as expressed in the communalistic principle implies this principle of justice.

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At the second level, one can infer an underlying sense of justice to nonhuman nature, in the idea of ecological harmony. In the words of Archterberg, this sense of justice is engendered in the idea that "nature as well must have opportunities to survive (integrity) in its diversity characteristic of the biosphere" (ibid: 154). Again this sense of justice underlies the Bukusu notion and practice of human kinship with nonhuman nature. It must be made clear however, that the justice, described as Achterberg cautions, is not based on the principle of reciprocity. Rather, it is "justice done to nature by giving or leaving it the opportunity to an independent existence and a development of its own just as we appropriately do justice to other entities of which we recognise their intrinsic (inherent) worth" (ibid: 154). This view is perfectly articulated within the anthropocentric predicament.

The third point, though closely related to the preceding, is that in the context of sustainability, moral obligation to future generations is recognized. As Kothari (1994: 232) has rightly observed "sustainability cannot be realized by those who have only learned how to act in the short-term". He advises that a recipe for sustainability can be received from cultures whose actions take into consideration future generations. Indeed this theme has emerged quite clearly in our reconstruction of Bukusu environmental ethical principles, in particular the communalistic principle. Brundtlands's report articulates a similar point emphasizing human obligation to future generations and to nonhuman beings. The report explains that "the case for conservation of nature should not rest only with development goals, it is part of our moral obligation to other beings and future generations" (Brundtland, 1987:57).

As a matter of fact, this very realization is expressed in the definition and vision of sustainability. This gives impetus to evolve a moral system of care for future human generations as well as nonhuman beings. The question of whether or not future generations are legitimate moral rights holders is quite controversial in environmental ethics. We have seen for instance, how Passmore cautiously tries to limit the extent of future to some vague 'immediate future'. Some other scholars, such as Singer (1975) argue that since future generations do not actually exist, then we cannot conceive of them as having rights. Our simple response to such thinking is that unless we envisage a future generation of plastic people, at any one given time, humans are or will be descendants of humans who are or were rights holders. In any case, present and future generations are not separated by a vacuum; the two always overlap and exist in some continuity. This very continuum in our view is sufficient basis for a rights holder's status for future generations.

5.3.2.3 The Vision of Ecosustainability

The notion of ecosustainability as a moral principle as portrayed in the foregoing section has as its ultimate ideal, a new way of living. This vision of ecosustainability involves rational acceptance of not only our limitations as human beings, but also a call on human beings to make certain sacrifices for the good of both nonhuman nature and us.

In practice, this may demand radical changes in human attitudes towards nonhuman nature, moderation in our consumption mannerism and generally in our lifestyles. This is premised on the overall understanding that sustainable fulfillment of human needs is so to

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speak inextricably connected with sustainability in ecological balance; hence nature provides the material context within which human needs are fulfilled.

We sum up our vision of ecosustainability by adoption of Joy Palmer's words that; "it calls for a collective responsibility for our earth, today and for the future---such a cooperative spirit may highlight the importance of a shared ethic of sustainability and its contribution deepening of understanding of the role of human life" (1992:182). It calls for an ethic of care for the other, both the humans and nonhuman nature.

5.3.3.4 Ecosustainability as a Conceptual Framework

The ethic of ecosustainability is undergirded by central notions of obligation to future generations, nonhuman nature as having worth of its own and intrinsic moral standing, respect and care for nonhuman beings and responsible use of nonhuman nature. This study believes that these notions are crucial to a theory that can help resolve conflicts between humans and nonhuman nature. Let us explain just how this may work out.

First and foremost, we have seen that morality is necessarily a human institution. This means that, human beings must necessarily be at the centre of morality. The notion of ecosustainability as explained above recognizes this centrality. Any theoretical perspective that purports to present a nature-centred ethic ignores this factual and logical inevitability, and hence becomes inconsistent. This is because as elucidated above, nonhuman beings are not the sorts of beings that are capable of moral agency.

Second, and without contradicting the first principle, ecosustainability recognizes the idea

that nonhuman being have value of their own and hence moral standing. From the onset

then we see the possibility of developing a moral system, which values nature as having

a good of its own while maintaining the unique position of humans as nature transcending

beings.

This way, deep ecology's attempt to put at par human worth and that of nonhuman beings

is repudiated. Thus, humans are not subjected to what Skolomowiski describes as "a

shocked recognition of their equivalence with all creatures" (cited from Smith, 1997:16),

rather; humans are meant to perceive themselves as part of a cosmos which has inherent

worth. In the light of the dilemma posed by the anthropocentric predicament earlier

explained, we could not agree the more with Skolomowiski that:

> an elevation, rather than an equalisation, of human
> esteem for the human in relation to other beings and a
> perception of the directionality of evolution toward the
> human should actually lead to more life-affirming
> relations with the natural world (quoted from Smith,
> 1997:16-17).

Within the ecosustainable framework, we can accommodate our view that when humans

operate on a higher pedestal, say of wisdom, the possibility of this wisdom devolving into

better treatment of nature is enhanced. The ethic of ecosustainability engenders such

sensibility recognizing in humanity rationality which ought to lead them into harmony

with nonhuman nature, and fellow human beings, both present and those yet to come.

The long vision of ecosustainability explained above is crucial in an attempt to address

conflicts between human and nonhuman beings. This is for the simple reason that

whatever humans do to nonhuman nature, they are reminded by the vision that it were better if (nonhuman nature) it were to last forever. This call just by itself would however, remain empty, if not chimerical, for we know that many human activities towards nonhuman nature hardly reflect such a vision.

The move towards the practical realization of this vision is motivated and guided by the awareness and recognition of our obligation towards future generations as pointed out and as exemplified by the Bukusu environmental ethics. Attfield (1991:88) helps us to lay down the condition more succinctly, "stewardship tradition requires that we hand over the earth in a good state as we received it". This in a sense acts as a moral constraint on the part of moral agents. We saw how the Bukusu were restrained in their use of the natural resources because of this sense of guardianship or stewardship of nature that humans ought to be.

Additionally, the ethic of ecosustainability engenders the notion of wise-use of nonhuman nature, this emanating both from the respect for nonhuman nature as beings worth of moral standing, and our obligation to future generations. The notion of wise-use in turn implies responsibility on the part of humanity. This responsibility is also out of realization that while it is permissible for humans to exploit nature for their benefits (nature provides for this), it is morally wrong for humans to exploit nature in total disregard of the consequences of their actions. Further, recognition of the intrinsic worth of nature logically implies recognition of the fact that nature has a good of its own which can be harmed.

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Thus viewed, we can see internal tension or inconsistency in acts of unwise use of nonhuman nature because to misuse nature necessarily implies to destroy it and yet to destroy nature is to indirectly destroy humans. The logic herein is simple and can help in resolving conflicts between humans and nonhumans beings, because if nature continually loses out in such conflicts, it could potentially or actually be destructive to humans themselves.

In conclusion, the point being emphasized here is that humans ought to be accountable for their actions towards nonhuman nature. We saw how in the Bukusu ethic this accountability to themselves, nature and spiritual elements was important in restraining their adverse actions to nonhuman nature. Let us emphasize that this accountability need not be to God as stewardship is often interpreted.

In any case there is an old argument in philosophy, which suggests that things are good not because God commands them but rather God commands them because they are good. This accountability can be to humanity and conflicts between humanity and nonhuman nature seen within this context can be solved in a way not to undermine the sustainability of both, which as argued above are inextricably connected. Again within the context of ecosustainability, this accountability is more feasible because standards of conduct can be set which will then bind those who subscribe to them. These codes so created can explicitly then set criteria by which conflicts are resolved. This is important in ensuring that we move from the level of theory to the level of praxis, which is wanting, say in deep ecology paradigm. To live sustainably therefore is to live in harmony with nature, not in its pristine sense but to try to harmonize human activities and endeavours with those of

nonhuman nature. It is in the light of this that our ethic of ecosustainability will support only forms of development that pursue the principle of sustainability, that is sustainable development.

CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was conceived in response to one of the greatest challenges, herein collectively referred to as environmental crisis that threatens not only humanity but also other forms of existence. The study is implicitly premised on the realization that human beings to a large extent, partly due to their immense capacities for better or ill are responsible for many environmental problems that we face today. This study also takes cognizance of the fact that it is only human beings who can reverse this trend and therefore halt these destructive tendencies. Towards this endeavour, it is the contention of this study that a moral approach to the question of human-nonhuman nature relationship can make significant contribution. In particular, the moral approach can contribute towards articulation and sharpening of conceptual and theoretical tools with which to understand and analyse human-nonhuman nature conflicts. This in our view is crucial in the endeavour towards achieving ecological harmony.

The moral approach as a way of harmonizing human-nonhuman nature relationship is premised on the view that morality can be more effective than other social institutions such as law. This is further premised on the idea that morality has the capacity to affect and motivate human character, and attitudes in a more profound way. This is based on the time-honoured view that moral value is at its best, self-imposed and motivated, involving voluntary self-restraint.

To ground the argument that a moral response to human-nonhuman nature conflict is a viable one, this study has drawn parallels from the familiar conventional ethics, appreciating the role of morality in inter-human relationships. The institution of morality emerges as playing important roles of accounting for and harmonizing relationships. It is observed that the weaknesses and imperfections of the institution of morality in these roles notwithstanding, human beings are yet to devise a better alternative, hence morality remains central and unique in this endeavour. The alternative would be law, which *per se* is inhibited in a very fundamental sense namely that it aims at the mere exterior, putting more emphasis on external observance. Yet we believe, the spirit that underlies this observance is more crucial in the realization of good actions. The best illustration of the inhibition of externalism is perhaps to be found in the teachings of Jesus. In the Jewish society in which Jesus was born, the leaders, i.e. Pharisees and Sadducees had a notorious and meticulous knack for insistence on the outward observance of the Law of Moses. And they naively believed that such observance is all that morally upright living required. Jesus seeing the folly of such thinking taught that such insistence on mere outward observance of the moral obligation that had little bearing on inner lives of the adherents was not only hollow but of little value.

In our own country, there are good laws in the statute books that are designed to protect the natural environment such as the Forest Act, National Monuments and Antiquities Act etc. and yet forests and national monuments continue to be destroyed unabated. As these and other examples show, laws can often be manipulated to subvert the very justice of which they are custodians.

Therefore part of the contribution of this study is the highlighting of the ethical dimension to the human-nonhuman nature relationship. This is in our view crucial in sensitizing people about the need to re-think the way they view the natural environment. The central argument that runs through this thesis is that, morality has an important role to play in the endeavour towards ecological harmony. The arguments presented, particularly on the functions and effectiveness of morality in Chapter Two show the advantage of the moral institution because of its capacity to affect the interior of the human person. These arguments present compelling grounds to confirm the first objective of this study, which underscores the centrality of morality in relationships. These arguments are also in line with the first two assumptions of this study, which respectively saw a lacuna in the absence of a moral component in human- nature relationship and called for the inclusion of the ethical ingredient in the use of the natural environment. It is argued in this study that human beings ignore the inclusion of the moral concern in human-nonhuman nature relationship at the risk of jeopardizing not only the existence of the rest of nature but also their own survival. But most importantly, it is hoped that an environmental conscience is aroused among people, thus shaping positive attitudes towards nonhuman nature.

The notion of conscience applied to environmental concern means that we humans as moral agents not only recognize that there is a right relationship with nonhuman nature but should also pursue it by developing desirable dispositions. This should then be backed by commitment in actions, by denouncing wrong actions towards nonhuman nature while acting in a way to enhance the good of nonhuman nature. When all this is achieved, then we can speak of an environmental conscience.

It is important at this point however to clarify that to argue that morality has a more central role in environmental concern than law is not to say that law has no place in protection of the natural environment. As a matter of fact, law presupposes morality and provides strong backing for realization of the good. This is because morality is limited in its sanctions for enforcement of what it prescribes as right or otherwise. In the case of human-nonhuman nature relationship, there is therefore need for enhancement of environmental law to address abusive tendencies towards nonhuman nature. It is in the light of this that we view positively the Environmental Management and Coordination Act 1999. The most important implication of this Act is that it gives all Kenyan's *locus standi* to sue in the event of destruction of the environment. From the foregoing discourse the assumptions of this study, which underscore the importance of morality in addressing human-nonhuman nature relationship, are presupposed on a strongly justifiable ground.

The notion of human-nonhuman nature conflict as this study found out is a problematic conceptual issue. The question of human-nature conflict has not been directly addressed in the vast literature on environmental ethics. Where it has appeared in the literature, it has more often been merely mentioned and not adequately conceptualized and clearly articulated. The main point of difficulty in conceptualizing this question lies in the fact that logically, in conventional ethics, we cannot conceive of the notion of human-nonhuman nature conflict. This as pointed out in this study is due to the fact that nonhuman nature is viewed from the point of view of humans such that humans cannot directly conflict nonhuman nature. This is because as viewed, the good of nonhuman nature is conceived merely in terms of human good. Thus, it is wrong to harm nonhuman beings, because by so doing, we harm human beings who own or have an interest in those

beings. This is in our view a misconception, which partly legitimizes our study as our analysis of the issues has shown.

The position argued for in this study is that nonhuman beings have a good of their own and hence an interest in wellbeing. Proceeding on this recognition, we have argued that nonhuman nature possesses legitimate interests, which can be conflicted by human actions. For instance human beings clear forests to pave way for human settlement. This directly undermines the survival of wildlife and other nonhuman beings habitating those forests. This in our view creates a situation of conflict between the two groups. This, in the same way as in the case of human-human relationship calls for moral intervention, which is clearly prescribed in conventional morality. Thus an ethical dimension to human to nonhuman nature relationship is crucial in addressing environmental crisis. Indeed, as presupposed at the conception of this study, continued exploitation of the natural environment unguided by moral constraints has already proved deleterious to nature. For example the rampant poaching that reduced the number of Elephants and Rhinos in their hundreds of thousands in Kenya especially in the 1980's was carried out in a manner devoid of any ethical considerations.

In short, from the discourse carried out on the question of human – nonhuman nature conflict, we believe this study has made some important contribution to the debate on environmental ethics. Besides highlighting and clarifying the conceptual issue of human – nonhuman nature conflict, this study has also justified the view that in any relationship that involves a moral agent, conflicts cannot logically be precluded. Thus, we conclude

that conventional ethics, which treats conflict only in the human – human sense, ignores the human – nonhuman nature relationship as an independent domain of morality.

The foregoing argument lays credence to the third assumption of this study which not only postulates reality of human-nonhuman nature conflict but also sees such conflict as contributing to environmental crisis. This in turn validates the basic premise on which this study stands, namely that a moral approach can make significant contribution to alleviation of environmental crisis.

In general terms, an attempt to articulate an environmental ethic involves a leap from familiar conventional human-to-human relationships to the contentious, controversial and complex human-nonhuman nature relationship. Two pertinent points of contention germane to this enterprise involve the basis of a human-nonhuman nature ethic and the grounds on which to predicate moral standing for nonhuman nature. As clarified in Chapter Two of this study, the domain of ethics should involve three dimensions i.e. the self, the other (human) and nonhuman nature. Proceeding on that awareness, this study has made an attempt to ground moral standing in nonhuman nature, on the basis of which an environmental ethic can be constructed and defended.

At the heart of the matter is the notion of intrinsic goodness of nonhuman nature. By intrinsic goodness we mean the worth of a being by virtue of its being or its existence. This is irrespective of any other value that human beings make of the being in question. Thus to value a being intrinsically is to value it for what it is, by its very being. Chapter Three has interrogated the notion of intrinsic worth and hence intrinsic moral standing for

nonhuman nature, which can be located in the unity and diversity of nature which is supported by the functioning of nature itself. We are convinced that nonhuman nature has a good of its own when we see nonhuman beings endeavour to enhance their own kind for instance by reproducing themselves, repairing their wounds, resisting death etc. In these happenings, we read in nature an endeavour by these beings to enhance their wellbeing. From the point of view of the Bukusu metaphysics discussed in Chapter Four, this intrinsic worth of nature is engendered in the common ancestry or origin of all beings in nature, humans included, which bestows upon all beings in nature a sense of sacredness and kinship with every other being. These serve to show that the Bukusu view nonhuman nature as having value of its own, contrary to some arguments which tend to deny valuing nonhuman nature intrinsically.

It is hoped that the foregoing discourse has established justifiable grounding for moral concern for nonhuman nature. The point argued for in this study is that nonhuman beings, possessing worth of their own, have intrinsic moral standing and hence deserve our direct moral obligation. Through the arguments presented in Chapter Three, we have been able to achieve the third objective of this study that set out to account for the basis of moral concern for nonhuman nature. The injection of the Bukusu dimension into the debate has hopefully enriched the perception and marks the unique contribution of this study to the general debate on environmental ethics.

To argue that nonhuman nature has a good of its own is however not the same as saying that therefore nonhuman nature has no instrumental value. That beings in nature serve as means to some other ends other than their own is a fact of nature that cannot be denied

without absurdity. This is even true of humans in relation to fellow human beings; we often use fellow humans in morally justifiable ways as means to our ends. It is a fact that human beings will continue to satisfy their present and changing demands and needs from the natural environment. Similarly various beings in nature will continue to prey on others to enhance their own good. This is how nature is constituted and these functions are integrated in a way that allows nature to sustain itself. One cannot conceive it any other way.

The recognition of and treating nature intrinsically is however significant in understanding the human-nonhuman nature relationship. Foremost, it underlies the view that beings in nature are worthy of our direct respect and care as moral subjects. Additionally it demonstrates that nonhuman beings have interests of their own which can be harmed and conflicted by human beings. The view of this study is that human interaction with nonhuman nature that is devoid of the realization of these points can precipitate disharmony and imbalance in nature that can be inimical to both humans and the rest of nature. This theme runs through the entire thesis.

It can be intimated that the arguments examined in the discourse on environmental ethics are mainly articulated within the context of Western philosophical tradition. To bring the debate on environmental ethics closer to us, this study has added an African dimension to the discourse. This we have done in Chapter Four through a case study of the Bukusu people of Western Province, Kenya. An analysis of Bukusu practices, beliefs and value systems has brought to the fore what we can call Bukusu environmental ethics. To gather the information, we carried out a qualitative field research, which principally involved

oral interviews with the guide of sample questions prepared prior to the interviews (See Appendix), and initiated dialogues with our selected informants. In line with the fourth assumption of this study, a critical reconstruction of the information gathered reveals rich conservationist attitudes and practices in the Bukusu value system. In quick recap, the Bukusu metaphysics underscores the bondedness of all beings in nature, which is grounded on the common origin of all existents in nature. This is also expressed in a broadened sense of kinship of all beings, thus underscoring unity of being. In the end, the Bukusu perspective has indeed enriched our understanding of human-nature relationship and strengthened our argument for moral standingness of nonhuman nature.

The Bukusu conception of human-nature relationship as analysis of the above worldview shows undergirds an ethic of caring and stewardship for nonhuman nature whose overall goal is to maintain harmony and balance in nature. This is an important contribution to the conceptual framework we have proposed in this thesis. Besides, the introduction of the Bukusu dimension to human-nonhuman nature relationship, in particular human-nonhuman nature conflict, is in our view an original contribution to the general debate on environmental ethics. To the best of my knowledge, this aspect of Bukusu knowledge has not been attempted and remains undocumented. We consider this research to be beneficial because it serves to inject in the debate on environmental ethics our own localized African perspective. We see this as an important contribution considering the fact that some environmental problems are unique to certain areas whose solutions require a localized approach. A component of the local peoples knowledge is certainly crucial in the search for relevant and appropriate approaches to such problems.

In the end, we have hopefully proposed a richer conceptual paradigm within which human-nonhuman nature relationship in general and human-nonhuman nature conflict in particular can be viewed. Specifically, we have analyzed three broad perspectives of conceptualizing human-nonhuman nature relationship in ethical terms. These are anthropocentrism, biocentrism / ecocentrism and the Bukusu model. A fusion of some of the elements of these three perspectives is what this study has suggested as the preferred conceptual framework to understanding human-nonhuman nature relationship. Let us briefly recapitulate what this fusion constitutes.

The biocentric / ecocentric paradigm as discussed in Chapter Five, proposes a new ethic, a nature-centred ethic, which is grounded on alleged equality of all beings in nature. The idea of equality of all beings in nature as this thesis through argumentation has shown is problematic. Human beings are endowed with capacities that make them unique from the rest of the community of beings in nature such that to put at par say a human being and a tree is to ignore a fundamental distinction between humanity and nonhuman nature. Thus an ethic, which is predicated on the alleged equality, is in our view implausible partly because it is impractical to operationalize such an ethic. But most importantly, as argued in this thesis, particularly in Chapters Two and Five, ethics is necessarily a human institution. This is to say that it is only to human beings that questions of right and wrong make sense. Therefore, ethics cannot be otherwise, other than being human-centred. On the positive note however, the biocentric/ecocentric model recognizes and defends intrinsic worth in nonhuman nature and hence moral standing for nonhuman nature. This is a significant step towards articulation of an acceptable and consistent environmental

ethic and the present study has adopted and developed this element as a central thesis in defending a human-nonhuman nature ethic.

The anthropocentric or shallow ecology paradigm on the other hand as understood in this thesis denies independent moral standing to nonhuman nature. Thus, on this model, nonhuman nature is given consideration only insofar as it is useful to human beings. In other words, nonhuman nature is viewed, merely from the point of view of humans. Thus viewed, it is logically and conceptually contradictory to speak of human-nonhuman nature conflict. The point is that nonhuman beings would not have intrinsic moral standing and hence would not count morally on their own. Thus, when we cause destruction say to some animal or plant species, we do no harm to their interests but those of fellow human beings who derive benefits from these animals and plants. It is for this reason that our actions may be considered morally wrong, not because we have caused harm to nonhuman beings. Thus what we have termed human-nonhuman nature conflict would simply be human-human conflict. This position as argued out in this study ignores the intrinsic worth of nonhuman beings in nature, hence an impediment towards articulation and realization of an environmental ethic.

On the positive side, the anthropocentric paradigm on the other hand upholds the centrality of humanity in nature. This as argued in this thesis is a fact of nature, which cannot be denied on any justifiable grounds. This study has adopted this aspect arguing that the asymmetrical nature of human-nature relationship i.e. non-equality of human beings with the rest of nature must be taken into consideration in the articulation of human-nonhuman nature ethic. The asymmetrical nature of human-nonhuman nature

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relationship has been clearly argued for and defended in this thesis. The unique position of humanity, however as is demanded of moral agents, implies responsibility on the part of human beings but not on the part of nonhuman nature.

Finally, the Bukusu perspective reinforced the view of the unity of all beings in nature predicated on common ancestry of all beings in nature. In the Bukusu Cosmology presented in Chapter Four, all beings in nature share a common origin and ancestry in the creative power of the supernatural being, **Wele**. This establishes a broad sense of kinship among all beings in nature. Thus Bukusu philosophy of being unequivocally emphasizes the intrinsic worth of all beings in nature. Nonetheless, the Bukusu recognize in humanity unique capacities of reason and morality, which set them apart from the rest of nature. The Bukusu have evolved a value system, which integrates and harmonizes human activities within the overall purpose of nature.

The fusion of the important positive elements we have just highlighted above form a conceptual paradigm that this study has termed ecosustainability. As explained in Chapter Five, the principal pillars on which this framework is premised are; recognition of intrinsic moral standing for nonhuman beings in nature, the fact that ethics is necessarily human – centred, non- equality of all beings in nature and the responsibility on the part of human beings as moral agent to care and respect not only fellow human beings but the rest of nature as moral subjects. The overall goal of the right relationship between humanity and nonhuman nature is seen to culminate in ecological unity, harmony and balance.

In a nutshell, it has been demonstrated that ethics cannot avoid anthropocentrism, that is, that ethics is necessarily human – centred. This confirms the fifth and final assumption set out at the conception of this study. In terms of objectives, we have been able to show, in the light of the fourth objective of this study the implausibility and inconsistency of a nature-centred ethic proposed by radical environmental ethicists. Finally, the articulation of our proposed conceptual framework for conceptualising human-nonhuman nature relationship in general, and human-nonhuman nature conflict in particular marks the culmination of this study. This is what we set out to do in the fifth objective of this study. While we hope that the Bukusu dimension has enriched this paradigm, we are not oblivious of the fact that great controversy still abounds as to the suitable ethical framework to guide human - nonhuman nature relationship. Thus, what we have provided here should be seen just as it is intended; a proposal.

In view of the discourse carried out in this study, there are a number of considerations worth reflecting upon that are in our view critical towards achieving sustainable ecological harmony. We see a serious and urgent need for an extended research in the area of traditional ecological knowledge. These studies should be undertaken in many African communities with the view to bringing out the relevance of traditional knowledge in today's efforts in environmental conservation and protection. The advantage of this approach is that local communities are actively involved and fully participate in the search for solutions to their environmental problems, which they come to identify with. This is important in checking the tendencies of some communities resisting or resenting 'imported' solutions to some problems which do not take due consideration of their value systems.

The case of the Maasai people in the Amboseli National Park is a vivid example of resentment of 'imported' solutions to a local scenario. The Maasai had co-existed with wild animals in this area from time immemorial, although sometimes conflicting over watering points around swamps in Amboseli. The Maasai had shaped their patterns of taking their animals to the watering points only at certain times, and then grazing far off, so as to allow the wild animals access to the watering points. This minimized conflict between the Maasai interests and wildlife. When the authorities provided watering points and tried to remove them from Amboseli, now a national park, the Maasai's way of resenting this policy was for instance by killing elephants and other wild animals. This is because, removing them from this area uprooted them from the ecological base with which they were familiar and integrated their whole livelihood, which happens to revolve around their livestock. The Maasai were resenting what was a rather simplistic approach adopted by the authorities to what was a more complex ecological scenario.

It is partly in view of this that to minimize human-wildlife conflict, Kenya Wildlife Services, the legal guardian of wildlife in Kenya has partly adopted the policy of involving local communities in the search for remedies. In our view, one way of enhancing this involvement is to integrate the local communities' positive indigenous social, ethical, and religious values into their programmes. In addition, integration of these values would provide a profound basis on which any community's participation would be anchored. This way, different communities in different ecological zones would identify themselves with the unique environmental issues of their areas. This in the end would serve to establish consensus among the people concerning their priorities.

Indigenous knowledge should go hand in hand with specialized knowledge in relevant areas of inquiry. This study suggests that since environmental knowledge is multifaceted, the best approach towards acquisition of such knowledge would be inter-disciplinary. In the social sciences, we have in mind disciplines such as sociology, religion and law. These would contribute, respectively, the social, cultural, spiritual and legal dimensions to environmental concern and protection. The natural sciences such as Botany and Zoology on the other hand would provide facts about, rate of extinction, ecological relationships etc.

There is also urgent need to make serious attempts towards changing the way people perceive their natural environment. This is in view of the fact that most people simply view the natural environment in terms of objects of exploitation. In our country, we read a lot about grabbing of forests (and hence destroying biodiversity) by individuals who are driven by no other motive than personal material enrichment. This bolsters a negative image of nature as mere object for greedy individuals to exploit for selfish ends. This perception ought to change, so that people view and treat nonhuman nature positively as having a good of its own, which also happens to provide the very basis on which all life is supported.

The need for this attitude change ought to be the concern of all right thinking and conscientious people. Thus concerted efforts should be made from all fronts including, the media, and wildlife clubs in educational institutions. These efforts, we believe, can go along way towards sharpening people's sensibilities and sensitizing them about the right relationship with our nonhuman kindred and sojourners in this universe, hopefully

arousing in humans an environmental conscience. This is what morality finally culminates to as this thesis has demonstrated. To further help in translating the ethical ideals into praxis, the education system must take the lead. For example the Kenya Government must make good the proposal to introduce environmental studies at all levels of the education system. In these studies, we propose that the ethical component be accorded priority consideration and not to be left to religion as the tendency has been.

To bolster the above endeavours, there is need, in this country to strengthen the legal system regarding our distribution and exploitation of the natural resources. The different laws related to environmental management should be harmonized with the view also to making punishments more punitive to those who fail to adhere. This requires serious political will and good governance, which have in the past lacked and hence destruction of natural environment such as forests has continued unabated. The spirit of the enactment of the Environmental Management and Coordination Act 1999 which has among other things given all Kenyans the *locus standi* to sue in the event of destruction or desecration of the environment should be supported by concrete actions. Together with this, however, as pointed out earlier on, since environmental problems are multifaceted and complex, the issue of poverty which is for instance, inextricably connected with environmental issues ought to be addressed. Thus efforts must also target alleviation of poverty, which will automatically address some environmental problems arising from the rampant poverty pervasive not only in Kenya but also in other Third-World countries.

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APPENDIX: SAMPLE QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by right and wrong?

2. Name some actions and practices that are considered morally right or wrong among the Bukusu, indicating for each why they are so considered.

3. What is the origin of all things that exist in nature according to the Bukusu?

4. Apart from the existents that are apparently visible, what else exists? And what is the relationship between the visible and the invisible realities?

5. What is the place of human beings vis - a - vis other beings in nature? Explain

6. Does the domain of right and wrong earlier mentioned extend to the relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings? If yes, explain how this is expressed in Bukusu:

   i)   Practices

   ii)   Beliefs

   iii)   Attitudes towards nonhuman beings.

7. What then constitutes a right relationship between human beings and nonhuman beings?

8. What are totems? Identify some totems of Bukusu clans and explain why they are considered totems in those clans.

9. What are taboos? Identify some taboos and explain their role in shaping human conduct in relation to nonhuman nature.

10. Describe the Bukusu land tenure system before the advent of colonialism.

11. What were the underlying principles of this land tenure system in relation to:

    (i)   Access to and distribution of land and other natural resources

    (ii)   Protection and care of the natural environment.

12. Explain what constitutes Bukusu sense of justice and to what extent does it involve human - nonhuman nature relationship.

13. What would the Bukusu view as conflict between human beings and nonhuman nature?

14. In case of such conflicts referred above, how were they solved?

15. In your view, how ought humans relate to nonhuman nature today?