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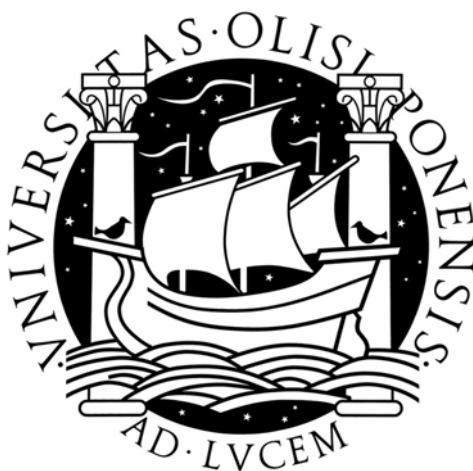
**Circumstances of responsibility.  
Contributions from virtue thinking in  
the realm of the environmental crisis**

**Sofia de Azevedo Guedes Vaz**

**Doutoramento em Filosofia da Natureza  
e do Ambiente**

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**Tese orientada pelos Professores Doutores Viriato  
Soromenho-Marques e Timothy O’Riordan (University  
of East Anglia)**

**2007**

Ao Martim e André que nasceram e cresceram com esta tese.

## Sinopse

O ambiente coloca problemas complexos a nível científico, filosófico, social, económico e político. Soluções não são fáceis e muitas vezes não há soluções certas ou erradas. A política ambiental assenta essencialmente em motivações externas como instrumentos económicos ou legislativos. A política ambiental deveria dar mais atenção à filosofia ambiental e os seus esforços em compreender as raízes dos problemas e em propôr justificações filosóficas para a sua resolução. A política ambiental ganharia em investir também em motivações internas, trabalhando mais com as pessoas, como consumidoras, cidadãs, poluidoras, como alguém com um papel importante na relação com o ambiente. Sugerir que desenvolver responsabilidade em relação ao ambiente como uma virtude a nível individual poderia contribuir para a formação de carácter, para *eudaimonia* e para um melhor ambiente. Propus um processo trifásico de educação e habituação, empowerment ambiental (literacia, sensibilização e consciencialização ambientais) e a promoção de uma cidadania ambiental activa. A nível político, responsabilidade deveria ser a primeira virtude das instituições que tratam directa ou indirectamente da relação entre homem e a natureza. Pensar em termos de virtude poderá contribuir para um alargamento das questões políticas dando mais espaço para se pensar e agir de um modo mais inovador, onde melhores soluções poderão ser encontradas. A proposta passa por uma política da virtude em relação ao ambiente baseada na importância da noção de virtude, que inclui um ser e agir bem (e responsabilmente em relação à natureza) em relação a si próprio, aos outros, ao futuro, ao planeta e a noção de *eudaimonia* acoplada à ideia de prazer em agir como cidadão ambiental. Assim, usar a responsabilidade em relação à natureza como uma virtude, a nível individual e político permite que se atinjam dois objectivos ao mesmo tempo, nomeadamente melhorar o ambiente e ajudar-nos a sentir que fazemos mais sentido e em última instância, mais felizes.

**Palavras-chave:** Responsabilidade, virtude, política de ambiente, ética ambiental e princípio da precaução.

## **Abstract**

Environmental issues pose complex problems, at scientific, philosophical, social, economic and political levels. Often solutions are not straightforward and sometimes there isn't even a right or a wrong solution. Environmental policy relies mostly on external motivations such as economic and legislative instruments to protect the environment. Environmental policy should pay more attention to environmental philosophy, its efforts in understanding the roots of problems and in proposing a philosophical justification for the rationale to tackle them. Environmental policy might profit from investing also on internal motivations by working more with people, people as consumers, as citizens, as polluters and as someone with a role in our relation with the environment. I suggested that to develop responsibility towards nature as a virtue at the individual level would contribute to *eudaimonia* and ultimately to a better environment. I proposed a three phase process, education and habituation, environmental empowerment (environmental literacy, awareness and consciousness) and the promotion of an active environmental citizenship. Regarding the political level, responsibility should be the first virtue of institutions that deal directly or indirectly with the relationship between man and nature. Virtue thinking is believed to contribute to a broadening of the political and to give more room to think about possibilities of changing a mode of thinking and acting towards more encompassing solutions. Environmental virtue politics, a political philosophy based on the importance of the notion of virtue which includes a mix of being and acting good (and responsibly towards nature), for the self, for the other, for the future and for the planet and of *eudaimonia* coupled to the notion of pleasure of acting as an environmental citizen was the main proposal. Using responsibility towards nature as a virtue attains two objectives at the same time, improving the environment and eventually helping us feel more meaningful and ultimately happier persons.

**Key-words:** Responsibility, virtue ethics, precautionary principle, environmental policy, environmental ethics

## **Circumstâncias de responsabilidade. Contribuições de uma ética e política da virtude no contexto da crise ambiental.**

O contexto desta tese situa-se na filosofia ambiental, política ambiental e ciência ambiental e nas relações entre estas disciplinas. Compreender o modo como estas disciplinas pensam e conceptualizam a crise ambiental, perceber se o conceito de responsabilidade poderá contribuir para um melhor ambiente e como o poderemos desenvolver a nível individual e político são as grandes tarefas a que me proponho. Caso esta responsabilidade fosse desenvolvida como uma virtude será que poderia contribuir para melhorar a crise ambiental e ao mesmo tempo para sentir que a nossa vida faz mais sentido e em última instância, para sermos mais felizes?

A tese principia por dois capítulos que descrevem analiticamente, na perspectiva da sua compreensão da crise ambiental, quer a política quer a ética ambiental. Entre estas duas disciplinas, tem havido pouca interacção e, apesar de terem evoluído significativamente ao longo dos últimos quarenta anos, o seu sucesso ainda está longe de ser alcançado. A ética ambiental tem procurado compreender as causas primeiras da crise ambiental e em propor valores que possam sustentar possíveis respostas políticas. Por outro lado, a política ambiental tem investido em solucionar os problemas, à medida que estes surgem, apostando numa atitude preventiva e socorrendo-se essencialmente da ciência, da tecnologia e de instrumentos económicos e legais.

A responsabilidade é proposta como uma possível plataforma de entendimento entre ambas as disciplinas. No capítulo quatro investiga-se este conceito, procedendo-se a uma breve genealogia e análise do que tem sido pensado sobre responsabilidade quer no âmbito da crise ambiental quer apenas na filosofia e na política. A expressão de Hume “circumstâncias de justiça” expõe as razões pelas quais a humanidade tinha e precisava de justiça. Hume argumentou que a justiça, assim como tudo o que leva as sociedades não só a manterem-se, mas a manterem-se com felicidade, faz parte da moralidade. O título da tese, “Circumstâncias de Responsabilidade” transpõe a preocupação

de Hume, para a responsabilidade em relação à natureza. A dimensão *aretaica* do conceito de responsabilidade conduz à análise da ideia de responsabilidade em relação à natureza como uma virtude. Para tal o capítulo cinco investiga a ética da virtude e em especial as razões do renovado interesse por esta corrente da ética que originariamente advém de Aristóteles. A ética normativa focou-se ultimamente em responder à questão “o que devo eu fazer?”, e a re-emergência da ética da virtude despoletou perguntas tais como: “Quem é que eu quero ser?” e “Como é que eu devo viver?” que teriam sido descuradas, quer pela deontologia quer pelo utilitarismo.

A importância da formação do carácter e o conceito de *eudaimonia* dominam o quarto capítulo, onde se propõe, com o fim de desenvolver a responsabilidade em relação à natureza como uma virtude, um processo trifásico de educação e habituação, empowerment ambiental (literacia, sensibilização e consciencialização ambientais) e a promoção de uma cidadania ambiental activa. O conceito de *eudaimonia*, fundamental na ética Aristotélica, é também neste contexto potencialmente importante, pois permite que a natureza e a sua defesa contribuam para dar algum sentido à vida e em última instância para sermos mais felizes. A justificação “porque me faz sentir bem” dada por pessoas que agem de forma ambiental (por exemplo, promovendo a separação de resíduos e utilizando transportes públicos) cada vez mais presente em estudos de cariz prático suporta esta linha de investigação.

Poderia esta virtude, aparte do seu benefício para o ambiente e para nós próprios ser também transposta para um contexto político? Os capítulos seis e sete exploram esta questão, discutindo a relação entre ética e política, o cosmopolitanismo, uma possível política da virtude e a questão controversa de poder haver um bem comum orientador-mor da política. O liberalismo, o sistema político que domina todo o mundo ocidental, acredita que o papel do Estado, nunca deveria ser o de impor uma concepção de bem comum, mas sim promover condições para que os indivíduos possam prosseguir o seu bem individualmente definido. Há no entanto diferentes propostas que consideram diferentes concepções de bem comum como passíveis de serem adoptadas por um estado liberal. A teoria das capacidades de Sen e Nussbaum é um

exemplo que é investigado nestes capítulos, com vista a tentar justificar que um bom ambiente poderia fazer parte de um bem comum.

Propõe-se ainda que a nível político, a responsabilidade seja a primeira virtude das instituições que lidam directa ou indirectamente com a relação entre o homem e a natureza. O pensar em termos de virtude poderá contribuir para um alargamento das questões políticas dando mais espaço para se pensar e agir de um modo inovador, onde poderão ser encontradas melhores soluções. A proposta apresentada é a de uma política da virtude em relação ao ambiente baseada na importância da noção de virtude, que inclui um ser e agir bem (e responsabilmente em relação à natureza), em relação a si próprio, aos outros, ao futuro, ao planeta e a noção de *eudaimonia* acoplada à ideia de prazer em agir como cidadão ambiental.

No capítulo sete fala-se de filosofia política e da sua importância num contexto em que a teoria política e a ciência política não conseguem abarcar tudo o que pode enriquecer uma visão da política mais ambiciosa e mais fundamentada filosoficamente. Neste sentido, explora-se a ideia de uma filosofia política de ambiente, nomeadamente de uma política de virtude em relação ao ambiente, que se centra em justificar se o ambiente poderá ser estrutural a nível político e consequentemente um objectivo político comum, e não apenas da política de ambiente e de qual poderia ser o papel das autoridades políticas em fomentar nos cidadãos a virtude da responsabilidade em relação ao ambiente.

No capítulo oito investiga-se a relação da ciência com a política e com a sociedade e como a evolução desta relação tem influenciado novas maneiras de ver a ciência que assentam numa abertura a questões de participação da sociedade civil no definir de problemas e na procura das suas soluções e no assumir da incerteza enquanto qualidade da própria ciência. Ao nível político estas questões espelham-se no princípio da precaução, um princípio que poderá estar na génese de um novo paradigma de política ambiental no qual a ideia de responsabilidade se assume como um valor fundamental.

O princípio da precaução funciona como um caso-estudo que confirma a necessidade de se fazer política de ambiente de forma mais aberta, participada e eventualmente mais sofisticada, onde os princípios da governança – transparência, participação, responsabilidade, eficácia e coerência – se assumem como orientadores. A transparência no processo de decisões políticas e o envolvimento de cidadãos no processo de decisão exigem que as autoridades assumam a necessidade de aprenderem a trabalhar de maneira aberta com valores, factos e normas. Um diálogo aberto com todos os intervenientes sociais e económicos e com a sociedade civil, quer a nível de organizações, quer a nível de cidadãos assegura uma responsabilização colectiva, que se assume como o melhor investimento para uma real contribuição para a crise ambiental.

Este será um desafio constante que nos acompanhará nesta jornada de querermos um melhor ambiente, e esta tese enfatiza que uma ética normativa que nos leva a investir em nós próprios e na nossa conexão com a natureza será sempre, pelo menos, uma boa aposta. Para trabalho futuro propõe-se que se continue a investigar e a enriquecer esta ideia de uma filosofia política de ambiente que aposte na virtude da responsabilidade em relação à natureza a nível individual e político.

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# Chapter One – Introduction

## 1.1. *Prelude*

*Kindergarten* is where one learns some of the most important things in life. Say hello when meeting someone, and then goodbye, never take things from others, but if you really want them, then ask first, always say thank you, always say please, wash your hands before eating, don't beat the others, take care of things, if naughty, say sorry... Much of this amounts to responsibility. Be responsible for your actions, in your relationships and for things around you. This thesis is also about responsibility.

The context of this research is within environmental philosophy, policy and science and the interplay between them. Like in a symphony a series of movements will be composed trying to underpin what these disciplines are thinking about the environmental crisis, whether the concept of responsibility would help them work towards a better environment and how could we develop it both at a personal and at a political level. Would responsibility as a virtue contribute to enhance this relationship and would it contribute to improve the environmental crisis?

Very few people, if any, are against a good environment. Few people do something about it. The reasons are various and most are quite legitimate. A good environment, too often conflicts with other "goods" and so both governments and individuals face a dilemma. We are in a situation characterized by the cartoon character Pogo as "we met the enemy and he is us"<sup>1</sup>. The environmental dilemma has various dimensions, solving it presupposes an exercise of judgement, and very often there isn't a right or a wrong solution. What would be the potential of responsibility as a contribution to overcoming this dilemma and ultimately improving the environment?

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<sup>1</sup> Walt Kelly used the quote "We Have Met The Enemy and He Is Us" on a poster for Earth Day in 1970.

Responsibility seems a “reliable bet”<sup>2</sup>, so a positive answer might seem quite obvious. And probably it is, we have been learning about its importance since at least the *Kindergarten*. Then again obvious things can sometimes be quite challenging. Underpinning all the associated concepts, ideas and above all what to do about it, seems less obvious. And reading, thinking and writing about responsibility on philosophical, environmental and political perspectives disentangles many other ideas contributing to an enrichment of the whole *corpus* of this proposed enquiry.

In environmental science, policy, and philosophy, ideas and discussions are abundant and fascinating. Nevertheless, these are often loose ideas, and discussions and answers are sometimes given too quickly and too ineffectively to problems that deserve much more attention and framing. Thinking seriously about environmental policy involves an encompassing discussion about public issues, economy, policy, science, society. Would responsibility help in this endeavour, in creating a platform of understanding between these loose discussions?

## **1.2. Responsibility**

Democracy and justice have, understandably, been the main focus of political theory. Democracy is the type of political system which rules most of the nation-states of the world and justice structures societies<sup>3</sup>. David Hume considered that justice existed because of the so-called “Hume’s circumstances of justice”: man needed to live in society, man was selfish and nature was scarce for his wants<sup>4</sup>. Hume thought that justice was part of our morality because the survival and maintenance of society were dependent on it.

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<sup>2</sup> Hursthouse (1999 ,p.172) expression about being virtuous. See also chapter five.

<sup>3</sup> As Rawls (1999, p.6) says, “the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation”.

<sup>4</sup> “tis only from the confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants that justice derives its origins. In *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 3.2.2 (Book 3. Part 2. Section 2 p.318).

The title of this thesis “Circumstances of Responsibility” is inspired in Hume’s thinking about justice added by the proposal that using responsibility to help solving the current environmental crisis should qualify it to enter our morality. The survival and maintenance of a happy society might depend on it. So mankind is now under circumstances of justice and of responsibility, specifically responsibility towards a better environment. An environment which supports life in general and human life in particular is a condition of possibility of mankind. Hans Jonas, a German philosopher, was probably the first to set out the idea of *The Imperative of Responsibility*<sup>5</sup>.

Analysing the history of the environmental movement, one can identify a so-called “doom phase” when it was considered that the condition of possibility of mankind was in danger. Hans Jonas<sup>6</sup> adopted this attitude and his rationale for the need for responsibility was not just doing but also the possibility of doing. He reckoned that for our technological age we needed a new ethics, one where the imperative was responsibility, which to work more effectively would best be based on fear.

Even though responsibility has been foundational for ethics in varied ways, Jonas considered that traditional ethics were not appropriate. Ethics deals with action and given that the “*nature of human action*” had changed, so did ethics need to change as well, “the enormity of its powers forces upon ethics a new dimension of responsibility never dreamed of before” (1984, p.6). The imperative of responsibility should now structure a new ethics. Hans Jonas has been a pioneer in thinking on this new dimension of responsibility but on this enquiry the rationale for developing responsibility will be different, namely it will not use a heuristics of fear.

Responsibility has been a perennial concept in the history of humanity and if one may say so, it is above democracy and justice, it is a condition for its existence and is also foundational for ethics. If one wants to take an ontological

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<sup>5</sup> Originally written in German in 1979, and translated by himself into English in 1984. His proposal would be analysed in chapter four.

<sup>6</sup> Jonas proposes that a rule must be developed to assist decision-making: “prophecy of doom is to be given greater heed than the prophecy of bliss.”(Jonas, 1984, p.31).

approach to the polity then responsibility is a meta-concept fundamental for structuring it, for it to be. The rationale for responsibility in this thesis is that being responsible is a possibility (and also a “reliable bet”) to contribute to solve intractable environmental problems.

Environmental issues pose complex problems, at scientific, social, economic and political levels and solutions are not easy or straightforward, and sometimes there isn't even a right or a wrong solution. The idea of developing a meta-concept that might not directly solve any of the apparently unsolvable problems<sup>7</sup>, but might help us dealing with them seems a wise way forward. The idea would be developing responsibility as a sort of meta-concept, not only to motivate action, but also as structuring of our own life; responsibility towards the environment as a virtue helping us having more harmony<sup>8</sup> in our relationship with the environment and ultimately with ourselves.

Most philosophical discussions on responsibility are on moral responsibility, on the problematic of opposing determinism to free will. Aristotle's discussion on moral responsibility is not as virtue but as to determine when a person is or is not accountable for his actions. Strawson (1962) in his landmark essay “Freedom and Resentment” took the discussion into the idea of reactive attitudes as being the base for someone to be morally responsible. Hume is also considered a reference philosopher on the nature and conditions of human freedom and moral responsibility.

In this enquiry, the main purpose is researching the possibility and the advantages of developing responsibility as a virtue, as a trait of our character and if possible also as a trait of the character of the political system. If so, then the conditions would be set to a system that could better encompass the needs of a public environmental policy based on openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence<sup>9</sup>. Watson (1996) wrote a paper entitled “Two faces of responsibility” considering one as attributability and the

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<sup>7</sup> “Wicked problems” as they will be defined in chapter two

<sup>8</sup> Not the fear proposed by Jonas

<sup>9</sup> These are the five principles informing governance, according to EU (2001).

other accountability. For the first one, which is the one I want to follow, he says "responsibility is important to issues about what it is to lead a life, indeed about what it is to have a life in the biographical sense, and about the quality and character of that life." (p.229)

In the context of virtue thinking inspired by Aristotle, acting virtuously contributes for promoting a more meaningful life. Responsibility as a virtue has then a "circular" character, in the sense that the consequence might turn into a cause for supporting yet more responsibility. Aristotle thought that improving one's character was an advantage, suggesting that virtuous activity is not burdensome, but noble and enjoyable: "Moreover, the life of these [active] people is also pleasant in itself. For being pleased is a condition of the soul." (1099 a 5) or "actions expressing the virtues are pleasant in themselves." (1099 a 20). Also David Hume (1777) finishes the *Enquiry* acknowledging that acting virtuously is a source of happiness: "Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances, very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them"<sup>10</sup>. For Hume agreeability and utility are the basis of our morality. If responsibility towards the environment is a virtue, then according to Aristotle and Hume, it might turn out to be pleasant and agreeable besides being of great utility for environment<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Enquiry, Sec. IX, Part II (p.283)

<sup>11</sup> It might not be easy, but as Aristotle also says about learning and acting virtuously, it might be a tough and long but fructuous way. The main challenge is being able to attain harmony even when the acting is not straightforward a source of our own perception of happiness. Our preferred development is marked by an increase of comfort and increased material wealth with all what it provides. We want always more and will not let go of any of the conquered comforts. Recently (2007) Coca cola introduced the Zero version. Zero sugar, meaning one can keep on consuming it and not be afraid of putting on weight. This is a good metaphor of our society, don't let go anything and relegate responsibility of our acts into an innovative industry. The same is happening with green consuming. The main message is consume green, not consume less. The main challenge of this research is if what might be perceived as a sacrifice (consume less at all levels, be more austere, be more responsible towards the environment) might be transformed into a source of *eudaimonia*. Responsibility as a virtue, that is the proposed more "reliable bet". Saving someone from a fire for example, might cause us burns that we would surely not be happy about, but yet, ultimately feel happy for having saved the person. Not consuming coca cola zero, might be instantly disagreeable, but could ultimately make one feel better. Recycling, even if troublesome, might make us feel good. In chapter five this "feel good" factor, already observed in some studies will be analysed.

### **1.3. Environmental policy and environmental philosophy**

This enquiry's context is the environment. Environmental policy is the privileged means to affect the environment and it has been informed mainly by environmental science. The main realm of this thesis is environmental philosophy and it is also an objective of the enquiry to understand its relationship with environmental policy.

Environmental philosophy and environmental policy are as twins, emerging at the same time and stemming both from the same root, a growing care and concern with the environmental problems that arose back in the sixties. One could imagine that these twins would grow side by side, dealing with the same worries and problems, developing and maturing together and, supporting each other. But environmental philosophy focused on the philosophical discussion of the intrinsic value of nature and on the intergenerational thematic, and slowly drifted away from the actual environmental problems to which environmental policy had to provide an immediate answer. Environmental philosophy focused on the ethical branch and it took a long time before starting giving attention to the political area<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand environmental policy evolved from investing on answers to problems into how to prevent them, always privileging a highly regulative formula. So environmental philosophy and environmental policy evolved within different premises, the first focusing on grounding philosophically and consistently what it thought were the roots of environmental problems and the latter in trying to solve and prevent them on a short and medium term.

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<sup>12</sup> Sagoff, 1988 with *The economy of the Earth* did a pioneering work linking philosophy and policy arguing that not all political decisions were economic and sometimes one is a consumer and other times a citizen. Dobson, 1990 *Green Political Thought* might be a reference just as Eckersley, 1992 *Environmentalism and political theory: towards an ecocentric approach* but they are both political theorists rather than philosophers. Norton, 1991 *Toward Unity among environmentalists* was one of the firsts denouncing the need for a more political approach to environmental ethics. O'Neill, 1993 with *Ecology, Policy and Politics: Human Well-Being and the Natural World* may be one of the first philosophers to get into a more political oriented philosophy as Light (ed), 1996 *Environmental Pragmatism* who is also a philosopher focusing on the failure of environmental philosophy to fulfil its promise as a guide to formulating better, more morally responsible environmental policies. John Barry in 1999 published *Rethinking Green Politics. Nature, virtue and progress* challenging Dobson and Eckersley and their green ideology opposing it to green political theory. Baxter, also in 1999 published *Ecologism. An introduction* and he is a philosopher defending ecologism as a political philosophy. More recently this trend is more obvious.

These disciplines have relied on their differences for justifying not having invested in interactions with each other. These differences have been reduced to dichotomies<sup>13</sup> which tend to simplify, limit and hinder possible solutions<sup>14</sup>. Environmental problems are, in general, found at the intersection of ecosystems (quite complex) with human social systems (quite complex), so one would expect them to be “doubly complex” as Dryzek (1997) put it. The more complex a situation, the larger is the number of plausible perspectives upon it. The perception of environmental problems as complex and persistent has been pushing environmental policy to innovatively look as how it should evolve. To understand and frame environmental problems simultaneously as scientific, social, economic, philosophical and political has been one of the main failed challenges of both environmental policy and environmental philosophy. There has been a sort of autism in the way different disciplines have been developed. For a new phase of environmental policy a new impetus is needed, and this must involve an interdisciplinary effort, an open mind, and a breakthrough of established political routines, philosophical inquiries and scientific quests.

The job in philosophy is enquiring and understanding rather than solving. Environmental problems need solving. But fundamental for a good solution is a good understanding and framing of the problem. To inquire how environmental science works, one needs to also understand how the social and political components of environmental policy work and what are their interactions. It is this need to look innovatively, critically and holistically into the environmental world that is happening and this thesis aims at contributing to it by reducing disciplinary barriers. The main *locus* is responsibility and as an overarching concept it might speak across disciplines and minds and therefore contribute to this inter-disciplinarity.

Believing that environment will gain with this interdisciplinary effort, and that responsibility, being a philosophical and a political concept widely accepted as

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<sup>13</sup> Different authors have called it different things and have more than just two, Naess (1973) spoke about deep and shallow ecology; Dobson (1990) dubbed it ecologism and environmentalism; Dryzek (1997) a radical and a reformist; Carter (2001) mentions anthropocentric and ecocentric.

<sup>14</sup> In chapter seven, this limitation will be further explored

fundamental for environment, might be a good common denominator, or present a platform of understanding further justifies this enquiry.

The following main challenges<sup>15</sup> to environmental policy might exemplify this concept of responsibility as a common denominator:

- How to tackle individuals: more and more emphasis is put on the role of consumers and the need for sustainable consumption<sup>16</sup> - how could an environmental citizenship develop, with environmental responsibility engrained in people's thinking and life?
- How to uphold environmental values in balance with economic and social ones - the Lisbon agenda is overshadowing environmental policy and could responsibility help in the integration challenge?

These two challenges will be analysed throughout the thesis and will provide much of the frame for the research. Other emerging challenges might also be relevant, but the scope of the research will dictate a more narrow analysis:

- How could connection be ensured between growing local initiatives and higher level policies? Could responsibility help in this connection?
- How to ensure that globalization integrates environmental values. What could be the role of responsibility in mitigating possible negative impacts of globalization?

## ***1.4 Structure of the thesis***

The enquiry has been set out; the challenge now will be to organize all the investigation into a coherent storyline that will successfully discuss:

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<sup>15</sup> These challenges came up as a result of continuous discussions with Ann Dom, Project Manager at the European Environment Agency, to whom I am thankful.

<sup>16</sup> Difficult for politicians as this touches upon peoples' (perceived) individual freedoms

1. Could it be argued that responsibility as a virtue contributes to a more harmonious relationship of man with nature?
2. Could it be argued that responsibility as a virtue contributes to a more meaningful life?
3. Could it be argued that responsibility contributes to more interdisciplinarity between environmental philosophy and policy?
4. Could it be argued that a harmonious relationship of man with nature, a more meaningful life and an interdisciplinarity between environmental philosophy and policy, all contribute to a better environment?

The structure of the thesis will, step by step, build up a storyline tackling a holistic perspective to these questions. There will be no final answers<sup>17</sup> or certainties and this enquiry will not be prescriptive about what to do in the future. Throughout the thesis there will be what sometimes might seem a disparate set of subjects and issues. The complexity of the environmental discipline demands this broadness and each of these disparate issues will contribute to the main storyline of the thesis which is that responsibility is one of the most important things in life.

This responsibility will be mainly posed as individual responsibility<sup>18</sup>, but as Brotherson (1929, p.480) says: “responsibility is to be consciously recognized and assumed by individuals. They are self-conscious centres, creative and directive, of social forces. But the individual is to be conceived as the *locus* of a common responsibility, each *locus* differing from others according to differing powers and opportunities of individuals”. This is also the sense in which responsibility will be interpreted in this thesis. The structure of the thesis will have the following chapters which are like movements composing an unusual long symphony:

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<sup>17</sup> Deleuze (1953) said “a philosophical theory is not born from itself or for the fun of it. It is not even enough to say that it is a response to a set of problems. In fact a philosophical theory is an elaborately developed question, and nothing else; by itself and in itself, it is not the resolution to a problem, but the elaboration, *to the very end*, of the necessary implications of a formulated question”. He was talking about Hume’s philosophy. I do not aim at having developed a philosophical theory, but the sentence still makes sense to this enquiry, indeed to any philosophical enquiry.

<sup>18</sup> Responsibility is usual limited to individual agents, but signs are given that it can also be a question for collective agents. For example, Soares (2002) grounded philosophically the concept of corporate responsibility in Levinas’s theory of infinite responsibility.

*Allegro con brio* - Environmental Crisis and Environmental Policy - This chapter will begin by challenging simplistic ways of defining and understanding environmental problems and crisis in order to open the discussion in a critical way. The main aim is to show that the perception of the evolution of environmental problems and environmental crisis needs to be seen as part of an established political debate and not just as the beginning of that debate. It will then go on describing analytically the evolution of environmental policy in a brief historic perspective, and then go on by describe the pathway of European environmental policy, organizing it around its the main principles of established policy statements and which are the sources of the main ideas of environmental policy (mainly at European level, but influencing overall environmental policy).

*Andante* - Environmental ethics and its relation to environmental policy – This chapter will describe the evolution of the relationship between man-nature and the efforts by philosophers to understand nature. It will offer a brief analytical description of environmental ethics and its main currents, and assess what these perspectives have achieved politically. It will expose the separation between environmental policy and philosophy and then inquire if and how, in the future, that relationship could be strengthened. It will propose responsibility as a bridge concept, as a concept that might provide a platform of understanding between policy and philosophy. This assessment will be based on the review contained in the previous chapter

*Allegro* - Aporetical discussion on responsibility – In this chapter there will be a general description of what responsibility is and how different authors define it. Apel, Jonas, Cane, Hume and Brown will be the authors investigated as they have made serious contributions to investigating responsibility in these arenas of philosophy and policy. It will then explore the possibility of responsibility entering morality using the same thinking as Hume used for justice. It will end by opening way to develop responsibility as a virtue.

*Allegretto* - Virtue ethics – In this chapter virtue ethics as a normative ethical current will be briefly described, and why and how it has re-emerged in the

philosophy literature in the last century. Environmental virtue ethics as an established current will be analytically described. It will go on by inquiring how virtue ethics might help developing responsibility mainly at an individual level, going on some phases of character development and focusing on environmental citizenship. A main idea of virtue ethics, namely that of *eudaimonia*, will also be tackled, as it seems that it has been gaining prominence in influencing peoples' behaviour towards the environment. The idea that one might act responsibly towards the environment just because it makes one feel well or feel good is shown with some examples from literature on waste and transport. These are central to EU environmental policymaking and to possible changes in human behaviour.

*Adagio ma non troppo* – Ethics informing policy – This chapter inquires the possibility of politics being more informed by ethics. It looks into cosmopolitanism and its proposals of the need of ethics in policy, it will look into the timid virtue politics that is arising mainly through some Neo-Aristotelians authors and will discuss the question of the Good and the common Good. It will finish by investigating how politics based on responsibility towards the environment as a virtue could be justified.

*Scherzo* – Environmental political philosophy - It will look into political philosophy and will propose environmental political philosophy as a main discipline where fundamental and foundationalist values and principles can be discussed. It will explore the possibility of an environmental virtue politics.

*Minuet* – Science and the Precautionary principle – This chapter will use the precautionary principle as a case-study since it is a main policy principle mirroring new thinking on how to deal with uncertainty and scientific indeterminacy. It will briefly go through the main new forms of science that are emerging, the interface between science and society and the difficult relationship that science is now having with politics. It will end with coming back to responsibility and co-responsibility as the concept that might improve that relationship allowing both the precautionary principle and environmental policy more room to breathe.

## 1.5. *Finale*

This will be a non-ending story. The environmental crisis will never go away. We will never be fully responsible, neither fully virtuous citizens nor virtuous consumers. Discussions among environmental policy, science and philosophy will go on endlessly and many new ideas will come to light in years to come. A whole new array of innovations both at technological and political level will take place. The current environmental structuring concept of sustainable development might either finally dominate in all areas or be substituted, or be complemented by other concepts, paradigms and ideas. Although scenarios, narratives and visions might start unveiling the curtain of what might be the foreseeable future, much of it will come as a surprise. These are challenging times, and this thesis is a drop in the ocean. But investing in one's character, in one's care about the self, the other and the world will always be one of our most reliable bets. Even though not always perceptible, the ocean is made of many, many drops. And as the poet would say<sup>19</sup>:

“Was it worth while? It is worth while, all,  
If the soul is not small  
Whoever means to sail beyond the Cape  
Must double sorrow – no escape.  
Peril and abyss has God to the sea given,  
And yet made it the mirror of heaven”

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<sup>19</sup> Fernando Pessoa in “Mar Português”:  
Valeu a pena? Tudo vale a pena  
Se a alma não é pequena.  
Quem quer passar além do Bojador  
Tem que passar além da dor.  
Deus ao mar o perigo e o abismo deu,  
Mas nele é que espelhou o céu

## Chapter two – Environmental policy

### 2.1. Introduction

The history of environmental policy is quite recent and the (dis)advantage is that we are still making it. On the one hand we are still trying to understand what is happening and the constant dynamism of the process makes a critical analysis difficult. On the other hand, since almost everything happened in the last 50 years, it might be easier to try to contain it in a frame of analysis. Nevertheless during this period, many ideas and events have burst in a scattered way. It has been impressive how different disciplines<sup>20</sup> quickly adapted to the new need and dived into environment with heart and soul. Both natural and social sciences have been contributing to environmental science and environmental policy with valuable insights, key ideas and concepts from their own disciplines. Environment has been a multidiscipline subject, but not always as interdisciplinary as perhaps it should. In this chapter some of these contributions will be used to help understanding how the environmental crisis is being perceived and acted upon.

A strong idea from this history is that environmental problems have been constantly around for these past years and successive “clumsy solutions” gave rise to successive “wicked” problems<sup>21</sup>. Environmental problems as fundamentally policy problems might indeed be perennial “wicked” problems, and their solution is often prone to either promote new problems or to be passed by the seemingly unstoppable growth<sup>22</sup>. There are other characteristics

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<sup>20</sup> For e.g. ecology, biology, environmental sciences, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, economy, political sciences.

<sup>21</sup> Rittel and Webber published in 1973 a famous paper describing wicked problems and their characteristics. As they say “The search for scientific bases for confronting problems of social policy is bound to fail, because of the nature of these problems. They are “wicked” problems, whereas science has developed to deal with “tame” problems. Policy problems cannot be definitively described. (...) Even worse, there are no “solutions” in the sense of definitive and objective answers” (Rittel and Webber, 1973 p.155)

<sup>22</sup> Example of the first is the recent debate on biofuels, i.e. biofuels as an energy solution is causing problems elsewhere, namely in food production in the developing world. Example of the second is the impact of emissions of the transport sector, where significant improvements in technology are constantly passed by the growth of the transport sector.

of environmental problems that added by unsuitable institutional settings contribute for the environmental crisis never to go away.

Why environmental problems have been persisting in the last 50 years, despite clear advances in science and technology, clear evolution of policy-making, and an increasing awareness and environmental education is the subject matter of many reports, such as those of the European Environment Agency (EEA, 1999, 2005). As “wicked” problems though, the emphasis should be one that makes solution secondary and problem understanding central. In fact wicked problems cannot be solved as such<sup>23</sup> and helping all stakeholders to negotiate a shared understanding and a shared meaning about the problem and its possible solutions would already be of paramount importance. This thesis takes this approach, of trying to clarify environmental problems in a way that would attain at least a common understanding.

This chapter will briefly go through this problematic of environmental problems, their characteristics, their evolution, and how they are perceived. Then it will analyse the evolution of environmental policy and namely European environmental policy<sup>24</sup> in how to deal with it.

The objectives of this chapter are to analyse how problems and the environmental crisis have been understood, and how environmental policy and European environmental policy have been evolving. It will finish by opening way to the next chapter where environmental ethics will be scrutinized. Within the overall storyline these introductory chapters are important for giving the background supporting the argument of responsibility which will be unfolded in the following chapters. Responsibility towards the environment as a virtue will

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<sup>23</sup> Karl Popper in the “Logic of Scientific Research” argued that solutions were only hypothesis offered for refutation. “whenever we propose a solution to a problem, we ought to try as hard as we can to overthrow our solution, rather than defend it” (Preface to the first English edition, 1972, p16). It seems a good method for environmental problems.

<sup>24</sup> Even if now and then the analysis implies looking further, the focus of this thesis will remain, as much as possible, within be the European situation. European environmental policy will be privileged because as reported by the midterm evaluation of the sixth environmental action programme (EU, 2007, p.4) “EU legislation lies behind 80% of national environmental legislation”.

be proposed as a potential complementary<sup>25</sup> solution within the environmental problematic.

## **2.2. Environment emerging**

Understanding the complexity of what environmental problems are and how they might be identified and defined is important. In addition to situate the starting point of the environmental emergence and the context of its beginning will also be useful for a better exploration of possible new and future trends.

Generally speaking, one can state that the environmental problematic as we know it, started back in the sixties. It is possible to claim that it started much earlier, talking about environmental concerns in the beginning of the century with air or water problems or about land ethics in the forties. Or even go back and find references in philosophers and naturalists who cared for nature and/or human health. But in an institutionalised and broad way, one usually cites, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1962, the Earth day in 1970, the Meadows 1972 report *The Limits to Growth* and the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm as some of the most relevant events that marked the beginning of the environmental era both as private and public concern<sup>26</sup>. These events were mirroring the acknowledgment of environment as a subject in need of attention at several levels, namely by the academia, the political world and civil society. All this prompted the starting of environmental science, policy and philosophy.

Eckersley (1992) considers three phases for this emergence of environment, namely participation, survival and emancipation. Participation started in the sixties associated with student and peace movements asking for more participation in political decision-making. The survival phase had its apogee in

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<sup>25</sup> Complementary of other approaches which rely on either legal or economic instruments

<sup>26</sup> Worster, 1994 (first edition 1977) in his *Nature's economy. A history of ecological ideas* and Marshall, 1992 in his *Nature's web. An exploration of ecological thinking* both provide a full history of the concern with nature. Marshall identifies Ancient China and Taoism in the sixth century BC as the first clear expression of ecological thinking. In this thesis though, the focus will be more on environmental policy as such.

the seventies with unpleasant scenarios for our survival in planet Earth. The population growth and their impact on the environment and on the use of resources prompted the appearance of doomsayers. Their response to the crisis had an authoritarian dimension very much inspired in their reading of Thomas Hobbes and the logic of Leviathan. Hardin and his famous “mutual coercion mutually agreed upon” is an example of this phase<sup>27</sup>. Emancipation called for “a reevaluation of the foundations of, and the conditions for, human autonomy or self-determination in Western political thought” (Eckersley, p18). Basically the environmental crisis stops being seen only as a crisis “of participation and survival but also as a crisis of culture in the broadest sense of the term, that is, the total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action” (Eckersley, p.20). This emancipatory enquiry translates a *spectrum* of thought rather than a single view and even if “there are many areas of disagreement, the most fundamental division from an ecophilosophical point of view is between those who adopt an anthropocentric ecological perspective and those who adopt a non-anthropocentric ecological (or ecocentric) perspective” (Eckersley, p.26). This third phase provided the environmental movement with maturity and some sort of legitimization, even if this division never got properly solved.

Eckersley analysis is quite accurate and this dichotomy of anthropocentric vs non-anthropocentric perspective has been accompanying the environmental crisis and contributing to different perceptions and different analysis of the problems. Next chapter will deal with this dichotomy more closely.

### ***2.3. Environmental problems and crisis***

What is an environmental problem and what is the environmental crisis? It is dangerous to describe environmental problems and environmental crisis and its roots in a too narrow perspective, as the framing of a problem affects which solutions are investigated. And yet this has been the case for long.

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<sup>27</sup> See Vaz (2003) “The tragedy of the commons and Leviathan”, for a fuller account of this phase.

The perception of the evolution of environmental problems and environmental crisis needs to be seen as part of the political debate and not just as the beginning of the debate. This chapter will begin by challenging simplistic ways of defining and understanding environmental problems and crisis in order to open the discussion in a critical way.

On a first phase environmental problems were seen mainly as problems in need of scientific or technological solving. Environmental policy was mainly positivist in the sense of relying exclusively on scientific knowledge and technology to solve the emergent problems of pollution, environmental degradation and resource use. It was a policy without politics, where facts were supposedly separated from values, where logic was supposedly separated from ideas or beliefs. There was a strong belief in science and technology, in a supposed neutral and objective science. The idea was that getting the facts and the knowledge was enough.

On a second phase, other dimensions were considered, namely social, economic and political ones and the complexity of environmental problems became apparent and environmental policy had to evolve, getting more politicised and more open to social sciences. As Berkhout *et al* (2003, p.1) say “the environment can no longer be disentangled so easily from social reality”. Nevertheless this might not be easy, because as Jasanoff (2002, p. 260) correctly observes “with prediction and control as their central objectives, these disciplinary frameworks have little patience for the ambiguity of history and experience, the variability of cultures or the uncertainty of knowledge”. The crucial step is to understand that these disciplines are entangled and it does not make sense to invest in understanding them independently. After the initial domination of science and technology, disciplines like sociology, philosophy and political science entered the equation and concepts like social constructivism and discourse theories gave rise to new conceptions of how environmental problems should be understood and analysed. A small account of these will follow as they are crucial for understanding how environmental problems might be framed.

### 2.3.1. Social constructivism

The powerful argument behind social constructivism is that there are no absolute truths and therefore our understanding of environment is our own construction<sup>28</sup>. As Dickens (1996, p.71) puts it “it is simply a product of language, discourse and power plays”. Due mainly to the rising of the global environmental problems and the way they were being communicated to the public and policy makers (Dunlap et al, 2002), this concept gained space.

Its basic premise is that as our understanding of the world relies on ourselves, this knowledge is socially constructed. We needed to acknowledge that also scientists have particular values and motives, and therefore knowledge is not as objective as we all would like it to be. If our view and knowledge of nature and environment is constructed by ourselves, then who we are makes all the difference in this construction. This is one of the main flaws that this concept helps us understanding. If it is the “western white male scientist or policy maker” that does all the work, it is obvious that minorities or undervalued groups are marginalized from the debate, and even the design of the debate prompts biased analysis<sup>29</sup>. If nature has been one of the main victims of this way of analysing it, laymen, women, racial minorities and the developing world have also been highly affected. This type of analysis has been giving rise to demands of more participative political processes by ecocentrism, eco-feminism and environmental justice movements, as will be seen in the next chapter.

Social construction theory is indeed very helpful to make evident some weaknesses of discussing environmental issues and problems because as with most fields where science and policy have a close relationship, more than the absence of certainty is the existence of contradictory certainties which makes

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<sup>28</sup> Social constructivism is a complex theory and this section only reveals a part of it relevant for our storyline. Hannigan (1995), Dickens (1996), Castro (2002) and Yearley (2002) for example have good accounts of it.

<sup>29</sup> And one can even question who can qualify as scientist because as Popper (1972, p 52) said “what is to be called a “science” and who is to be called a “scientist” must always remain a matter of convention or decision”

the debate weak (Hannigan 1995). These certainties need deconstructing, and this sociological theory might help that process. Social constructivism has at the same time a positive and a negative influence as it is both a valuable way of showing our limits in understanding our relationship with nature and environment, but it also might influence that relationship in a negative way, since it might some times exaggerate<sup>30</sup> in the sense that knowledge of the social and natural worlds need not and cannot be considered endlessly contestable (Dickens 1996).

Yearley (2002, p.282) argues that “constructionists view societal decisions about what is a leading environmental problem or about “the best” response to environmental problems as the contingent outcome of interaction and negotiation”, and this means that it is fundamental to invest on participation in order to make these decisions as inclusive as possible.

Social constructivism also helps us understanding how environmental claims are created, legitimated and contested (Hannigan, 1995). This understanding helps environmentalists make their case better, and this might be positive or negative, depending on the claim. Hannigan (1995 p.12<sup>31</sup>) gives some examples on how this has been used: “Rachel Carsons book is often claimed to be seminal in starting the environmental movement, but she was not the first to denounce the dangers of pesticides; The ozone hole does not exist, rather a thinning in concentration, the image of the hole was scientifically constructed to make the situation more dramatic and understandable; Acid rain was first identified in the nineteenth century but not acted upon until the 1960's when a Swedish biologist linked it to the death of fish in the lakes of Scandinavia; The Gran Chaco, a mostly arid lowlands plain which constitutes Latin's America second largest ecosystem after the Amazon is disappearing at a much faster rate than the tropical rainforest but, unlike the latter, remains virtually unknown internationally”. These examples should make us think and learn to understand,

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<sup>30</sup> The discussion on social constructivism seems to give rise to extreme and almost absurd statements. As cited in Dickens (1996, p.72), Tester (1991) is at one extreme defending that “a fish is only a fish if it is socially classified as one” to Benton's (1993) criticism “perhaps, if we were to impose the socially produced category of fish upon the viper its bite would lose its venom?”

<sup>31</sup> This page reference is from the Portuguese version of the book. The translation was checked later with the original English text.

that even if social constructivism does not deny environmental problems it does assert that the rank ordering of these problems by social actors does not always directly correspond to actual need.

### 2.3.2. Environmental discourse

Another major concept is environmental discourse<sup>32</sup> which might be divided in two inter-related dimensions: the first related with rhetoric, and the second, is considering environmental discourse as a specific way of looking at a problem and a specific use of language when talking about it.

Rhetoric is often associated with the ancient Greeks and as the study of a technique used to arrive at rapid conclusions or to form an opinion without serious investigation and convince the others of it. This is quite a negative understanding but more recently a New Rhetoric (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1969) has been gaining ground. This *New Rhetoric* is founded on idea that “since argumentation aims at securing the adherence of those to whom it is addressed, it is, in its entirety, relative to the audience to be influenced” (1969, p.19). Perelman’s theory of Rhetoric is a theory of argumentation and therefore this led him to focus essentially on the audience. It focuses on values of the audience and therefore the status of elements in the argument should not be fixed. Aristotle had already understood that need and had the concern of also connecting with the audience. In his *Nicomachean Ethics* he constantly uses the so-called *endoxa*, which is what everybody says. This discourse makes his ethics to be directed towards the right audience. Aristotle’s method for ethics is dialectical which has the advantage of giving a starting point, which by being common it also ensured a connexion with people and their expectations, problems and anxieties. Aristotle starts by how things are seen and understood – *endoxa* -, to get to how things should be. On the other hand, De-Shalit (2000) says that environmental philosophy has had little – or too little – impact on policy because the language, the arguments and the issues are different,

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<sup>32</sup> As with the previous concept also this one is of a complexity not shown in this section. The objective of tackling it in this thesis is only to be aware of it, when talking about environmental crisis or problems. Hajer (1995) and Dryzek (1997) and Castro (2002) for example have very good analysis of it.

between environmental philosophers and the public. There is a permanent disconnection.

Environmental ethics discourse has a certain difficulty to connect with most people, as it focused in the intrinsic value of nature, which is a difficult concept for most people. How could it be possible to improve the connection between environmental issues and people's concerns? How could the environmental discourse make sense? Perhaps Aristotle's and the New Rhetoric school concern with the audience come as help for that question. The need of using imaginative components that make rational argument possible and persuasive was clearly understood by Aristotle. As King (1999, p.26) said "To be intelligible (...) we must connect with the imagination frameworks that structure the audience's expectations, understanding and practical engagement with the world". King defended the importance of the roles of narratives and metaphors in the articulation environmental ethics theories.

Arguably sustainable development is the main narrative of environmental policy which will take us to the second dimension of environmental discourse. In fact, concepts like sustainable development or ecological modernisation are environmental discourses. Environmental discourse as such is as a devise to construct environmental story lines, acknowledging the power language has and how it might influence political decisions. When the discussion is more on how we interpret the environmental crisis than on the crisis itself (Hajer, 1995), it is important to choose carefully the type of discourse used. An environmental discourse, when established is almost like a closed box, full of prejudices and closeness to other discourses.

As Dryzek (1997) defines it in the preface of his book on environmental discourses<sup>33</sup>, (p.v), "A discourse is a shared way of looking at the world. Its adherents will therefore use a particular kind of language when talking about events, which in turn rests on some common definitions, judgements,

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<sup>33</sup> Dryzek (1997) considers that there are four main environmental discourses: Survivalism, Sustainability, Green Radicalism and Environmental problem solving, describing and classifying each one of them, acknowledging that "different discourses see different things in the world" (p17)

assumptions and contentions” and “Language matters and the way we construct, interpret, discuss and analyse environmental problems has all kinds of consequences” (p.10). Hajer (1995, p.60) has a similar definition, “discourse is a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices and through which meaning is given to physical and social realities”

When we are choosing the way we talk about an environmental problem, we should be aware of different discursive strategies and which type of storylines we will use. Hajer (1995) gives the example of Amazonian’s problems. It can be pollution, or it can be deforestation, or it can be the aculturation of indigenous people, or even spoil a useful carbon sink or a green lung. It will depend which storyline we choose to adopt.

The building up of a discourse involves many elements and considerations, just like in the social constructivism theory/method. The theory on both how to construct or analyse environmental discourses is still giving its first steps building on the discourse analysis and its deep historical roots in the analysis of ideology, rhetoric, the sociology of science and language philosophy (Hajer, 1995). Hajer (1995) is also careful in denying a simple definition of discourse as if it was a discussion, enlarging it in a Foucaultian way also to the institutional analysis dimension, where it is important to consider “where things are said, how specific ways of seeing can be structured or embedded in society as the same time as they structure society” (p.263).

What it seems important is to be aware of these sociological concepts, when identifying, defining and discussing environmental problems, as plural perspectives might all be equally valid. This is also a very important input for a more lucid way of looking at science and at how it is unacceptable to consider it as the only valid mean to inform policy. The question of uncertainty and complexity is also fundamental in this process of downgrading a naïf and narrow understanding of science in the environmental policy process, and later on this will be further investigated.

Another important related issue is the analysis of underlying frames and assumptions in the political debate. But this is not easy because frames are generally implicit rather than explicit (Forsyth, 2003). To understand how frames influence politics, one must be aware of them and of how they were constructed. The nature of knowledge production is shaped by this framing. Furthermore its importance also relies in awareness and acknowledgement that alternative framings are also possible<sup>34</sup>. It is clear that there are many ways of framing environmental problems. Berkhout *et al* (2003) says that the challenge is to bring together these different ways. Seeing environmental problems as problems of technocratic control or as problems of moral significance or as problems of entitlement for different groups in society are examples of how different framing might affect which solutions are chosen.

Coming back to the question of if it is possible to identify the environmental crisis, we conclude that it might be a different crisis for different people, in different places, in different times, and the above concepts lead us to be careful in its possible identification, definition and discussion. Maybe talking about characteristics of environmental problems helps giving a more integrated view.

### **2.3.3. Characteristics of environmental problems**

After acknowledging the importance of contextualizing, framing and having a critical attitude when identifying and discussing environmental problems, it is time to come back to the question of what might be the actual environmental problems. One could use the reports of the European Environment Agency which have been organized according to problems, as a reference. For example in the *Europe's Assessment: the second assessment* (1998) these were: climate change; stratospheric ozone depletion; acidification; tropospheric ozone; chemicals; waste; diversity change; quality of inland waters; problems in marine and coastal environment; soil degradation; urban environment; and technological and natural hazards.

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<sup>34</sup> Forsyth (2003) has an extended enquiry on the role of framings and how to acknowledge the influences of different social framings on the evolution of environmental knowledge and explanations.

In its following report *Environment in the European Union at the turn of the century* (1999), EEA under the heading of environmental issues considered the following: Greenhouse gases and climate change; ozone-depleting substances; dispersion of hazardous substances; transboundary air pollution; water stress; soil degradation; waste generation and management; natural and technological hazards; genetically modified organisms; human health issues; changes and loss of biodiversity; and then within a spatial dimension: urban areas; rural areas; coastal and marine zones; mountain areas.

More recently in EEA's report *The European Environment. State and Outlook 2005* (EEA, 2005) problems remain the same, but analysed in three different frames, integrated assessment, core set of indicators and country analysis. The core set of indicators include air pollution and ozone depletion, biodiversity, climate change, terrestrial, waste, water, agriculture, energy fisheries and transport.

These are all problems framed by scientific, technological and political realms and whose analysis is therefore strongly dependent on that framing. These environmental problems are rarely framed as issues of justice or ethics<sup>35</sup>. The existing frame invests mainly in an analysis of how, when and how much should the emissions be decreased, or pollution curbed for example. Its framing is strongly utilitarian and anthropocentric, and even biodiversity, which could provide a window of opportunity for a different thinking is analysed mainly as a provider of services<sup>36</sup>. It should be clear that this is not a suggestion for keeping a growing release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere or stopping biodiversity policy, etc. It is just a way of reminding us that once we get into a framing or a discourse, it is difficult to see or accept other perspectives.

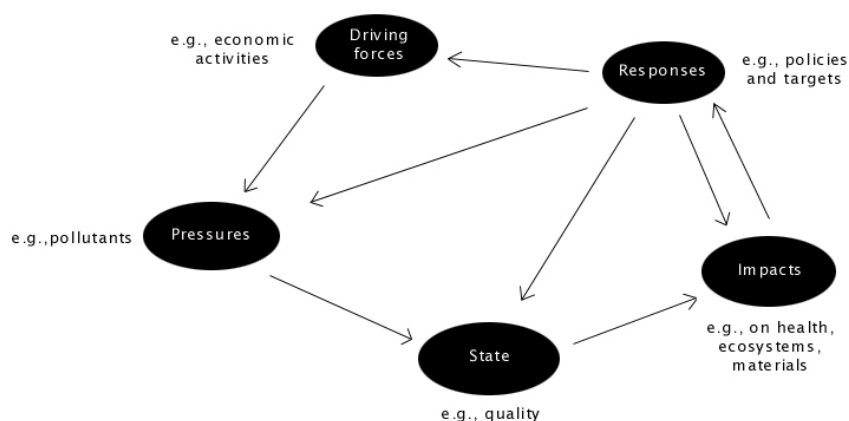
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<sup>35</sup> Only recently climate change has started being analysed as an ethical issue, Chapter 6 will deal more closely with that new (2007) framing.

<sup>36</sup> In page 203, (EEA, 2005) and based on the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, these services are depicted as: Provisioning services (food, freshwater, genetic resources, etc); Regulating services (climate regulation, disease regulation, etc); Cultural services (recreation and ecotourism, aesthetic, inspirational, etc)

That these problems might be considered some of the most important scientific and policy ones is fair enough, but as important as this identification might be its closure. As Forsyth (2003) says problem closure is the pre-definition of the purpose of inquiry, so one needs to analyse the whole cycle of an environmental problem to more effectively discuss possible ways of solving it. EEA has for long been proposing a framework of analysis, the so-called DPSIR (D – Driving forces; P – Pressure; S – State; I – Impact; R – Responses) framework which gives an integrated view of the problems.

Figure 2.1. EEA DPSIR Framework



Source: Stanners et al (2007, p.128)

Such a framework avoids a too simplistic understanding of environmental problems and provides a holistic understanding of what might be involved in a given problem. But it is still quite closed and does not explicitly state why choosing those problems and not others, and why this specific closure which gives emphasis to science and policy. Furthermore when, why and how a potential environmental problem enters the scientific and political agenda

remains a difficult process to be disentangled<sup>37</sup>. To be aware of the social, cultural and political influence in how these scientific problems are analysed remains also as problematic. This framework covers up other processes that take place, namely issues of power and bias, issues of ineffectiveness or irresponsibility, or issues of interpretation and as mentioned earlier issues of framing. As “wicked problems” the attention given to frame environmental problems more broadly would be very positive, and issues of social justice for example are often not given enough attention. Even though this DPSIR way of analysing has been a major step in identifying the whole cycle of an environmental problem, it might be also relevant to inquire the specific characteristics that environmental problems exhibit. This might help in understanding the political implications of both its definitions and its proposed solutions. Both Weale (1992) and Carter (2001) identified some of these core characteristics, and what follows is a merge of their findings:

- a. Public good
- b. Impacts arising as by-products of otherwise legitimate activities within society
- c. A large technical core imposing its own requirements
- d. Long term character of problems affecting future generations
- e. It is not enough to solve the effects, but also the causes and therefore it interferes with other sectors of public policy
- f. Transboundary problems
- g. Complexity and uncertainty
- h. Irreversibility
- i. Temporal and spatial variability
- j. Administrative fragmentation
- k. Regulatory intervention

These characteristics represent a mix of problems that are intrinsic to the environment and provide a frame for defining the type of policy problem that

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<sup>37</sup> Jordan and O’Riordan (2000) have an interesting input to this discussion of formation of environmental policy agendas. Downs (1972) proposed an issue-attention cycle of public interest and organisational response, which is still quite relevant for this problematic.

environment might be. Considering that the type of policy problem limits and shapes the type of political conditions and policy solutions (Weale, 1992), they provide an added value to the discussion. They help understanding the singularity of environmental policy and what are the challenges. These characteristics could be grouped in three for a better frame of analysis.

Table 2.1. Groups of environmental characteristics and their main implications

Group of characteristics	Implications
a,b,c,d,e,f define environment as a policy issue. These characteristics shape how environmental policy must be understood and therefore must be taken in consideration when thinking about solutions.	These characteristics should consider the idea of collective action associated with the public good characteristic, the idea of integrating environment into other sectors for a more legitimate and effective solution, and the problem of considering distant others, both in time and space.
g,h,i are characteristics that stem from the natural conditions of the environment. They pose particular challenges to environmental policy which prompts its singularity as policy.	The implications affect essentially the relationship between science and policy and prompt the need to innovative ways of thinking about politics. Precautionary principle, governance, development of narratives and scenarios as part of policy making are examples of these possible innovations
j and k reflect institutional structures and policy-making processes that affect possible solutions.	Implies an awareness of the characteristics of traditional political institutions and how it poses problems to an effective environmental policy making. Implies new challenges to policy organization, institutions, governance. For example, things like standard jurisdiction, scope and scale of policy making are challenged by problems that do not respect the spatial and temporal organization of contemporary politics (Shaw and Peterson, 2003).

Even though these characteristics are relevant and helpful, they nevertheless tend to ignore the social and the ethical dimension of environmental problems and therefore the social and natural capital are undermined. Next chapter will deal more closely with this dimension.

Nevertheless acknowledging all these characteristics helps understand why environmental policy is so complex and why it prompts and needs innovative and new ways of making policy. It also helps understand why environmental policy has not been easy and why has been often inadequate. Environmental

policy was initially treated as a discrete policy area failing to have an anticipatory, comprehensive and strategic approach to the environment (Weale, 1992). The identification of these characteristics together with the increasing public concern with environment and the acknowledgment of both social constructivism and the power of environmental discourses determine that environmental policy is not and cannot be considered as a closed box. It must be recognized as an interdependent relationship between ecosystems and political, economic, social and cultural systems. Issues like those identified in the introductory chapter are examples of this need.

Most of these characteristics demanded from politics and from political institutions, new ways of policy making. Political institutions have also been challenged by the complexity, uncertainty, acknowledgement of values and, need of participation when solving environmental problems. The investment of a more engaged and informed society in terms of its collective interests seems fundamental for effective challenges to closed boxes. Public scrutiny and protest have challenged traditional policy making. Environmental politics are reshaping political institutions, practices and possibilities. So as Munton (2003) says, environmental trends are often in the vanguard of policy because of their complexity, the uncertainty surrounding their scientific understanding and, the range of moral, ethical and political values that underpin the decisions. The emergence of international environmental policy, global governance, critical political ecology, risk society, ecological modernization, themes like deliberative democracy and sustainability policies are some of these new trends.

To properly define the environmental crisis has not yet been possible, and Soromenho-Marques (1994) proposes a four dimension frame for better understanding why is the environmental crisis a particular crisis and what is at play<sup>38</sup> (p.144):

i. Planetary dimension

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<sup>38</sup> Soromenho-Marques, 1994, p144. Personal translation of: dimensão planetária; dimensão de catastrófica irreversibilidade; dimensão de aceleração cumulativa; e dimensão de derrapagem e descontrolo crescentes.

- ii. Dimension of catastrophic irreversibility
- iii. Dimension of cumulative acceleration
- iv. Dimension of growing loss of control

Soromenho-Marques (1994) compares the environmental crisis to other crisis of history and considers these four items as differentiating. Because it is for the first time, (i) a global crisis; (ii) the destruction of ecosystems which seems irreversible might be compared with the other five known hecatombs that happened in the natural history of the biosphere and led to mass extinctions (occurring in the Ordovician, Devonian, Permian, Triassic and Cretaceous periods); (iii) the resilience of some ecosystems implies that it might take decades before they collapse and therefore the accumulation of aggressions might not be easily visible and acted upon (acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer, contamination of lakes, etc, might be examples of this); (iv) the last dimension has three aspects, a. insensitivity to the alerts<sup>39</sup>, b. Asymmetry between the objective complexity and the capacity for subjective representation – the real crisis grows faster than our capacity to understand what is going on, c. the objective distribution of the factors constituting the crises and the existing political means to fight it is inadequate.<sup>40</sup>

The previous analysis points in the direction of an environmental crisis that is difficult to define, to understand, and to be sorted out. Nevertheless environmental policy has been trying to deal with it the best it can. Going back to the past might be relevant to better understand what is going on now. Furthermore the past is always a provider of useful insights namely on how one could we improve the situation, as individuals, as society, and as a polity<sup>41</sup>, in the future.

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<sup>39</sup> "Late lessons from early warnings" EEA, 2001 shows striking examples of this situation

<sup>40</sup> This paragraph is a personal translation of a personal summary of Soromenho-Marques (1994, p 145-146) original text.

<sup>41</sup> It might be interesting to use a definition of polity given by Althusius (1603) in his *"Politica Methodice Digesta, Atque Exemplis Sacris et Profanis Illustrata"*. "The word "polity" has three principal connotations, as noted by Plutarch. First it indicated the communication of right (*jus*) in the commonwealth, which the Apostle calls citizenship. Then, it signifies the manner of administering and regulating the commonwealth. Finally, it notes the form and constitution of the commonwealth by which all actions of the citizens are guided. Aristotle understands by polity this last meaning" (p.18)

## 2.4 Emerging environmental policy

Going back on time, the establishment of the Yellowstone National Park, in the United States of America in 1872, might be considered already as an incipient beginning of environmental policy. From there on, some conventions for the protection of the nature, fauna and flora were signed. John Muir (1838 – 1914) deeply influenced by Thoreau founded the Sierra Club in order to defend the wild regions of United States of America. In 1916 there were already 16 National parks. Muir defended the preservation of the environment in opposition to Gilford Pinchot (1865 – 1946) who defended a conservationist approach implying a rational and efficient management of nature. The first wanting to preserve it by itself, and the second wanting to conserve it so that it could best serve man. This was already the start for the polemic and the tension between different ways of seeing how to deal with the environment.

But as mentioned above it is generally accepted that it is in the sixties that environmental problems entered widely the public domain. In United States of America<sup>42</sup>, the creation of the Environment Protection Agency<sup>43</sup> in 1970 is a landmark event. In Europe, probably United Kingdom<sup>44</sup> was the epicentre for the appearance of the political care with the environment, mainly because it was the most affected country with problems caused by the industrial revolution and the growth of the population<sup>45</sup>. If in the beginning the creation of national parks,

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<sup>42</sup> "In 1955, after many state and local governments had passed legislation dealing with air pollution, the federal government decided that this problem needed to be dealt with on a national level. This was the year Congress passed the Air Pollution Control Act of 1955, the nation's first piece of federal legislation on this issue. The language of the bill identified air pollution as a national problem and announced that research and additional steps to improve the situation needed to be taken. It was an act to make the nation more aware of this environmental hazard".

Source: <http://www.ametsoc.org/sloan/cleanair/cleanairlegisl.html>

<sup>43</sup> "In July of 1970, the White House and Congress worked together to establish the EPA in response to the growing public demand for cleaner water, air and land. Prior to the establishment of the EPA, the federal government was not structured to make a coordinated attack on the pollutants that harm human health and degrade the environment. The EPA was assigned the daunting task of repairing the damage already done to the natural environment and to establish new criteria to guide Americans in making a cleaner environment a reality." Source: <http://www.epa.gov/epahome/aboutepa.htm#history>

<sup>44</sup> Even though "The first major piece of environmental legislation in the UK, the Alkali Act, came into force in 1864 to control discharges of hydrochloric acid because they had turned once verdant countryside in North-West England into an industrial wilderness", as a major public policy, environment as such, also appears in the sixties. Source: <http://www.inece.org/2ndvol1/handysid.htm>

<sup>45</sup> For example, London was subjected to a series of dense fogs (nicknamed smog as they were supposed to be a mixture of smoke and fog). The worst smog in Britain was the famous London smog of December 1952 in which about 3000 people died. The Clean Air Act of 1956, forbidding the burning of fuel that was not smokeless is a relevant contribution for the start of an environmental policy. Other acts, and also in other countries followed.

together with care for wildlife and forest degradation were then main issues, very soon air and water pollution, and its impacts on human health and quality of life were the problems that needed solving. Isolated reactive responses, of technological and end-of-pipe character dominated environmental science and policy. Building higher and higher chimneys or putting filters in the chimneys are paradigmatic examples of this first attitude. But very soon environmental policy entered into a pro-active and preventive character. Clean technologies and environmental impact assessment are the typical examples of this second phase of environmental policy. So this beginning was marked by a very narrow relation of policy with science and technology. These two phases (which remain co-existing) were defined by strong confidence on the help of both technology and prevention as sufficient for a good environmental policy.

Apart from these two phases, environmental policy has also been raising and falling in the political agenda and to better understand that dynamism, Soromenho-Marques (2003) proposes a cyclic theory of the importance of environmental policy.

Table 2.2 – A cyclic theory of the importance of environmental policy

Periods	Beginning year(s)	Meaningful event(s)	Changing year(s)	Meaningful event(s)
First growing period	1962	Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring"	1973	Yom Kippur War
First declining period	1973 1974	First Oil Crisis	1983	Die Grunen in the German Bundestag
Second growing period	1984 1985	Bhopal accident and Vienna Convention on the ozone layer	1997	Kyoto Protocol
Second declining period	1998	Environmental deadlock in the US Congress	? ?	??

Source: Soromenho-Marques (2003, p.5)

This table might, if written now in 2007, have a fifth row, with the third growing period starting in 2007 with Climate Change as the main event, supported by both the publication of the Stern Report and by the publication of the last IPCC

report (May 2007) concluding that the proof of climate change is 'unequivocal' which is putting environment back in the political agenda.

But coming back to the early periods it is interesting to notice that the early environmental policy documents focused mainly on the need for research and information. Half of the measures in the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment (in Stockholm) report are about research, monitoring, getting information and cooperating. The first programme of action of the European communities on the environment<sup>46</sup> published in 1973 is also dominated by the need of more research and scientific knowledge and standardization of methodologies. Thirty four years later the body of information and research in the environmental field is impressive. But now we know that, not only there is always something more to be known but also that there are things we will never know, or that we will know too late or only have a hint of it. This is the nature of knowledge on all fields and most notably also on the environmental one. This environmental epistemological question is related with the complexity of most of the environmental problems and science and their close association with previsions and uncertainties. Characteristics of environmental problems associated with developments on the interface between science and society and policy have been prompting a new phase of environmental policy. This will be explored in chapter and eight.

The chapter will now follow by a short description of the European Union environmental policy since it has affected and influenced environmental policy at national level in all Member States. In fact European environmental policy is relevant even at a world level (Jordan, 2002).

### **2.4.1. European Environmental policy**

European environmental policy has a diffuse start and a chaotic evolution. It was first in 1987 that environment was explicitly enshrined in the Treaty, but at that time a considerable body of European environmental legislation existed,

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<sup>46</sup> Official Journal C112 20.12.73

and the already fourth programme of action on the environment was being produced. From 1973 to 2003, six programmes of action of the European Community/Union on environment were published establishing the main strategies and priorities for European environmental policy. Before that European environmental policy was characterized by Hildebrand (2002) as essentially based on “incidental measures”.

Even if the main priorities of the EC and then EU were not related with environment, these six programmes have been one of the driving forces of the development of environmental European legislation and consequently of most national environmental policies of the Member States. It is not the objective of this chapter to assess European policy or environmental policy or its effectiveness. The aim is to identify different types of ideas that have marked environmental policy. If anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism have dominated discussions within environmental philosophy, the struggle between economy and environment has dominated the evolution of environmental policy. Weale and Williams (1993) defend that from the nineties on, it can be said that environment gained an equal footing with the single market great EU priority<sup>47</sup>, nevertheless if so, this potential equal footing has not been translated in as much environmental improvement as economic development.

The first programme of action of the European Communities on the environment was published just before the 1973 Christmas (OJ C112 20.12.73). This was just after the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm. Just after the Rio's United Nation Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, the fifth programme, perhaps the most influential of them all, was published. The last programme was published just before the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development<sup>48</sup>. These

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<sup>47</sup> See Weale and Williams (1993) for a good account of economy vs ecology. They mention the ruling of the European Court of Justice on the Danish drinks packaging law stating that “the 1987 Single European Act provided grounds for holding that the protection of the environment took priority over rules of free trade” (p.59) as an important incident. Nevertheless they also report that “there is still an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship between the demands of economic competitiveness on the one hand and the demands of environmental protection and sustainable development on the other” (p 62)

<sup>48</sup> The relationship between these two bodies cannot be reduced to these coincidences; it is just interesting to notice that the first two prompted reactions from the European Union, and that the last programme for the first time came ahead of the United Nations meeting.

programmes might be divided in two phases, one with the first four programmes, which have a vertical approach, and then the last two which brought a new approach, more horizontal, more global and more integrated.

Table 2.3 Dates of publication in the Official Journal and main ideas put forward

First – 1973	Second-1977 <sup>49</sup>	Third - 1983 <sup>50</sup>	Fourth - 1987	Fifth - 1993 <sup>51</sup>	Sixth,2002 <sup>52</sup>
Prevention, planning, limited resources, research, polluter-pays, trans-national respect, long term character, awareness, level of action to be differentiated and co-ordination among M S	Land use planning; it states clearly that there are limits to natural resources and that material growth has physical limits. Environmental impact assessment is introduced	Integration of the environment dimension into other policies; Environmental impact assessment procedure; Reduction of pollution and nuisance if possible at source	Environmental awareness; recognition that environmental protection policy can contribute to improved economic growth and job creation; integration is again given predominance for agriculture, industry, and energy sectors <sup>53</sup> .	Sustainable development. Integration is given a new emphasis; Shared responsibility which is a novel approach on how to deal with complex issues with so many actors <sup>54</sup> .	Reflecting the overdose of things happening in this new century it puts many ideas and concepts <sup>55</sup> forward.

<sup>49</sup> OJ C139 13.6.1977

<sup>50</sup> OJ C46 17.02.1983

<sup>51</sup> OJ 93/C138/01. It is the first with a title and enhanced scope: "Towards sustainability – A European Community programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development".

<sup>52</sup> The last programme was published as a Communication of the Commission in 2001 and then as a Decision (1600/2002/EC) of the European Parliament and Council in 2002. I used the latter. It also has a title "Environment 2010: Our future, Our choice" and states that "Protecting our environment does not have to translate into restricting growth or consumption *per se*".

<sup>53</sup> Other relevant themes are: The issue of Climate Change; social policy and consumer protection; the use of economic instruments (such as taxes, charges, state aids, tradable discharge permits) as a possible means of implementing Community policy. A different approach to pollution is put forward leaving the one medium approach behind. This new more coherent strategy should assess the exposure by a particular pollutant through the various pathways (air, water, soil) of a particular target. The need for protecting not just birds but the habitat of wildlife - animals and plants and the habitat directive would be published in 1992. Respect for animals in the M. S., namely the use of animals for experiments, factory farming, trade and the processing of animals for consumption purposes is mentioned as an issue to be dealt with.

<sup>54</sup> The strategy is to create a new interplay between the main groups of actors and economic sectors through the use of an extended and integrated range of instruments: i. Regulatory instruments: legislation to set environmental standards; ii. Market based instruments (economic and fiscal instruments and voluntary agreements); iii. Horizontal support instruments (information, education, research); iv. Financial support instruments (funds). This meant going away from an almost exclusively top-down approach (legislative approach) to a more bottom-up approach with the involvement of all economic and social partners.

<sup>55</sup> Emerging environmental problems, precautionary principle, decoupling, strategic integrated approach, economic globalization, good governance, principle of rectification, best available scientific evidence, clean technologies, indicators, strategic environmental assessment, integrated product policy, life-cycle of products, EMAS, green public procurement policy, liability regime.

The sixth programme, still in force, proposes five priority avenues of strategic action to help us meet our environmental objectives. The first is to improve the implementation of existing legislation. The second aims at integrating environmental concerns into the decisions taken under other policies. The third focuses on finding new ways of working closer with the market via businesses and consumers. The fourth involves empowering people as private citizens and helping them to change behavior<sup>56</sup>. Finally, the fifth aims at encouraging better land-use planning and management decisions. The programme establishes environmental priorities for a Community response focusing in particular on climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health and quality of life, and natural resources and wastes. These are the ideas that are shaping current environmental policy.

This brief account did not aim at evaluating European environmental policy but only to scan the main ideas which have influenced environmental thinking and policy in all Member States<sup>57</sup>. To structure environmental policy around the following principles (that have pervaded environmental thinking) and which have been coming mainly from these programmes, might be helpful to better understand it:

- The polluter pays principle. It exists since 1973, and has finally been implemented in 2004 through the liability directive<sup>58</sup>.
- The prevention principle. It was the philosophy of the second programme in 1977 and it marks the main paradigm of environmental policy;
- Environmental impact assessment. It comes up first in the United States of America, but in 1985 is published the Directive (amended in 1997). More recently the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive

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<sup>56</sup> The second, third and fourth objectives are closely related with the core themes of this research. I will argue that responsibility as a virtue will contribute positively for their attainment.

<sup>57</sup> European policy has also been influenced by Member States, mainly by those which are considered as "trend-setters". Janicke, M. (2005) published a paper on "trend-setters" and the character and role of pioneer countries. Also Liefferinck and Andersen (2002) have a paper on "green" Member states.

<sup>58</sup> From the Europa site "The first EC legislation whose main objectives include the application of the "polluter pays" principle, the Liability Directive (2004/35/EC) establishes a common framework for liability with a view to preventing and remedying damage to animals, plants, natural habitats and water resources, and damage affecting the land. The liability scheme applies to certain specified occupational activities and to other activities in cases where the operator is at fault or negligent. The public authorities are also responsible for ensuring that the operators responsible take or finance the necessary preventive or remedial measures themselves". Source: <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l28120.htm>

(2001/42/EC) enlarging the scope to plans and programmes is also gaining importance;

- Integration principle. It came up first in the third action programme in 1983, and was reinforced in the European Council of Cardiff (1998) as one of the fundamental philosophies of sustainable development;
- Principle of information and participation. The fourth action programme, in 1987 by establishing the European Environmental Year projected environment as a new issue to new audiences and to the general public. Within the processes of environmental impact assessment a great role has been given to participation and information. The Aarhus Convention<sup>59</sup> of 1998 is crucial in implementing it, as the White Paper on Governance on 2001, which also considers it as some of its defining principles;
- Precautionary principle. Started in 1976 in Germany. Was included in the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. In 2000 the Commission published a Communication about it<sup>60</sup>.

All these principles are informed by a mixture of science, ethics and politics. They provide the basis for environmental discourses within policy. The first might have been ecological modernization legitimized by the fourth programme based on the idea that environment might be an economic opportunity. The second main discourse is the sustainable development one. It has become so broad and so encompassing that it is losing power as a discourse, even if still dominating the environmental strategy, as it will be seen in a while. Another potential emerging discourse is environmental governance. It is a very attractive discourse amounting to a new way of doing politics. The concept of European governance<sup>61</sup> has become widespread specially after the EU White Paper

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<sup>59</sup> The European Union wishes to keep citizens informed about and involved in environmental matters and to improve the application of environmental legislation by approving the Convention on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters (Århus Convention) with Council Decision 2005/370/EC of 17 February 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Chapter eight will be dedicated to the precautionary principle

<sup>61</sup> "The debate on European governance, launched by the Commission in its White Paper of July 2001, concerns all the rules, procedures and practices affecting how powers are exercised within the European Union. The aim is to adopt new forms of governance that bring the Union closer to European citizens, make it more effective, reinforce democracy in Europe and consolidate the legitimacy of the institutions. The Union must reform itself in order to fill the democratic deficit of its institutions. This governance should lie in the framing and implementation of better and more consistent policies associating civil society organisations and the European institutions. It also entails improving the quality of European legislation,

published in 2001 and the literature is immense and dealing with many different perspectives<sup>62</sup>. Nevertheless what is interesting especially for environmental policy making are the five principles of good governance, namely openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. The precautionary principle might be a new discourse and this will be further investigated in chapter eight.

The role of these environmental discourses is that they set up environmental strategies, prompting the adoption of legal items. The Environmental European *acquis*<sup>63</sup> is now quite extended with more than 500 legal items. These have been influencing directly all national environmental policies, as when not directly applicable then most of them need transposing.

If until the early eighties these legal items were only agreed by the Council of Environment Ministers on the basis of proposals submitted by the Commission, later on all institutions of the European Union, namely the European Court of Justice<sup>64</sup>, the Council of the European Union and the European Parliament<sup>65</sup> also have important roles in adopting and reinforcing environmental policy. Involving more stakeholders in European policy-making has been a major evolution translating an opening of the process on how to do politics.

Also the European Environment Agency operational since 1994 and based in Copenhagen, whose mission consists in aiming to support sustainable development and to help achieve significant and measurable improvement in Europe's environment through the provision of timely, targeted, relevant and

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making it clearer and more effective. Moreover, the European Union must contribute to the debate on world governance and play an important role in improving the operation of international institutions" Source, Europa site in: [http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/governance\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/governance_en.htm)

<sup>62</sup> See e.g. <http://www.valt.helsinki.fi/vol/laitos/intersektioportaali/governance/Keywords.htm> for more than hundred references on governance

<sup>63</sup> The so-called *acquis communautaire* is the corpus of principles, policies, laws, treaties and practices adopted by the EU.

<sup>64</sup> "The decisions of the European Court of Justice have had a significant impact on the development of environmental policy in the European Community" (Koppen, 2002, p.100).

<sup>65</sup> The co-decision procedure, introduced in 1993 by the Maastricht treaty, gives the European Parliament the power to adopt legislation jointly with the Council of the European Union, requiring the two bodies to agree on an identical text before any proposal can become law. If they don't agree it goes into a conciliation procedure. Environment is quite a sensitive area, as an evaluation done in 2002 showed. Circa 50% of environmental laws had to go into this conciliation procedure (the highest percentage together with Employment, compared with circa 20% for each of the other Directorate General proposals) Source: [http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/institutional/analysis/index2\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/codecision/institutional/analysis/index2_en.htm)

reliable information to policy making agents and the public, has had an important role. By providing a wide range of information and assessments of: state of the environment and trends; pressures on the environment and the driving forces behind them; policies and their effectiveness; and outlooks/scenarios, the EEA has supported the Community and member countries to make informed decisions about improving the environment, integrating environmental considerations into economic policies and moving towards sustainability. EEA has been acting as a boundary organization promoting a better relation between science and policy in the European environmental context.

Nevertheless all this process of environmental politics has not been easy and according to the Commission: "The last few years have seen a growing difficulty in the timely and correct implementation as well as proper practical application of EC environmental legislation. This is reflected in the number of complaints received and infringement cases opened by the Commission every year. As in the earlier years, in 2003 the environment sector represented over a third of all complaints and infringement cases concerning instances of non compliance with Community law investigated by the Commission. The number of new complaints remains higher than 500 per year..." (CEC, 2004)<sup>66</sup>

While it is impossible to deny a maturing of the environmental field both as a science and as a policy, it is widely accepted that it still needs to go a long way. In the traditional frame of analysis the two main problems at the European level seem to be the poor implementation of legislation as seen above and the tension between economy and environment. This tension has determined a recurrent and the major Achilles heel of European environmental policy<sup>67</sup>,

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<sup>66</sup> In 2004 it slightly improved to 570 infringement cases and in 2005 to 489 due to a more efficient way of handling complaints and infringement proceedings on the part of the Commission, together with swifter action by Member States to comply with their obligations. Source - Europa site (Reference IP/06/1232 Date: 21/09/2006) Available at:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/1232&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

<sup>67</sup> The overall philosophy of EU policy on the environment is defined in Article 174 of the EU Treaty, which became effective in 1993 (Maastricht amendments to the Treaty) stating that it "*shall be based on the precautionary principle and on the principles that preventive action should be taken, that environmental damage should as a priority be rectified at source and that the polluter should pay.*" A further step was taken with the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997), which enshrines the principle of sustainable development as one of the European Community's aims.

namely the failed integration of environment into other sectoral policies. Integration implies an horizontal coordination between the different policy sectors while sustainability, as will be seen later, means improving the vertical coordination between different levels of governance – international, regional, national and local (Vogler and Jordan, 2003). Integration has been around for the past 30 years and yet it seems that probably it will never be successful, at least while the thinking does not change. At this point one could briefly mention the main theme of this thesis, that of responsibility, and propose that while responsibility is not an intrinsic value of policy-making, this integration will be very difficult.

In fact, one could describe European environmental policy as a constant search on whom to attribute responsibility for action. If first tried to put it to the source polluters, then it acknowledged diffuse polluters – the sectors –, and recently acknowledging the importance of individual behaviour is trying to help individuals, while respecting their freedom of choice, to more environmentally informed consumption and to a more active environmental citizenship. The following table tries to depict the evolution of policy instruments to tackle this issue of how to deal with responsibility.

Table 2.4. – Environmental instruments used to tackle different evolving challenges<sup>68</sup>

	Challenges	Environmental instruments: from narrow to wide
70s-80s:	Tackle big polluters (point sources)	Polluter-pays principle; regulation, mainly on technology standards, end-of-pipe
90s:	Tackle diffuse sources. More and more putting responsibility for environmental action with the sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry, rather than only with environment ministries	Wider range of instruments: regulation, environmental impact assessment, voluntary approaches, pricing. Integration principle. More participatory and strategic approaches to policy making. More use of framework directives, that tackle various issues of an environmental theme, setting objectives, but leaving choice of instruments to the countries
2000 and onwards:	Realisation of 'implementation gap': a lot of strategy and legislation, but poor implementation	Sustainable development gets mainstreamed (at least in words) at various governance levels

<sup>68</sup> Table inspired by continuous conversations with Ann Dom, Project Manager at the European Environment Agency

Environmental policy has been evolving from a more normative emphasis (directives and regulations) to consensus building (sustainable development, governance) but one could say that environmental policy has been using the concept of responsibility unsuccessfully. Could environmental philosophy help? The challenge is if responsibility as an ethical concept could pervade environmental policy in a way that as a political concept has not achieved. That remains as a challenge to be analysed in this research.

The question involving the tension between environment and economy, which is an unavoidable subject matter in environmental policy, is an example of where one could investigate the possible role of responsibility. EU policy has been emphasizing that opposing economy to environment would take environmental policy nowhere and so has invested in mainly in the ecological modernization and the sustainable development discourses.

Ecological modernisation in its most simple definition is the “bingo” for policy makers and advocates of economic growth. It is a sort of “sister” (Benton, 2002) of sustainable development in that it offers a compromise between economic growth and the environment as it assumes that existing political, economic, and social institutions can internalise the care for the environment. Hajer (1995) summarizes it in three issues:

- i. Ecological crisis constitutes a challenge for business. It opens new markets and creates new demands and therefore it will stimulate innovation;
- ii. environmental protection is for the first time seen as a positive sum game;
- iii. It does not call for any structural change; it is basically a modernist and technocratic approach to the environment; it calls basically for efficiency.

But in truth, ecological modernisation has much more to it, as it demands a more considerable effort on part of society and its institutions than it apparently seems. “The ecological modernisation theory concentrates on a process of

modernising modernity by repairing a structural design fault of modernity: the institutionalised destruction of nature” (Mol, 1996, p305). So if one considers that disembedding was the crucial process of the modernisation, what now is being suggested, is a re-embedding process, which should result in the institutionalisation of ecology in the social practices of production and consumption (Mol, 1996).

Huber, one of the fathers of ecological modernisation theory says ecology and economy should be made independent but then integrated through the *ecologisation of the economy* and the *economisation of the ecology* (Huber 1982 cited in Mol 1996, p.306). So there is a need for an emancipation of the ecological sphere from the economic sphere, as it has already achieved from the political and cultural sphere. This means the emergence of an ecological rationality parallel with an economic rationality. And this is a difficult process. It took strong social struggles and disputes (ex exploitation of labour) to emancipate other rationalities from the economic one, and this new emancipation process is to be seen as an evolutionary process again full of conflicting interests, social struggles and ideological debates (Mol, 1996). The fact that production and consumption practices need being confronted with different rationalities poses the question of the hierarchy of those rationalities, which is not an easy question. So ecological modernisation does not criticise economic growth, but asks for an increasing role on its performance. Ecological modernization is, in a way, quite independent of any conception of responsibility, and tries to invest mainly on a utilitarian perspective of a mutual benefice, whose symbiosis remains to be proven.

On the other hand sustainable development<sup>69</sup> is framing the general environmental policy philosophy, both at European and National levels and has a direct appeal to responsibility. The revised<sup>70</sup> European Union’s Strategy of

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<sup>69</sup> European definition: “Sustainable Development stands for meeting the needs of present generations without jeopardizing the needs of futures generations - a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come. It offers a vision of progress that integrates immediate and longer-term needs, local and global needs, and regards social, economic and environmental needs as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress”. Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/> (viewed in March 2007)

<sup>70</sup> The first one was published in 2001 by the European Council in Gothenburg as a declaration ‘A Sustainable Europe for a Better World: A European Strategy for Sustainable Development’.

Sustainable Development<sup>71</sup>, published in 2006 is influencing the national strategies of all Member States.

It is interesting to notice that many of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy guiding principles: promotion and protection of fundamental rights; solidarity within and between generations; open and democratic society; involvement of citizens; involvement of businesses and social partners; policy coherence and governance; policy integration; use best available knowledge; precautionary principle; make polluters pay, are highly influenced by environmental philosophy and imply responsibility at different levels.

Sustainable development is rooted in the belief that environment can and should be managed and is believed to be the best compromise between economic development and environmental protection (and social policy). Nevertheless, recently a communication from the Commission<sup>72</sup> stated that “The EU is not yet on the path of sustainable environmental development. There has only been limited progress with the fundamental issues of integrating environmental concerns into other policy areas and improving the enforcement of EU legislation. Many environmental pressures are actually increasing: global emissions of greenhouse gases are rising, the loss of biodiversity is accelerating, pollution still has a major effect on public health, the amount of waste produced inside the EU continues to increase, and our ecological footprint is steadily growing”

Nevertheless an alternative or complementary framing of environmental problems has not been considered seriously by environmental policy. In this thesis, the idea of virtue ethics and virtue politics will be proposed to enhance the responsibility believed to add value to possible improvements to

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<sup>71</sup> “The overall aim of the renewed EU SDS is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of quality of life both for current and for future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion.”  
Source: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eussd/>

<sup>72</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European and Social Committee and the Committee of the regions on the Mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (COM (2007) 225 final, 30.04.2007)

environmental problems. Such an idea has not have had room even to be framed, let alone discussed. But later on we will come back to it.

Jordan (2002, p.1) says that the “EU has some of the most progressive environmental policies of any state in the world”. In fact, the EU has set the environmental agenda of all its Member States and is a reference worldwide. Regardless of its effectiveness it has put forward, in these last 35 years the main principles and ideas that dominate environmental thinking. Even if it has always been an anthropocentric policy, it has been influenced by environmental philosophy. Emerging political concepts like those of governance and its five principles and the precautionary principle are examples of principles coming from European policy potentially favourable to other ways of seeing and framing environmental policy. This chapter will finish by discussing some of the emergent thinking in environmental politics, opening way to further development of environmental ethics, which will be the subject matter of next chapter, followed by the one on responsibility. If responsibility could provide a platform of understanding between philosophical and political perspectives and if virtue thinking, as a helpful mean to develop responsibility at individual and political levels, could improve environmental policy remain the challenge of this enquiry.

## ***2.5 New politics of environment***

Environmental policy underwent several phases, depending if one is analysing it within a scientific, political, or philosophic realms. A reactive policy, a preventive policy, a regulatory policy approach, a voluntary and non-regulatory policy approach, ecological modernisation, sustainable development, environmental governance are examples of different trends that have been dominating the environmental agenda and environmental policy literature in the last 40 years. We are now in a situation, where this possibly new politics of the environment cannot, be defined by a single concept, a single discourse or a single paradigm. The previous discussion about the difficulty on identifying what the environmental crisis is makes it impossible, or inappropriate to find a new word

or a new concept that includes all that should be considered in this emerging new politics of the environment.

We have not yet come into a new politics of environment, but we surely have come a long way in understanding the complexity of the problems we are facing. The chapter started with the idea that environmental problems are “wicked” problems, described as persistent and intractable, and for which solutions cannot be simply scientific, objective or definitive but rather a set of proposals of different dimensions. This has been reinforced throughout the chapter. We should acknowledge that we are not capable of making holistic decisions both because of institutional barriers and of our limited framing of thinking. The decisions and solutions have seldom been complete, and have been mainly “clumsy solutions”. It is also clear that any future research agenda will have not only to include questions of efficient environmental governance, but also questions about political legitimacy, accountability, authority, and furthermore it will also have to include explicitly ethical questions.

A shift from an ontology dominated by the state and anthropocentric interests towards a more holistic conception of tightly interdependent natural and socio-political systems seems difficult but is probably the only way forward. This will have epistemological implications challenging the atomistic positivism that pervades political science. Environmental policy cannot be a closed system or of the State’s unique responsibility. The State is not the only site of politics, and in the environmental field this is very clear. Environment prompts passions both in a private and public sphere which further enlarges its standing in society. Soromenho-Marques (2004) identifies seven domains of the “environmental constellation”, which form seven types of political and social actors which all together have been and will be determinant in the success of any environmental strategy.

Table 2.5. Seven Domains of the environmental world

State and Institutional (public policies)	This is the most fundamental domain, which to be successful should be open to all other and following domains.
Party politics	Not only green parties but also green worries across the board in all parties
Civic, non governmental	Has an increasing role and give voice to the civil society.
Scientific and pedagogic	Universities and research institutes which have been fundamental in knowledge advancement.
Comunicational and informative	Not only in scientific press but also in all media. Its role has been fundamental, not only as a mobilizer but also as a pressure over the polity.
Economic and market	It is a changing role as the green market has been slowly increasing and influencing more sustainable production and consumption.
Ethical and philosophical	There is a growing influence of this dimension in environmental policy as this thesis has been defending.

Source: Translated and adapted from Soromenho-Marques (2004)

Adding to these seven domains is a perspective of the importance of individuals, as environment also prompts individual actions outside the scope of an organised dimension. Virtue thinking will emphasise this perspective and will be the object of chapter five, so for now, this will not be tackled. So considering these seven domains helps framing the thinking about politics of the environment and challenges the standard thinking and practice in contemporary politics. But it's important to remember that politics and political institutions are not static and may evolve. For example Shaw and Paterson (2003, p.49) mention the importance of “emerging spaces of politics that are being created by environmental movements and other political processes, and how these might create the basis for more successful environmental governance” and also acknowledge that managing environmental problems is already “creating new forms and sites of authority”. Shaw and Paterson (2003) defend we need to develop new forms of inquiry less obsessed with the space and authority of the sovereign state. The shift from government at the national level to a more diffuse system of governance is already happening.

These different domains and the core characteristics mentioned earlier denounce how complex is working on environment. Change and innovation have become an imperative and, as mentioned earlier, environment is often at

the vanguard of policy, as its issues are novel at so many levels. According to Busch and Jorgens (2005) environmental policy innovations could be divided in six groups:

1. environmental institutions, like ministries, agencies, advisory councils and sustainability commissions
2. general environmental laws like constitutional articles on environmental protection, legal provision for the public access on environmental information and framework laws
3. specific laws and regulations on air, water, nature and soil protection or waste laws and packaging regulations
4. instruments for policy integration like national environmental plans, sustainability strategies and impacts assessments
5. economic instruments like energy/carbon taxes and feed-in tariffs and quotas for renewables
6. labels and standards like eco-labels, energy efficiency labels for refrigerators and freezers and energy efficiency standards for refrigerators and freezers

As is clear from this list, the issue of responsibility, or of enhancing citizenship, or promoting better consumer attitudes does not qualify as a new or innovative way of doing environmental policy. Yet the role of ethics at both personal and institutional levels should be increasingly gaining ground, and during this thesis I'll defend that position, trying to complement the focus on regulative and economic instruments with other initiatives at both personal and institutional levels. These initiatives will draw on the idea of working with the Self which has been also proposed by several currents within environmental ethics.

Challenges for the environmental policy making process have been framed by Berkhout *et al* (2003) in three areas:

- i. challenges of dealing with complex and uncertain environmental problems and the implication this has for expert institutions, decision-making and policy processes;

- ii. challenges of global environmental governance, of new international environmental regimes and between environment and trade regimes;
- iii. sustainable production and consumption and the challenges this presents for business and regulation as well as lifestyles and livelihoods

Looking carefully at all these challenges, one can see that, in fact, ethics must become a central issue in environmental policy. Not only the relationship between individuals and society is important, but also introspection at individual level will become central in environmental policy. In chapter six we will come back to the reframing of the relationship between ethics and politics and will formulate slightly more concretely if and how this new politics of environment is really emerging.

Environmental policy is about preventing and solving problems and there are arguably only three reasons why environmental problems should be solved. Because they affect us, they affect future generations and they affect nature. The early environmental policy started mainly concentrating on the first reason. This was dubbed too anthropocentric and not really acknowledging the other reasons. A proper solution had to take also into consideration nature and future generations. But if the first reason was quite easy to agree on, the same cannot be said of the other two. Next chapter will deal with environmental ethics which has been focusing much of its research on these two other reasons.

## Chapter three – Environmental ethics

### 3.1. Introduction

From the previous chapter one could notice that environmental issues are increasingly pervading the political arena with ethical and philosophical questions. Some of these environmental issues prompt restlessness in many people as they make us question how our societies are evolving, what progress is after all, and which values are structuring the relationship between humankind and the natural world.

Up to now we have been seeing two things: one that it is more difficult than it seems to identify and agree on the environmental crisis and to do so simplistically might even be harmful; second that looking at the past helps understanding the existence of a technocentrist way of solving problems. This chapter enquires how the philosophical approach to environmental problems has evolved.

One could say that environmental philosophy did not start from a pure philosophical quest. It started as recognition of the environmental problem as a political problem in need of conceptual background. Lynn White<sup>73</sup> and Garret Hardin published in *Science*, in 1967 and 1968 respectively “The historical roots of our ecological crisis” and “The tragedy of the commons”, marking some of the first philosophical<sup>74</sup> concerns with the environmental crisis<sup>75</sup>. Then in 1973 Richard Routley presented at the 15<sup>th</sup> Congress of philosophy, a paper entitled “Is there a need for a new, an environmental, ethic?” and Arne Naess published in the same year in the *Inquiry* a paper “The shallow and the deep long-range

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<sup>73</sup> “Our ecological crisis is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture. The issue is whether a democratized world can survive its own implications. Presumably we cannot unless we rethink our axioms” Lynn White (1967, p.1204)

<sup>74</sup> One could also mention Aldo Leopold, 1949 with his book “A Sand County Almanac”, who is very often recognised as the father of wildlife management and very influential for environmental ethics. His essay “The Land Ethic” advanced the main premises for the environmental ethics movement that started years later. His work will be explored further down in this chapter.

<sup>75</sup> These two seminal texts have very different approaches. While White is searching for the roots of the problem, Hardin is providing a solution for what he sees the problem is.

ecology movement". These events started a series of debates on environmental ethics and marked the beginning of a strand of philosophers starting to worry and think about environmental ethics, investing in understanding the cause/s of the environmental crisis.

The importance of understanding the causes was based on the belief that how we think determines how we act and not that the way we act determines the way we think<sup>76</sup>. Both environmental science and policy have been mainly investing in our actions, trying to tackle problems from that point of view assuming that our life and our actions are the most important cause for the environmental crisis. But in environmental ethics the main premise is that our actions depend on the way we think and therefore its main emphasis is to change ideas and values, hoping it will in turn change attitudes and actions<sup>77</sup>.

Environmental policy invested mainly in a regulative approach while environmental philosophy has been assuming that understanding the relationship that man has with nature and what are its roots, might help in solving the environmental crisis. Understanding this relationship is believed, in environmental philosophy, to be fundamental to think about the environmental crisis and what to do about it.

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<sup>76</sup> Marx and Weber had similar competing views about the relation between economy and ideas. If Weber thought that ideas influenced the economy as it is clear in his famous essay *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, where he argued that religion was one of the reasons for the different ways cultures develop. Protestantism, he argued was crucial for the development of capitalism and bureaucracy. On the other hand, Karl Marx believed that the destruction of the capitalism would led to a new society where man would discover himself as an autonomous, complete and auto-conscientious being. His famous sentence "Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it" Marx, 1845 (Theses on Feuerbach, N.11) mirrors that view.

<sup>77</sup> In truth these two approaches more than opposing each other, are essentially complementary. In one's life, one feels that both are truth. This again points to the reconciliation between environmental politics and philosophy, defended in this chapter, for a more comprehensive approach to help solving environmental problems. Responsibility which is both a political and ethical concept will help in this reconciliation and virtue ethics espousing a natural harmony between one's acts and one's thinking will be the means used, as will be seen later on.

### 3.2. Relationship man-nature

A possible interpretation of this relationship is based on the premise that the way man understands nature has practical implications in his acting and in how he evaluates it, i.e. ideas about the world around us influence the way we deal with the natural environment. Depending on the value and rights attributed to nature, then man's actions towards it are or aren't legitimized. If man feels part of nature, above, below or indifferent is determinant in how he plans, executes and judges his projects of being in the world. By accepting this premise then looking for the explanations and the origins of the relationship of man with nature can and should be done, investigating several cultures and religions and epochs as has been done extensively in the literature<sup>78</sup>. A comprehensive history of the relationship between men and nature is outside the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless a brief account of some key events might give a context to better understand both the environmental crisis and its perceived roots.

The scientific revolution was a crucial event for how this relationship evolved and it will be the start and focus of this section, as it is still much related with our Western way of seeing the world<sup>79</sup>. It is during these couple of hundred years that science<sup>80</sup> (as we know it today) emerges and when a mechanistic conception of nature replaces the cosmological one. Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543) started the scientific revolution by publishing his ideas about the solar system<sup>81</sup>, where the Earth loses its place as the centre of the universe.

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<sup>78</sup> Some examples of literature are: Marshall, 1992 looks into Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Ancient Egypt, Early Greece, Roman, Celtic, Judaeo-Christian tradition, Christianity, Islam, and North American Indians. The Blackwell Companion to Environmental Philosophy, edited by Jamieson, 2001 compiles papers looking into Indigenous perspectives, Classical China, Classical India, Jainism and Buddhism, The classical Greek tradition, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Early modern philosophy and XIX and XX centuries philosophy. Pepper, 1996 also looks into pre-modern and modern ideas about science and nature. Collingwood, 1945 also looks at different ways of understanding nature from Greek Cosmology to Renaissance and Modernity.

<sup>79</sup> Another perspective, defended by Lynn White in his famous paper, already mentioned, was that the ecological crisis was not due to the scientific revolution and its consequences but rather to religion, namely our Western Judaeo-Christianity one. White defended that humans (in the western world) considered themselves separate and superior to nature and meant to use it for their own benefit, because that was what the Judaeo-Christian religion implied. Even though that is a valid interpretation, in this thesis the scientific component of the environmental world will have privileged treatment. Science is a source area, not only for understanding some of the relation of man with nature, but also as an area providing many of environmental problems and solutions and in need of re-evaluation, as will be seen later.

<sup>80</sup> Science is within this thesis almost always to be understood as techno-science.

<sup>81</sup> Copernicus book *De revolutionibus orbium coelestium* or *On the Revolution of the Heavenly Orbs* is published in 1543.

But arguably, as important as that loss<sup>82</sup>, was the heliocentric proposal which also implied a new understanding of cosmology and mainly of its mechanistic character. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630) in trying to explain the planetary motion and its causes used a new metaphor for nature, that of a clock. This implied a deterministic view of nature, where causes and effects became the most important component of what should be understood.

Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) developed Kepler's ideas and attributed to mathematics the responsibility to determine and subsequently to understand and justify the universe. He believed God had structured the universe according to geometry. Galileo starts a new conception of science, defined by its empiric and measurable character. What could be measurable would be objective, as objects had shape, size, motion and quantity. On the other hand, what could not be measurable would be subjective, and not relevant for science. This was the seed for the dualism which became the dominant view later on.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was a main character in the emergence of science as the privileged mean to understand and dominate nature. He developed the inductive method which was based on the observation of nature as the start of the process. After careful observations scientists could construct hypotheses which would then be tested by more observations and experiences. All these hypotheses would then be considered laws of nature, which would provide the basis for more hypotheses which would then end in a unique law, which would explain all the phenomena in the universe. Scientific knowledge was therefore a process of building on and on and it meant power over nature. Science was for Bacon the means to improve the well-being of man in the world. For him acquiring scientific knowledge was a humanist and utilitarian project. In his famous utopic tale, *New Atlantis*, a scientific community tried to acquire all possible knowledge in order to benefit the whole society.

The Baconian conception of science as a utilitarian humanist project has been dominating our (western) collective minds, at political, social, and cultural levels.

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<sup>82</sup> Collingwood, 1945 even says that this idea that Copernicus theory was so important in diminishing the importance of earth and of man was "philosophically foolish because no philosophical problem (...) was affected by considering the relative amount of space they occupy and historically false, because the littleness of man in the world had always been a familiar theme of reflection" p 96 - 97

Science acquired over the years a great power as support to the political power and political decision-making. The idea that science produces objective truths, is independent and contributes to the universal good, is only now, more than 500 years later, slowly being questioned<sup>83</sup>. Science was viewed as a source of objective truth opposing subjective views which would not deliver truth. It is in the XVII century that this dualism pervades our general perception. If dualism was emergent with Galileo and Bacon, it was René Descartes (1596-1650) who espoused it clearly and openly.

Descartes reinforces Galileo's idea of the unreality of what is not measurable and clearly identifies nature, animals, and the human body with machines. These could be dismantled in order to be analysed and understood. This reductionist way of understanding the world – decompose it in its component parts – has influenced science up to today. But if Descartes was worried with the idea that everything could be reduced to basic elements then what would distinguish man from nature? It is his most celebrated sentence *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am) that might help on a possible answer. Thinking was what separated men from other beings, and from his own body (mind could not be analysed in its component parts as the body could). Arguably this Cartesian dualism between mind (*Res cogitans*) and matter (*Res extensa*) has marked mankind's relationship with nature ever after. The superiority of the mind and of thinking gave man a privileged position towards nature. Firstly man was not anymore part of nature, secondly he was superior.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727) ends this scientific revolution establishing the so-called new scientific paradigm - natural and rationally understandable laws allow us to know and to predict -. Descartes and later Leibniz (1646 – 1716) had dismissed the possibility of *actio in distans* (action at a distance) which is fundamental for Newton's theory of gravity. Therefore Cartesians and Newtonians were “enemies” defending different perspectives of how science could be developed. Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle (1657-1757), a French

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<sup>83</sup> A detailed analysis of the evolution of science and its relation with politics will be dealt later. Challenging the neutrality of science, its value-free character, its independence from social and cultural and political areas is emerging lately as a fundamental field of analysis. Chapter eight will deal with this.

author, might have been one of the few who defended the Cartesian tradition and yet praised Newton<sup>84</sup>. This attitude of trying to compromise between different perspectives, in order to evolve has been quite difficult in the history of science. Popper (1959, 1996) and Kuhn (1962) explained differently the process of science development and in chapter eight we will come back to it.

Newton joined the inductive method with the deductive one<sup>85</sup>, showing that reasoning and experience would allow us to understand nature and the world<sup>86</sup>. Analysis functions inductively starting from the effects to the causes, and synthesis functions deductively: from the known causes, which by then are the principles, it explains the phenomena that are the effects. The idea that the complexity of the universe could be understood by reason and experiment is the cornerstone of this new paradigm, i.e. reason and science could explain anything<sup>87</sup>.

From the XVI to the XVIII century this scientific revolution discharged the medieval cosmology and challenging both theology and the existing science<sup>88</sup> it opened way to modernity. Modernity, undoubtedly one of the most interesting periods of history, is when “everything” happened and it is also when the idea of progress became intimately related with a growing relation of control, domination, manipulation and therefore disrespect of nature, and with the idea that nature was there basically to serve man. Utilitarian and material objectives justified this relation, or perhaps even better, this non-relation between man and nature.

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<sup>84</sup> Paragraph inspired in Soromenho-Marques (1990, p151-152)

<sup>85</sup> The first inspired in Bacon, the second in Descartes.

<sup>86</sup> Newton published *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* in 1687 where he described the universal gravitation and the three laws of motion, laying the groundwork for classical mechanics.

<sup>87</sup> This section was inspired by the analysis that Pepper, 1996 makes of the roots of technocentrism.

<sup>88</sup> If in medieval physics, substance, matter, essence, form, quantity were the categories in terms of which the world was scientifically interpreted, from now on those of time, space, mass, energy gained ground and irreversibly changed both science and the world view Burt (1924). As Burt (1924, p27) exemplifies it: “spatial and temporal relations were accidental, not essential characteristics. Instead of spatial connexions of things, men were seeking their logical connexions; instead of the onward march of time, men thought of the eternal passage of potentiality into actuality. But the big puzzles of modern philosophers are all concerned with space and time”.

This was a very brief account of the evolution of science in this period<sup>89</sup>, just to emphasize the roots of the dualism and whose main consequences were impacts on social, political and economic values which in turn affected the relationship between man and nature. The emergence of this science and technology decisively influenced the idea of progress, of capitalism, of changing modes of production both in agriculture and later on in industry. All these are related and all contribute to both define the relationship of man with nature and as sources of environmental problems *per se*. If science is guilty, then it is doubly guilty, one could say<sup>90</sup>.

This understanding of the roots of the perturbed relationship between man and nature might explain or contribute to explain how we came to the ecological crisis maybe even without a clear consciousness of what we had been doing. It became natural for most of us to think of nature as “something” that was there for our benefit. We lost fear, then we lost respect and then we lost the wish/capacity to even think about it<sup>91</sup>. But not everyone lost the capacity to get fascinated by nature, and many devoted much of their time and science to understand it, not in order to conquer it, dominate or manipulate but just “because it was there”<sup>92</sup>. These men were laying down the roots for another view of nature, which will also be important for our storyline.

### **3.3. Understanding nature**

Earlier it was mentioned that the start of environment as a political and ethical issue was related with events like Rachel Carson’s book or the Earth Day. These were indeed cornerstones for the understanding of what was going on,

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<sup>89</sup> This very brief history has highlighted only the successes of science. As Ravetz (2006a) says it would be also interesting for students that the history of science would be told through its many errors which can be found for example in the work of Pythagoras, Galileo, Newton. This human side of science would help us understand science better and furthermore “what a world of excitement, insight and creativity is lost, by our collective inability to confront error in real science” (p.38)

<sup>90</sup> The terms technology and science are sometimes not properly separated in this thesis as they should. Nevertheless since this description and analysis aims at a more conceptual understanding, I believe it is not a serious problem. In general I am talking about a techno-science.

<sup>91</sup> By accepting this premise that in general the western world acts towards the environment without properly thinking, then prompting thinking becomes a crucial first step.

<sup>92</sup> Expression inspired by George Mallory answer “Because it is there” to the “Why climb the Everest?” question in 1924.

and as important alerts to change. But the care and sensitiveness towards nature has been present from ancient times (Marshall, 1992, Collingwood, 1945) and the naturalism of many scientists and philosophers have influenced the way nature has been cared for, respected, worshiped, loved, admired.

Aristotle was, for his time, a brilliant natural philosopher/biologist, and he went far ahead of what was known at his time. He practically started biology (considered as study of life) and it took long before anyone made so many contributions to it as he did. As a curiosity, *The History of Animals* is his longest book<sup>93</sup>. Even if most of his science became obsolete, it must be acknowledged that Aristotle had a special interest in nature and devoted a great part of his work to understand it better<sup>94</sup>. Later on, natural sciences from Copernicus to Newton made extraordinary advances by repudiating Aristotelian teleological explanations in favour of mechanistic accounts of nature, as just seen. In this section the approach will be as brief and narrow as just above, limited to the period, immediately after the scientific revolution, and when science was trying very hard to understand the workings of nature. Most of the following men were naturalists but in truth they were also emerging ecologists, even if the word only came up in 1866. Each in their own peculiar way contributed to landmark evolutions in the science of nature<sup>95</sup>. The following brief chronological account aims to provide context to the emergence of ecology, environmental science and ethics.

The first of these characters might be Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) who was a Swedish botanist and zoologist who laid the foundations for a modern scheme

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<sup>93</sup> The work is a zoological natural history and consists of 10 books with lengthy descriptions of countless species and their anatomies. It is interesting to notice that Aristotle treats Man just as another animal, even though he acknowledges that, *but of all animals man alone is capable of deliberation* (488 b 24). Indeed, of the ten books, first in book VII, does Aristotle dedicate it to Man, and then again with a description that follows those of other species. All his definitions or characterizations of Man are in line with those of other animals, like in (539 a 15) *some are viviparous, such as man, the horse, the seal, and all other animals that are hair-coated*, or when talking about gregarious creatures: *Such social creatures are man, the bee, the wasp, the ant, and the crane* (488 a 8).

<sup>94</sup> Collingwood, 1945 has an account of the Ionians (Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes), the Pythagoreans (Pythagoras, Plato, Parmenides, Cratylus) and Aristotle's view and understanding of nature. In this thesis though, the focus is not so much history, but the present situation, so this part of the evolution of how humans have understood and studied nature will be missed.

<sup>95</sup> The summary that follows is not exhaustive. It will mention only a handful of these "ecologists" considered as the ones contributing with landmark events that determined and scoped the way nature became to be understood. Many others contributed as well. For a broad and comprehensive analysis of this theme see Collingwood, 1945, Marshall, 1992, Worster, 1994, Pepper, 1992, Deléage, 1991.

of nomenclature, fathering taxonomy by constructing a comprehensive and principled system of biological classification. He was a man of organization and arrangement and set up a system of classification published in *Systema naturae*<sup>96</sup> which revolutionized the way nature had been studied up until then. From there on, a universal system allowed a comprehensive descriptive study of plants and animals. His other relevant contribution was in 1749 when he published an essay entitled *The oeconomy of Nature*. Here Linnaeus justified a balanced nature designed by God. Even though nature seemed chaotic and unpredictable, Linnaeus defended that if one looked closely enough, then every single organism had an important role to play in a natural economy. The idea that no living thing is useless brought back a holistic understanding of nature even though Linnaeus presented it as a static portrait of geo-biological interactions in nature. Linnaeus was a utilitarian and believed nature was there to serve man, but at the same time he kicked off the foundations for a holistic understanding of nature<sup>97</sup>.

Gilbert White (1720-1793) was an Englishman who published in 1789 “one of the best-loved books in the English language, appearing in over a hundred editions by the mid-twentieth century” (Worster, 1994, p.5): *The Natural History of Selborne*. Year after year, season after season, White observed, studied and described nature in Selborne, UK and one of his most important contributions was that he managed to grasp a complex unity in diversity. This book was an inspiration to many naturalists (such as Thoreau and Darwin) and can be considered as one of the most important early contributions to field ecology.

Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) was a demographer and a political economist and so not a naturalist as such, but the contribution made by his population studies was quite relevant. Malthus was the first one to give a scientific perspective of the growth of the population and the carrying capacity of the natural environment. His *An Essay on the Principle of Population*<sup>98</sup> influenced a series

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<sup>96</sup> Its first edition, in 1735, had 14 pages, 2 for minerals, 3 for plants, 2 for animals. Its last edition in 1766-68 had three volumes and 2300 pages (in Deléage, 1991)

<sup>97</sup> This summary is inspired by Chapter 2 of Worster (1994) *Nature of Economy* who describes Linnaeus tradition as imperialist in contrary to the arcadian tradition started by Gilbert White.

<sup>98</sup> The first edition was published in 1798. Malthus revised it on and on and the final edition was a sixth one, published in 1826.

of scientists, most notably Darwin who was inspired by Malthus' man's struggle for existence principle. It was also a much criticised publication but ecologically it has importance at two levels: first the scientifically explained notion of relation of dependency between man and nature (even if most of his predictions failed to happen<sup>99</sup>); the second because it was an opposition to the idea of an unlimited growth and improvement of society<sup>100</sup> and blind faith in technology to solve potential problems. These are still two very valid principles.

Friedrich von Humboldt (1769-1859) was a Prussian naturalist and explorer who did scientific quantitative work on botanical geography. Humboldt insisted that the only way to understand nature's complexity was to take accurate measurements in the field and then search for general laws. He made numerous important discoveries and influenced all subsequent scientists of nature<sup>101</sup>. He studied and understood the importance of climate and of geographic conditions for the distribution of species. He created biogeography (a major achievement) and mapped the isothermal lines which explained some of that distribution. He believed that nothing in nature could be studied in isolation and all phenomena were connected, which is a clear anticipation of ecology.

Charles Darwin (1809 – 1882) is of course a main reference in science and Worster (p114) even says he is “the single most important figure in the history of ecology”. It is difficult to summarize his many contributions. Two of his theories were chosen as they have heavily impacted the emergence of ecology, the acknowledgment of its complexity, and the understanding and perception that man has of himself:

- i. A clear anticipation of ecology is Darwin's theory about the dynamic equilibrium between species and its inter-relationship. Furthermore he

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<sup>99</sup> In 1968 Ehrlich published *The population bomb* and in 1972, Meadows et al published *Limits to growth*, both important books in the emergence of environmental politics and ethics, and both also with failed predictions. But more important than the failed predictions of Malthus, Ehrlich and the Meadows is the idea itself, the idea that sooner or later we will reach a limit, a limit for which technology will have no answer.

<sup>100</sup> The title of the first edition actually reads *An essay on the principle of population as it affects the future improvement of society with remarks on the speculations of Mr. Godwin, M. Condorcet, and other writers*. Both Godwin and Condorcet believed technology would solve all potential problems (In Pepper, 1992).

<sup>101</sup> Emil du Bois Reymond (1818 – 1896) a German physician and physiologist is reported to have said: "Every scientist is a descendant of Humboldt. We are all his family."  
Source: Wikipedia - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A.\\_von.\\_Humboldt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A._von._Humboldt)

foresees the difficulty in establishing biological laws, as he recognises that it is impossible to isolate simple cause-effect relationships in nature.

- ii. In his theory of the origin of the species, he proposes similar structural characteristics of the *Homo sapiens* with the non-human primates. Both had a common origin. This amounts to an enormous advance at all levels, and not only in science, as man becomes a terrestrial species among others.

Humboldt and Darwin provided two fundamental notions for understanding nature. Humboldt with his biogeography introduced the importance of space and Darwin with his evolution theory introduced the importance of time. Both devoted much of their work to justify the importance of understanding nature as a holist and complex system and the importance of interdependence of all species<sup>102</sup>.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) was an American author and philosopher best known for his book *Walden. Life in the Woods*, which is a reflection upon simple living in natural surroundings, inspired by his own experience of living isolated in a cabin for a year or so. Thoreau was influenced by the science of Humboldt and Darwin but also by White and his more simple and harmonious way of understanding nature. He was both a romantic and a naturalist<sup>103</sup>. He attached to his love of nature, an ideology, praising a way of life in harmony with nature, criticising development very harshly. So if the above characters contributed mainly with scientific achievements, Thoreau<sup>104</sup> contributed mainly to an ecological philosophy<sup>105</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Might be interesting to mention Kant (1724 – 1804) who had an important insight into how natural sciences should be developed, differentiating natural description (Naturbeschreibung) from natural history (Naturgeschichte). If description was important it was not as comprehensive as natural history which had a more ambitious project of speaking to the understanding and reason and not only to the memory. Kant understood natural history as related with the temporal dimension trying to understand nature in a more holistic perspective. (Footnote inspired on Soromenho-Marques, 1990, p 359-361)

<sup>103</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, friend of Thoreau started the transcendalist movement which had also an impact in the understanding of nature. "Emerson defines nature as an all-encompassing divine entity inherently *known* to us in our unfettered innocence, rather than as merely a component of a world ruled by a divine, separate being *learned* by us through passed-on teachings in our experience" Source: Wikipedia

<sup>104</sup> Pepper, 1992, includes Thoreau in a wide Romantic movement where many other characters were of importance namely for the ecocentric movement. Pepper mentions Blake, Byron, Shelley, Carlyle, Ruskin, Keats, Scott, Morris, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, Burke, Turner, Constable. Romantics (in literature,

Ernst Haeckel (1834 – 1919), was greatly influenced by Darwin, and published in 1866 the *Generelle Morphologie der Organismen* and to provide some order to a science which was splitting off, he suggested the new word *Oecologie*<sup>106</sup>. Worster (1977, p.192) says that “in Oecologie, Haeckel suggested that the living organisms of the earth constitute a single economic unit resembling a household or family dwelling intimately together, in conflict as well as in mutual aid”. Worster reports that the word was ignored for several decades in favour of “the economy of nature” and only in 1893 it reappeared. But more important than the word, is the concept which was emergent already for some years. Relations, interdependencies, complexity, holism were characteristics already present, but according to Bramwell, 1989 (as mentioned in Pepper, 1992 and Deléage, 1991) Haeckel did more than just coining a name. As a strong monist and holist, he contributed to bring together man and nature, arguing for unity between them, and he brought back an organicist view of nature. He tried to give a political and philosophical perspective to this new science, but he did not succeed and it took hundred years for the idea of ecology to be also a political and a philosophical discipline.

The foundations of ecology were established during these 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It has been defended that the evolution of science has been determinant to the relationship between man and nature. Science (observations, experiences, rationalism) provided an understanding of nature that exposed its holism, complexity, the interdependency of species, the evolution of species, which prompt attitudes of respect and admiration. At the same time, as we saw earlier, science enhanced the dualism between man and nature, which related to the consequences of the scientific revolution (industrialization, capitalism, progress and technology), prompt attitudes of domineering and exploitation. Science, one could say, has had a schizophrenic

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painting, music) had no empathy with industrialization and its materialistic culture of the eighteenth century. They would substitute utilitarian standards for aesthetic ones and in general they thought science was inadequate to explain nature. Thoreau, but also Ruskin, though, also praised the scientific study of nature, and that is why he became more related with ecology.

<sup>105</sup> The word ecology is attributed to Haeckel, but Deléage (1991, p58) reports that Thoreau, in a letter written in 1858, used the word ecology. Nevertheless he did not define it or used it ever again. Haeckel as will be seen, not only used the word but he defined it as well.

<sup>106</sup> In ecology “might be included all that pertained to “der Wissenschaft von der Oeconomie, von der Lebensweise, von der ausseren Lebensbeziehungen der organismen zu einander”” (in Worster, 1994, p 192)

influence in the relationship between men and nature, and one of the strongest influences and therefore the above sections even if very briefly were important to understand the evolution and the dynamism of this relationship.

Even if not relevant for the immediate storyline (emergence of environmental ethics) it would also be important to refer, that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a new paradigm of science, also coming from physics played an important role in our understanding of reality. This new paradigm came from the quantum (quanta are sub-atomic units) physics, and mainly from Bohr's (1885 – 1962) principle of complementarity and Heisenberg's (1901-1975) principle of uncertainty which states that the simultaneous determination of two paired quantities, for example the position and momentum of a particle, has an unavoidable uncertainty. This uncertainty is not a limitation of our capacity for measuring reality; basically it is a characteristic of reality itself. This contributed for the idea that when observing, a scientist is already participating in the observation. Objectivity loses its centrality in science. This new paradigm created a probabilistic science, opposing the deterministic character of Newtonian science. The word opposition might not be the most appropriated one because in truth they both co-exist to explain different phenomena. But it means that science is not universalistic<sup>107</sup>. This new paradigm is influencing environmental science and policy, in the sense that it questions objectivity and gives the concept of uncertainty a new impetus.

Capra (1975, p.67-68) in his famous book "The Tao of physics" put it quite eloquently: "Quantum theory thus reveals a basic oneness in the universe. It shows that we cannot decompose the world into independently existing smallest units. As we penetrate into matter, nature does not show us any isolated basic building blocks, but rather appears as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of the whole. These relations always include the observer in an essential way. The human observer constitutes the final link in the chain of observational processes, and the properties of any atomic object can only be

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<sup>107</sup> More recently the project of a new paradigm, still in under discussion, is emerging - the String theory. It claims that if one does not think of particles as point-like but as strings, then it is possible to join both classical and quantum understanding of reality. This has been too difficult to prove up to now, so it remains as a project.

understood in terms of the object's interaction with the observer. This means that the classical ideal of an objective description of nature is no longer valid. The Cartesian partition between I and the world, between the observed and the observer, cannot be made when dealing with atomic matter. In atomic physics we can never speak about nature without, at the same time, speaking about ourselves". Callicott (1989) used the holistic quantum theoretical world view and the holistic ecological world for justifying the intrinsic value of nature as will be seen in the following section.

### **3.4. *Environmental ethics***

As mentioned in chapter two defining environmental crisis is not straightforward, and even asking for consensus about what is the environmental crisis might be irrelevant<sup>108</sup>. Regarding its causes, we just saw that ultimately a perverse relationship with nature might be considered as the trigger for all subsequent causes.

When Routley published his seminal paper in 1973 with the suggestive title of "Is there a need for a new, an environmental, ethic" he put the question of the last man. If a surviving last man of a collapse of the world system would eliminate, as far as he could, every living thing, animal or plant, would that be an ethical behaviour? Ethics started with how man should deal with himself, it evolved into dealing with equal others, then non-equal others, then with all. The history of ethics has been one of constant extensions. Routley's question was uncomfortable because it demanded a new extension. The challenge of environmental ethics has been to extend the realm of ethics to future people and ultimately to all living beings, ecosystems or Nature<sup>109</sup>.

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<sup>108</sup> Utilitarianism, industrialization, capitalism, progress, technology and material wealth determine much of the Western way of life. Poverty, inequality, wars and corruption determine much of the developing world way of life. Both have numerous environmental problems, albeit different ones. In this thesis the focus is mainly the western world, this was only to make the further point that environmental problems come from different contexts

<sup>109</sup> Some environmental ethicists, mainly the ecocentrics (deep ecology and eco feminists) more than merely an extension of ethics, wanted an ontological evolution of man itself. This will be seen further down. But the extension theory does explain the initial situation of the emergence of environmental ethics.

This extension is quite difficult because as the environmental sociologists Catton and Dunlap (1980, p.15) defended, the “Western culture has a strong anthropocentric tradition viewing humans as separate from and somehow above nature” and this tradition exempted them from ecological constraints. They had coined it as “human exemptionalism paradigm” and called for a new paradigm which would take in consideration the ecosystem-dependence of all human societies, and coined it as “new ecological paradigm” – NEP.

So both philosophy and sociology were struggling to understand the underlying causes of environmental problems and were invariably getting at this anthropocentric tradition, enhanced by the power of science and technology, and by an attitude of arrogance towards nature<sup>110</sup>. It seemed that a new ethics was necessary, a non-anthropocentric ethics, one that would answer Routley’s question negatively, not only for the last man, but already for us. The ideal answer should be that it is not ethical to destroy living things. The reason why it was not ethical would be that living things had value for themselves, independently of man. That was why the last man thinking experiment was so important. If it is not ethical to destroy living things when there are no more men around, then it must be because living things have value for themselves.

Early environmental ethics concentrated therefore in attributing an intrinsic value to nature, not the instrumental one which had been dominating. To extend ethics to other beings was the strategy, and intrinsic value of nature was the foundation for this non-anthropocentric ethics. Most environmental philosophers started developing a Kantian based approach, developing the idea of the intrinsic value (Callicott, 2002). Kant claimed that each person has intrinsic value because they would have an intrinsic value-conferring property which for him was reason. So, rational beings had an intrinsic value and should therefore be treated as ends in themselves and not as means. This concept was then extended to nature, claiming the intrinsic value of nature. The form or ethical

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<sup>110</sup> As Rachel Carson, 1962 said in her *Silent Spring* “The “control of nature” is a phrase conceived in arrogance, born of the Neanderthal age of biology and philosophy, when it was supposed that nature exists for the convenience of man” (p.257)

architecture that was retained is Kant's close linkage of ends, intrinsic value, and a value-conferring property (Callicott, 2002). What has been in discussion and is likely to continue in discussion is what the value-conferring property is. And different theories claim different properties, like, interests (Goodpaster, 1978), sentience (Singer, 1975), or just a good of its own, a *teloi* which would make it a teleological centre of life (Taylor, 1986).

It was believed that the intrinsic value would support clear stands in environmental political decision-making. Nevertheless probably more trees have been harvested to give us the possibility to write about it, than they have been saved because of it. It seems very difficult if not impossible to get agreement on it and different currents within environmental ethics rose as consequence of different arguments.

O'Neill (1993) defends that there is a generalised confusion about the term because it is used in at least three different basic senses:

- i. Intrinsic value used as a synonym for non-instrumental value. An object has instrumental value in so far as it is a means to some other end. An object has intrinsic value if it is an end in itself.
- ii. Intrinsic value is used to refer to the value an object has solely in virtue of its intrinsic properties. (intrinsic properties as those that are not non-relational properties)
- iii. Intrinsic value is used as a synonym for objective value, i.e. value that an object possesses independently of the valuations of valuers.

These three senses are valid and what is important is to be clear which one, one is using when talking about intrinsic value. In fact there is a certain intractability dimension in this problematic and the philosophical discussions have been endless and accused by some philosophers (for example Shrader-Frechette, 1995<sup>111</sup>, De-Shalit, 2000, Ball, 2001<sup>112</sup>, and Light, 2002), as

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<sup>111</sup> About Callicott, Leopold, Taylor, Holmes Rolston and Westra, she says that their "soft ethics (...) have great heuristic and inspirational power, but they are more useful in preaching to the converted than in resolving controversy" (p. 622). "Instead, the ethics needed in practical policy making must not only be

hampering the possible influence of environmental ethics on environmental politics.

Nevertheless non-anthropocentrism ethics was seen by the majority of environmental ethicists as fundamental for a proper re-evaluation of the relationship between man and nature and as the main added value for a different and enlarged view of ethics. It was also considered as the only one which would prompt different thinking and therefore different acting towards nature. Anthropocentrism was initially totally rejected as a possible frame for environmental ethics, and it took time before anthropocentric environmental ethics could gain ground in the field. As Light (2002, p 429) put it “regardless of the early debates over the terminology, the assumption that axiologically anthropocentric views are anti-ethical to the agenda of environmentalists, and to the development of environmental ethics, was largely assumed to be the natural starting point for any environmental ethics”. The discussions on different ways of grounding the intrinsic value of nature dominated environmental ethics for decades, and non-anthropocentrism, gave rise to different currents, namely animal liberation movements, deep ecologists, biocentrists, land ethicists and ecofeminists.

### **3.4.1. Different non-anthropocentric currents**

These different currents mirrored essentially different preoccupations. Peter Singer, already in 1975 published *Animal Liberation*, a seminal work on animal liberation which prompted the movement of animal rights and liberation, which, for that time, was quite eccentric. Singer argued that there was no moral justification for the mistreatment of animals, even though they had been perpetrated for so long. Singer believes in the principle of equality as equal consideration of interests, not only for all human beings but also to non-human animals (Singer, 1979). Sentience, the capacity to suffer or to feel pleasure or

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inspirational, but also complex and precise enough to help resolve controversy”. For her, environmental ethics are necessary but not, as their proponents claim, sufficient for solving environmental problems.

<sup>112</sup> Ball (2001) even says that their failure will not be due to its unimportance, but to the “unintelligibility and thus perceived illegitimacy of its discourse”.

happiness, is used by Singer to justify the equal consideration of interests, since animals share sentience with humans. Even though non-human species do not have intelligence or moral understanding, it is wrong to mistreat them. Humans do not mistreat new born or mental diseased people, and they do not possess intelligence or moral understanding either. This principle of equality also gives ground for Singer to reject and condemn speciesism.<sup>113</sup> which justifies causing pain or kill animals because they are not the same species as humans is a main cause of the problem.

Singer is a utilitarian influenced by J. Bentham<sup>114</sup> who believed that the capacity for suffering was the vital characteristic that would give a being the right to equal consideration. For Singer preferences, interests and capacity for suffer are what should count, and since non-human animals share it with humans, they should all be part of the same ethical universe.

Tom Regan is another philosopher defending animals and he has been focusing on animal rights and duties toward animals. The publication of Regan's (1983) *The Case for Animal Rights* marked a major advance in the philosophical underpinnings of the animal rights movement. He bases his philosophy in deontology rather than in utilitarianism even though Regan argues that the traditional Kantian rationality should not be considered as the main reason to attribute value. He focused either on the idea that all non human animals are "subject-of-a-life" just like humans, and therefore entitled to be ascribed the same value it is attributed to humans. Regan argues that we are alike in fundamental ways and therefore we all have the same value and the same rights.

Other philosophers did commit themselves to the animal liberation movement and even though Callicott (1980) claimed that animal liberation was not the same as environmental ethics, as animal liberation and conventional anthropocentric ethics had more in common with one another than either have

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<sup>113</sup> Singer even defends that racism and sexism are equivalent to speciesism.

<sup>114</sup> As Bentham (1789) famously put it: "the question is not, Can they reason? nor Can they talk but, Can they suffer?"

with environmental or land ethics, he recently<sup>115</sup> retracted from that position accepting that intrinsic value of nature should not be the sole criterion for environmental ethics.

Callicott has been the main author representing land ethics, an ecocentric current inspired by the writings of Aldo Leopold (1949). Aldo Leopold (1887-1948) is a main reference in environmental ethics, even though he was not a philosopher and the chapter that inspired land ethics is only 23 pages long. This chapter comes in a book, *A Sand County Almanac*, and Leopold starts it by describing and analysing nature around him according to the months in a year, followed by “Sketches here and there” where chapters with suggestive titles like “If I were the wind” or “Thinking like a mountain” reveal a process of discovery and understanding of nature at a dimension not yet ever exposed. In this latter chapter Leopold evokes the mountain’s ancestral knowledge about the value of wolves<sup>116</sup>, the value of long term, the value of ecologic equilibrium, the value of the dynamic relationship between species, which should inspire us to rethink our relationship with nature.

In last part of the book “The upshot” comes the famous chapter entitled the land ethic, where Leopold takes the reader through a sequence of concepts: the extension of ethics; the concept of a community to which we belong interdependently; an ecological consciousness that should make an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections, and convictions; the conscience of what it means to use economic and utility arguments to justify the conservation of nature; the concept of the land pyramid which using the biotic pyramid image which makes us understand land, not only as soil, but as a fountain of energy flowing through a circuit of soils, plants, and animals; and finally the concept of land health which give us a measure of its capacity of recovery and carrying capacity to the aggressions we make it<sup>117</sup>. All these concepts should make us re-think our attitude towards nature and prompt an evolution from “man the conquer” to “man the biotic citizen”; from “science as

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<sup>115</sup> In the preface of the book where the essay was reprinted (Callicott, 1989).

<sup>116</sup> “Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf” (...) “mountains have a secret opinion about them”(p.129)

<sup>117</sup> All these expressions are taken literally from the book.

the sharpener of his sword” to “science as the searchlight on his universe”; and “land the slave and servant” to “land the collective organism” (p.223).

Leopold proposes we should give value to land, not in an economic sense, but in a philosophical sense, anticipating the intrinsic value of nature later on developed by environmental ethicists. Leopold asks philosophy to help us rehabilitating a holist vision that has been lost by the reductionism of independent knowledges<sup>118</sup>. Philosophy should help us understand the whole and how we are part of it. But since he was not a philosopher, it has been Callicott who has been developing this dimension. In his 1989 book *In Defense of the Land Ethic* he published a series of papers exploring the intellectual foundations of Leopold’s proposal developing that philosophical dimension of land ethics. In 1999 he publishes another book *Beyond the land ethic*, where, as the title indicates he goes beyond it.

Leopold had proposed a natural and moral imperative for man to consider himself as part of a community and to respect it as it was himself. Callicott goes a step further, demanding more from man. He demands an ontological change of the Self. He constructs the thesis of the continuity between man and nature, as a whole, as a new being. Callicott (1989) used the evolution of physics which went from an understanding of nature as atomistic, dualist and reductionist into the quantum paradigm of holism, energy flux and uncertainty. Inspired by both Capra and Shepard, Callicott (1989) used it to justify the intrinsic value of nature: “If quantum theory and ecology both imply in structurally similar ways in both the physical and organic domains of nature the continuity of self and nature, and *if* the self is intrinsically valuable, then nature is intrinsically valuable. *If* it is rational for me to act in my own interest, and I and nature are one, then it is rational for me to act in the best interest of nature” (p. 173).

David Hume’s philosophy is also extensively used by Callicott to justify why an evolution from a traditional anthropocentric ethics into a land ethics made sense. David Hume considers that morality is essentially related with

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<sup>118</sup> If already in the 1948 the fragmentation of knowledge was so clear, one imagines what Leopold would say 60 years later.

sentiments that would be of benefice, useful or pleasant to man or to society<sup>119</sup>. Man would not survive without society and therefore these sentiments should be transformed in norms, rules or principles to help us survive together. So killing, stealing, betraying are transformed in moral rules, which are impediments for us to behave in ways that would threaten living in society. Hume's arguments to turn justice into a moral sentiment were based in the idea of survival and maintenance of society. The idea that species evolve in a way that potentates its survival, also used by Darwin gives the background for land ethics. Callicott argues that using land as the new foundation for ethics shows a natural evolution. In fact, when we are aware of the ecological concepts of interdependencies and equilibrium of biotic communities, there would be no alternative but to add this knowledge to ethics. Just as mankind needed to incorporate some rules for its survival in society and make them a question of morals, we would be in a similar position also needing to turn the distance created between man and nature and the consequent use and abuse of nature into a question of morals.

Another feature further developed by Callicott is holism, a structuring concept in the land ethic. Nevertheless it should be analysed carefully, because all individuals lose relevance when an enlarged community is the basic entity. Leopold's sentence "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" (p.224-225) is prone to contradictory interpretations, and man and its well-being might be ignored in name of this integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. This has been giving rise to criticisms of misanthropy to land ethics as it would legitimise, for example, the killing of people if its density would challenge the "integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community". Callicott in his initial writings assumed positions that would be prone to this criticism and also of eco-fascism, as the "integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community" could be used in a dictatorial mode over any other principles.

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<sup>119</sup> This will be analysed in more detail in the following chapter.

Later on Callicott assumed the extremism of his initial writings and concluded that land ethics did not substitute a human ethics but complemented it. Callicott (2001) proposed a prioritizing of the duties generated by membership in multiple communities by first order and second order principles to avoid an uncritical holism or eco-fascism. He even acknowledges that we should use developments in ecology to justify changing Leopold's sentence into "a thing is right when it tends to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Callicott, 2001, p. 216).

If land ethics has been evolving, so has deep ecology, initially proposed by Arne Naess (1973), who, as Leopold, and before them Thoreau, believes in a close life with nature to better understand it. As mentioned earlier, the publication of Naess' paper entitled "The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary" is considered as a landmark event for environmental ethics. In this paper Naess (1973) distinguishes two different approaches to environment that were already becoming clear at that initially stage, the shallow ecology movement, "Fight against pollution and resource depletion. Central objective: the health and affluence of people in the developed countries." (p.95) and against this one he opposes the deep ecology movement that could be characterized by seven points that should be *normative* and should provide one unified framework for ecosophical<sup>120</sup> systems:

1. Rejection of the man-in-environment image in favour of *the relational, total-field image*.
2. *Biospherical egalitarianism* – in principle.
3. *Principles of diversity and of symbiosis*
4. *Anti-class posture*
5. Fight against *pollution and resource depletion*
6. *Complexity, not complication*
7. *Local autonomy and decentralization*.

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<sup>120</sup> Naess considers this movement as ecophilosophical, and established the concept of *ecosophy* as a "philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium" (p.99).

These two approaches mirrored a fundamental cleavage in how, right from the beginning, the environmental crisis was assumed, which were its causes and how it should be reacted to. From there on this dichotomy ruled the environmental movement at both political and philosophical levels, taken different names<sup>121</sup>, but always following Naess's differentiating theory and ultimately determining the separation between environmental policy and environmental philosophy.

The deeper questioning of the environmental crisis took to a deeper questioning of the self demanding an ontological effort to understand and react against it. If land ethics and its continuity theory demanded it, deep ecology also strongly invested in the self. Naess (1973) proposed ecosophy believing it should be a broad concept, and later he (1987, 1989) developed the idea that ecosophies should be personal; each person should develop his/her own, understood as a philosophy of life oriented to an ecological harmony. To his own he designated it of Ecosophy T<sup>122</sup>, giving it a personal character.

Naess's ecosophy T is based on the notion of Self-realization. The selfhood proposed by Naess is based on an active identification with wider and wider circles of being. Self-realization is when this circle of identification is the widest possible. It implies a transition from ego to social self to metaphysical self to ecological self<sup>123</sup>. The upshot is that our self interest becomes the interest of the rest of life. Naess believes it might also promote a more meaningful life if one can get there.

Fox (1990), also an important deep-ecologist, says one could interpret Naess in three different ways, a popular, a formal and a philosophical. The popular one is the one which identifies deep ecology with the non-anthropocentric movements and an ecocentric vision of the world. The formal one is based on the idea of asking progressively deeper questions about the ecological relationships of

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<sup>121</sup> Anthropocentric vs non-anthropocentric; technocentric vs ecocentric; environmentalism vs ecologism; reformist vs radical are some of concepts that served different authors to expose this difference.

<sup>122</sup> T comes from the name of his mountain cabin, Tvergastein, where Naess wrote much of his work.

<sup>123</sup> "I therefore tentatively introduce, perhaps for the first time ever, a concept of ecological self. We may be in, of and for Nature from our very beginning" (Naess, 1987, p 35)

which we are a part. It is formal because it doesn't talk about answers, just questions and it should take us to our own personal view of what is deep ecology. The philosophical sense of deep ecology "refers to a concept of Self-realization (spelt with a capital "s") that is inspired primarily by Spinoza and Gandhi" (Fox, 1990, p. 4). It should lead to compassion (and not egoism that a self-realization in a narrow, atomistic sense of self would take us) and it is philosophical because Self-realization is a fundamental approach and "any view that proceeds from fundamentals is perforce a philosophical view" (p.5). Furthermore a deeper and deeper questioning takes us beyond the realm of our everyday life, of technical or scientific realms into a philosophical realm. For Fox<sup>124</sup> this is the fundamental interpretation that gives deep ecology its unique identity, distinction and dimension, because the other interpretations might be confounded with other ecocentric currents.

These other currents concentrate themselves in the intrinsic value of nature, and what would make deep ecology different was this emphasis in ontology, in a realization of a certain status of the self expanding itself as much as possible. So we should not need a morality that tell us to protect nature because nature has an intrinsic value, rather we should protect nature in a natural and effortless way without any duty or moral pressures. Naess (1987) talking about this mentioned Kant's moral act and beautiful act. The first is motivated by an intention to follow a moral law at whatever cost (even if against our inclination). But if we feel inclination and pleasure to act according to the moral law than this would be a beautiful act. Naess's point was that we should try to influence people towards beautiful acts, working on inclinations rather than morals. To be environmentalist wouldn't or shouldn't be a sacrifice, but rather a pleasure<sup>125</sup>.

Deep ecology is associated to several concepts, as the relational-self, ecosophy, Auto-realization, progressive questioning, transpersonal ecology and

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<sup>124</sup> Fox's (1991) own contribution to deep ecology is the idea that only this third interpretation should count, and he proposed the development of the concept of Transpersonal Ecology as its basis. His theory is based on an expansion of the self through identification at three levels, personal, ontological and cosmological. The two latter are of transpersonal character.

<sup>125</sup> Even though Naess does not mention, this is very much related with virtue ethics, and to the storyline of this thesis, even if within a different context, or rather a more narrow context, i.e. only on the sense of developing responsibility towards the environment as a virtue that would flow naturally and harmoniously. Chapter five will deal more closely with this matter.

Naess and Sessions (1985) developed a new set of principles which should be a platform of understanding for deep ecology. Pluralism has been accepted within the movement giving freedom to the development of different concepts and this platform would give deep ecology a framework of understanding among all its followers. This new set of eight principles has been evolving and the last version was published by Naess in 2005. The main difference between these eight and the original seven points, above mentioned, is that the emphasis is now on the intrinsic value of nature in detriment of the more relational and Auto-realization concepts. But Naess (2005) developed a structure for deep ecology of four levels, in order to accommodate criticisms to this change of emphasis:

Level 1 – Worldview and ecosophy

Level 2 – Principles of the Platform of deep ecology

Level 3 – Factual, normative or political hypothesis

Level 4 – Particular decisions and actions.

The idea is that level one is personal, and each person can develop his own, giving flexibility to the theory and not compromising people who might not want to share personal ecosophies. So its grounding concept is not consensual neither aims to be. Auto-realization loses its privileged dimension as the distinction principle of deep ecology being from there on only of an arbitrary character. Level two should be fixed and accepted by all, meaning that the intrinsic value of nature and the non-anthropocentrism dimension become common for all deep ecologists. Levels 3 and 4 admit that there are no universal solutions and these should be adapted to different persons, countries, cultures.

The three currents above described and briefly analysed have been providing environmental ethics with different perspectives, all aiming at fighting what they believe are the causes of the environmental crisis and within the context they believe more important. Animal movements, focus on the need of animal rights, fighting mistreatment of animals by denouncing specieism in order to get to liberation of animals. Land ethics and deep ecology focus mainly on a clear

non-anthropocentrism based on the intrinsic value of nature and on a certain ontological dimension of working with the self, either promoting continuity between man and nature or enlarging it to capture nature as part of the self. Focusing on holism, land ethics privileges the moral consideration of ecosystems and wilderness, while sentientists are individualists and focus on the extension of moral consideration to other individuals who might be considered as having interests. In between might be the biocentrism, and deep ecology in his initial statements was a biocentric current. But biocentrism grew out to be yet another current, namely with Taylor (1986) who clearly stated that the most important value was to be alive as an individual, defending a clear monism. Taylor argued that every living organism had a *telos* from which a form of the intrinsic value might be derived. So biocentrism is individualist as sentientism but focuses on every living individual and not only on sentient beings, and Varner (1998) proposed the biocentric individualism.

It is quite difficult and almost counter-intuitive to argue that a micro organism, a fly, a rose, an oak tree are as important as a person. Defending a strictly egalitarian biocentrism might also be taken to an absurd and unsustainable level and an alternative is accepting pluralism within the biocentrism and so allow for a hierarchy based on other criteria than being alive. Pluralists, in turn were accused of moral relativism.

The discussion is endless and these debates of monism *versus* pluralism, holism *versus* individualism have shaped environmental ethics and possibly made it, as Ball (2001) said, quite unintelligible or as Light (2002, p.436) says “it is instead evolving mostly as a field of intramural philosophical debate”<sup>126</sup>. But environmental ethics has also been connected with other social, political and moral questions such as feminism, virtue theory, pragmatism, and communitarianism which opens the debate and might talk to us in a more understandable language, one that as O'Neill reports (2001, p. 174) would “call

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<sup>126</sup> Also O'Neill (2001, p.174) says “A feature of a great deal of theorizing in environmental ethics of which the search for “intrinsic value” is typical is that it loses sight of what moves environmental concern. There is a stark contrast between the richness in the normative vocabulary that informs our appraisal of the environments with which we live and the austerity of the vocabulary that environmental philosophers employ to theorize about it”

upon more specific reason-giving concepts and corresponding claims about the ways in which natural objects are a source of wonder, the sense of proportion they invoke in us of our place within a wider history, the care we feel called upon to give as we develop our understanding of the lives of fellow creatures, the diversity of forms of life to which respond, and so on". Ecofeminism might be one of these other ways to better relate with what speaks to us as persons, in this specific case as women.

Ecofeminism also a clearly non-anthropocentric and an ecocentric philosophy uses the idea of submission of both women and nature in the past centuries to man as a starting point for arguing that women are well prepared to both think and deal with environmental problems and have a special contribution that might be very valuable to the overall discussion. The idea that nature is feminine is also quite widespread in this movement. Davion (2001, p.233) defines it as "a series of theoretical and practical positions bringing feminist insight to environmental philosophy".

There are many ecofeminist strains, each defending its own beliefs but they all share the idea that "there is a link between dominations of women and dominations of nature, and that the understanding of one is crucial to the understanding of the other" (Davion, 2001, p.233). Probably it is possible to structure the different ecofeminisms in three ways (based on Dobson, 1995):

- i. Women should seek equality with men as they are generally equal
- ii. Accepting the differences but seek to re-evaluate the female characteristics that are undervalued in Western/patriarch societies:
  - a. existence of values and ways of behaving that are primarily feminine (could be biological or social);
  - b. domination of nature is related to domination of women; the structures and reasons are similar;
  - c. women are closer than man to nature and therefore potentially in the vanguard as far as developing sustainable ways of relating to the environment is concerned.

- iii. Masculinity and femininity should both be rejected and we should develop an alternative culture.

If the first one was a main issue for feminism, in ecofeminism both ii and iii have been dominating most of the discourse. Dobson (1995) dubs it “the difference” and the “deconstructive” models. The first one is based on exploring and criticising the dualisms man/nature and men/women basing the discussion on an essentialist argument which believes in a feminine essence which should be universal and common to all women. This feminine essence should be given room for women to discover, celebrate and affirm all their real nature, which is intimately related with nature. This position has been criticised even within ecofeminism itself on account of different arguments:

1. A debate is needed between essentialism and social construction, because the hierarchy of the sexes should not be seen as a fatality but rather a social construction. Patriarchal relationships should be the departure for discussion and not an irremediable fact.
2. There should not be a unique standard of what women are. There are cultural, racial, sex preference differences and they should all be accepted
3. This feminine essence is also sometimes equated with natural and biological functions of reproduction and likeness with nature, where both women and nature are the source of life. This is an apolitical argument rejecting women as socially active and therefore promotes the continuation of patriarchal attitudes.

Val Plumwood is the main promoter of the “deconstructive” model. She believes that accepting too easily dualisms promotes the difference that hinders true developments in ecofeminism. She rather defends that women should “move to a further stage in their relations with nature, beyond that of powerless inclusion in nature, beyond that of reaction against their old exclusion from culture, and towards a deliberate and reflective positioning of themselves *with* nature against a destructive and dualising form of culture” (1993, p.39). So both men and women should challenge the “dualised conception of human identity and

develop an alternative culture which fully recognises *human* identity as continuous with, not alien from, nature" (1993, p.36)

Plumwood (2002) also criticises rationalism, arguing that in our inherited Kantian moral framework the essential features of morality are distant to emotion and close to reason. The dualism between reason and emotion has been affecting Nature. She criticises most environmental philosophers who have tried to ground the need for protecting nature on a rational, cognitive way of explaining and understanding the intrinsic value of nature. The emotions and care one might have towards nature seemed not considered universal or rational enough to ground an extended moral theory which would account for an approval or disapproval of our actions towards nature.

Even though there are many discussions within ecofeminism, the important is that it promotes the idea that new ways of thinking in a nonpatriarchy context are needed, and this involves a reconceptualisation of knowledge, reality and ethics, and both the value of connections between particular individuals and the value of nature or environment conceived as both material entities and abstractions needs to be recognised (Davion, 1994). Above all it makes us re-think the relationship of the human being with him/herself and with the world.<sup>127</sup>

These 4 currents might be the main non-anthropocentric ones in environmental ethics and they have many points in common. At the bottom line all defend a need for a radical re-conception of humanity's place in nature; there should be no reasons to believe that humans are the most important beings and the sole *locus* of value in the world. Ecocentrism might be considered as a common way of looking at these currents capturing its most relevant issues. Eckersley (1992) defends this ecocentric perspective claiming that it offers an encompassing approach because:

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<sup>127</sup> A remaining question might be if the emancipation of women does necessarily lead to the emancipation of the nonhuman world or vice versa? As De-Shalit (2000) controversially defends, both ecofeminism and deep ecology use the environment instrumentally as their main aim is not the environment itself but they use it as to re-think the relationships between the sexes, or to a redefinition of the self, respectively. They fall into the trap of conceptual instrumentalism because they refer extensively to relations and relationships, rather than relate individuals within the environment.

- i. It recognises the full range of human interests in the nonhuman world;
- ii. It recognises the interests of the nonhuman community;
- iii. It recognises the interests of future generations of humans and nonhumans;
- iv. It adopts a holistic rather than an atomistic perspective insofar as it values populations, species, ecosystems and the ecosphere as well as individual organisms.

Then Eckersley (1992) goes on defending the five main criticisms to ecocentrism:

- i. it is impossible to perceive the world other than from an anthropocentric perspective since we are, after all, human subjects. This is dismissed as the anthropocentric fallacy, because even though, of course we cannot be others, we can remind ourselves that other meanings might exist, and emphatically develop a non-anthropocentric consciousness.
- ii. Ecocentrists displaying insensitivity to the needs of the oppressed and poor by collectively blaming human species. This is dismissed as non-anthropocentrism does not mean misanthropy and what ecocentrists are against is the ideology of human chauvinism.
- iii. Ecocentrism is a passive and quietist perspective that regards humans as no more valuable than ants or AIDS virus. Again it is defended that a non-anthropocentric perspective is one that ensures that the interests of non-humans are not ignored in human decision making, but this does not mean that an extreme non-interference with other life forms is always ensured.
- iv. Ecocentrism is difficult to translate into social, political and legal practice. But it is neither necessary nor ultimately desirable that legal rights are ascribed to nonhuman entities. This does not mean that it is not possible.
- v. Nature is interpreted too benignantly. However ecocentrists defend nature for what nature is, and not because it might be benevolent or benign. Nonhuman nature knows no human ethics, it simply is.

Eckersley (1992) concludes then that the ecocentric approach promotes re-thinking and the need to proceed with greater caution and humility in our interventions in ecosystems.

Regardless of all the discussions around these issues and their classification, essentially one has to acknowledge that they have been promoting important ideas and concepts that enrich not only philosophy but also start pervading both the political and civil society discourses.

### ***3.5. Future generations***

Environment does not seem an easy political arena. The scientific, the political and the philosophical realms are full of discussions within and in between them. Exploring differences in different approaches has made it even more difficult. The discussions within environmental philosophy, not only among anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, but also within them prompted a rather entangled net of arguments which has made it a complex and rather unintelligible world, as just seen. This has constituted a prime justification for politics to ignore the seemingly endless discussions and for political analysts to enhance the differences between policy and philosophy.

Light (2002, p.443) defends that environmental ethicists should invest in how best they could help “the environmental community to make better ethical arguments in support of the policies on which our views already largely converge”. His point is that it is possible to keep the lively philosophical debates and yet be more politically pro-active. Light (2002, p.444) defends that “a more fully responsible environmental ethics must abandon the wholesale rejection of anthropocentric reasons for protecting the environment, at least as part of our public philosophical task”. His idea is to develop a more public philosophy focused on making arguments “that resonate with the moral intuitions that most people carry around with them on an everyday basis” (p.444). Light (2002)

argues that obligations to future generations are a powerful intuitive reason that most people will easily relate with<sup>128</sup>.

In fact the questions about future generations prompted discussions within philosophy but entered environmental policy smoothly in the late eighties mainly due to the sustainable development definition given in *Our common future*, written by the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) and widely known as the Brundtland report.

The question of an institutionalised need to care for future generations was posed by the challenge environmental hazards posed us, and that were not known in previous societies<sup>129</sup>. Up to very recently, the inheritance given to next generations was generally a good one. Men have improved almost about everything up to now, so following generations always have profited from the advances of the previous ones. It was this new situation of our risk society<sup>130</sup>, depletion of resources, long term hazardous waste and irreversibility that prompted us to look into hooks on our ethical and political culture to possibly justify our refrain of harming future generations. Its intelligibility has made it, in general, an accepted philosophical and political issue. Light (2002) invokes it as a platform of understanding between philosophy and politics.

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<sup>128</sup> Light (2002) does not advocate that environmental philosophers should give up pursuing a theory of non- anthropocentric natural value. They should rather consider it as meta-ethics and when wanting to influence public policy they should put it aside. Light developed environmental pragmatism, which is agnostic concerning the existence of non-anthropocentric nature value and recognises that environmental ethic must include a public component with a clear policy emphasis. It must therefore “take up the largely empirical question of what morally motivates humans to change their attitudes, behaviours, and policy preferences toward those more supportive of long-term environmental sustainability” (p. 446)

<sup>129</sup> Although Soromenho-Marques (2002, p.141) identifies Kant, Condorcet, Jefferson and Burke as previous contributors to political philosophy and also to ethics with this issue. For example Jefferson was concerned that it would be unfair that the public debt could be passed to another generation.

<sup>130</sup> Risk society was so dubbed by Ulrich Beck in a seminal book with that title in 1986. The concept defends that we are in a new era of modernity, or late modernity and that environmental and technological risks are the most relevant influence in our societies. The basis of the theory is to understand the evolution of the risks, societies have been affected by, and how they are fundamental to the societal organization. So in pre-industrial societies the nature of the risks was of the natural kind, like floods, earthquakes, volcanoes, etc. In industrial societies, risks were more dependent on human actions or social forces. In contemporaneous societies where risks cannot be determined or understood, they took over and we can be described as risk societies.

Different authors have been theorizing about it, hooking it to different political philosophical theories, like liberalism, communitarianism, utilitarianism and deontology<sup>131</sup>.

Deontological views focus on the moral status of future persons and their rights and our duties to non-existent persons. Rawls with his theory of justice was one of the first to attempt to amend and extend the liberal theory of rights and justice so as to provide grounding for, and to take into account, the rights of future persons (Ball, 2001). O'Neill (1993, p27) also contends that modified versions of Rawls's theory support intergenerational respect: "Rawls ensures impersonality and impartiality in justice by specifying that the principles of justice are those that would be chosen by self-interested individuals in conditions of ignorance of their position in society, their dispositions to take risks, and their beliefs about the good. Rawls assumes in his own account that those in this original position belong to the same generation, and introduces obligations across generations by the *ad hoc* proviso that each cares about someone in the next generation".

Ball (2001) defends that the available discourse of liberal individualism – including the idea of reciprocity – may be open to conceptual innovation, and he proposes an innovation in the understanding of reciprocity based on a serial, rather than a simultaneous idea. He suggests "punctuated reciprocity" which means to reciprocate to the next generation what has been done to the existing one. This means we could still use existing moral codes and concepts in a sort of new way. And we say sort of new way, because if this punctuated reciprocity might be new in name, is not in practice, and most probably we used it in our everyday life. Ball (2001) gives the example of behaviour in traffic where when one receives a help (for ex. entering in a road without traffic lights and therefore dependent of another drivers kindness) is tended to be reciprocated it next time, to someone else. Or as Hobbes wrote on his Leviathan "whatsoever you require that others should do to you, that do ye to them" (Hobbes 1991).

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<sup>131</sup> Partridge (2001) has a good summary of the issue.

O'Neill argues that also classical utilitarianism entail obligations to future generations, as it "which holds that the best action is that which maximises total happiness, characterised hedonistically in terms of pleasure and the absence of pain. This view involves no temporal indexing of the pleasures, and entails that pleasures should be maximized across generations, be this by increasing pleasure or by increasing future populations" (p. 26)

On the other hand De-Shalit (1995) contends that the utilitarian, contractarian, and rights based theories fail to provide justifications for our obligations to future generations, and he proposes a communitarian theory of intergenerational justice. He argues that we can consider that we are morally bound to future generations because we share membership in a "community". De-Shalit bases his argument on a conception of human beings that can transcend self-interest because they are seeking a moral environment.

O'Neill (1993, p.38) considers "that there is a temporal myopia that infects modern society" based on a lack of sense of continuity of the present with both past and future. He contends that the problem with respect to our obligations to future generations which is that we can benefit or harm them but that they cannot benefit or harm us is a false problem and dismisses it because harm can be done to a previous generation both via harming reputation and by determining the success or failure of a previous work not only at scientific level but also intellectually, for ex. "it has been said of Aristotle that his greatness lies in his interpreters" (O'Neill 1993, p.32).

The discussion about the philosophical underpinnings of why present generations should respect future generations is, as briefly shown above, also contentious, but most environmental problems make it clear that future generations are vulnerable to how we develop our policies and therefore it is an inescapable theme in both environmental philosophy and environmental policy.

### **3.6. Green political thought**

Even though the inter generational theme seems a good frame for grounding much of green political thought, not all environmental political thinkers agree with giving up the importance of non-anthropocentrism in policy, namely Dobson (1990, 1995) and Eckersley (1992) which are political theorists defending ecologism and ecocentrism. Dobson's ecologism holds "that a sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life"<sup>132</sup> (1995, p.1). Dobson believes ecologism is a political ideology as it defends two themes not found in liberalism, conservatism, socialism, etc. Those two themes are its belief in the limits to material growth and its opposition to anthropocentrism.

Also Eckersley (1992) believes that an "ecocentric approach may be seen as a genuinely new constellation of political ideas" (p.3). In ecocentrism, living and nonliving, animate and inanimate, human and nonhuman are not separate by all part of the same intrinsically dynamic world. Ecocentric political theorists defend a need for a radical re-conception of humanity's place in nature re-thinking our inflated sense of human self-importance. She concludes then that the ecocentric approach is "more consistent with ecological reality, more likely to lead us toward psychological maturity, and more likely to allow the greatest diversity of beings to unfold in their own ways" (p.179).

But John Barry (1999) labels Dobson's and Eckersley type of thought as green political ideology rather than green political theory. The latter, he thinks, deserves a more broad approach and he defends that "the normative claims of green political theory do not require the rejection of anthropocentric moral reasoning in favour of a putative non-anthropocentric ecocentrism (...) such ideological views of green politics were perhaps an inevitable aspect of its early development, but are now detrimental to its future development" (Barry, 1999 p.3). Bryan Norton (1991) has also been a defender of the so-called

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<sup>132</sup> Dobson (1995, p.1) opposes it to environmentalism which "argues for a managerial approach to environmental problems, secure in the belief that they can be solved without fundamental changes in present values or patterns of production and consumption"

“convergence hypothesis” claiming that “environmentalists are evolving toward a consensus in policy even though they remain divided regarding basic values” (p.86)<sup>133</sup>. Avner De-Shalit (2000) also believes that the gap between environmental philosophers and environmental politicians and activists must be bridged but he defends that they answer different questions<sup>134</sup> and only by acknowledging it can “environmental philosophy penetrate environmental policy and provide its rationale” (p. 5).

Light and Katz (1996) propose environmental pragmatism<sup>135</sup>, “an open-ended inquiry into the specific real-life problems of humanity’s relationship with the environment” (p.2). Its main premises are moral pluralism (ensuring that it does not end in relativism); investing in diminishing the importance of theoretical debates; and considering that privileging practical issues of political consensus is fundamental. It assumes itself not as another current within environmental philosophy but rather as a platform of understanding between all of them in view of contributing directly to the resolution of environmental problems.

It is clear that environmental philosophy has been a burgeoning field with many disagreements. This can be seen as positive, as it provides diversity to the discipline. Deep ecologists, eco-feminists, biocentrists, land ethicists, defenders of animal rights, environmental pragmatists, environmental virtue ethicists<sup>136</sup> they all look differently to the environmental question. By framing it differently, alternative contributions to policy arise, which might be seen as positive. But the consequences of this diversity are that the contributions to policy might be seen as scattered ideas rather than a coherent philosophical background. In chapters six and seven this discussion will be re-activated.

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<sup>133</sup> This is not a consensus view, and mainly non-anthropocentrists, like Taylor, Callicott, Holmes Rolston III believe Norton is wrong with his hypothesis. They believe different basic values affect environmental policy making.

<sup>134</sup> “Environmental ethics is about the moral grounds for an environment-friendly attitude. Political theory with regard to environment related to the institutions needed to implement and support environmental policies” (De-Shalit, 2000 p. 5)

<sup>135</sup> Light and Katz (1996) edited a volume on several papers on environmental pragmatism which is defined as a new strategy in environmental thought, arguing that theoretical debates are hindering the ability of the environmental movement to forge agreement on basic policy imperatives. It moves beyond theory and advocates an inquiry into the practical merits of moral pluralism.

<sup>136</sup> Environmental virtue ethics is yet another current and will be analysed in detail in chapter 5.

### **3.7. Concluding**

These two chapters make us acknowledge that one environmental crisis, one cause, one solution does not exist. The interaction of different dimensions makes it a complex system, difficult if not impossible to disentangle; furthermore different objectives also determine different framings. Both upstream and downstream implications make a possible consensus very difficult.

What might be agreed on is that there are problems affecting both ourselves and our health, and affecting nature and its health. The extent of the problems and the extent of those impacts seem impossible to agree on. The possible causes of those problems are and will always be an open discussion. Social constructivism and discourse analysis theories helped us understand why agreement is so difficult. The identification of common characteristics of environmental problems helped understanding the complexity of the issue both at political, economic, philosophical and scientific levels. Going back in time and recognizing the importance of science in this process helped understanding that if the scientific revolution legitimised the separation between man and nature, it also promoted the emergence of ecology which prompted a re-approximation<sup>137</sup>. Apart from science and its evolution also other factors entered the equation, namely the lively debate within environmental ethics.

The complexity of the whole scientific, political and philosophical problematic, the “wicked” character of most environmental problems and the uncertainty related with many of them should not make us give up. To continuously do our best seems the most appropriate way to further continue in this endless task. What is our best is a difficult question, and in this thesis promoting responsibility is the proposal to deal with this impossibly soluble problem.

Most currents on environmental ethics proposed a challenge of some sort of ontological dimension for the process of improving the relationship between man and nature. Callicott's and Plumwood's continuity proposal and Naess's

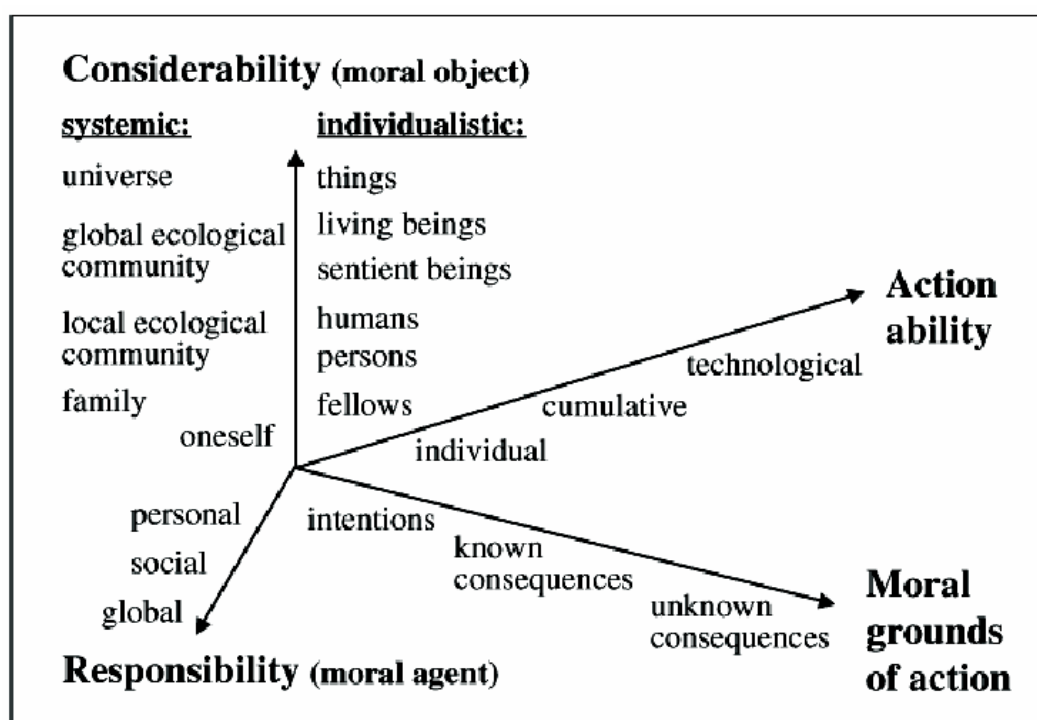
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<sup>137</sup> Pepper, 1991 divides the first as the roots of technocentrism and the second as the roots of ecocentrism.

and Fox's expansion of the self include this dimension. I will be proposing an equal demanding task, but one situated in virtue ethics realm. The challenge will be on how to promote responsibility towards nature as a virtue to be developed and worked internally. Chapter five will investigate virtue ethics and environmental virtue ethics in order to support this proposal.

Also Alroe and Kristensen (2003) defend that we should take responsible acting as basic in environment. They believe that we need a broad ethical framework to be able to include it, and so they proposed a model based on four elements of moral acting.

Figure 3.1 – Broad Ethical Framework



(Source: Alroe and Kristensen, 2003)

This framework allows us to see in a diagrammatic way how ethics should evolve along the four dimensions depicted in the four axes and how they are all related. If our action ability is only individual, we only consider oneself and our fellows as moral considerable and our moral grounds for actions are our own intentions then we, as moral agents have only personal responsibility. Our current situation though, of often unknown consequences of our actions

(ignorance and uncertainty) associated with an action ability of technological dimension, considering either the universe or all living beings and things (according to a more systemic or individualistic perspective) as moral considerable, then our responsibility as moral agents grows to be a global responsibility.

Alroe and Kristensen (2003) are therefore claiming that the knowledge of our ignorance and uncertainty turns into a moral ground of action and does not diminish our responsibility contrary to the common understanding which claims that we are only responsible for what we can know. This inclusion of ignorance and uncertainty as a moral ground of action combined with the growing action ability has several implications at both personal and political levels. Responsibility becomes even more fundamental<sup>138</sup>.

We should now proceed to better understand the concept of responsibility and how it might help with all the challenges we are facing.

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<sup>138</sup> The precautionary principle will be our proposal to deal ethically, politically and scientifically with uncertainty. The precautionary principle, subject matter of chapter eight, becomes then the most responsible way of doing it.

## Chapter four – Aporetic discussion on Responsibility

*“Responsibility is a word of ancient lineage and many different uses”<sup>139</sup>*

### 4.1. Introduction

Resource and environmental management problems are often characterized by complexity, high uncertainty, and conflict over fundamental values. As Funtowicz and Ravetz (1994, p.1882) put it “to characterize a problem involving global environmental issues, we can think of it as one where facts are uncertain, values are in dispute, stakes are high, and decisions urgent”. The idea of developing responsibility seems a very simple and wise way forward. It might not solve any of the possibly unsolvable, uncertain and complex problems, but might help us dealing with them. Nevertheless discussing responsibility seems a messianic task, as it has different meanings<sup>140</sup> and its discussion is dispersed by different disciplines and conducted in different contexts and realms. Nevertheless the idea that responsibility is central in morality seems unquestionable<sup>141</sup>. In fact, responsibility has always been central in all ethical theories albeit treated differently.

The different realms might be political, moral, scientific, or social; individual or collective; or co-responsibility. And then there are its different connotations. Spiro (1969) differentiates responsibility as accountability, as a cause or as an obligation. Hart (1968) established a taxonomy dividing it in role-responsibility, causal-responsibility, liability-responsibility and capacity-responsibility<sup>142</sup>. Watson (1996) defends that responsibility has two faces, accountability and

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<sup>139</sup> Spiro, 1969

<sup>140</sup> “Accountability, liability, chargeability, answerability, obligation, blame, guilt, culpability. Charge, duty, onus, burden, job, task.” In The Oxford Dictionary

<sup>141</sup> As Meyer (1993) p 18 says within an Aristotelian context “the topic of moral responsibility concerns issues of central importance to our conception of morality and to our conception of ourselves as moral agents” (...) “moral responsibility is the property of an agent that makes her subject to the demands of morality, and hence subject to moral evaluation in the light of these demands”... “the features that make us morally responsible agents are central to our conception of what is most important and valuable in our lives”

<sup>142</sup> Role refers both to being responsible because of one's role and acting responsibly within the role (because she is manager, she is responsible to do x; she is a responsible manager); causal refers to people, events, animals, weather; liability refers mainly to legal liability; capacity refers to being mental and physical capable to be attributed responsibility.

attributibility, the second being its *aretaic* face. Pellizoni (2000) talks about the four dimensions of responsibility namely care, liability, accountability and responsiveness. Finally the problem opposing free will with determinism seems also to be central in controversies about responsibility. Compatibilists and incompatibilists<sup>143</sup> argue differently on the place that should be given to responsibility considering that the conditions of (free or determined) action are the most determinant for responsibility<sup>144</sup>.

The universe of its possible discussion is therefore virtually unlimited, but the approach of this chapter<sup>145</sup> and indeed of this thesis is to investigate how to increase responsibility specifically in the realm of the relationship between man and nature. This narrowing rules out some meanings and some concepts of responsibility, namely those that are not relevant to morality, such as causation. The focus will be on Watson's (1996) concepts, namely of responsibility as accountability as to establish the claim that we are accountable for what we do to nature; and responsibility as attributibility since the focus of this research is exactly that *aretaic* face of responsibility.

Responsibility is a cornerstone of any ethical current if not directly, then indirectly. Both Aristotle and Kant, for example, even if very different in their approaches, give responsibility an important place in their philosophies. The importance given by Aristotle to individual action as a voluntary action imposes responsibility on it "We have found, then, that we wish for the end, and deliberate and decide about what promotes it; hence the actions concerned with what promotes the end will express a decision and will be voluntary." (1113 b 5) And also "He is himself responsible for having this character ... for each type of activity produces the corresponding character. This is clear from those who train for any contest or action, since they continually practise the appropriate activities." (1114 a 5) And giving further emphasis to this operational dimension

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<sup>143</sup> Compatibilists believe that causal determinism and moral responsibility are compatible. Incompatibilists don't.

<sup>144</sup> Strawson's landmark essay though, states that the reactive attitudes (which are the base for someone to be morally responsible), like resentment and gratitude are so natural that even if one would like to ignore them, one would not be able to do so. Strawson, 1962.

<sup>145</sup> This chapter will introduce responsibility and treat it mostly within its individual realm. Chapter 6 will deal more directly with the political realm.

“we become just by doing just actions, temperate by doing temperate actions, brave by doing brave actions” (1103 b 1)

Aristotle method demands much from the agent because he provides no standard rules for action “All this makes it clear, then, that in every case the intermediate state is praised, but we must sometimes incline towards the excess, sometimes towards the deficiency” (1009 b 25). He also acknowledges that it is difficult to decide what one should do “ (...) but doing it to the right person, in the right amount, at the right time, for the right end, and in the right way is no longer easy, nor can everyone do it” (1109 a 25). Aristotelian virtue ethics then, demands a great deal of responsibility on ones own acts.

Responsibility is also an important concept for Kant. For example, in the essay from 1784 with the title “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” Kant starts by saying that “Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!" - that is the motto of enlightenment”. Kant believed that Enlightenment promoted the idea of individual responsibility and man were not taking the opportunity to assume it. His use of the Latin expression *Sapere Aude* is quite paradigmatic of the interpretation that Kant was having of how people were immature in what regards their responsibility. Kant exhorts people to think, to develop their capacity of reason which amounts to be responsible.

Autonomy, the cornerstone of Kant's philosophy is utterly important in this project of responsibility. Autonomy means a disposition for each man to decide by himself, do his own choices, determine in which direction he should move. Ultimately this amounts to responsibility. This disposition is rational and if one should promote autonomy within oneself then, one should also promote it regarding the other. If one cultivates one's own individuality the others should

do the same. No one is a means for it, which establishes Kant's proposal of each man being an end and not a mean.

Furthermore the maxim "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law" (Kant, 1785), gives the agent the responsibility for deciding on each occasion what should be the action to follow. One can say then that responsibility is a key issue to Kant's ethical theory. This was only a brief sketch in order to state how responsibility has always been present in ethics. In this essay responsibility towards the environment is the main issue, so it makes sense looking into that arena.

For example Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and Arne Naess among many others, advocate directly or indirectly responsibility as a conception of how humans should feel responsible towards the environment and eventually accountable for their relationship with nature, which in turn should prompt responsible acting towards nature. It seems an obvious and simple idea that if we could all, individually and collectively, privately and institutionally, be and act more responsibly then the world would be a better place for all of us, man and nature. The approach taken will be supported by a positive and constructive analysis of responsibility<sup>146</sup> and go beyond the free will<sup>147</sup> discussion<sup>148</sup>.

Responsibility is a perennial theme not only in philosophy but also on other disciplines. Within an environmental context, reviving the lines of Hans Jonas and Karl Otto Apel might give a good genealogy and evolution of the concept. They both dedicated much of their thinking to this issue of responsibility. Cane

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<sup>146</sup> Rawls (1985) defended in a paper about justice as fairness, that he considered the question as political, not metaphysical. He did so in order not to be entangled by metaphysical claims which would undermine his objective. This is the approach also taken here. Considering a concept of responsibility not related with the free will discussion will free us from dwelling with metaphysic conditions such as causal determinism

<sup>147</sup> Furthermore Fischer and Ravizza (1998) set up a theory of moral responsibility that is immune to causal determinism. They defend that our status as morally responsible agents is not vulnerable to the existence, if it would exist, neither to the inexistence, if it does not exist, of causal determinism. They consider themselves as compatibilists, but more than that, by ignoring the potentialities of causal determinism in moral responsibility, they went a step further in the complex discussion between compatibilists and incompatibilists. It is in this further step that I would like to situate my discussion.

<sup>148</sup> Cane (2002) says that "there is a psychological reason why the issues of free will and determinism do not constrain our moral and legal responsibility practices (...) even if it were proved that the universe is deterministic, a psychological need to feel a certain degree of control over our surroundings and our lives and not to surrender to fatalism would probably preserve our present responsibility practices more or less intact" p 24. This is in a way the same argument as Strawson's inevitability of the reactive attitudes.

worked extensively on a legal reasoning about responsibility and his work will be reviewed as it contributes to an enriched understanding of responsibility. David Hume's thinking and justification of how justice pervaded morality might also have interest in this crusade. Hume's methodology will be proposed to argue that responsibility towards nature could also become part of morality.

Selected parts of their thinking will be used to help answering what is responsibility; why do we need it; how can we develop it and to whom should it be attributed. Responsibility has many meanings and concepts and the focus will be getting to a conception of responsibility as the guiding and framing principle for a consistent and philosophically grounded environmental policy.

The need for considering science in environment policy has always been obvious, but the same cannot be said of the ethical dimension. Even though concepts used in environmental policy like biodiversity, sustainable development, environmental space among others, do include an ethical dimension, environmental policy, as seen in the last two chapters does not tend to acknowledge the specific need for an ethic guiding it. But we are entering a new era where values are openly placed hand in hand with facts and science, where irreversibility, uncertainty and complexity dominate many environmental issues. Chapter eight will deal with science and its relationship with policy. Science is losing its status as the only means for understanding the world. Furthermore science or techno-science is itself a producer of the world. This inquiry is looking at responsibility proposing that it could structure or frame this new era, where environmental policy and environmental philosophy should be hand in hand investing in a better environment.

#### ***4.2. Apel: Why do we need responsibility?***

Last century was rich in exposing humanity to what humanity had been achieving since Bacon's project of "The end of our foundation [the house of Solomon] is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the

enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible"<sup>149</sup>. This has created a sort of crisis of conscience in all of us, as we feel uncomfortable when we think about Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the ecological crisis, ecological disasters (for e.g. Seveso, 1976, Three Mile Island, 1979, Bhopal, 1984, Chernobyl, 1986), the threat of nuclear war and weapons and nuclear energy, and so on. These problems were (and are) mostly related with science and technology and even if we feel uncomfortable, we do not feel directly responsible nor do we tend to attribute direct responsibility to particular scientists or politicians. This is perhaps because our (Western) material quality of life and comfort is due to the same science and technology that have caused these events. In a naïve, superficial and apolitical attitude, societies in general have not been too worried about those past events<sup>150</sup>. But towards the "fin de siècle" and most vividly in this new century, the call for responsibility<sup>151</sup> has been growing fast.

The novel problems<sup>152</sup> that are prompting this feeling are those which are global and irreversible, complex and involving uncertainties, and that have extensive impacts on human health, the environment and on future generations. Furthermore, these problems prompt changes within the realm of human social relationships and therefore are interdependent (Apel, 1993). Therefore we need to reflect on the fact that institutions which have been responsible for the formation of moral norms are now themselves also a novel type of challenge for our ethical responsibility (Apel, 1993). Apel (1993) believes we are responsible, not only for the effects and side effects of science and technology, but also for the institutions or social systems, and even more for those which do not exist

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<sup>149</sup> In his utopia *New Atlantis*. Francis Bacon, 1624

<sup>150</sup> Of course the environmental movement has been worried and tried to make societies care, but largely unsuccessfully.

<sup>151</sup> Jonas, 1979, Beck, 1986, Apel, 1987 among others, started the trend.

<sup>152</sup> Apel (1993) divided it in two classes of problems, "First, there are problems that are completely novel in so far as they are brought about only by the present stage of civilization, that is, of human sociocultural evolution. Second, there are problems that are not completely novel, as we may recognize finally, but we are brought to full awareness of their relevance only now, that is, in connection with the realization of the first class of problems" (p 496). Apel then goes on to say that both classes of novel problems "imply a challenge to ethics to which most of our current types of philosophical ethics cannot provide a response" (p 496). The first type of problems are posed by the constant growth of the range and efficacy of human technological power based on scientific progress as Apel and many others who are thinking on this problematic have been saying. But Apel's insight is that this type of problems can be further divided in two dimensions, one relating to our interventions into nature and the other to the technological changes within the realm of human social relationships.

but should exist, as for example a global order of international law and political cooperation, or even a global economic order that could deal with these problems. It means we are doubly responsible, firstly for our actions and secondly for how we deal socially and institutionally with those actions.

The difficulties of these novel problems within traditional ethics are three-dimensional, according to Apel (1993):

1. the enormous range and scope of those actions or activities that are made possible by science-based technology<sup>153</sup> (because their effects and side effects transcend the face-to-face encounter with the affected)
2. For morally relevant decision making we often need scientific knowledge concerning the complex structure of the relevant facts and the possible effects and side effects of our actions and sustainable activities.<sup>154</sup>
3. Those actions and activities are usually not caused by individual actors<sup>155</sup>

We are faced with new challenges and in need of a new ethic, a new ethic of responsibility. Traditional ethics for example cannot deal with holding people responsible if they are not accountable as mentioned in item 3. And even if we know that historically, political philosophy and political science have been coming up with institutional devices for dealing with problems of collective responsibility (contracts, associations, agreements), we are now, as mentioned above, also responsible for the existence and inexistence of institutions and social systems that could deal with it. The question then is to inquire if these novel problems are after all, only old problems of collective responsibility, or indeed new and in need of novel ethics.

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<sup>153</sup> The main consequences of these are, the threat of nuclear war, the ecological crisis and the conflict between the First and the Third Worlds (Apel, 1993)

<sup>154</sup> As Apel (1993) says, the Kantian idea that with regard to morals the common man can always know, by listening to his inner voice, what he ought to do, does not apply anymore to these problems. Furthermore the so-called value-free or value-neutral free science is itself matter of ethical responsibility.

<sup>155</sup> So individual actors cannot be held accountable, but even if we acknowledge that we (the single persons who make up the we) are somehow responsible for the effects of these collective activities, we feel also quite powerless.

Apel (1993) does not believe that, for example, Hobbes and his social contract or Rawls and his theory of justice<sup>156</sup> would provide a rational foundation for a global ethics of justice, let alone a global ethics of responsibility. The global character of most of the problems we are facing calls for a “universally valid foundation of an ethic of justice, solidarity, and co-responsibility” (p.505). Apel claims that we can use the Kantian *transcendental universalism* and proposes “the transcendental-pragmatic foundation of discourse ethics as a response to the global problems of justice and co-responsibility” (p.506). Apel develops his theory of discourse ethics to answer the problems posed by the need of co-responsibility. And since his approach is via communication, rather than collective responsibility, Apel prefers using the concept of co-responsibility, implicating all individuals in a project of communication and discourse. Co-responsibility “brings a public level of responsibility for common or shared problems into play without disburdening individuals of their personal responsibility. It stresses the dimension of shared or common problems, but also retains a participatory role for the individual in publicly relevant communication and thus in the discursive shaping and treatment of such problems” (Strydom 1999, p 68). Apel is not developing an ethic of responsibility, but rather an ethic that answers the urgent call of responsibility. He helps understanding the need for responsibility.

### **4.3. Hans Jonas and the imperative of responsibility**

On the other hand Jonas proposes an ethics of responsibility. He defends that the relationship of man with nature and the capacity that science and technology have given to man, has been putting responsibility as a concept that might, not overcome, but be both fundamental and complementary for and of justice. Jonas’s work dwells mainly on the philosophical dimension of this responsibility and deals particularly with moral philosophy and its possible

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<sup>156</sup> First because the *principle of reflective equilibrium* does not provide a rational foundation for the universal validity of the principle of justice and secondly because Rawls presupposes a *point zero situation*, which is inexistent as everything has already begun and in part gone the wrong way (Apel, 1993).

foundation. Hans Jonas is looking for a new ethics in this technological age, an ethics where responsibility turns into an imperative, an ethics of responsibility.

Hans Jonas's (1984)<sup>157</sup> rationale for the need for responsibility was not just 'doing' but the possibility of doing. He claimed that our power is not doing or effective doing but it is the capacity for doing. For him, this should be our measure for responsibility. Jonas (1984) contends that traditional ethical theories are not appropriate to deal with the scale of the possibility of human action<sup>158</sup>.

Hans Jonas argues that former ethics were of the "here and now, of occasions as they arise between men, of the recurrent, typical situations of private and public life" (p.5). The predictive dimension of later effects was absent "no one was held responsible for the unintended later effects of his well-intentioned, well-considered, and well-performed act" (p.6). It is this new dimension of responsibility, which Jonas thinks is absent from former theories, which demand a new ethics. Jonas is introducing the inter-generational issue into ethics, and believes he is a pioneer. Nevertheless Soromenho-Marques (2002, p.141) identifies Kant, Condorcet, Jefferson and Burke as previous contributors to political philosophy and also to ethics with this issue. In chapter three, the inter-generational question has already been pointed out as a main pillar of environmental ethics.

Jonas claims that ethics has an objective and a subjective side, the one having to do with reason, the other with emotion. Any ethical theory must deal both with the rational ground of obligation and with the psychological ground of moving the will. Jonas claims that if we have to find an answer in our feelings than the feeling of responsibility is what we are looking for. And this was not the sentiment that featured in previous ethics. So he set himself up to build a new ethics, based on the concept of responsibility.

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<sup>157</sup> The book *The Imperative of Responsibility* was originally published in German in 1979. The edition used for references is a translation into English made by Hans Jonas himself and published in 1984

<sup>158</sup> "modern technology has introduced actions of such a novel scale, objects, and consequences that the framework of former ethics can no longer contain them" (Jonas, 1984)

Jonas's claim for responsibility both as a novelty within ethical theories and as the only way out for guiding our actions seems very attractive and in line with the conception developed in this thesis. Nevertheless there are four features of his thinking that might be open to some discussion and therefore worth analysing in more detail, namely, metaphysics, abolition of reciprocity, disregard for utopias, and above all the need for fear.

## Metaphysics

Jonas's main premise is that Man must be aware and ready not to endanger the possibility of existence of Man. "For there is an *unconditional duty* for mankind to exist". Jonas grounds this, because the "first principle of an ethic of futurity does not itself lie *within* ethics as a doctrine of action, but within metaphysics as a doctrine of being, of which the idea of Man is a part" (Jonas, 1984, p.44).

To ground his ethics, Jonas turns to metaphysics. Jonas's metaphysics is as simple as man's existence, it is an ontological metaphysics. Man must exist/be and must ensure that it continues to do so. So the new imperative is "Act so that the effects of your actions are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life". It is from this metaphysical duty of existence that Jonas develops his ethics which should then guide our actions:

- Man's duty towards himself;
- Towards his distant posterity; and
- Towards the plenitude of terrestrial life under his dominion.

Nevertheless one must acknowledge that the call for responsibility comes mainly from the ecological crisis raised by the Western/first world and it might not be a priority within all societies. Even if the need for responsibility might be global and universal, is the feeling that prompts it also universal? Jonas imperative is based on the metaphysical principle of the dignified existence of man. But is the *survival of humanity* really at stake? Probably there is no answer to this question and it would not be important if Jonas hadn't based his ethics on it. His doom-saying approach, in a way, takes his otherwise sound

claim into sort of muddled fields. Jonas's metaphysics is the "duty" of existence of man, which is simple and acceptable, but by proposing it, he presupposes that this existence is in danger. This presupposition is prone and creates controversies, which might discredit his otherwise sound conclusion of the imperative of responsibility.

## Reciprocity

Jonas claims that his principle of responsibility is independent of the concepts of right and reciprocity, which seen in a narrow perspective<sup>159</sup>, are both unwanted elements in a theory of ethics that have to deal with nature and with the future. Thinking that nature or future generations cannot reciprocate, then it makes sense to develop a theory that is not based on reciprocity. But then again there are very few theories (libertarians and mutual advantage theorists) that consider reciprocity as a basis for moral obligation. For Kant, for example, duty is unconditional, and therefore free from any reciprocity. Nevertheless Jonas still considers important to spell out that his concept of responsibility goes away from the idea of contract and implies no reciprocity. Jonas feels that this is well grounded and it does not need to be deducted because the natural relation of parent-child is the archetype of all responsible action and, is in our nature, it is a natural obligation/duty even though we should differentiate between responsibility for one's deeds and responsibility for particular objects. On the other hand Apel (1987) believes that for concrete norms to be legitimised they must already presuppose a responsibility where reciprocity is not even a question<sup>160</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> One could consider that animals, trees, rivers might have rights and therefore why would it be unwanted? A challenge to avoiding reciprocity has been taken up by Ball (2001) who suggested "punctuated reciprocity" as seen in previous chapter.

<sup>160</sup> "we are obliged to take part in organizing the aforesaid responsibility as a solidary responsibility that adheres to a formal principle consisting in a universalized reciprocity" (Apel, 1987, p 20)

## Utopia

A potential contentious point is Hans Jonas's aversion of utopias. He constantly calls for modesty and caution. "Not timidity, but the imperative of responsibility issues the novel call to modesty, (...) and modesty of goals versus the immodesty of utopia is the only way possible.(...) So caution is the better part of bravery and surely a command of responsibility. (...) The call to caution, that is, to modest goals, becomes a first duty"<sup>161</sup>. Even though it is true that caution should be part of our behaviour, it is also true that progress and utopias are so entrenched in human nature, that they cannot be dismissed so lightly. There is more that one progress and more than one utopia, and keeping the situation as it is, might not be the solution. We might need other progress and other utopias but Jonas does not consider it.

Soromenho-Marques (2005 , p.148) mentions that also Machiavelli and Spinoza were against political utopias as they could undermine the complex power game and could overstate the human condition, idealising it. But the main utopias of modernity, More's (1516) *Utopia*, Campanella's (1602, 1613) *Città del Sole* and *Civitas Solis*, and Bacon's (1624) *New Atlantis* are relevant beyond the potential political limitations, as they help the enterprise of the scientific endeavour of conquering the world. Especially *New Atlantis* marks the shift of considering science as a project to understand the world into a project of also constructing the world. And Bacon's project has been materializing quite vividly (as seen in chapter three and further in chapter eight) in a significant contribution for the environmental crisis.

This was identified by Jonas who anchors his imperative of responsibility against technology and its *possibilities*. Jonas's main objective was also to oppose Bloch (1959) and his *Principle of Hope* and the Marxist Utopianism. Jonas fears that Marxism by wanting the *transformation of man* might bring "about greater technological miracles necessary for the still greater, and finally total, utilization of nature and unburdening of man" (p.187). Jonas

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<sup>161</sup> Hans Jonas, 1984 , sentences all from page 191, rearranged.

acknowledges the limits of tolerance of nature and questions if “utopia” lies inside or outside of them. The question is not how much *man* is still able to do but how much of it can *nature* stand (p.188).

Many recent utopias though, are not anymore technological or promethean and are important for inspiring hope and provide transgressive spaces, conceptual and real, in which to experiment within alternative paradigms as Pepper (2005) says in a paper about utopianism and environmentalism<sup>162</sup>.

## Fear

Since Jonas did not believe that knowledge and wisdom were enough to deal with the problem, he proposed fear. “Fear can do the job – fear which is so often the best substitute for genuine virtue or wisdom. (...) We know much sooner what we do not want than what we want. Therefore moral philosophy must consult fear prior to our wishes to learn what we really cherish.” (Jonas, 1984, p.23, 27). So he develops a “heuristics of fear”.

Like Hobbes, Jonas wants to base politics on fear<sup>163</sup>. For Hobbes, the sovereign does not create fear, he works on a natural element of human nature. Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* (1651) “So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First Competition; Secondly, Diffidence; Thirdly, Glory.” (Hobbes, 1991) Gain, safety and reputation were therefore the main reasons for war, but probably also the main reasons for our behaviour in general. So he uses the word diffidence to say that one should be cautious and attack before being attacked, even with the uncertainty of being attacked. It is an individual

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<sup>162</sup> Another important point might be O'Neill's (1996, p. 39 - 44) distinction between abstraction and idealization in the context of practical reasoning. Even though she situates this discussion in the context of ethics and how some virtue writers (such as MacIntyre and Taylor) are particularists and criticize universal and abstract principles (related with work on justice), it might be relevant to understand the distinction she proposes. Abstraction is a fundamental attribute of both language and reasoning and it will not arbitrarily augment a starting point leading from truth to falsehood. On the other hand idealization can easily lead to falsehood. Assuming ideals (rather than establishing ideals) as a starting point will not necessarily lead to a situation that might be practically applicable. Even though idealizations might be important in different theoretical contexts such as when explanation is important (e.g. hypotheses in natural sciences), they might also be dangerous in practical reasoning because of its guiding objective. This might be relevant, because many critics of utopias might confound if their role is guiding and practical guiding for that matter or just idealizing in view of explaining or further exploring a situation.

<sup>163</sup> As a curiosity, this is completely the opposite of what Franklin Roosevelt famously asserted in his First Inaugural Address in 1933, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

fear, but Jonas's fear is more general, of a spiritual dimension, it must be cultivated and educated by ourselves so that we can develop sensitiveness for potential harm for future generations or for nature. "One can live without the supreme good but not with the supreme evil." (Jonas, 1984, p.36)

Hans Jonas thinks that the potential of action of the technological man transcends everything that was possible up to now, and more than *Homo sapiens* we are now *Homo faber*. Therefore "morality must invade the realm of making", as the "changed nature of human action changes the very nature of politics" (p.9) and it must do so in the form of public policy. For Hans Jonas the imperative of responsibility and the heuristics of fear are more related with public policy than with individual behaviour. This is because the causal relation with potential catastrophes is not related with individual actions but rather with overall policies. This is a novelty because ethics had been mostly worried with the individual, and how to create a system to guide the individual on what he could or couldn't do. To build up ethics for the system is of another dimension.

Jonas proposes that in face of uncertainty a rule must be developed to assist decision-making. And this is that the "prophecy of doom is to be given greater heed than the prophecy of bliss" (p.31). He justifies this on view of the different dimension of the big enterprise of modern technology neither slow nor patient, unlike natural evolution that works slowly and with small steps at the time. Jonas believes that we loose control, "we are free at the first step but slaves at the second and all further ones".

Nevertheless we should be cautious with the concept of fear. Governing within a premise of fear, might turn out not to be as democratic as a process of decision-making should be. In fact, if fear is there, it might dominate our actions and automatically legitimise them, possibly ignoring the need for a public debate that would discuss risks and values (Larrère et Larrère, 1997). Even though Jonas's fear is not irrational, but a conscious and developed feeling, one must still be very careful in grounding a new ethics on such a powerful concept.

And then again, it is not clear that using fear to influence behaviour would be totally efficient, especially when the object of fear is distant in time. Human behaviour functions on the principle of the discount rate, where a good now is more important than a fear in the future. And because of that Jonas says “only a maximum of politically imposed social discipline can ensure the subordination of present advantages to the long-term exigencies of the future” (Jonas, 1984, p. 142). This is a subtle call for authoritarianism, which might be another of his Achilles heel. In fact responsibility should be situated in the antipodes of authoritarianism. Responsibility involves social learning and above all freedom which is exactly what authoritarianism is afraid of.

So Jonas grounds his “heuristics of fear” with strong arguments of human nature, and he claims this fear not to be irrational; but should we trust it, and instead not base our actions on other features of human nature? Would it not be preferably, in terms of policy, to work with rationality, prudence, deliberation? Or at a personal level, could one develop responsibility within an *aretaic* dimension? Probably yes, and this will be explored later on.

Jonas is indeed a great thinker about responsibility, and his work is of enormous help in my endeavour even though there are some arguments that I do not agree with. That fear does not seem the most appropriate means to develop responsibility and his criticism of utopia are such disagreements.

But one can still consider that an ethics of responsibility towards nature is necessary to ensure the “happy survival of our species”, so how could we import it into morality? Hume considered justice as the main feature that would ensure this survival. Could we use Hume’s thinking and see how he imported justice into morality to help doing the same to responsibility? Before exploring Hume’s philosophy it still makes sense to further enrich the understanding of responsibility. As there are different concepts of responsibility and it is used in different contexts, it is difficult to fully or clearly state what responsibility is<sup>164</sup>,

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<sup>164</sup> Actually more than answering the question it might be more relevant to think about responsibility and hope that this thinking will contribute to answering it.

but the legal perspective of responsibility might be helpful in this effort of understanding it better.

#### **4.4. Cane: legal responsibility**

Very often responsibility is seen separately, or is analysed separately, and its full understanding gets partial or truncated. An example is the difference between moral responsibility and legal responsibility. Cane (2002) devoted a whole book trying to enrich responsibility through a legal reasoning as he thought moral reasoning was not enough<sup>165</sup>. He reckons that “morality and law are both parts of a rich tapestry of responsibility (and other normative) practices, and that all parts of the “responsibility tapestry” deserve careful attention if we are to make sense of the whole” (Cane, 2002, p.13).

The legal and the moral reasoning about responsibility are complementary, the first one is more concerned with social practices while the second rests on a more abstract level. As Cane (p.22) points out “the question confronting a judge is never, what do we mean by “responsibility” or even “what are our responsibilities?” but rather “by what rule or principle should the dispute about responsibility, which has arisen between these two parties, be resolved”? In contrast “the temporal, human and social context of much philosophical analysis is left more or less indeterminate”.

In legal reasoning the criteria for good argumentation are adequate information, impartiality and sincerity, and it is constrained by demands of consistency and coherence (Cane 2002), and these criteria are for the most similar with good

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<sup>165</sup> Cane (2002) is worried about the narrowing of the discussion on responsibility in the philosophical literature, as he realizes that it seems that “the essence of responsibility is to be found in what it means to be a human agent and to have free will” (p4) and he feels that because “moral disputes can sometimes be left unresolved, and moral questions can often be left unanswered” (p 8) or that “for many people, morality is purely a matter of values, unclouded by claims of authority” (p 11), then “law possesses institutional resources that morality lacks” (p 12) and “by reason of law’s institutional resources, the legal “version” of responsibility has a richness of detail lacking in the moral “version” of responsibility” (p 12). Furthermore “there is much less pressure in the moral sphere than in the legal system to provide determinate answers to detailed questions about responsibility” (p 12) and therefore “law can make a contribution to thinking and judgement about responsibility outside the law as well as within it” (p 12).

moral reasoning. But because “disagreements that can be left unresolved in the moral domain have to be resolved once they enter the legal domain” (p.21) the problems of free will and determinism are somewhat relegated to a specific discussion that will not impair with the normative life of society. The problem is that if “analysis of responsibility is divorced from its role in practical reasoning the danger is that the analysis will misrepresent the nature and content of responsibility judgements” (p.45). Thinking about responsibility outside a strict realm helps its richer understanding. Cane (2002), coming from a legal perspective, proposes seven inter-related ways to look at responsibility as a way to understanding it better, namely:

1. think about responsibility socially (as a set of social practices of taking responsibility and of holding people responsible<sup>166</sup>)
2. think about responsibility contextually rather than abstractly<sup>167</sup>
3. think about responsibility legally<sup>168</sup>
4. think about responsibility functionally<sup>169</sup>
5. think about responsibility relationally<sup>170</sup>
6. think about responsibility distributionally<sup>171</sup>
7. think about responsibility operationally<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Rather than naturalistically which would imply discovering the truth. “in the absence of agreement as what the truth about responsibility is, social practice provides us with an extensive and extremely rich data set about responsibility” p 279

<sup>167</sup> Because looking at it as part of the normative life of a society will help rather than looking only at it in an analytical and abstract way. This does not entail that responsibility can only be understood contextually, but it helps if one can do it as well. By contextually Cane (2002) means “much can be gained by thinking about responsibility in relation to a particular society and a particular time, and in relation to particular social activities and problems, and particular value systems” p 280.

<sup>168</sup> In the absence of agreement about what moral responsibility is and what our moral responsibilities are, law and its institutional resources (“for the making, interpretation, application and enforcement of rules and principles of responsibility”) p 280 might help.

<sup>169</sup> Concepts and principles of responsibility serve various functions (eg. Ontological, explanatory, normative, evaluative), and thinking along these help a more complete perception of what responsibility might be. Ontological is backward-looking and allocates ownership (formation and maintenance of our identities as individuals, how we can influence events and achieve things in the world) of conduct and outcomes. Explanatory is based on ideas of causation and is both backward and forward looking. Normative is forward looking and is about how people ought to behave in the future. Evaluative is concerned with whether past conduct was good, bad or indifferent.

<sup>170</sup> Relation to others, to one's own conduct and to the outcomes of one's conduct. A strict agent-focused theory of responsibility is too limited.

<sup>171</sup> Not always we make the distinction between what it means to be responsible and what our responsibilities are. The latter help us in acknowledging how rules and principles of responsibility distribute risks, rights and obligations amongst individuals and groups. How the burden of responsibility is distributed is an example of how viewing it distributionally might help.

<sup>172</sup> It is important to think about how responsibility is realised in practice, how it might be enforced. “If responsibility matters, then it matters whether and to what extent our lives are regulated in conformity with it” p 283

Looking and thinking at responsibility within such a broad view contributes to the acknowledgment of its complexity and of the difficulty of a comprehensive discussion within the realm of this thesis. It enriches our account and, in pointing us to different directions, it ensures that in trying to understand responsibility we also understand better what it means to be human, and what our relationship with the world around us might be. Strawson (1962) in his essay on reactive attitudes also mentions this need of getting into real life<sup>173</sup>, if we are to understand what responsibility might mean.

In real life, when talking about responsibility, one can be talking of many things, i.e. liability, answerability, accountability, role or task responsibility, as mentioned earlier. The discussion around the first three is essentially backward-looking, in the sense of an evaluative function. Role and/or task are more forward-looking just as those coming from undertakings or agreements, or even any activity one might do. These must include both production of good outcomes and prevention of bad outcomes because being responsible depends both on what one has done or has failed to do, on acts or omissions. But the idea of being responsible or holding someone responsible is not just a matter of behaviour, it goes more deeply. Coming back to Watson (1996) and his attributability characteristic, the one relating to an *aretaic* perspective, where responsibility becomes important “to issues about what is to lead a life, indeed about what it is to have a life in the biographical sense, and about the quality and character of that life” (p.229), we are confronted with responsibility as part of our character, of our self.

The objective of this thesis is to investigate how one could invest in becoming more responsible towards nature. How our actions could be determined by a feeling of responsibility. How could responsibility permeate our morality and become a structuring concept in our relationship with ourselves, the others and nature? How could responsibility become part of us?

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<sup>173</sup> “.. try to keep before our minds something it is easy to forget when we are engaged in philosophy, especially in our cool, contemporary style, viz. what it is actually like to be involved in ordinary interpersonal relationships, ranging from the most intimate to the most casual”. (p 50)

Nevertheless knowing what we are responsible for, why, when and to whom, is not always an easy question to answer and does not depend solely on us. The question of values, for example, plays an important role in determining what, when, why, to whom one is responsible. Social values are important for the meaning of responsibility, as not knowing if an activity is worthy of praise or blame, makes it impossible to attribute moral responsibility. Social values help in deciding what is praiseworthy or to blame, and this might be an evolving and dynamic process. David Hume based much of his morality in praise and blame.

#### **4.5. David Hume and morality**

David Hume observed that the qualities of the mind are selfishness and limited generosity, which together with scarce resources for men's unlimited wants meant we needed to develop justice as a means to ensure a "happy survival of our species". Hume's circumstances of justice were: "tis only from the confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants that justice derives its origins."<sup>174</sup> Justice has been a central concept in philosophy and namely in political philosophy as it is the central concept in structuring society. Even though responsibility<sup>175</sup> has always also had a role, the primacy of justice seems unquestionable. But as justice frames and guides the structure of man living in society, could responsibility also frame and guide the structure of the relationship of man with nature? The "happy survival of our species" might be dependent on that as well.

Apel and Jonas made the case very clear and indeed we are in a situation we could call "circumstances of responsibility" and changing what Hume said we could have - it is from the confined generosity of men, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, and his growing technical and

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<sup>174</sup> In *Treatise of Human Nature*, 3.2.2 (Book 3. Part 2. Section 2). Most of Hume's citations in this chapter are from the *Treatise* 3.2.2. If not, it will be noted.

<sup>175</sup> Responsibility as a concept, not legal responsibility or the close relation between justice and responsibility.

scientific capacity to irreversibly interfere with nature that responsibility should derive its origins -.

Having made the case for responsibility as a fundamental value for grounding our relationship with nature, the second challenge would be to further investigate its place in morality. Responsibility is artificial<sup>176</sup>, it is a human artefact, and it is not natural, meaning it is not nature who tells us to be responsible. So how could one say that the nature and conditions of responsibility amount to the basis of the moral life?

Using Hume's arguments to turn justice into a moral sentiment might be mimicked to this responsibility. Hume thought that the main question to be looked at in his moral philosophy would be the one giving answer to the foundations of morals and is stated in the *Treatise* like this: "Why any action or sentiment upon the general view or survey, gives a certain satisfaction or uneasiness?" In the *Enquiry* he slightly reformulates it into "to reach the foundation of ethics, and find those universal principles, from which all censure or approbation is ultimately derived".

Hume's doctrine was that all or most men in all or most occasions feel an emotion of either censure or approbation and this constitutes the verdict of moral determinations and conclusions. He observes that actions, qualities, and characters which are generally approved fall into two classes:

- those which are immediately agreeable either to their possessor or to other men;
- those which are useful, i.e. ultimately and indirectly productive of pleasure either to their possessor or to other men.

Hume describes and divides all vices and virtues according to these two classes. But how does this approval and disapproval arise? Broad (1959)

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<sup>176</sup> There are different concepts of responsibility and when it is related with causation and not involving human agency, this statement wouldn't be appropriate. There would be nothing artificial in the responsibility of the moon for the sea tides, for example. So the concept of responsibility we are dealing here is the one involving man as an active agent. (Footnote based on a comment by Simon Hope)

proposes to call the “innate disposition to feel emotions of approval and disapproval from time to time the *Moral Sentiment*”. And that another sentiment, *benevolence* or *humanity* is essential to determine in which direction the emotions of approval and disapproval take. This emotional disposition has 4 characteristics according to Broad (1959):

1. it is common to all, or nearly all, men;
2. it is excited by the perception or the thought of any human being, as such, in a state of happiness or misery;
3. it is because the happiness of men is pleasing to most men that most men feel approval for qualities that they believe to be pleasant or conducive to human happiness, and disapproval for qualities that are unpleasant or conducive to human misery;
4. the emotion of approval is itself pleasant and that of disapproval is unpleasant.

This means we have three factors of Hume’s moral theory:

- moral approval – connected with happiness
- sympathetic pleasure
- something believed to be pleasant or useful to man

This means that happiness is a crucial feature of Hume’s moral philosophy: “Everything, which contributes to the happiness of society, recommends itself directly to our approbation and good-will. This is a principle, which accounts, in great part for the origin of morality.” For Hume, society is the first fundamental achievement of Man, without which we would have perished. The second is to maintain it. To maintain society is a difficult task as human nature has many individualistic features that menace it. The challenge is therefore not only to maintain society but to maintain a happy society. The happiness of society becomes mankind’s fundamental aim. For Hume, the great challenge for mankind is to incorporate everything that leads us to achieve happiness, maintain it and enhance it, in the moral system. To turn our actions leading to the society’s happiness into moral action is Hume’s brilliant way to put it.

The first observation of Hume regarding the negative features of human nature is that generally man is greedy: “This avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, universal, and directly destructive of society.” So he concludes that we needed to establish some rules to avoid this avidity and possible destruction of society and at the same time enhance the happiness of mankind. These fundamental rules were for Hume:

- Stability of possession
- Transference of property by consent
- Obligation of promises

With these rules, mankind has been able to maintain an equilibrium that allowed its survival and its flourishing. Justice appears in this context as a help for mankind to keep these rules even when men lose sight of why it is important to keep them as society's unity. It is a device that allows us to overcome our short sight on many actions, when they do not affect us directly.

Man is the weakest of all animals and it is only by aggregating in society that he is able to supply his defects. Society is advantageous if not fundamental by giving additional force, ability and security to an otherwise helpless human being. But as society becomes larger, people in their own actions may often lose sight of that interest when they are tempted to follow a more immediate interest.

But as Hume points out, people never fail to observe and resent the harm that they themselves receive from the injustice of others. So, when we see the effects of uneasiness in the behaviour of the victims of injustice, our mind “passes from these effects to their causes” and forms an idea of the sentiment. Furthermore, because “every human creature resembles ourselves, and by that means has an advantage above any other object, in operating on the imagination”, the uneasiness felt by the victims of injustice not only

communicates itself to us but also begets a correspondent emotion in us according to the psychological principle of sympathy (Norva, 2004).

To ground justice as moral action, through sympathy is a brilliant argument and also one that speaks to us and to our feeling of becoming better persons. To feel sympathy is rewarding in that sense, and therefore the justification of justice has become very appealing. It also turns a very potential rationalist concept – that of justice – into a concept at the mercy of feelings which is very brave. “Self-interest is the original motive to the establishment of justice<sup>177</sup>: but a sympathy with public interest is the source of the moral approbation, which attends that virtue”. “Sympathy is too weak to controul our passions; but has sufficient force to influence our taste, and give us the sentiments of approbation or blame.” And as we have seen these are the moral sentiments that constitute the basis of our morality.

Human nature is determinant for our behaviour and therefore to our morality and Hume was clear in understanding the need to take it into account in any morality system. One of the great features of David Hume’s philosophy was his capacity to see that a potential psychology, anthropology or sociology would be fundamental to develop a proper system of morals. In 1958 Anscombe analyzing modern moral philosophy said we could do nothing before having an adequate philosophy of psychology. New trends in socio-biology, namely the work of E.O. Wilson (1988) have been explaining the relevance of biology to the understanding of human behaviour. They all draw on Hume’s insight of the importance of developing a moral system that would allow a society development. As Deleuze (1959) said: “It is not our nature which is moral, it is rather our morality which is in our nature”.

In this thesis I am proposing to develop responsibility towards nature as a feature of our moral system, and as a virtue. An artificial virtue but started by a natural feeling. Just as the initial development of the sense of justice is natural,

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<sup>177</sup> On the contrary Hutcheson (1694-1746) also a moral sentimentalist, believed in universal benevolence as the highest and best of human motives, known through a moral sense. He explicitly denies that benevolence could ever conflict with true justice.

but it is thereafter augmented and secured by the artifice of custom and education. As Hume says: “Politicians to govern men more easily and preserve peace in human society, have endeavour’d to produce an esteem for justice, and an abhorrence for injustice. (...) They try to extend the natural sentiments beyond their original bounds. (...) As public praise and blame increase our esteem for justice; so private education and instruction contribute to the same effect. ”

It is clear that only when the sense of justice is in its mature and solidified state that it can supply people with a *moral* motive to act justly in a larger society where their self-interested natural motive is too remote. The path for responsibility will be difficult, long and will take time, because as Hume says: “Time alone gives solidity (...). Nothing causes any sentiment to have a greater influence upon us than custom”<sup>178</sup>. We could summarise the features of David Hume’s philosophy as follows:

- Moral sentiments are natural and universal
- Approval and disapproval are the basic moral sentiments
- Pleasure and utility are behind moral sentiments
- Sentiment and not reason are on the foundation of morals
- Sympathy is a natural feeling that helps creating artificial virtues
- Human nature and its survival and happiness are the basis for our morality

Two hundred and fifty years later, the demands of new societies and of new circumstances are challenging us to re-think on new rules to maintain the flourishing of mankind. From Hume’s time up to now, most of the world circumstances changed as did some of man’s circumstances towards the world, namely the power to alter it. But what has not changed is human nature. Man is still selfish and greedy. The resources are even more limited. We still need to live in society. Justice is still a key feature of the unity of most societies. But other circumstances are now also at play, which make again the need of

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<sup>178</sup> Treatise 3.2.10

devising new rules. As mentioned earlier we are now in a situation that can be defined as “circumstances of responsibility”.

New rules are needed to structure our relationship with nature. The Earth Charter<sup>179</sup>, which is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, might be a good start for these potential new rules.

#### Box 4.1. Principles for the Earth Charter

- I – Respect and care for the community of life**
1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity
  2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love
  3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful
  4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations
- II . Ecological Integrity**
5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life
  6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach
  7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being
  8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired
- III. Social and Economic Justice**
9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative
  10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner
  11. Affirm gender equality as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity
  12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities
- IV. Democracy, non-violence, and peace**
13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice
  14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life
  15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration
  16. Promote a culture of tolerance, non-violence, and peace.

Source: <http://www.earthcharter.org>

For Hume, stability of possession; transference of property by consent and obligation of promises were the rules that allowed societies to live in peace and maintain happiness. The rules presented now, even if of a different kind, also aim at restraining “man's avidity” and to consider “the scanty provision nature has made for his wants”. These new rules impose a respect for non-human life

<sup>179</sup> The Earth Charter is a widely recognized, global consensus statement on ethics and values for a sustainable future. It has been formally endorsed by over 2,400 organizations, including global institutions such as UNESCO and the World Conservation Union (IUCN).

and for future generations, as the present technical and scientific capacity to irreversibly interfere with nature is increasingly becoming a threat for a healthy and harmonious and therefore happy life.

Hume used justice to enforce his rules. And as these rules were fundamental for maintaining a happy society, justice became a virtue part of morality. In this situation, responsibility would be our stronger ally. So we want to transform it into a virtue belonging to morality. Hume used the natural feeling of sympathy to help men keeping justice even when they would lose sight of why it was important. This second step has to be kept as an unanswered question. Does sympathy also help men keeping responsibility? Would sympathy still work towards the non-human world, and distant people in space and time?

Even if we cannot answer this question it surely directs us into a view of investing as much as possible in an ethics that privileges human character, and the importance of custom. It points us to thinking about virtues ethics, about what sort of person we are and want to be. In the next chapter, virtue ethics and responsibility as a virtue will be further investigated.

#### ***4.6. Responsibility as a virtue***

According to the “circumstances of responsibility” which have been identified throughout this and previous chapters it seems it would make sense to develop responsibility as a virtue both at individual and political levels. Chapter six and seven will deal more specifically with responsibility at a political level. Individual responsibility should be promoted not only at personal but also at political level.

Individual responsibility is indeed on the political agenda and should be one of the values against which a society and its institutions ought to be evaluated (Brown, 2005, p.23), and so it is relevant to know which social policies would promote it. Brown (2005, p.23) says that “surprisingly little philosophical work has been undertaken to analyse and separate out the different rationales that might be in play”. Brown (2005) in the paper with the self-explanatory title, “If we

value individual responsibility, which policies should we favour?” analyses why individual responsibility should be promoted and which conflicts might arise from a pluralistic view of the value of individual responsibility, and draws some conclusions that might help solving them.

Fairness has been a major rationale for adopting responsibility-sensitive welfare policies, but Brown is afraid that it isn't enough and it might not contemplate future generations. So he presents five rationales for promoting greater individual responsibility, namely (Brown, 2005: p24):

1. “Utility – individual responsibility tends to promote happiness and desire satisfaction
2. Self-respect – encouraging individuals to take greater responsibility for their own lives and livelihoods can enhance self-respect
3. Autonomy – expecting people to take individual responsibility for the success or failure of their own lives is an important way of showing respect for their competence as freethinking agents
4. Human flourishing – individual responsibility is an essential part of what it means to lead a good life
5. Fairness – assigning responsibility to individuals for the situations in which they find themselves can in some cases be the fairest way of resolving a conflict of interests between taxpayers and welfare claimants”

These five rationales might enter in a conflict but, Brown argues, can still help a coherent and attractive social welfare strategy<sup>180</sup>. Mainly the four first ones take us again to a very personal dimension of understanding responsibility.

It enforces this thesis's idea that rather than only imposing external motivations, like constraints or incentives at legal or economic level, promoting the feeling of responsibility and its benefits at personal level seems a fruitful approach, namely regarding environmental policy. Actively choosing one's values and

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<sup>180</sup> Brown's paper uses examples of drug addicts, negligent drivers injures in road traffic accidents, and people who prefer not to work, and therefore it is not of much interest in this chapter. Nevertheless the five rationales are quite universal and a wonderful systematization and therefore worth mentioning.

one's goals implies one is committed to responsibility, as one's identity as an agent is expressed in this choice. Responsibility then might be understood as a virtue, as part of one's character. So rather than considering responsibility as a question of obligation or of acceptable behaviour, to view it as an aspiration, of a virtuous dimension, of even a supererogatory<sup>181</sup> behaviour, is the favoured perspective defended in this thesis. Next chapter will investigate this further.

#### ***4.7. Summary and Conclusion***

It seems that the new concept of responsibility should be universal from a social point of view, as it concerns everybody; it should be global as it concerns the whole world; and it should be irreversible in time as it reaches into the future. Jonas proposed a future-oriented, planetary ethics of collective responsibility and Apel a universal, planetary, macro-ethics of co-responsibility. Both took individual responsibility into a collective or co-responsibility realm and connected risk with responsibility. Chapter eight will come back to this relationship of risk and uncertainty with responsibility.

Chapter two had already set up the context for thinking that we are now in a situation characterised as “circumstances of responsibility” specifically towards nature and the environment. This might mean that the present situation may be evolving to a “collapse”<sup>182</sup> justifying that mankind should alter its course of philosophy towards the environment. Jonas with his pessimism and within the spirit of the seventies adhered to this doom-saying interpretation. Existing technology and plausible future technology allied to the inadequacy of traditional ethics to deal with it were enough for Jonas to consider that a new ethics of responsibility should be developed based on a heuristics of fear and a possible authoritarianism. Apel believed also that novel problems were crying for a new ethics and proposed a discourse ethics based on communication. Different currents of environmental ethics analysed in chapter three proposed a

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<sup>181</sup> One might not need encouraging supererogatory behaviour but then again neither discouraging it.

<sup>182</sup> As Jared Diamond (2006) would say.

rationale based on either the intrinsic value of nature or the care for future generations, to justify new ethics.

Diamond (2006) analysing other “collapse” situations proposed that if we can have enough foresight and wisdom we can avoid them. Ravetz (2006) analysing patterns of failure of systems identified several reasons of why things can go wrong, and proposes that since some of us are understanding what is happening our task is to “convey that understanding to all those who can eventually contribute to a solution and, at the same time, to lay out the way towards a solution” (Ravetz, 2006, p 33). Ravetz (2006) realised that this conveying of understanding is quite difficult and “we cannot know what it will take to convince people and politicians that things are genuinely different now” (p.33), so the best we can do is to have a strategy to be ready for when that shift occurs. Furthermore one should analyse openly different assumptions and behaviour in order to, when the time arrives, act with understanding and compassion and so all together can move towards the perceived best route.

It might be irrelevant to analyse if mankind should be considered accountable for the environmental crisis and therefore morally responsible to do something about it. Hume’s rationale for the “circumstances of justice” was only that it was needed for a happy survival of mankind.

It is difficult to say that if we don’t act responsibly towards the environment, mankind will not survive happily or will not survive at all. There is an intractable uncertainty about this potential “collapse”. But as mentioned in last chapter it is this uncertainty that should move us into behaving responsibly as at least our best bet to deal with it. In fact having a responsible relationship with the environment might always have been relevant, but the characteristics set out at the beginning of this section - universal, global and irreversible – make it now more acute. So this thesis has been entitled “circumstances of responsibility” as responsibility seems, as justice seemed to Hume, the most reliable way forward to deal with the world around us.

Hume thought that the best would be to incorporate it into morality and this has opened way for arguing that it might also make sense to incorporate responsibility towards the environment into morality. Brown's considerations about the development of this responsibility as something that is part of our character and that contributes to our own self-respect, autonomy and flourishing will justify further inquiring the aretaic face of responsibility, as a virtue, as an "attributability" of our character.

Aristotle was one of the first philosophers to have built a theory of moral responsibility. He was interested in two questions. First on how we are responsible for our own character, for the virtues that are states of our character and the second on when one would be subject of praise and blame for one's actions. They are both related as praise and blame are tools for influencing character formation. For the most, this chapter has been pointing in this *aretaic* direction, of the interest of investigating virtue ethics as a potential good theory to best enhance responsibility. The next chapter will be devoted to virtue ethics, and the following ones with more political implications of all this.

## Chapter five - Virtue Ethics

“Ethics surely is in fact, as it has always *mutatis mutandis* been, both exploration and analysis”<sup>183</sup>

### 5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter responsibility was discussed, pointing in the direction of using virtue ethics to further investigate its potentialities. Would virtue ethics be a good ethical normative approach for developing responsibility within an environmental policy context?

Looking at virtue ethics and environmental virtue ethics will help ascertain what are the main characteristics and ideas of this body of literature that fit into this proposal. My hypothesis is that the problems - personal, social, scientific and political - posed by the environmental crisis might benefit from some of the concepts used in virtue ethics, namely those of the importance of character and *eudaimonia*. As seen in the previous chapter, developing responsibility as one of the main contributions - personal, social, scientific and political - for the environmental crisis seems a good investment. In this chapter dwelling into this virtue's body of thought will help finding out what could it contribute to this project of developing responsibility. Could responsibility be a virtue, a character trait? Would it contribute to our own flourishing? Could it be transformed, as to be part of our moral world? Could it be transposed to the political and institutional world? In the next chapter responsibility will be further investigated in a political realm, in this one, virtue thinking will be closely scrutinised in order to decide of its appropriateness to this adventure.

The context of the emergence of virtue ethics as a normative approach will be explained. A brief literature review highlighting the main issues and discussions within virtue ethics will follow. Then this review will continue on environmental

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<sup>183</sup> Murdoch (1956)

virtue ethics, as a significant body of work has already been done on it. In chapters six and seven some ideas around virtue politics will also be revisited.

The objectives of this chapter will be to investigate and discuss if and how could virtue thinking enrich the *corpus* of this thesis. The concepts of the relevance of character and of character building and of *eudaimonia* – flourishing will be the lines investigated. This chapter will end with a set of conclusions opening way to start the *Adagio ma non troppo* chapter, the one on investigating how ethics could better inform politics.

## 5.2. Ethics

Ethics helps us grounding and arguing our decisions and actions. “What should I do?” is a question we need to answer in a coherent, consistent and rational but also emotional way. Different frame thoughts or approaches help us answering it. In normative ethics usually one considers deontology, utilitarianism and only more recently virtue ethics as those different approaches (Hursthouse, 1999; Slote, 2001; Crisp and Slote, 1997).

Deontological ethic, which is identified with Kant (1724-1804) and his followers, is centred in duties. One should always act according to duty and by duty, treating human beings as autonomous and ends in themselves and never as means. The utilitarian ethics inspired by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) defends one should act so as to maximize the good consequences and minimize the bad<sup>184</sup>. Virtue ethics defends one should act as a virtuous person should act and emphasises the need to complement this action question “what should one do?” with another one related with the whole of one’s life, namely “how should one live?”<sup>185</sup> The first two approaches

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<sup>184</sup> This is certainly a very simplistic way of dividing and defining deontology and utilitarianism. Nevertheless we want to focus only on virtue ethics and we are mentioning these other theories only to situate virtue ethics.

<sup>185</sup> As McDowell (1979) so nicely puts it “If the question “how should one live?” could be given a direct answer in universal terms, the concept of virtue would have only a secondary place in moral philosophy. But (...) occasion on occasion, one knows what to do, if one does, not by applying universal principles but by being a certain kind of person: one who sees situations in a certain distinctive way.

have had influence in the way environmental ethics has been developed. The third one is now emerging and it will be investigated further in this chapter. I believe and will argue that virtue ethics is appropriate for further developments within environmental ethics and more specifically with a strand of political relevant environmental ethics.

Other normative approaches will not be attacked or underestimated, as they had, and still have an important role in the achievements of environmental ethics, but the focus will solely be on virtue ethics. Furthermore, normative ethics need not be mutually exclusive<sup>186</sup> and there might be scope for complementarities, as for example rule-utilitarianism. Sandler (2004, p.489) also mentions that Virtue Rules (v-rules) are part of virtue ethics, being the main difference that the “underpinning of the v-rules are the virtues, not the categorical imperative or some other fundamental ethical principle”. Also Hursthouse (1999) mentions that both Kantians and utilitarians might want to add an Aristotelian account of the emotions and still remain Kantians and utilitarians. Also Nussbaum (1999) thinks that the existing ethical currents can absorb the added value of virtue ethics, and therefore virtue ethics *per se* does not make sense. Even though I do not agree with this last statement it is easy to agree that one’s life is usually influenced by a mixture of different ethical approaches<sup>187</sup>.

Watson (1990) also mentions that it makes no sense to opposing ethics of virtue to ethics of duty. A virtuous person will acknowledge her duties easily and even if some discussion might come up on the importance of some duties in relation to others, it would be a mistake to oppose virtue with duty.

Nevertheless it is still seems important for theoretically explore the differences. And as Watson (1990, p.232) states, an ethics of virtue is a “claim that the

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<sup>186</sup> Also Taylor, 1994 shows his disagreement of what he calls reductionism “Why do people think in the first place that it might be plausible that all our ethical commitments might be derived from a single principle? Alternatively put, what seems so strange about moral diversity?”

<sup>187</sup> Murdoch (1956, p.57) also wrote: “philosophers have been misled, not only by a rationalistic desire for unity, but also by certain simplified and generalised moral attitudes current in our society, into seeking a single philosophical definition of morality. (...) Why should philosophy be less various, where the differences in what it attempts to analyse are so important”.

concept of virtue is in some way theoretically dominant”. But one should be open to synergies<sup>188</sup>, especially when applying them to a political context, as will be done further down the line.

### **5.3. *Emergence of Virtue Ethics***

It is widely accepted that virtue ethics is currently one of three major approaches in normative ethics. The other two theories, deontology and utilitarianism had been dominating normative ethics until the recent revivalism of virtue ethics.

The establishment of a new theory is not an easy task, and even in the case of virtue ethics, which is originally more than two thousands years old, it has been a dynamic process, with tough discussions from all moral philosophy quarters. This revivalism has gone through three stages:

- first by denouncing other normative ethics as incomplete, lacking features of a moral life fundamental for an ethical theory;
- second by trying to prove that virtue ethics fulfils this gap and is a real alternative or at least a complement to the other normative ethics;
- thirdly a more independent process of finding its own identity, not by opposing other theories but by itself.

The followers of other normative theories have reacted to this new actor stealing their roles in the scene. The discussions have taken two strands, on one hand downplaying the need for virtue ethics, by finding in their own theories virtue oriented features<sup>189</sup>, and on the other hand reinforcing the central tenets of their theories as the real important ones in moral philosophy.

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<sup>188</sup> Hursthouse (1999, p.5) even hopes that “future generations of moral philosophers, brought up on all three approaches, will lose interest in classifying themselves as following one approach rather than another (...) but that is still over the horizon ...”

<sup>189</sup> For example Kant’s later writings (1797) include a book “The doctrine of virtue” which has been largely ignored by many philosophers, even Kantians or Neo-Kantians. It has gained renewed interest lately, for example it has been translated into Portuguese in 2005. Kant’s theory has also been ignored by most virtue ethicists when discussing deontology as a Kantian based ethic. Kant’s writing on ethics is mainly

Within this process, moral philosophy has been the main winner, by an enrichment of its vocabulary, awakening of dormant concepts, exciting discussions and a renewed interest in its existence as a philosophical discipline. There are a dozen of key ingredients in moral philosophy and several recipes have been appearing in how to cook them together. Motive, intention and character have been the newly used, and reason, duty, pleasure, belief, will, emotion, inclination, right, good, desire and, appetite have been cooked differently. The revivalism of virtue ethics has brought up a shift from an emphasis on choice, on how to choose what to do, into an emphasis on the motives and intentions behind the choice, and into the whole life of the ethical agent.

Aristotelian ethics, which is arguably the strongest influence on contemporanean virtue ethics, was mortally wounded in the aftermath of modernity, and it took long before anyone started looking at it again<sup>190</sup>. One of

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centred in conceptions of duty, autonomy of the will, universality and rationality. On this book on virtues his conception of virtue is very different from both the classical and the contemporanean ones. Kant repudiates the conception of Aristotle's mean. Kant rejects any conception of *eudaimonia* or other conception of happiness as determinant for ethics (even though he accepts that acting virtuously might bring some satisfaction and therefore act as a sort of reward). He rejects the idea of examples: virtuous person's actions as guides to non-virtuous persons. Finally he also rejects the importance of character traits. The way Kant understands virtue is almost as Aristotle understands continence. For Aristotle a virtuous person is someone who attained a status of harmony between motives, desires and acts. For Kant, a virtuous person is someone who can control his desires through reason. But in a way that also harmonises the will with the act, such that acting becomes a duty, an internal duty. For Kant, acting virtuously expresses the autonomy of the will, even though it is a self restrained kind of act. For Kant it is possible to determine the will through reason. And such a disposition of reason to determine our choices is his way of seeing virtue as a moral trait. The existence of laws determining our conduct is fundamental for Kant. If they are external they are legal laws, but if they are internal, i.e. if the laws themselves constitute the way one determines one's actions which then become duties then they are moral laws. These moral laws are *a priori*, universal, are not determined by circumstances or contingencies and are commanded by reason. In this book Kant accepts the importance of moral anthropology but considers that it comes only after the metaphysic of morals. Duties are still the central conception of Kant's philosophy and in this book of virtues, and perhaps inspired by Grotius, Pufendorf and Hume he divides these duties in perfect and imperfect and these last ones are what he considers virtues. Moral laws do not determine actions, they determine maxims for the actions, and this means that these laws are broader than the legal ones (which determine actions). So the duties that come from moral laws are imperfect, in the sense that they are almost voluntary. Imperfect duties are virtue duties. There are some authors, namely O'Neill (1983) and Louden (1986) who defend Kant's "virtue ethics" as a significant component of his work. O'Neill, responding to MacIntyre rather inaccurate interpretation of a Kantian sort of moral rules as algorithms, even states that "Kant offers primarily an ethic of virtue rather than an ethic of rules". Louden is more modest. This discussion is quite interesting but not in the realm of our thesis and therefore we leave it here.

<sup>190</sup> "In the tradition of Western philosophy since the fifth century B.C., the default form of ethical theory has been some version of what is nowadays called virtue ethics; real theoretical alternatives emerge only with Kant and with consequentialism" (Annas 2005). Christian ethics a sort of virtue ethics had been dominating for a long period. The devoid caused by its dismissal provided room for Kant and utilitarianism to dominate normative ethics. (Annas, 2005, Hursthouse, 1999, Nussbaum, 1999)

the first philosophers to get tired of “Mill’s utilitarianism and Kant’s deontology” guiding our ethics was G.E.M. Anscombe (1958, p.1) claiming that the “concepts of *moral* obligation and *moral* duty and of what is *morally* right and wrong, and of the moral sense of “ought” ought to be jettisoned”. She believed we needed a sound philosophy of psychology to be able to advance anything in moral philosophy. Anscombe was very critical about all modern moral philosophy and advanced the idea of considering the concept of virtue as a new beginning. A great number of authors consider her paper as the trigger for the revivalism of virtue ethics<sup>191</sup>.

In 1956, Murdoch had already written that “the insistence that morality is essentially rules may be seen as an attempt to secure us against the ambiguity of the world” (...) “there are times when it is proper to stress, not the comprehensibility of the world, but its incomprehensibility, and there are types of morality which emphasise this more than is customary in utilitarian Liberal moralities” (p.50). Murdoch (1964, 1967, and 1969) also believed that morality should be considered as a matter of our whole mode of life. Murdoch (1967) defends the “unselfing” – that is, the shifting of perspective from concerns of the self to those outside it. For Murdoch, virtue is also this movement beyond the self, and an idea of developing a capacity for an ultimately love of what she calls “the Good”.

Other authors also point to different justifications for an increasing interest in virtue ethics. Williams (1985) identifies a problem of the morality system, which is to try to make everything into obligations, even when considerations that seemingly do not yield obligations. Wolf (1982) says that if one wants to consider things like personal bearing, creativity, sense of style, than this is incompatible with Kantian or utilitarian ideals. She thinks that moral ideals do not, and need not, make the best personal ideals and this involves a perspective that has been ignored by contemporary moral philosophy. This means that judgements should be made outside the limits set by the values, interests, and desires that a person might actually have.

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<sup>191</sup> One of them, Duncan Richter, even entitled his book *Ethics after Anscombe. Post “Modern moral philosophy”*, 2000.

Nussbaum (1999) identifies the reasons for the re-emerging of virtue ethics, as a discontent, not with Kant or Bentham or Mill themselves, but rather with how their followers had focused the ethical questions on choice and action, neglecting the agent's emotions and desires and the ethical life of the agent. She blames this on a phase of ethics that ignored moral psychology. This was also the main argument Anscombe (1958) had identified already fifty years ago by having said that we needed moral psychology to be able to do moral philosophy. Nussbaum (1999) identified the non cognitive view of emotion as a cause and a consequence of the troubled relation between moral philosophy and moral psychology.

So this re-emerging of virtue ethics happens because certain philosophers got tired of the existing approaches to ethics, mainly based on either utilitarianism or deontology. Most of this feeling comes from a perception of *quasi* ignorance of the ethical life of the agent, and almost exclusive focus in choice and action<sup>192</sup>. The motives, character, emotions had been put on a shelf and were getting too dusty. Soon after this re-emerging followers of both deontology and utilitarianism, came back to their origins and found that after all, their theories also contemplated virtues and therefore the revivalism of virtue ethics *per se* did not make sense. But the main argument lies on the fact that for virtue ethics, virtues are the central and basic notion, the criteria for right action, while for the others it is not at their centre even if they consider it.

#### **5.4. Virtue Ethics**

After opening space for a new approach in normative ethics, the second phase was based on specifically showing the main oppositions between virtue ethics and the other approaches. For example Trianosky (1990)<sup>193</sup> published an

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<sup>192</sup> As Hursthouse (1999, p.2) says "Dissatisfaction with deontology and utilitarianism comes from it having ignored or sidelined a number of topics that any adequate moral philosophy should address: motives, moral character, moral education, moral wisdom or discernment, friendship and family relationships, a deep concept of happiness, the role of emotions in our moral life, and the questions of what person I should be, and of how we should live."

<sup>193</sup> Virtue ethicists reviewed by Trianosky are among others Anscombe, Gewirth, Foot, Darwall, Frankena, Prichard, Warnock, Pincoffs, Hursthouse.

overview of virtue ethics specially comparing it to deontological ethics. He reckons that a great deal of unity within work on virtues lies on an opposition to central elements of a view he calls neo-Kantianism even if Kant himself wouldn't endorse it all. Triantosky (1990) identified nine claims<sup>194</sup> of this neo-Kantianism that most contemporary writers on virtues would agree in rejecting, if not all, then at least a significant number of them.

He reckons that there is a sort of a ruler between ethics of duty and ethics of virtue. Then he defines what would be in the extremes of this ruler, what he calls pure ethics of virtue on one side and pure ethics of duty on the other side. The main difference is that for an ethics of duty only judgements about right action are basic in morality and virtuousness of traits is derivative in some way from the rightness of actions *versus* the pure ethics of virtue where only judgements about virtue are basic in morality and that rightness of actions is derivative from virtuousness of traits.

McDowell (1979, [2003] p.141) has a very nice way to compare the place of virtue within moral theories: "if the concept of right conduct is the most important, then virtue has a secondary place and is considered as a disposition to behave rightly, the nature of virtue is explained, as it were, from the outside in. (...) if (based in Aristotle) the main question is "how should one live?" then the question is approached via the notion of a virtuous person and so the conception of right conduct is grasped, as it were, from the inside out." He defines virtue as an "ability to recognize requirements which situations impose on one's behaviour".

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<sup>194</sup> The nine claims are: 1. The most important question in morality is "what is right or obligatory to do?"; 2. Basic moral judgements are judgements about the rightness of actions; 3. Basic moral judgements take the form of general rules or principles of right action. Particular judgments of the right are always instances of these; 4. Basic moral judgements are universal in form. They contain no essential reference to particular persons or particular relationships in which the agent may stand; 5. Basic moral judgements *are not* grounded on some account of the human good which is itself entirely independent of morality; 6. Basic moral judgements are categorical imperatives. They have a certain automatic reason-giving justificatory force independently of their relation to the desires and/or interests of the agents; 7. It is possible for considerations about what is required by basic moral judgements to play some role in the actual motivation *of any agent*, independently of the operation of desire and emotion in him/her; 8. It is necessary that considerations about what is required by basic moral judgements play some role in the actual motivation *of the truly virtuous agent*, independently of the operation of desire and emotion in him/her; 9. The virtuousness of a trait is always derivative from some relationship it displays to what is antecedently specified as right action.

On a third phase, emphasis was put on the characteristics of virtue ethics that would define it, positively if one may say so. For example Oakley (1996)<sup>195</sup> made a review of different virtue ethicists and concluded that even though they differ in many aspects, they all have in common the following six claims:

- An action is right if and only if it is what an agent with a virtuous character would do in the circumstances;
- Goodness is prior to rightness;
- The virtues are irreducibly plural intrinsic goods;
- The virtues are objectively good;
- Some intrinsic goods are agent-relative;
- Acting rightly does not require that we maximise the good

These six claims, which are endorsed by all virtue ethicists, form a basis that both justifies the theory and shows how it differs from both Kantianism and Utilitarianism. Furthermore they contribute to an enrichment of contemporary ethics. Oakley (1996) concludes that this basis is enough for understanding that virtue ethics cannot be assimilated to a character-based form of those other theories, as some philosophers had suggested.

Also Nussbaum (1999) suggests that if there is any common ground among the defenders of “virtue ethics,” it lies in these three claims<sup>196</sup>:

- Moral philosophy should be concerned with the agent, as well as with choice and action.
- Moral philosophy should therefore concern itself with motive and intention, emotion and desire: in general, with the character of the inner moral life, and with settled patterns of motive, emotion, and reasoning that lead us to call someone a person of a certain sort (courageous, generous, moderate, just, etc.).

<sup>195</sup> Virtue ethicists reviewed by Oakley are among others, Foot, Hursthouse, MacIntyre, Hurka, Slote, Watson, McDowell.

<sup>196</sup> But she feels that it isn't enough to form a new category for two reasons: first because within Kantian and Utilitarian traditions there has already been a lot of writing and thinking about virtue; and second because there is no unity in the so-called virtue ethicists. Even though Nussbaum identified this common ground for them she defends that any category of ethics could pursue those three claims.

- Moral philosophy should focus not only on isolated acts of choice, but also, and more importantly, on the whole course of the agent's moral life, its patterns of commitment, conduct, and also passion.

Philippa Foot has also been quite influential in the awakening of virtue ethics and she had already developed three criteria for what should be a virtue (1978):

- virtues are beneficial characteristics that a human being needs to have for his own sake and that of his fellows;
- they have to actually engage the will, and are thus to be distinguished from skills
- they are corrective, in the sense that they are about what is difficult for humans in general.

Another major author is Alasdair MacIntyre who wrote *After Virtue*. MacIntyre (1981) suggests that we lost a sense of narrative of the moral sphere with modernity, and now we are not part anymore of the community in which moral concern took shape and developed. He proposes a return to an Aristotelian view, one that encourages a search after goodness through the virtues. He defended that virtues are related to practices, because the exercise of virtues besides being important for its own sake have also further point and purpose, and it is in grasping those that initially one comes to value the virtues. He defends a historicist perspective and a narrow view of virtues as related with tradition and culture, as his thesis is that virtues depend on the cultures where they are enshrined. He is a particularist and defender of communitarianism, and later on this issue will be tackled. MacIntyre also proposed a tentative definition of virtue: “a virtue is an acquired human quality the possession and exercise of which tends to enable us to achieve those goods which are internal to practices and the lack of which effectively prevents us from achieving any such goods” (1981, [2003], p.191). Perhaps because of some of his controversial ideas, MacIntyre, more than his predecessors, made many philosophers start thinking and discussing virtues.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> For example the *Inquiry* published in 1983 a whole issue on MacIntyre's “After Virtue”, with papers from several philosophers attacking and defending MacIntyre, and with MacIntyre defending himself.

Recently also came out the accounts of Swanton (2003) who is worried fundamentally about the rightness of actions and tries to inquire an ethical criterion of rightness. She proposes that an action is virtuous in respect V (e.g. benevolent) if and only it hits the target of virtue V (e.g. benevolence) and at the same time an action is right if and only is overall virtuous. Many other authors have been and are developing other features of virtue ethics. These will appear here and now in the discussions to follow.

Attacks on virtue ethics' lack of unity and on the idea that it does not provide action guidance are recurrent. Even if it is true that there is a lack of unity in virtue ethics it does not amount to a serious problem, because its identity is not at stake. Regarding the lack of action guidance, Hursthouse (1999) deconstructs the main arguments, either by comparing them with the other normative ethics or explaining why this is not so. But the main aim here is not to attack other theories or defend virtue ethics from attacks as this has been done extensively in the literature<sup>198</sup>, so the focus will be rather on how virtue ethics could be linked with environmental policy and what are the reasons justifying it.

## **5.5. Environmental virtue ethics**

Environmental policy is the field of study for this inquiry. Therefore a brief introduction to environmental virtue ethics is also relevant. Even though virtue ethics is quite a new normative approach, several environmental ethicists have already been thinking about it. Some authors will be briefly reviewed, namely Hill (1983), Westra (1998), Frasz (2001), Sandler (2004), and Hull (2005) who have been building up environmental virtue ethics<sup>199</sup>.

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<sup>198</sup> Hursthouse, 1991 and 1999 has defended virtue ethics against all claims against it. In Hursthouse (1991) she discusses nine frequent criticisms to virtue theory. Some she considers misplaced and explains why, others she considers that they are not misplaced but yet she does not agree. For some she claims that rival theories are no better, and therefore virtue theory is as good and has advantages of its own.

<sup>199</sup> Sandler and Cafaro, who have been writing and developing environmental virtue ethics, edited a book with a collection of the most relevant papers written on it: "Environmental Virtue Ethics" Edited by R. Sandler and P. Cafaro (2005)

Environmental virtue ethics, insofar as it embraces a perspective of cultivating human character traits that enhance a healthy and harmonious relationship and interaction with nature is, albeit without being named, present in the philosophies of Arne Naess, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold and many others. In fact their emphasis in changing our lifestyles into more respect and care for nature is already a step given in direction of a more environmentally virtuous life. Van Wensveen (1999) also notices that virtue language is present in a way or another in the work of almost all environmental philosophers. Fortunately, she argues, as it enhances our capacity to respond to environmental challenges. “One more language is one more chance” Van Wensveen (1999, [2005], p.27) says. Or as Sandler (2005, p.7) puts it “virtue language is not only everywhere in the discourse, it is indispensable to the discourse”.

But it has been in the last 20 years that different theories of environmental virtue ethics have been defended openly acknowledging its virtue ethics realm. Hill (1983) is usually considered one of the first philosophers to espouse environmental virtue ethics, by claiming the limits of utilitarian and deontological ethics in explaining some actions. There are actions that are not immoral but yet we feel some sort of discomfort. So instead of the traditional question of what is right or wrong to do, Hill (1983) says that very often, the question that comes into mind is rather “What sort of person would do such a thing?” (Hill [2005], p.47). Maximizing utility or treating humans as end-in-themselves was not enough and one should consider exploring an ethic of human flourishing to understand and explain some actions.

In general, environmental virtue ethics can be placed in mainly two currents. The extensionist current is based on an extension of virtues of the human realm to land or nature, such as friendship, benevolence or loyalty (e.g. Frasz 1993, 2001, Welchman 1999). The other current defends a new type of a specifically environmental virtue as for e.g. ecological sensitivity (Sandler, 2004) or integrity (Westra, 1998).

Sandler (2004) defends a conception of environmental virtue distinct from a human virtue but with the same normative status. This virtue should be endemic and peculiar to environmental interactions and relationships. Sandler coins it as ecological sensitivity. He reckons that environmental virtues such as those Frasz and Welchman propose have only selective normativity as they are so, only for those who desire it. Alternatively ecological sensitivity, that Sandler sees as a human excellence, should be cultivated independently of one's desires or position, and comes from the simple fact that one is a human person in the world. He also defends that a virtue such as this provides the action-guidance that so many critics of virtue ethics like to point. In the same line as Hursthouse he defends its action guidance as a characteristic of his proposal.

Westra (1998) also specifically talks about virtue ethics on her development of the principle of integrity which is her focus for a new global ethics. For Westra (1998) the integrity of ecological and biological processes is the foundational value for this new ethics.

Frasz (1993, 2001) on the other hand, has been writing about different character traits that should count as environmental virtues. He develops environmental virtue ethics along other lines. He defends that "From its beginning environmental ethics has addressed questions central to virtue ethics such as what is the best kind of life one can live with the natural world, what kinds of moral relationships are better for people to establish with the natural world, and what kinds of expanded communities might foster positive traits in humans?"<sup>200</sup>. Frasz (2001) sees environmental virtue ethics as "it seeks to determine what attitudes, traits of character, habits of behaviour, practices and policies will aid in the ultimate good: flourishing human life within a healthy biotic community". He then goes on defending friendship as the main environmental virtue which can be extended to nature and to future generations. Recently Frasz (2005) has proposed also benevolence as an environmental virtue.

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<sup>200</sup> Version sent kindly by Frasz himself by email in a word version with no pages.

Another strand comes from Christian virtue ethic that draws mainly on Aquinas' thought. Deane-Drummond (2004) is such an example proposing a virtue ethic centred on wisdom. She argues for a recovery of a primacy of virtue ethics within a Christian framework. She says (p.xi) that "virtue ethics is consistent with Christian theology and that an understanding of the classical cardinal virtue of prudence, routed in the theological virtues of charity, hope and faith and set in the context of the three other cardinal virtues of justice, fortitude and temperance, is relevant for ethical consideration of the natural world. (...) Prudence, broadly speaking, is the means through which the good can be achieved, understood in terms of goodness as given by God. (...) The need for a wisdom ethic for the environment stems from not only a requirement for practical wisdom or prudence in complex environmental decision-making, but also the need to bring hope in an uncertain world. This Christian virtue of hope is critical in framing environmental decisions, for without hope it would be easy to give up on our responsibilities out of a sense of despair".

More recently, Hull (2005) proposes good ecocitizenship as the overarching environmental virtue. He considers it an excellence constitutive of human flourishing and describes a good ecocitizen as one admiring "actions reflecting green excellence, and does so regardless of whether she benefits materially from them" (p.104). Hull believes that a "person who possesses this excellence recognizes clearly the close connection between human flourishing and appreciating and understanding wild nature, and a portrait of her fundamental values must reflect this awareness. Thus the core values embraced by a person who possesses this excellence begin with the recognition that we are all plain citizens of our planet, that we for our own physical, intellectual, and moral benefit share it with other forms of life" (p.103).

On the contrary, Attfield (1999) dismisses environmental virtue ethics stating that without principles of obligation, virtues are "short-sighted if not blind". Also Katz (1997) says that environmental policy should be based on secure foundation of philosophical and ethical reasoning. Katz reckons that environmental policy based on virtue ethics is equivalent of it being based on the unstable and "variable dictates of prudential self-interest". Rolston III (2005)

also argues that environmental virtues are not enough if not complemented by the acknowledgment of the intrinsic value of nature. He calls an environmental virtue ethics that does not consider value of nature, as “immature” and proposes instead an “environmental virtue/value ethics”, to be sure that we do not stand halfway. His main argument is that one should respect values in nature for their own sake and not as “tributary for human flourishing”.

Nevertheless environmental virtue ethics is becoming an established field within environmental ethics and in the introduction to the anthology<sup>201</sup> above mentioned, Sandler (2005) identifies four different approaches to the specification of environmental virtue, claiming that they need not be mutually exclusive:

- i. extensionism
- ii. considerations of benefit to agent
- iii. considerations of human excellence
- iv. study of role models

Sandler (2005) argues that they provide a rich variety of resources for thinking about environmental virtues.

Hull (2005) also makes an effort to systematize environmental virtue ethics claiming that it is ultimately justified by its contribution to:

- i. to guiding human practice
- ii. to improving the well-being of ordinary people
- iii. preserving the environment

Environmental virtue ethics has been developed in the assumption that there was space for thinking about character and behaviour of people within environmental ethics, and that those questions were not addressed by traditional ethics or traditional environmental ethics (more worried with the

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<sup>201</sup> Sandler R and Cafaro, P. (ed), *Environmental virtue ethics* Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005

intrinsic value of nature). People have traits of character, attitudes, habits, dispositions and it is people that make laws, promote policies, and act towards nature. Therefore it makes sense to identify what are the potential attitudes that constitute environmental virtues and what is the role of character in environmental ethics. This is also one of my main lines of argumentation as we will see further on.

Furthermore there is a growing concern with human flourishing, with what promotes it and what contributes to it. The idea that nature and living with nature and understanding it is a source of joy, peace, self-knowledge, and even a feeling of renewal (if one is receptive to it), leads one to acknowledge that promoting this openness and sensitivity to nature might be part of a process of one's own flourishing.

Promoting lifestyles that enhance an equilibrated and harmonious relationship with nature has been a perennial objective of environmental ethics. Acknowledging the role of virtues to promote this type of lifestyles has been a specific added-value of environmental virtue ethics. Furthermore, as Van Wensveen (1999) observes, ecological virtue discourse, as a distinctive, diverse, dialectical, dynamic, and visionary moral language carries the promise of moral creativity. Such creativity is fundamental for the many ecological challenges we face, and for which traditional moral languages are difficultly adaptable. Problems and dilemmas that environmental ethics are constantly faced with, such as questions of rights of trees, animals, or plants, might be overcome by looking through new moral lenses, different perspectives. As Van Wensveen (1999) states, virtue language has pre-modern roots which is an advantage when modernity is considered in part responsible for the ecological crisis, and where one needs a new moral language that is independent of such an worldview.

## 5.6. Getting somewhere

Where do we stand now? It seems that there are as many theories on virtue ethics as virtue ethicists and environmental virtue ethicists. Some privilege character traits (Hursthouse and Slote), or focus on *eudaimonia* (Hursthouse and Foot), others on its tradition and community characteristics (MacIntyre), among others. Nussbaum (1999) divides virtue ethicists into two categories: either anti-utilitarian who want to enlarge the place of reason in ethics or anti-Kantians who believe that reason plays a too dominant role in ethics. She dubs the first ones as pro-Aristotelic as they focus on the idea that the critical work of practical reason can enlighten emotions like desires, habits, beliefs, and passions. The second group is more pro-Humean and has a non universal view of ethics, together with a certain cultural relativism and emphasis on emotions and desires<sup>202</sup>. In the previous chapter Hume's moral philosophy was investigated to check if responsibility could have the same fate as justice – being imported into morality. In this chapter the pro-Aristotelic line of thought, the classical account of virtue ethics refocused by contemporary glasses and its emphasis in character, *eudaimonia*, practical reasoning and connections with politics will be pursued.

The critic on lack of unity within virtue ethics is probably an appropriated critic<sup>203</sup>. Virtue ethics seems difficult or impossible to define. We can either consider it as a concept or alternatively by its many conceptions and many characteristics<sup>204</sup>. The previous literature review, focused on the many conceptions as it is the more easy path and it gives more breath of choice for one's own preferred version. Defining it as a concept or a core concept would be more difficult to get broad agreement. As seen above, both Oakley (1996) and Nussbaum (1999) tried to dig out common ground among virtue ethicists. But it does not seem that one single concept exists. Hursthouse (1999, p.1)

<sup>202</sup> Nussbaum (1999) looks at Homiak, McDowell, Murdoch, Richardson, Sherman, Wiggins and Nussbaum as pro-Aristotelians and to Baier, Blackburn, Foot, MacIntyre, Williams as more anti-Kantians and some pro-Humean. She acknowledges this is a too simplistic dichotomy but useful for the sake of her argument. She also looks at Sidgwick, Mill, Kant and Bentham to find virtue related arguments in their philosophies.

<sup>203</sup> But as we mentioned above, it might not be too worrying as its identity is not put in question.

<sup>204</sup> This idea is based on Rawls's distinction between the concept and the various conceptions of something, and was kindly pointed to me by Simon Hope, a PhD student in Cambridge, UK, investigating similar themes.

says it is a “term of art initially introduced to distinguish an approach in normative ethics which emphasizes the virtues, or moral character”. Slote (2001) proclaims that exact definitions are difficult and he approaches it via the contrast with the other theories “based in moral laws, rules, and principles” while virtue ethics is “agent-focused”. Watson (1990 [2003], p.231) defined it as a “set of abstract theses about how certain concepts are best fitted together for the purposes of understanding morality”.

Or one could come back to Aristotle, for whom it was a philosophy of life based on the need for Man to develop his character and intellectual capacities. Explicitly Aristotle defined it as a happier Man, but indirectly he would be a better Man. Hursthouse (1999) and Annas (2005) (among others) who develop an Aristotelian virtue ethics also emphasize the flourishing dimension of virtue ethics.

It seems that there is one idea in virtue ethics that could be retained as core, or at least as its real added value. It is the personal dimension of ethics with its associated satellites of character, of *eudaimonia* or flourishing, and of how should one live and what sort of person does one want to be. The criteria of right action in virtue ethics is what a virtuous person would do at that moment, but the decision this virtuous person would do is informed by his/her general form of life he/she is living, and the way in which their reasoning about morality is drawn from their idea of the right sort of life. Even though virtue ethics is not limited to this sort of more personal dimension<sup>205</sup> of a philosophy of life, it seems legitimate to select it for this inquiry, because those features are quite distinctive from other ethical theories and those which will help us achieve our aim. Before going on, it would be important to stress that even considering this personal dimension as a core idea within virtue ethics it would be wrong and

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<sup>205</sup> Some virtue ethicists (namely Hursthouse, 1999) are afraid that in privileging this personal dimension, this might be used to argue that virtue ethics cannot be a rival to utilitarianism and deontology since it is not oriented to give guidance on the right action. Nevertheless we believe that this personal dimension does not undermine the action guidance dimension and is a clear added value of virtue ethics. Indeed one of the main reasons for its justification and existence.

unfair to say that it is an egoistic or egocentric sort of philosophy and centred in the self<sup>206</sup> as will be seen in a moment.

Could virtue ethics, environmental virtue ethics and virtue politics contribute for developing the concept of responsibility within environmental philosophy and policy? A discussion of virtue ethics as such is not the objective of this thesis. The objective is rather to investigate if one could specifically apply virtue thinking to environmental thinking, both at an individual and a political level. So the challenge, from now on, will be to produce an argument out of this “personal” path defending that indeed it is worth thinking along these lines. Looking into these satellites revolving around virtue ethics, namely character and *eudaimonia* and investigating its relevance for, namely a better environment<sup>207</sup> will follow.

## 5.7. Character

### 5.7.1. Introduction

The focus will be on the individual as an active agent and on his character<sup>208</sup>, motives and behaviour. Virtue thinking attributes quite a lot of responsibility to the individual. This responsibility translates into a need of constant awareness of the inner self and its development. “In a philosophical analysis of morality what place should be given to the “inner life”?” asked Murdoch (1956, p.36) when talking about the importance of other things than solutions to problems, something she calls someone’s “total vision of life” (p.39), or “texture of a man’s

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<sup>206</sup> Annas (1992) deconstructed that misunderstanding about the egoism. Virtues are not switched off when one’s own interest is not at stake (ex. Courage, benevolence). Virtues and flourishing are not independent, meaning that flourishing cannot be understood separated from virtues, and egoism is a vice which cannot be associated to flourishing.

<sup>207</sup> Another major theme is practical wisdom and practical reasoning, but we will not dwell into that. First because of its fundamental importance, mainly as the corner stone of acting, there is already a large body of literature dealing with it; secondly because acting virtuously depends so much on it, that even if not mentioning it directly, it is nevertheless embedded in the discussion about character and virtues.

<sup>208</sup> Not all virtue ethicists agree that character is the main issue in virtue ethics, disagreeing over its role, its primacy (Watson, 1990), its unity (Badhvar, 1996). For Hursthouse (1999) virtues are character traits (except gratitude, friendship and other few ones) and so if one has the “virtues of say, honesty, generosity, justice then one is honest, generous, just” which are more than tendencies or dispositions to act. Slote also considers character a main component in virtue ethics.

being or the nature of his personal vision” (p.39). As she says, in the ordinary sense, the question is of how “a person is like” (p.39). And how one is like is constituted above all by one’s character.

And one’s overall character is constituted and determined by character traits. And virtues are character traits, or following Aristotle, more than that they are excellences of character. They are more than tendencies to act. They are strongly entrenched and so one expects reliability in actions of virtuous persons. So in virtue ethics, being virtuous is the same as acting virtuously. Doing the right thing for the right reason and with internal harmony, is basically a matter of character. For this inquiry the question is that one’s “inner self” must be responsible, must feel responsible and then must act responsibly.

The question of character has an important role in discussions for and against virtue ethics, as it is one that is rather attacked by other ethical theories. So before continuing it might be useful to point some of the more widespread objections to the importance of character and arguments dismissing it.

### **5.7.2. Attacking and defending character**

There are some authors, mainly within social psychology who deny the importance of character traits or even its existence. They are situationists (for ex. Doris, 1998 and Harman, 1999) and believe that the true determinant of our behaviour depends on the situation and not on our character. They built some experiences or draw on others experiments where indeed most people reacted the same way, even though they were different people, and so concluded that their behaviour depended therefore on the situation rather than on their character. But also within social psychology there are other authors (for example Miller, 2003 and Sreenivasan, 2002) who oppose this way of looking at the experiments giving different degrees of explanations. Either differentiating global traits from local traits, or considering that fully virtuous persons do not exist but that does not imply that there are no character traits that can and

should be inculcated on people. They also downplayed the importance of the experiments and challenged the interpretation situationists did. Nevertheless what is coming out of this discussion is that one should be neither an extreme situationist nor an extreme trait believer. The way one behaves is indeed a mixture of many variables and trait and situation are two of them. But this does not go against virtue ethics because virtue ethics is mainly a character building moral theory which assumes it as a difficult task. The difficulty comes exactly by many of the circumstances that might make one not behaving virtuously.

Other criticisms to the character based virtue ethics come from an idea of being too self-centred. If one is worried mainly with one's character, and if this is related with flourishing and well-being, at a first sight it would seem that one would be self-centred rather than other-regarding. But one should see that most virtues are related with one's behaviour towards the other, and this behaviour is to be the mirror of ones motives, and if these are not other-regarding, than it is not virtuous behaviour. On top of that, virtue ethics aims at the well-being of everybody (of oneself and of the other) and in that sense, again the self-centred objection loses its power.

A final set of objections are related with the idea of luck and of freedom. Luck in the sense that we are not responsible for a good upbringing or with other circumstances that would develop and improve our character; freedom in the sense that upbringing and habituation are not chosen by one and therefore one does not have the freedom as such in the development of one's character and even one's actions. But one important thing is that acting virtuously always depends on deliberation and practical reason. In that sense, one is free to choose one's actions. And on top of that if one has a virtuous upbringing rather than narrowing choices, this enhances one's way at seeing the world and it gives freedom to choose deliberatively the sort of person one wants to be. So it is not an impediment of freedom, it is rather almost a condition for freedom.<sup>209</sup> A virtuous upbringing does not imply that the child will become a virtuous person. Rather it gives the foundations for that to happen, and in that sense it gives still

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<sup>209</sup> Some of these objections and their defence are inspired by a paper by Moira Walsh presented at the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy in 1998.

a lot of responsibility to the child, teen-ager, young adult and adult for their actions. This implies that people with a virtuous upbringing are still subject to praise or blame, because a lot of their behaviour is still their own choice and responsibility. Therefore if it is true that luck plays a certain role, it is also true it is not the central role. Virtue politics tries to give the conditions for everybody to have such an upbringing and that is a possible contribution to diminish this luck component. So there is much more than luck necessary and furthermore one should also acknowledge the contingent features of the human condition not as limitations but try to change them into potentialities.

Having dismissed the usual objections to character and character building, I can now continue our adventure of justifying its importance in an ethics that can apply it to the environment.

### 5.7.3. Responsibility as a virtue

Aristotle's discussion on moral responsibility is not as virtue but as to determine when a person should or should not be accountable for his actions. Throughout times, philosophically, responsibility has been the corner stone of the discussion between free-will and determinism<sup>210</sup>. Nevertheless the reason to choose virtue ethics, in detriment of deontology or utilitarianism is mainly because it might help investigating the possibility of responsibility to be a character trait, a virtue.

Following Aristotle, having virtues of character is not enough, virtues of thought are also necessary. "Virtue, then, is of two sorts, virtue of thought and virtue of character. Virtue of thought arises and grows mostly from teaching, and hence needs experience and time. Virtue of character results from habit" (NE 1103 a 15)<sup>211</sup>. So for Aristotle what we need is a good education to get the right habits early on in life, and then study and develop our intellectual capacities. Even if simply stated, its implementation is rather complex. In this inquiry of developing

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<sup>210</sup> Which, as mentioned and argued earlier I do not want to be involved in.

<sup>211</sup> For Aristotle the first ones were bravery, temperance, generosity, magnificence, magnanimity and the virtues of thought were *episteme*, *techne*, *phronesis*, *nous*, *sophia*.

responsibility as a virtue, a trait of character, it means educating children and people into the habit of responsibility, which basically translates into one being considerate towards the Other<sup>212</sup>, respecting oneself and the Other, assuming one's actions and being accountable for one's actions, and then when applying it to the environment it will require virtues of thought, namely wisdom (*sophia*) on environment in order to be able to take the right actions, and practical wisdom (*phronesis*) which will be transformed into the need for individuals to participate actively in the polity.

This means that the process has three stages, if one could say so. First, one should develop responsibility as a habit, secondly one should be given the opportunity and hopefully have the openness and the will to learn about the environment, and lastly one should develop an active mood in one's being in the world and in a polity, i.e. being an active citizen.

The first phase is mainly a dependent phase. Of the other, of the family, of the community and of the school but it also requires, not only that one learns from others, but also that one thinks and understands for oneself. As Annas (2005)<sup>213</sup> says "becoming more fully virtuous requires each of us to think for ourselves, hard and critically, about the moral concepts (...)". It requires ethical reflection and therefore it implies that we will try to be a better person, with a better character. It also requires a commitment into being in a continuously learning and maturing mode. Moral life is not static and is always developing and virtue ethics fits well with this dynamic notion<sup>214</sup>. So getting the habit of responsibility and of thinking, feeling and acting in accordance to that habit is the first stage.

The relationship between men and natural environment has been, one could say, of quite a lot of irresponsibility. This environmental irresponsibility is both at individual and political level. As said before, no one wants a bad environment, so the reasons for this situation are several, not straightforward, and above all

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<sup>212</sup> The other can also be nature, or the environment

<sup>213</sup> Annas (2005) has been made available in Anna's homepage: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~jannas/>. The citations are taken from the electronic version, and therefore I cannot provide page references.

<sup>214</sup> Annas (2005) even states that virtue ethics is the best theory in this evolutive dynamic of the moral life, because "when it comes to working out the best thing to do, we cannot shift the work to a theory, however excellent, because we, unlike theories, are always learning, and so aspiring to do better."

quite complex. In general, this irresponsibility is not explicit or purposed as such, but more like just a natural outcome of the way we deal and understand our relationship with the environment<sup>215</sup>. Or even the idea that we do not have a relationship with the environment. But increasingly we are faced with the need to acknowledge it, once it is turning fundamental even for any healthy life<sup>216</sup>. A third of diseases that affect us are caused by environmental problems<sup>217</sup> for example. Probably it is not unfair to say that most people know very little about the environment, but more worrying than that is that it is almost as if they did not want to know. As if by not knowing, one could be dismissed of taking responsibility for the troubled relationship. But we are faced with the need to rethink. The usual command and control type of management tends to diminish individual responsibility. Laws, rules, obligations, punishments, fines, subsidies, have proven not to be sufficiently environmentally effective. And yet most policy strategies for the environment are regulatory and economic. Believing that there is space for improving this situation through people's character, is why virtue ethics might be important, and on this second phase on investing in people's environmental education.

So in a second stage and for a virtue like this, for people to feel responsible and know how to act responsibly, they must know something about the environment. This means that it must involve at least wisdom and practical wisdom (*sophia* and *phronesis*) as mentioned earlier. This stage involves both an interest in

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<sup>215</sup> Just like Aldo Leopold related in his "The Land Ethic", "When god-like Odysseus returned from the wars in Troy, he hanged all on one rope a dozen slave-girls of his household whom he suspected of misbehaviour during his absence. This hanging involved no question of propriety. The girls were property. The disposal of property was then, as now, a matter of expediency, not of right and wrong", Leopold, 1972, p 201.

<sup>216</sup> This is the minimum approach. In chapter two, three reasons for us to care for the environment were identified: nature itself, others, and us. The third is related mainly with our own health and recently also economics is mentioned as a reason for caring for environment, namely all the questions surrounding climate change. The Stern Report (1996) available at: ([http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent\\_reviews/stern\\_review\\_economics\\_climate\\_change/stern\\_review\\_report.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/independent_reviews/stern_review_economics_climate_change/stern_review_report.cfm)) state that "Tackling climate change is the pro-growth strategy; ignoring it will ultimately undermine economic growth."

<sup>217</sup> The WHO's 2006 report "Preventing disease through healthy environments: Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease" summarizes the results globally, by 14 regions worldwide, and separately for children. The evidence shows that environmental risk factors play a role in more than 80% of the diseases regularly reported by the World Health Organization. Globally, nearly one quarter of all deaths and of the total disease burden can be attributed to the environment. In children, however, environmental risk factors can account for slightly more than one-third of the disease burden.

learning and an opportunity<sup>218</sup> to do so. This means empowering people and de-Shalit (2000) considers three levels for this environmental empowerment:

- Environmental literacy – accessing available information;
- Environmental awareness – to acknowledge that environment affects our life;
- Environmental consciousness – deeper level of concern.

To de-Shalit's empowerment levels, environmental capability could be added as the practical objective. It should prompt a capability to act fully in an engaged mode. But probably the great majority of us are, if at all, on the first level. This process of empowerment is therefore a fundamental step in a virtuous learning. Getting to a stage of fully virtuousness is not so much the objective (as it is virtually impossible), so the important is the path in its direction. Environmental literacy, awareness and consciousness are the necessary conditions for a productive use of the environmental responsibility virtue. But this process requires an effort, not only at individual but also at political level.

Politically the system must provide the conditions for this empowerment to take place and at the same time it must open itself for more participation, as for people to get a better sense of ownership of decisions; more transparency and communication as to people understand what is going on; and more cooperation so that we feel we are all in the same boat. Institutionally the new trend of governance and its related principles - openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence – (EU, 2000) might be the direction to head on. Even though the emphasis given in this chapter is in the development of individual responsibility towards the environment, this cannot happen in a *vacuum* of political will. Next chapter will further deal with this.

On the third stage it is required from individuals to participate in the polity. As we will see when discussing virtue politics, virtue thinking is an appropriate framework for considering ethics and politics on the same boat. This

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<sup>218</sup> Which translates in the political part that will be discussed later

characteristic of virtue thinking might be used to justify that if individually/privately it means openness to learning and reflection and choosing to be a specific kind of person with a specific type of attitude, politically/publicly it might mean shifting one's passive type of attitude into an active citizenship. In fact, politically, individuals are often more related with an idea of receptors than as actors in the system. Not only being worried by what one needs from the system, but also focus on one's contribution to it<sup>219</sup>. Focusing on "we should be just" rather than on "we are entitled to justice"<sup>220</sup> is such an example. "We must be responsible" rather than discarding responsibility to everyone else. This responsibility is in a way independent of others' responsibilities in the sense that if someone else is more responsible this does not entitle me to be less responsible<sup>221</sup>. And this commitment to be responsible in the polity means essentially thinking about an active citizenship.

At this stage it can be concluded that provided we have individuals whom, since early ages have been educated in order to acquire the habit of responsibility; individuals that later on want to think on "what kind of person" they are or want to be, and that this "kind of person" is one that develops responsibility towards the environment, meaning to be open for a process of environmental empowerment, then we are in the right path. Then the active part of this adventure encompasses citizenship which is also fundamental for attaining a society environmentally responsible. Given the importance of this last stage it will be worth digging into citizenship, investigating its contribution to our project.

#### 5.7.4. Citizenship

The impact of western lifestyles in both the political, social, economic and environmental systems cannot be underestimated. Qualities and attitudes of

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<sup>219</sup> One always remembers Kennedy's famous sentence in his inaugural speech as president "And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" which might also be an example of this idea of attributing responsibility to citizens/agents rather than seeing them as citizens/subjects

<sup>220</sup> Expressions are taken from O'Neill (1996) who argues that "Much contemporary writing on ethics, and especially on justice, builds on systematic deontic structures. (...) it treats the perspective of the subject or recipient as prior to that of the perspective of the agent, and accordingly treats rights rather than obligations or duties as the fundamental ethical notion".

<sup>221</sup> This idea comes from the "bucket argument" in Nozick's "Anarchy, State, and Utopia" book and was kindly pointed to me by Simon Hope.

citizens are shaping the evolution of our political societies. As Habermas (1992, p.7) says “the institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population makes of them”. It seems that to have a stable and increasingly better democracy, individuals must increasingly feel and act as citizens.

Citizenship has an extensive history stemming back to the Greek city-state, and is a concept that has different meanings and different scope for different epochs, for different political or philosophical currents. It focuses in social formations of rights and obligations, membership and identity, in issues of power, inequality and change in these formations (Roche, 1995). Dean (1991, p.493) says that citizenship is both a status and a practice. “It relates both to the way in which the individual is constructed in the context of the public sphere and to normative expectations as to her/his private as well as public conduct”

In our recent history, citizenship has been focusing on rights, mainly influenced by the classical analysis of T.H. Marshall. Marshall (1950) in a post-war setting thought that citizenship was mainly a question of ensuring that everyone should be treated as a full and equal member of society. He focused therefore on rights, namely civil, political and social. Marshall (1950) identified these three types of rights as general description of the evolution of the concept of citizen in the last three centuries: civil rights arising in the eighteenth century, political rights in the nineteenth century and social rights in the twentieth century. Arguably, the most important achievement of the Western world is the welfare system that provides their citizens with these types of rights.

Having said that, now for the twenty first century, emphasizing responsibilities rather than rights seems what most authors writing on citizenship are focusing on (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). They reckon that the balance of rights and responsibilities is one of the most fundamental questions in any contemporary theory of citizenship. On our liberal tradition though, the dilemma between fostering responsibility and obligations *versus* being “uncomfortable with imposing obligations as a matter of public policy” (p.357) remains a problem difficult to compromise. However difficult it might be to compromise between rights and responsibilities, most authors do not believe there is any other way

out. Giddens (1998, p.65) even claimed that the third way should be one based on the motto “no rights without responsibilities”.

But these responsibilities must be facilitated also by institutional structures. Nauta (1992) says that in this new century we are in-need of “additional, cultural resources for the daily practice of citizenship” (p.28) proposing “identity-formation”<sup>222</sup> as the missing component. The cultural resources for this identity-formation must not only be the life of the family (which is too limited) but mainly it has to be training and education outside the family. So Nauta (1992, p.31) says that “individuals must be provided with the cultural capacity they need in order to become knowledgeable and competent actors in modern society”.

Citizen passivity and unwillingness to actively participate seems one of the main problems to tackle. Most individuals are concerned mainly with their private life, rather than with their public or political life. But this is a natural outcome of the way our societies are organized and valued, so a lot needs done if we want to change the situation. Putnam’s famous paper (1995)<sup>223</sup> on “bowling alone” gave striking evidence of the decline of the social capital in our societies. Putnam (1995, p.73 and 74) gave four main reasons for this erosion in the American social capital:

- The movement of women into the labour force.
- Mobility: The "re-potting" hypothesis.
- Other demographic transformations.
- The technological transformation of leisure.

Putnam (1995) points to new avenues for research and a potential positive side of this question<sup>224</sup>. A main question seems to him that the new reality is not

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<sup>222</sup> She mentions its three properties: “an individual is said to have identity of his own when he is somehow able to be responsible for himself and aware of his interests; an individual must be aware and understand interests which are different from his own; an individual must, besides recognizing the interests of other people, must acknowledge them as well” (p.30)

<sup>223</sup> In 2000 Putnam expanded his arguments and published a book on the subject and keeping the “bowling alone” part of the title: *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*.

<sup>224</sup> Putnam (1995, p.77,78) mentions the following four hypotheses for further investigation:

1. We must sort out the dimensions of social capital, which clearly is not a uni- dimensional concept. What types of organizations and networks most effectively embody -or generate - social capital, in the sense of mutual reciprocity, the resolution of dilemmas of collective action, and the broadening of social identities?

adequate to institutions, associations, structures that were thought to other realities<sup>225</sup>.

So we have basically three problems in citizenship, one related with passivity, for which Nauta's proposal of fostering identity-formation might be considered a contribution. Our proposal of fostering responsibility as a virtue, would also contribute to decrease this passivity, because it should impel people to action. A second related problem is more structural and must deal with developing new and innovative ways of fostering participation and social capital building. It might involve institutional change. The third problem (and the one most relevant for our own enquiry) is that most persons are more worried with the rights they are entitled to than with the responsibilities that are increasingly needed to support the overall system (political, social, economic, environmental). Kymlicka and Norman (1994) say that most literature on citizenship reduces it to the obvious idea that society would be better if people in it were nicer and more thoughtful. They say that if we need a set of concrete policies to promote responsibilities this has not yet been embraced seriously by political<sup>226</sup> systems. They conclude that it remains unclear if promoting a good citizenship is such an important and urgent task.

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2. Which macro sociological crosscurrents that might intersect with the trends described here. What will be the impact, for example, of electronic networks on social capital? What about the development of social capital in the workplace
  3. There are also benefits of declining community engagement. Closely knit social, economic, and political organizations are prone to inefficient cartelization and corruption.
  4. Finally, and perhaps most urgently, we need to explore creatively how public policy impinges on (or might impinge on) social-capital formation. In some well-known instances, public policy has destroyed highly effective social networks and norms.

<sup>225</sup> This question of the inadequacy of the political system to deal with new demands is crucial, because the political system tends to limit any type of transformation because it would not be able to deal with it. This is not limited to citizenship but to any other more transformational suggestion. This question will come up again in the Conclusions chapter.

<sup>226</sup> Democracy and justice have been the main focus of political theory, and citizenship has been a derivative of these, in the sense that a citizen is someone who has democratic rights and claims of justice. However, the view that citizenship must play an independent normative role is increasingly gaining terrain in all political spectrums (Kymlicka and Norman, 1994). There is widespread agreement that one of the aims of public policy is to promote responsible citizenship. But up to now, only timid attempts have been put forward, report Kymlicka and Norman (1994), and these seem to coincide with those promoting democracy and justice. Kymlicka and Norman (1994) believe that we seem to be getting at an impasse, where either we truly believe that citizenship is a concept to work on seriously and therefore we must be prepared to restrict some of the rights gained so far and promote responsibilities, or we accept that we might shift our so far inconclusive focus on citizenship and keep on working on improving democracy and justice or possibly in another new concept.

Nevertheless citizenship is a worthwhile path to follow and, having responsible people who are willing to actively participate in the polity and that acknowledge their own responsibilities towards the system is one of the possibilities of improving the situation. Again, responsibility as a character trait, as a virtue, will tackle both problems. Promoting responsible citizenship might be helped by promoting both civic virtues and education. In fact, Kymlicka and Norman (1994) agree that one of the very few, “but still too modest and gentle, ways of promoting citizenship” is the focus on civic virtues.

Different types of political systems agree that investing on civic virtues is one of the possibilities for promoting citizenship. For civic republicans, fostering political participation seems the main virtue to develop. Civil society (recent development of communitarians) theorists emphasize the necessity of fostering civility and self-restraint. They believe that voluntary organizations of civil society are the main providers of such virtues. Liberals, even though too often associated with a too strong commitment to liberty and neutrality and therefore potentially incapable to tackle the concept of civic virtues, are nonetheless also working on that. A current within liberalism is in fact developing the concepts of civic virtues seriously, coming up with interesting proposals. They range from public reasonableness (Macedo, 1990), to a series of virtues that are required specifically for responsible citizenship<sup>227</sup>. Liberals that agree on the importance of virtues think that the system of education is the best vehicle for passing it.

Regarding education, a transversal and common issue in most citizenship literature, the interesting theory of de-Shalit (2004) who sees the teaching of political philosophy as the best way to empower citizens<sup>228</sup> should be taken seriously. Drawing on Sen’s and Nussbaum’s theory of capabilities, de-Shalit sees it as essentially a theory of freedom which enlarges the “range of options

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<sup>227</sup> Four groups of virtues for responsible citizenship: “General virtues: courage, law-abidingness, loyalty; social virtues: independence, open-mindedness; economic virtues: work ethic, capacity to delay self-gratification, adaptability to economic and technological change; political virtues: capacity to discern and respect the right of others, willingness to demand only what can be paid for, ability to evaluate the performance of those in office, willingness to engage in public discourse” Kymlicka and Norman’s summary of Galston (1991).

<sup>228</sup> “When political philosophers teach, write and research, they can help to empower citizens. They help their audience not so much to know the right answer to certain questions, but to benefit from being autonomous, rational, more critical, more attuned to political events and to better comprehend politics” de-Shalit (2004, p.803)

available to a person in deciding what kind of life to lead” (p.804). Only when citizens are able “to conceptualize, theorize, criticize and put forward arguments that may modify public policies” can they exercise their citizenship fully (p.804)<sup>229</sup>.

Individuals, mainly in the western world are now better off than any of our predecessors and therefore certainly committed to not let go both the democratic and justice systems. But regarding active participation and assuming responsibilities, it seems most individuals are still a long way out. It is important to notice that responsibility is “by nature cooperative and negotiated, not an inherent obligation or *a priori* doctrine” (Dean, 1991, p. 501). So in order to foster responsible citizens all methodologies are welcomed. Identity formation and its emphasis in people being aware and accepting both theirs and others interests; promoting civic virtues, no matter which or by which means and; education, both as empowerment and as character formation are some of the possibilities.

Responsibility as a virtue seems also a positive contribution because the emphasis is put in the individual and his/her character formation and his relationship with the others. As Dean (1991, p.502) says “Inclusive relationships are achieved in the context of specific social networks of care and responsibility and cannot be created by ascribing rights and responsibilities. The citizen must first be understood not as an abstract individual or “equal rights holder”, but as a “self-in-relationship””.

Since our field of study is the environment it also makes sense to look at environmental citizenship literature. In fact environment has had influence in citizenship<sup>230</sup>, and two of its characteristics, namely the global character of many environmental problems and the idea that environmentally, people have

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<sup>229</sup> Preventing “political poverty” or “voice poverty” is the crucial role of political philosophy citizen empowerment. De-Shalit, 2004

<sup>230</sup> Dean (2001, p.491) says it influenced it in three ways: “first, environmental concerns have entered our understanding of the rights we enjoy as citizens. Second, the enhanced level of global awareness associated with ecological thinking has helped to broaden our understanding of the potential scope of citizenship. Third, emergent ecological concerns have added fuel to a complex debate about the responsibilities that attach to citizenship”

more responsibilities than rights are quite relevant<sup>231</sup>. The first one is related with cosmopolitanism and the second with a new vision on responsibilities already mentioned. A brief account of environmental citizenship main topics follows.

### 5.7.5. Environmental citizenship

Green citizenship (Dean, 2001; Smith, 2005), ecological citizenship (Dobson 2003; Carter and Huby, 2005, Sáiz, 2005), environmental citizenship<sup>232</sup> (Hailwood, 2005) are different denominations meaning slightly different things, but having in common the promotion of a citizenship deeply worried with the environment<sup>233</sup>. Dobson (2003, 2006) has been one of the most influential writers on the subject, and it is worth looking in detail to his suggestions.

In 2003 Andrew Dobson wrote a book, *Citizenship and the environment* which he coined as post-cosmopolitan. Like the cosmopolitans, he reckons that thinking on citizenship is missing an important articulation with our current conditions. These are globalization, which should make us rethink the spatial frameworks of citizenship; and feminism who have led to reconsiderations of virtue, and of the sources and nature of citizenship obligations (Dobson, 2003). Dobson defends justice as the main core of his theory of citizenship. Dobson thinks that justice is more binding and a less paternalistic source of obligation. Because of its political nature, it takes us out of the realm of common humanity and into the realm of citizenship. The main features of his proposal for a post-cosmopolitan citizenship are his focus on duties or obligations rather than on rights, on a non-territorial dimension, on virtues and feminist virtues and on a

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<sup>231</sup> Dean (2001, p.494) mentions that the “question of responsibilities towards other species, the environment, the Earth itself, future generations” are examples of this broadening of the concept.

<sup>232</sup> Dobson (2003) defends that environmental citizenship simply extends the liberal list of rights beyond civil, political and economic rights to include environmental rights (ex. Clean water, protection from pollution, etc). Ecological citizenship is for him the one dealing with responsibilities. This is not Hailwood's position, though.

<sup>233</sup> In 2005, the Journal “Environmental Politics” dedicated a whole issue to citizenship mirroring the interest in both fields of study. In 2006, Dobson and Bell edited a book on *Environmental Citizenship*.

non-contractual basis. He then goes on developing an ecological citizenship which has in turn also four features<sup>234</sup>:

1. Ecological-non-territoriality - Dobson (2003) bases the non-territorial dimension of the ecological citizenship on the idea of ecological footprint. He tries to capture the asymmetric relationship between the space actually inhabited by a given human population and the ecological space required to sustain it, to be the argument for a responsible citizenship. The idea of “action at a distance” that might characterize this ecological citizenship does not fit with any territoriality. What is important is the “metabolistic” and material relationship of individual people with their environment. Dobson’s ecological citizenship demands an understanding of the impacts that single human beings do on the environment, as they go about the production and reproduction of their daily lives.

2. Ecological Duty and Responsibility - What are the duties and responsibilities and to whom or what are they owed? The principal ecological citizenship obligation is to ensure that ecological footprints make a sustainable, rather than an unsustainable, impact. Of course this might be indeterminate, but more importantly is to acknowledge that the question has normative dimensions. Being ecological footprints the expression of the impact of the production and reproduction of individuals’ and collectives’ daily lives on strangers near and far, makes these strangers those to whom the obligations of ecological citizenship are owed. Meaning that just as environmental problems cross political boundaries so do the obligations of ecological citizenship, and they do so asymmetrically. They are not owed by everyone to everyone, only by those who occupy ecological space in compromising ways. As these obligations are owed to the future as well as in the present, means that they do not contain any expectations of reciprocity<sup>235</sup>.

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<sup>234</sup> The development of these four features is a summary of Dobson’s book and many expressions and sentences are taken from there.

<sup>235</sup> Regarding the critic on the lack of a relevant global political entity to look after rights and obligations of ecological citizens, one might propose that the European Union and United Nations might be such incipient political entities. Furthermore, trans-national activist organizations, such as Greenpeace or Amnesty International slightly also qualify for this role. And lastly also the growing number of international conventions and treaties is a possible answer to that criticism.

3. Ecological citizenship and virtue - The focus on rights up to now undermined the idea of civic virtues, as rights are loosely connected with virtue. A virtue-based citizenship can be traced back in time, but more importantly is that virtues are the main theme of the “remoralization of politics”, and ecological citizenship is a striking exemplar of it. The ecological citizen does the right thing, not because of incentives, but because it is the right thing to do. A citizen committed to ecological values and ends, might want to do good, because nothing else but being virtuous. Drawing on the concept of ecological citizenship, Dobson proposes as the main and foundational virtue of ecological citizenship, justice, meaning ensuring a just distribution of ecological space.

4. The private realm in ecological citizenship - Private acts can have public implications in ways that can be related to the category of citizenship, and virtues like care and compassion, with their unconditional and non-reciprocal character, are characteristic of private realm relationships. If private sphere is considered as physical space, it is obvious that our responsibility for it falls in the realm of ecological citizen. We are constantly creating an ecological footprint and therefore most of our private actions are equally important as our public actions for ecological citizenship. A second very tight connection between ecological citizenship and the private realm is the nature of relationships we maintain in both cases. Since in the latter they are generally of a non-reciprocal type, this is fundamental feature to be transposed for the former. As ecological citizenship is also about everyday living the relationship between private and ecological is potentially constantly tightened up.

One must acknowledge Dobson’s pioneering work on ecological citizenship, even though not agreeing with all his premises. In fact Dobson bases his theory in the concept of ecological footprint and an ecological citizen is the one who diminishes it if it is too big. This is a legitimate path but it seems Dobson’s theory would not encompass other type of accounts.

Nevertheless being virtue thinking one of his features of ecological citizenship it supports this thesis’s adventure. But he believes justice to be the overall virtue,

and this would basically ensure a redistribution of the ecological space. So addressing environmental injustice is the back-bone of Dobson's theory and even though it is a valid virtue, it might be a virtue that is "below" responsibility. It seems that justice only enters the system when the harm is done, when ecological space needs re-distributing. On the other hand, a virtue like responsibility is more of a foundational dimension in general, but in this case in environmental citizenship. One could say that it is rather on a preventive mood, besides being more connected with the personal dimension that is being pursued in this thesis. Nevertheless one must acknowledge that the relationship between collective responsibility and citizenship theory is also strengthened by Dobson's work.

Bell (2003) on the other hand defends that a cosmopolitan liberal environmentalism can provide a plausible account of environmental citizenship. Opposing Dobson he reckons that his account is more encompassing as it does not require that all environmental/ecological citizenship actions should be solely motivated by a concern for environmental justice or the redistribution of ecological space. Bell interprets Dobson as defending only negative duties, rather than promoting positive ones, and his theory of cosmopolitan environmental liberalism "is committed to the development of institutional arrangements that secure everyone's right to a fair share of ecological space", not as Dobson's ecological citizen who has only "a negative duty not to violate the right of others to a fair share of ecological space (by using more than their fair share)."

Bell articulates the main problem as a "law-justice gap", i.e. "between what can be effectively enforced through law and what is just". To solve this gap, Bell draws on the moral regulation discussed by J.S. Mill in *On Liberty*. For Mill, there are two types of coercion, namely, 'physical force in the form of legal penalties' and 'the moral coercion of public opinion'. Bell uses moral coercion as his preferred strategy to deal with that problem, which from him means "the informal social pressure that individuals or communities can put on other individuals to conform."

Dean (2001) also develops a potential model of “green citizenship”. For Dean there is a need to combine social justice with ecological sustainability, in order to: “bind humanity together in a manner that enables it collectively to address its environmental predicament” (p.500). So his model would “embrace on the one hand an ethic of co-responsibility by which collectively to achieve the just distribution of scarce resources and, on the other, an ethic of care through which to negotiate the basis for human interdependency” (p.490) which is a very attractive junction of concepts.

So the obvious trend is the enlargement of the notion of citizenship to entail responsibility as well, and the environmental arena has been crucial for this acknowledgment. Environment is therefore providing the idea that formal approaches to citizenship are inadequate. One could even go further and defend that if it is accepted that nature have rights, then people have duties to nature as well as to society. Delanty (1997) argues that the idea of responsibility is being decoupled from the idea of duty and is becoming a key theme in the reinvention of politics today. He believes that both social movement activists and the wider public are acquiring a sense of being responsible for nature and for the future. This means that the rights of nature are providing the foundation for establishing collective responsibility towards it.

### **5.7.6 In conclusion**

That investing on character might turn out as a contribution for a better environment is the main proposal of this chapter. In fact, the bottom line of this inquiry is basically contributing to improve the environment, through investing on people. And the bottom line of the proposal is the idea of politics being more informed by ethics as to be able to find innovative ways of developing our attitude towards the public sphere. This “information” might be better attained through virtue ethics, a normative ethical theory which was devised when ethics and politics were a happy couple. They have since sort of divorced, as we have seen earlier, but virtue thinking might be an appropriate couple therapist. The

emphasis of virtue thinking on persons, their inner life, their character, their education will contribute to improve the polity.

There is a myriad of virtues around. Some philosophers choose to invest their thinking in specific ones, and as we have seen in environmental virtue ethics, several proposals for overarching virtues have been proposed. Friendship, justice, ecological sensitivity, eco-citizenship, benevolence, care, compassion are such examples. Responsibility is now suggested and proposed as an overarching virtue, as the character trait which would enable us to have a more prolific attitude towards the environment. The focus has been in thinking in responsibility as a character trait, as an excellence of character.

An Aristotelian path was followed, of working on achieving harmony between one's emotions and one's reasoning. On working both on cognitive states (e.g., knowledge and belief) and on affective states (e.g., desires, feelings, and emotions). So the idea would be of educating children and people into habits like those of being respectful of one self and of others, accountable for one's actions, of assuming one's actions, basically on being a responsible person. To have this habit entrenched in one's character means that affectively one would feel comfortable with one self when acting. But it is easy to act wrongly and believe that one is acting rightly and therefore still be comfortable. This is true in general but also in environmental "acting". If one does not have knowledge about a particular subject, one might not know how to act, in the sense that one feels for example "I never thought this would harm the environment". To avoid this argument, being responsible and in this case environmentally responsible does not only mean to be respectful, to assume and to be accountable, it also involves knowing. So learning becomes the means for a cognitive state compatible to responsibility<sup>236</sup>.

Responsibility entails action. In that sense developing citizenship, a concept which is gaining weight in a society acknowledging slowly that its individualism

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<sup>236</sup> A feature of environmental science is its complexity and uncertainty which makes this statement a bit too simple. But in the last chapter, when working on the precautionary principle we will try to deal with this problem.

is not taking, neither us, neither “I” to any happy ending, has been proposed. Galston (1991) as seen above proposed general, social, economic and political virtues for attaining a responsible citizenship. For environmental responsibility there is also a need of a constellation of premises before one can say one has it as a virtue. It is a process and there are no fully virtuous persons, no fully responsible persons, the important is to work on one’s inner self. On one’s character. On one’s education. On one’s motivation.

### 5.8. *Eudaimonia*

*Eudaimonia* is the Greek word for flourishing or happiness or living well or well-being<sup>237</sup>. This is another controversial concept within virtue ethics. Hursthouse and all pro-Aristotelian<sup>238</sup> virtue ethicists consider flourishing as a main component of the theory, while Slote and others, do not agree that it should be considered important. Considering *eudaimonia* involves a conception of life as an end, an objective to our moral life. It makes virtue ethics teleological<sup>239</sup> and involves the idea of a Good within morality. Politically this is a very tricky issue as considering one unique Good is something that explicitly our liberalist western heritage inhibits us. That will be dealt with in the next chapter.

So a strand of virtue ethics is reviving this *eudaimonia* concept, and Hursthouse (1999, p.167) talks about, what she dubs<sup>240</sup> Plato’s requirements on the virtues:

- i) “the virtues benefit their possessor (they enable her to flourish, to be, and live a life that is, *eudaimon*)

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<sup>237</sup> Different authors translate differently from the originally Aristotelian Greek term. But the right translation is not a major limitation in this discussion, because we believe the idea is clear

<sup>238</sup> For Aristotle character and namely a virtuous character is constitutive of the idea of *eudaimonia*. Virtues are not instrumental, are ends in themselves.

<sup>239</sup> Talking about *eudaimonia* takes us inevitably back to Aristotle’s philosophy and its teleological dimension. The Nicomachean Ethics starts with “Every craft and every investigation, and likewise every action and decision, seems to aim at some good” (1094 a 1) and then “[the good] in every action and decision it is the end, since it is for the sake of the end that everyone does the other things” (1097 a 18). Happiness – *eudaimonia*, is this end. To attain it, one should lead a virtuous life.

<sup>240</sup> Hursthouse insists that she “dubs”, she does not “describe” them as Plato’s.

- ii) the virtues make their possessor a good human being (human beings need the virtues in order to live well, to flourish as human beings, to live characteristically good, *eudaimon*, human life)
- iii) the above two features of the virtues are interrelated.”

So for Hursthouse there is sort of no way out, one needs virtues in order to flourish even though she also says “the claim is not that possession of the virtues guaranteed that one will flourish. The claim is that they are the only reliable bet.” (p.172). I would like to retain this idea of a life of virtue as a good and beneficial life. Because in a way we attain two things at the same time, by being virtuous and in this case responsible persons, first we become better persons, second the environment might win with it. This is because when one is leading a life towards being a better person, a virtuous person, then the probability that a certain spiritual aim surpasses other more material aims<sup>241</sup>, will almost by default lead us into being more responsible towards oneself, the other and the world, meaning also towards the environment, nature, animals. As mentioned earlier here there is a sort of circular argument because a consequence might then start acting as a further cause, and we act responsibly towards the environment because it makes us feel better.

Being a virtuous person is being a happier person as Aristotle would say. For Aristotle virtuous activity is not burdensome, but noble and enjoyable: “Moreover, the life of these [active] people is also pleasant in itself. For being pleased is a condition of the soul.” (1099 a 5) or “actions expressing the virtues are pleasant in themselves.” (1099 a 20). There might be examples, as mentioned in the introduction, where acting virtuously might not make us happy in the current quite selfish way of understanding happiness. In *eudaimonia* might be other things included rather than that simple limiting meaning of happiness, and that is why the translation of “flourishing” initially proposed by

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<sup>241</sup> Modernity, in opposition to Aristotle, privileged a pursuit of wealth, liberty and property rather than a virtuous life. This shift in paradigm was due to various reasons, but also from the appropriation that Christians, and most notably S. Thomas Aquinas made of virtue ethics into Christian ethics, and the need, on the XVII century to discharge religiosity from political life (Rodman, 1980). When Reformation and Counter-Reformation, and all wars it provoked and instigated, were over, one of its inheritance was this shift from a more spiritual end in life to a more material one. Arguably, this was the start for a new relation Man – Nature that ended up in the ecological crisis we are now. This is to be seen as a tendency and not *ipsis verbis* that there is no spiritual life from Modernity on.

Anscombe (1958) might help us understand Aristotle's statements and also Hume's, who acknowledges that acting virtuously is a source of happiness: "Inward peace of mind, consciousness of integrity, a satisfactory review of our own conduct; these are circumstances, very requisite to happiness, and will be cherished and cultivated by every honest man, who feels the importance of them"<sup>242</sup>.

The question of happiness and its importance is becoming quite popular in Western societies. The literature about happiness in this new century is quite overwhelming. Quite a few numbers of new books<sup>243</sup> are being written focusing on this problematic. Most of this literature starts by questioning the idea that since people are nowadays better off namely materially, socially, health wise, than our ancestors have ever been, why does it seem we are not happier? Translating quality of life into a good material life is proving to be a false myth. Lipovetski (2007) for example reckons that we have been putting all the "happiness eggs" in the same basket, the one on consumerism, and we are now beginning to realise that it was a false bet, and so we are struggling to find other sources of happiness. One of those alternative eggs might for example be related with finding a meaning in life.

Susan Wolf defends that "the meaning of life" is not part of the philosophical inquiry anymore having been substituted rather by an inquiry of what is "a meaningful life"<sup>244</sup>. Wolf accepts that because there might be no meaning to life, this is not contradictory with people having or seeking meaningful lives. Wolf describes a meaningful life as one that is involved in "at least partly successful engagements in projects of positive value" or "projects of worth".

And this is what I would like to retain from this discussion, which is if someone dedicates some part of their energy to projects of worth, which are difficult to

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<sup>242</sup> "Enquiry concerning the principles of morals", Sec. IX

<sup>243</sup> *Happiness: lessons from a new science* by Richard Layard; *Stumbling on Happiness* by Daniel Gilbert; *Le bonheur paradoxal – essai sur la société d'hyperconsommation* by Gilles Lipovetski; *A euforia perpétua. Ensaio sobre o dever da felicidade* by Pascal Bruckner; *The happiness hypothesis* by Jonathan Haidt, are some of the titles mentioned in an article published in "Expresso" in October 2006 written by Rui Trindade, but in this thesis I am not further investigating this theme.

<sup>244</sup> Luso-American foundation organised a session on 22 July 2005 where the American moral philosopher Susan Wolf exposed this theory. (Personal attendance and notes)

define, but intuitively intelligibly grasped, then the meaningful of their lives is increased. Both investing in having a virtuous character and actively engaging on “defending” and being responsible towards the environment are examples of some intuitively projects of worth.

So grounding responsibility as a virtue in both the need to better take care of our relation with nature and with the possibly of more meaningful life to ourselves is the proposal, which might be supported by new evidence in studies on environmental policy.

In fact there are several studies, namely in household waste reduction (Fahy and Davies, *in press* and Fahy, 2005) and transport studies, where people are reported to state that they recycle or they take public transports because that makes them feel good. For example, the results of an active research project in Ireland on household waste reduction, state that "They also acknowledged that after the first week they experienced the “feel good factor” because “less waste going out makes you feel good that you are doing your bit for the environment”. There is a growing body of literature addressing issues of environmental responsibility and citizenship (Dobson, 2005)<sup>245</sup>, which suggests that behaviour driven by environmental citizenship is more likely to continue in comparison to driven by financial incentives." (Fahy and Davies, *in press*, p.9).

Anable, Lane and Kelay (2006) in a review report for the UK Department for Transport on public attitudes to climate change and transport behaviour, report several studies<sup>246</sup> which highlight the importance of personal responsibility, non-selfish concerns and moral concerns on directing travel behaviour.

Nevertheless this is not always the case and there is often a gap between people’s environmental values and people’s environmentally friendly actions – called value-action gap or attitude-action gap or attitude-behaviour gap – which is clear on environmental issues. Anable, Lane and Kelay (2006) reviewed

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<sup>245</sup> Dobson, A., 2005. Environmental Citizenship: towards sustainable development. Paper presented at SDRN / RICS Sustainable Development and Quality of Life Lecture Series 15th February 2005. RICS: London. The reference is from Fahy and Davies (*in press*)

<sup>246</sup> Page 89 of the report, mentions six such studies.

several models and theories that help explaining the gap and how best overcome it. These models attempt to explain the psychological processes (including the role of values) that prompt altruistic pro-environmental behaviour. These models try to underpin reasons at three levels (p.64):

1. Individual – values, attitudes, beliefs, social norms and intentions
2. Interpersonal – trust, social networks
3. Community – societal norms and culture, communications, media

Their conclusion is that it is a quite complex issue involving anthropological, social-psychological and economic perspectives. For behaviour to change, they reckon that it is a seven step process (p.78):

1. Awareness of problem
2. Accepting responsibility
3. Perception of options
4. Evaluation of options
5. Making a choice
6. Experimental behaviour
7. Habitual behaviour

This process should be easier for people investing on responsibility towards the environment as a virtue as I have been defining it. The existence of options might be mainly dictated by external factors as institutional, social, economic and cultural. People who do not trust authorities, people thinking that the processes are not transparent, social norms preventing people of taking some attitudes, lack of easy facilities to perform actions, are examples of these external factors. All other steps are mainly related with internal factors such as pro-environmental knowledge, awareness, values, attitudes, emotions, *locus* of control, responsibilities and priorities.

This chapter has been dealing with these internal factors and arguing that virtue ethics is a suitable ethical normative approach to prompt pro-environmental behaviour. Environmental empowerment as proposed is an important part of the

process. Awareness of consequences and feelings of responsibility can activate these altruistic acts. Having values<sup>247</sup> that value things like the self, the others, the biosphere also contributes to the process.

The question is why and how *eudaimonia* would provide values that would make people feel this responsibility towards the environment and act accordingly. How could valuing nature and the environment enter the *eudaimonia* dimension? Why or what does make people report the so-called “feel good” factor when acting towards the environment?

O'Neill (1993, p.24) considers that “care for the natural world is constitutive of a flourishing human life. The best human life is one that includes an awareness of and practical concern with the goods and entities in the non-human world.” O'Neill goes as far as by recalling Routley's last man thought experiment (see chapter three) considering that “the last man's act of vandalism reveals the man to be leading an existence below that which is best for a human-being, for it exhibits a failure to recognize the goods of non-humans” (p.24). O'Neill knows that this is controversial claim, but he bases it on an Aristotelian interpretation of human flourishing. Intelligence and contemplation are characteristic human capacities which should, according to Aristotle be fully exercised, and if so these would allow us to understand and value the natural world.

In chapter four, I proposed that responsibility towards the environment was equivalent to Hume's justice and could also be imported into morality. That people feel this “feel good” factor is a sign that responsibility towards the environment is already pervading *eudaimonia*. The question that remains is if it is possible that all conceptions of the Good could entail a good environment. Would one that wouldn't entail it, be a wrong conception? Someone who acts responsibly according to their own conception of the Good, but this Good does not include the environment. This person's responsibility would not touch a possible relationship with the environment. The fact is that the majority of us,

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<sup>247</sup> Anable, Lane and Kelay (2006) define values as an enduring belief about behaviour of end-states, stable over time and central to an individual's cognitive system. Values transcend situations by providing a general frame of reference and representing abstract ideals. In chapter eight, the issue of values will again be tackled.

does not consider environment to be part of the Good. Might this be a political question from now on? Next chapter will deal with this discussion.

## **Chapter six – Ethics informing policy**

### ***6.1. Introduction***

The reader might be feeling a bit at a loss, because virtue ethics and responsibility might seem an interesting issue within the environmental problematic, but the crucial question always coming up at this moment of the argument is: What about the political side? Is virtue ethics not too apolitical? Is virtue politics possible or even more, is it desirable? Could either the concept of flourishing, happiness, meaningful life be translated into a political sphere, or could virtue influence, determine or change institutions, policies, and politics? These are difficult and challenging questions. This and the next chapter will tackle some issues relevant to the understanding of what might be involved. Its objective is mainly tying up knots left unresolved in previous chapters.

Discussion about the relationship between ethics and politics is crucial when two of the main objectives of the research in this chapter are to investigate (having in mind the responsibility concept):

1. Conditions of possibility of transposing environmental virtue thinking into environmental political thinking
2. The Good and the possibility of environmental quality being part of the Good

### ***6.2. Politics and ethics***

The relationship between politics and ethics has not been an easy one and has been much discussed throughout times. Virtually all philosophers thinking either on ethics or on political philosophy proposed different arguments for different architectures of this relationship. Very few ignored or denied it. If for some, politics was a branch of ethics, for others ethics was part of politics, if for some they coincided, for others they were in conflict. This is a broad and perennial discussion and I will address only certain aspects of this relationship.

As seen in earlier chapters environmental problems have many dimensions, namely economical, social, political, scientific and ethical. The development of environmental ethics even if having a start loosely related with politics has become increasingly prominent in political discourses over environmental problems. For example, ethics is increasingly important in global politics (Shue, 1995), and many environmental problems have increasingly a global character, as for example climate change<sup>248</sup>.

There are other signs, that thinking in ethics is also becoming relevant outside the philosophers' world. For example UNESCO has a specific programme to enhance the role of ethics and of environmental ethics in particular. They envisage that environmental ethics should "guide individuals, corporations and governments in determining the principles affecting their policies, their lifestyles and their actions across the entire range of environmental and ecological problems, and for the appraisal of such actions, lifestyles and policies" (UNESCO, 2004, p.6). UNESCO has proposals for international action within normative action (involving a declaration of ethical principles and commitment to implementation principles), capacity building (committees, systems for complexity management, cooperation, education, auditing policies) and

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<sup>248</sup> The Rock Ethics Institute (<http://rockethics.psu.edu/index.htm>) published in its site a White Paper on the "Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change" written by 25 authors considering that expressing ethical reflection on the politics of climate change is an international imperative. They identify 10 relevant ethical issues:

- Responsibility for Damages: Who is ethically responsible for the consequences of climate change, that is, who is liable for the burdens of:
  - preparing for and then responding to climate change (i.e., adaptation) or
  - paying for unavoids damages?
- Atmospheric Targets: What ethical principles should guide the choice of specific climate change policy objectives, including but not limited to, maximum human-induced warming and atmospheric greenhouse gas targets?
- Allocating GHG Emissions Reductions: What ethical principles should be followed in allocating responsibility among people, organizations, and governments at all levels to prevent ethically intolerable impacts from climate change?
- Scientific Uncertainty: What is the ethical significance of the need to make climate change decisions in the face of scientific uncertainty?
- Cost to National Economies: Is the commonly used justification of national cost for delaying or minimizing climate change action ethically justified?
- Independent Responsibility to Act: Is the commonly used reason for delaying or minimizing climate change action that any nation need not act until others agree on action, ethically justifiable?
- Potential New Technologies: Is the argument that we should minimize climate change action until new, less-costly technologies may be invented in the future, ethically justifiable?
- Procedural Fairness: What principles of procedural justice should be followed to assure fair representation in decision making?

awareness raising (promoting research, workshops on ethical literacy, promoting new paradigms, compiling environmental ethics reports, and international conferences). UNESCO's efforts on this area are important and reinforce the idea that more ethics might indeed help politics, the environment and ultimately ourselves.

The initiatives of both the Rock Ethics Institute (whose study has been presented in UN<sup>249</sup>) and the UNESCO are clear signs of how ethics is imposing itself naturally into the political. Chantal Mouffe with her proposal of radical democracy has also contributed to that thinking. One of her premises is the need for a revision of the political, "(...) the separation between the realm of morality and the realm of politics has, no doubt, signified an incontestable gain in individual freedom. But the consequences for politics have been very damaging. All normative concerns have increasingly been relegated to the fields of private morality, to the domain of "values", and politics has been stripped of its ethical components. (...) We do need to re-establish the lost connection between ethics and politics, but this cannot be done by sacrificing the gains of the democratic revolution" (Mouffe, 1993, p 65). Her proposal implies considering the political not as a "specific sphere", but conceived "as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition" (p.3)

Thinking about our ontological condition might take us to questioning ourselves on who we are and who we want to be. This introspection might be a first consequence of feeling sympathetic with the idea of more ethics around us. This takes us into the idea of virtue ethics, as seen before, and when inquiring if there might be any institutional role in promoting this "human self-perfecting" we must make a step into virtue politics. This is the reasoning that is structuring my proposal, not of a "remoralization"<sup>250</sup> of politics, but rather inquiring if politics could be more informed by ethics. Cosmopolitanism which is essentially a thesis about the need of a more ethically informed politics within global scope seems to be a proposal to take into account and further discussed.

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<sup>249</sup> Video of the presentation available here: <http://br.youtube.com/watch?v=i-faBHqVu04>

<sup>250</sup> As Dobson (2003) proposes

### 6.2.1. Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism has been gaining ground lately because of the global character of many issues and problems in economic, political, environmental, ethical, and social contexts. Furthermore the growing disillusionment with politics at the national and international levels is also one of the causes of the re-emerging of this cosmopolitanism (Chandler, 2003). The “tyranny of the actual over the ideal” which has pervaded politics makes it very difficult for an overall morality of a society. The narrow focus on the political sphere of national interests has sometimes acted as a barrier to develop new approaches. But as Booth (1995, p.110) says “What is needed must have moral at its centre because the fundamental questions of how we might and can live together concern values, not instrumental rationality”. He believes or wishes that the twenty-first century will be the century of ethics, and of global ethics. This is a line of thought in tune with some of the arguments privileged in this thesis.

The Greek word *kosmopolitês* - ‘citizen of the world’ - inspired this moral and socio-political philosophy. The history of Cosmopolitanism has passed by different phases throughout the last centuries having started already in the Hellenistic Age. Immanuel Kant might have been a strong figure in this history<sup>251</sup> for example by having proposed the philosophical grounds the famous “league of nations”. The focus from now on will, though, be in the contemporary cosmopolitanism and namely in its environmental context.

The international context has been the ideal stage for this project of reviving cosmopolitanism. Moral and political cosmopolitanism have taken different strands and have been highly criticised mainly on its possibility and on its desirability. Critiques on the impossibility of, for example world-states are usually dismissed, since its proposal is essentially metaphoric, and furthermore other institutional structures of global scope are also a possibility. Cosmopolitanism defends, essentially an ideal or a way of life and not all its

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<sup>251</sup> Kant’s main concern was on how to avoid wars and attain peace, which is not this thesis’s emphasis.

proposals are to be taken literally (but rather, I might borrow Goodin's (1995) expression, as "lighthouses"<sup>252</sup>). Other critiques challenging ethics as too individualist and too utopian to be useful for politics are, for example refuted by Shue (1995). He says that these critiques are based on the sense that ethic's core is all about individual behaviour and how individuals could lead ideally good lives, claiming that that is a too simple way to see both individuals and ethics. First, individuals are situated in families, nations, gender and, humanity. Second, a good deal of ethics is concerned with policies and institutions, such as justice, equity and, liberty (Shue, 1995). Furthermore a great deal of ethics is normative without being specifically utopian, and focuses on what would be better and not what would be best (Shue, 1995). De-Shalit (1996) says that philosophy and politics can be regarded as forming a single package, which could be described as an attitude of mind. Shue's theory is that politics and ethics might be distinguishable but not separate. De-Shalit (2000) also said the same about environmental ethics and politics. This is crucial, the idea that ethics and politics are not the same, each has its realm but they should inform each other constantly.

We saw in chapter two, that the tension between economy and environment has been a central issue in the development of environmental policy within general politics. Economic well-being is usually seen as a main national interest, and environmental protection has often been seen as marginal. Nevertheless economic well-being as a strategy against poverty is increasingly accepted as normative, and environment has entered the interest dimension as part of the sustainable development political paradigm (Shue, 1995). Economy and environment have both ethical and political dimensions. The clash between the ethical and the political dimensions must not be seen as the rule, even though of course sometimes it happens. As Shue (1995) says, to take ethics seriously is to consider the possibility of taking action even if it is not in one's immediate interest or the interest of one's own nation. If this would happen continuously then ethics would be impossible, if it never did then it would be pointless. As Shue says (1995) ethics must take in consideration the interests of

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<sup>252</sup> Mentioned in next chapter

the others at the same time and not after conceiving one's own interest, "serious ethics operates at the centre, not the fringe, of conceptions of legitimate interest" (p.457). This means that interests must be defined taking in consideration a commitment to environment right from its design stage. Virtue ethics comes to mind, as one of its main objectives is harmony between motives, desires and acts, but this is only attained if virtues are developed as habits right from the initial formational years. I will come back to that when discussing virtue politics.

The relationship of ethics and politics has been much discussed and if Aristotle is usually the first main reference, Machiavelli almost 20 centuries later, is often considered the second main one. A political system has two main actors, the ruler and the ruled, or the governor and the governed. When Aristotle was questioning if a good citizen is also a good man ("for, presumably, being a good man is not the same as being every sort of good citizen" 1130 b 25), he was worried about the governed. In contrast, Machiavelli by dealing with the actions of the prince was concerned with the ruler<sup>253</sup>. As MacIver (1909, p79) put it "this division gives us the two great historical problems concerning the relation of politics and ethics, one of which, touching the duty of the citizen, might be called Aristotle's problem, while the other, the duty of the prince or governor, might be called the problem of Machiavelli". Accepting these divisions, two systems of guidance of conduct are introduced: ethics for man; politics for citizens and for rulers. This is quite simplistic and might be challenged by other interpretations of Aristotle's<sup>254</sup> and Machiavelli's<sup>255</sup> thinking, but it illustrates well a widespread conception of the difference between ethics and politics.

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<sup>253</sup> According to Soromenho-Marques (1996) Spinoza read Machiavelli in a less straightforward way. *The Prince* would have two almost contradictory recipients, the ruler or the people. The first is obvious; the second demands some creativity but sounds also logic. By stating what a prince should do, Machiavelli could be alerting the people to what they should not want to have.

<sup>254</sup> The Aristotle's problem might not be as simple. In fact one could also say that for Aristotle ethics is part of politics. "Since, then, the examination of virtue is proper for political science, the inquiry clearly suits our original decision [to pursue political science]" (1102 a 10). Ross (1923, p.195) says, "Aristotle's ethics are social, and his politics are ethical; he does not forget in the *Ethics* that the individual man is essentially a member of society, nor in the *Politics* that the good life of the state exists only in the good lives of its citizens." So politics and ethics are intrinsically connected, and if ethics seeks to find how individuals can achieve the highest good, politics seeks to identify which forms of society conduce to the achievement of that good and politicians are responsible for a system that leads to it "For the legislator makes the citizens good by habituating them" (1103 b 5).

<sup>255</sup> Machiavelli did not only write the *Prince*, but also other important books, namely the *Discourses* where the idea of civic virtues, for example, give his thinking an often ignored a concept of liberty as the capacity

Besides these two actors, the context is also of paramount importance. The Hellenic reality is different from the one in the Renaissance and the environmental reality is yet another one. One of the characteristics of many of environmental problems is that they are global problems. This prompts challenges for the way national and international politics develop in this area. As seen this internationalization challenge has been giving rise to cosmopolitanism (Beitz, 1983, Shue, 1995; Booth, 1995; Chandler, 2003) which envisages the “possibility of global issues being addressed on the basis of new forms of democracy, derived from the universal rights of global citizens” (Chandler, 2003, p 332). Or as Booth (1995, p 112) says “if this world is to offer reasonable lives for a reasonable number of people, then we need a new rationality, new axioms, new agents, new forms of politics and a new discourse” and Booth believes we have the capacity for it through an ethics and an applied ethics at a global scale pointing to a good life of the world, “I am very confident that enough people across the world have the potential moral muscle for this cosmopolitan project” (p.118).

Within citizenship literature there is also a cosmopolitan citizenship emerging. It follows the globalization process, and is focusing in a global citizenship, the so-called “citizen of the world”. Cosmopolitan citizenship aims at extending democracy and human rights to the international sphere rather than on the territorially limited rights of the citizen at the level of the nation state. Rather than the rights of the states being the founding principle of international society it should be the rights of individual citizens (Chandler, 2003). The impact of globalising processes makes democratic decisions within one nation-state, undemocratic, if affecting the rights of non-citizens of that nation-state. It is the inequality of global power that makes these decisions (restricted to nation-states) not to be considered democratic from a cosmopolitan perspective. In environment this is striking. Decisions and actions taken in one country may affect the environment and citizens of other countries, even if far away<sup>256</sup>. If this

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for men pursuing their own objectives and for that they need to develop virtues and participate in public functions. This supports Spinoza's reading of *The Prince* in footnote above

<sup>256</sup> One of the first examples, before the widespread understanding of how global, many environmental problems are, is of the building of higher and higher chimneys believing that the dispersion would solve the

happens with legitimate actions, imagine with clearly illegitimate ones like the production of toxic waste in developed world and its disposal in the developing world. Even though international treaties, conventions and protocols are a first step on this cosmopolitanism thinking there is still a long way to go.

Even though theorists acknowledge the limited and conditional nature of the possible new rights of the cosmopolitan citizen, just thinking about it helps recasting the relationship between international institutions and the nation-state. The cosmopolitan project has been focusing on privileging ethics in politics, and has been rather utopian. The idea is to try on a new moral conception of legitimacy rather than formal legality<sup>257</sup>. The cosmopolitans allege that this ethical framework can lead to a more equal society, as any state can be intervened in if it breaches moral and ethical norms. It is a fragile project and the difference between weak and strong states poses many problems in its full implementation, and Chandler (2003) even alerts to the fact that in weaker countries, if their governments are not accountable, citizens lose their powers and might be submitted to strong foreign governments' decisions. So this is a project with some flaws and with difficulties and even if it seems reasonable at times, it will be difficult if not impossible to implement, let alone enforce.

Nevertheless thinking, discussing and writing about it challenges both the "poverty of politics"<sup>258</sup> and "poverty of philosophy" (Allott, 1999). As Allott says (p. 49) "Democracy and capitalism have taken power over the possibility of their own negating, and hence over their own surpassing, and it is philosophy which has given spurious charisma to their mental absolutism". Allott asks for the role of philosophy in "human self-surpassing and human self-perfecting" to be restored as the only means for an improved human consciousness with positive impacts in the management of the public realm. In fact, this management reflects the theories, values and purposes of the society and so there is a reciprocating character in politics and ethics.

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problem. To accept that the acidification of rivers, lakes and forests in Sweden, in the sixties and seventies, due to releases of SO<sub>2</sub> mainly in England, was initially very contentious.

<sup>257</sup> This has been proposed in an Independent International Commission on Kosovo report about that area (Chandler, 2003).

<sup>258</sup> "Politics in the most socially developed national systems has recently degenerated into an impoverished debate within narrow dialectic limits" (Allott, 1999, p. 48)

The areas of international relations and of citizenship are two privileged areas within environmental politics. The thinking on cosmopolitanism therefore contributes to the thinking in environmental ethics and politics. It is essentially a reflection as to whether and how far could or should ideas of environmental ethics enter the realm of environmental politics. What should be prioritized in environmental politics? If we privilege ethical questions this will make us ask “uncomfortable questions about ourselves, our liberal societies and the capitalist world we dominate” (Booth, 1995, p.125), and are we ready for that? Booth cites “George Bernard Shaw’s verdict that often “great truths begin as blasphemy”, toleration, nationalism, democracy, reason, rights, love, - readers can take their pick – were all humanly invented, against the social grain, by nonconformists who resisted the basics of their time” (p.115). The idea of a century privileging ethics might sound if not a blasphemy, than at least a delirium. But as mentioned in earlier chapters, utopias are extremely useful for materializing kingdoms of possibility.

### **6.2.2. Virtue Politics**

Virtue politics is also a proposal that successfully thinks about ethics and politics as two intrinsically connected disciplines. Rehabilitating virtue ethics has been increasingly gaining ground as we have seen in chapter five. The step from moral philosophy into political philosophy seems complex but necessary. It is important that they should not be promiscuously mixed but rather informing each other maintaining their realms. By exploring the possibilities of some virtue thinking within environmental policy, we might contribute to that relationship. But there is very little work on virtue politics, if any<sup>259</sup>. Even if not virtue politics as such, some Neo-Aristotelians have been proposing different architectures of politics that privilege some sort of virtue ethics thinking and therefore their proposals will be analysed within this section. To understand why so little work exists on virtue politics we also need looking into the liberalism and

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<sup>259</sup> Crisp and Slote (1997, p.25) in the Introduction to their edited book on virtue ethics say: “Clearly, virtue ethics needs to expand its recent moral horizons so as to take in larger questions of political morality” and further down they hope for a volume called “Oxford Readings in Virtue Politics”

communitarian debate and on the role of rationalism, universalism and individuality in politics.

Communitarianism has sometimes been considered the political strand of virtue ethics (Statman, 1997). Communitarian thinkers appeared mainly after Rawls's *A theory of Justice* had been published and were opposing liberalism, mainly its emphasis on individual rights and neutrality requirements. Communitarians believe that the value of community and tradition are not sufficiently recognized in liberal theories of justice as they generally ignore their role in defining and shaping the way individuals develop themselves. The idea of the priority of the right over the good espoused by Rawls is opposed by communitarians who believe on the priority of the good (being this one the reasons of why virtue politics is potentially related with communitarianism) over the right<sup>260</sup>.

Philosophical communitarianism has been espoused by authors like MacIntyre, Walzer, Sandel or Taylor<sup>261</sup> and has the following three main claims<sup>262</sup>:

- i. methodological claims about the importance of tradition and social context for moral and political reasoning,
- ii. ontological or metaphysical claims about the social nature of the self, and
- iii. normative claims about the value of community.

As a political movement communitarianism is not seen as a real alternative to liberalism. Its emphasis in communities is a too partial view in a possible environmental virtue politics. The idea that one could belong only to one community, "defined empirically and even geographically" (Mouffe, 2005, p20) and have a single idea of a common good does not suit a conception of us as

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<sup>260</sup> As Mouffe (1993, p.31) says "The communitarians, for their part, affirm that one cannot define the right prior to the good, for it is only through our participation in a community which defines the good that we can have a sense of the right and a conception of justice".

<sup>261</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre with *After Virtue*, Michael Walzer with *The spheres of Justice*, Michael Sandel with *Liberalism and the limits of justice* and Charles Taylor with *The sources of the self* have been labelled communitarians but do not want to be connected with the political movement which has been in the meantime developed by Etzioni and others, mainly in the United States of America. These authors do not think that communitarianism is a systematic alternative to liberalism (Source – Wikipedia and Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

<sup>262</sup> According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy

“multiple and contradictory subjects inhabitants of a diversity of communities, constructed by a variety of discourses” (Mouffe, 2005, p20). As a philosophical political project it also does not suit my purpose because the emphasis in community and in tradition gives it a particularist dimension that undermines the importance of universal and global virtue which is envisioned for the virtue of responsibility. Furthermore communitarianism seems also inadequate to address environmental global problems.

Apart from the communitarians, there have been some political philosophical authors that issued some papers reviving Aristotelian politics such as Salkever and Nussbaum<sup>263</sup>. They are Neo-Aristotelians, as they modify, adapt, ignore and improve some of the original Aristotle’s ideas<sup>264</sup>. Since Aristotle is still the main figure in virtue ethics it makes sense to consider the ideas of these thinkers, even if they don’t acknowledge themselves as having embraced virtue politics as such. But they have interesting proposals which might contribute to our discussion.

Salkever (1974) defends that there are two ways of interpreting and understanding the meaning of politics as an activity: “politics conceived as a problem of moral and intellectual virtue, and politics conceived as a problem of obligation and legitimacy” (p.78). He recognizes that the first one is now rare and might almost seem odd, while the second is the commonly way of thinking about politics. This implies that the question “why should I obey the law” becomes the way most of us understand our relationship with politics. This

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<sup>263</sup> Another author is Wiggins (2004) who, for example, wrote a paper: “Neo-Aristotelian Reflections on Justice”, comparing ideas of a pre-liberal conception of justice with a liberal conception where he revived some of the Aristotelian arguments comparing them with Kant and Rawls’s arguments.

<sup>264</sup> Onora O’Neill (1996) is not a neo-Aristotelian neither could be considered as defending a virtue approach to ethics or politics, but is also thinking and writing about these themes. She tries to bring together justice and virtue which are often considered apart as the first is considered universalist (based on universal and abstract principles) and the second, as particularist (judging and responding to particular situations and relationships). Even though “justice was once celebrated as a virtue”, contemporary writing depicts justice as incompatible with human virtue and excellence. O’Neill does not agree with this and tries to bring them together. Basing her arguments in a constructive account of practical reasoning she believes that the concepts of abstraction and universalization are fundamental as guide-lines for action, but not necessarily as complete instructions. O’Neill’s subject is justice, for which she believes that given “the world of ethical plurality, changing beliefs and shifting boundaries” (p.29) makes particularism unconvincing and unattractive in the modern world. She believes that a universal conception of virtues is part of an effort of practical reasoning that could guide action. Responsibility also has characteristics that situate it in need of universal and abstraction conceptions in order to be a virtue of the political system. I will come back to that.

question of legitimate authority becomes crucial and opposes an Aristotelian conception of politics for which the crucial question was what is best for man. The question “Does it enhance the human aspects of human nature?” has been substituted by “Is it legitimate?” and Salkever (1974) observes that indeed liberty, authority, obligation, legitimacy, and related contract-linked concepts are much more present than the concept of virtue<sup>265</sup>.

Public obedience was the necessary, though unpleasant, price of private freedom. Why free individuals obey the law if they are not compelled to do so, was Rousseau's<sup>266</sup> starting point for the idea of social contract which has been dominating political philosophy since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Salkever assumes that both intellectual and moral virtue have virtually disappeared from political philosophy having been substituted by obligation.

Salkever (1974), trying to analyse alternatives, thinks that it is important to come back to the “why” question. Coming back to Aristotle he considers that before the question of legitimate authority was the question of why man should enter a political relationship. Even though this is a complex question, one way to see it is to relate it to what kind of things is good for human beings. The question of what is desirable enters the public sphere and therefore politics. If the objective of politics is to take us in the direction of what is good for man, then that is the reason why we should enter a political relationship. The question of the legitimacy of authority loses its centrality. We are a “political animal” because it is through the political relationship that human beings can achieve excellence of character.<sup>267</sup> For Aristotle, politics has as its aim the development of moral virtue among its citizens. It is therefore judged on those terms rather than on economic growth or individual liberty or legitimacy.

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<sup>265</sup> One should not forget that the meaning of Greek word is broader than the current understanding of virtue. In Greek *areté* is also excellence in the sense that a thing done well is a thing done virtuously and the doer is virtuous on that activity which does not mean he is a virtuous human being.

<sup>266</sup> “L'homme est né libre, et partout il est dans les fers” - “Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains...” is Rousseau's powerful and emblematic statement on the foundations of the social contract.

<sup>267</sup> As Salkever (1974) puts it: Aristotle would then ask in “the process of determining whether a particular association were political (rather than economic or despotic) “does it enhance the strictly human aspects of human nature?”, while the greater part of modern philosophy, following Rousseau, would say “Is it legitimate?””

Most of contemporary political philosophy does not consider these Aristotelian perspectives, apart from a few exceptions, and it might be relevant to ask why this is so. Is the question of what is the best human life, still a valid and meaningful question? As Salkever (1974) reports, Machiavelli defended in “The prince” that how we ought to live was an irrelevant political question because we never live as we ought to. Moral virtue is therefore not a political term and is instead related with the private sphere, a matter of taste. This idea that it is not possible to answer what the best life for man is in a rational way (supposing that there is a best or virtuous live, this does not mean that all individuals would want to pursue it) further supported the dismissal of virtue thinking in politics.

The bottom line of Salkever’s position is that we have seen a worrying narrowing of the range of questions which inform philosophic inquiry into the political things. This narrowing may be distorting in the way we grasp the political reality. The questions of “legitimacy, authority, obligation, liberty are focused on the manner in which the polity is constituted rather than on the goals or values of life styles which the polity explicitly encourages or implicitly rewards” (p.92). For Salkever, it is important to consider alternatives which might be more fulfilling mainly the one that “formulates the problem of the best human life in terms of the problem of intellectual and moral virtue” (Salkever, 1974<sup>268</sup>, p.92). Salkever (1990) later wrote a book on the importance of theory and practice in Aristotelian political philosophy, claiming that Aristotle more than any other philosopher helps us asking “better questions about what we are doing as political actors” (Salkever, 1990, p.5). The importance of what Salkever defends is mainly opening the discussion of the political to other realms. It contributes for decreasing the prejudice against virtue thinking.

Nussbaum (1990) in a book on liberalism and the Good wrote a chapter entitled “Aristotelian Social Democracy”. As we have seen in chapter five, Martha Nussbaum does not agree that virtue ethics is a normative ethical current so virtue politics is also probably meaningless for her. Her chapter is a well-argued

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<sup>268</sup> He finishes by acknowledging that even though Rousseau has been fundamental for this legitimacy paradigm, was also one of the few ones considering virtue as well “Rousseau holds a unique position as an uncommonly brilliant (though not necessarily successful) link between the language of legitimacy and obligation on the one hand and the language of virtue on the other”

call for an Aristotelian vision of politics. The question of the Good and of the priority of the Good<sup>269</sup>, which are crucial themes in political philosophy, are thoroughly analysed by Nussbaum (1990) who presents a list of capabilities as a proxy for the Good<sup>270</sup>. Recently, Nussbaum (2006) takes this open list, these entitlements and refines it into the so-called capability approach which is to be the basis of her theory of justice. Next section will discuss her proposals in more detail.

Salkever, Nussbaum, Wiggins are examples of authors who propose what might be considered some basis, or some foundation for renewing the way political philosophy is discussed and analysed. These and other new-Aristotelians have been criticised by Wallach (1992) who believes that Aristotelian politics suffer from some disconnection between the form and the substance of Aristotle's political theory, and disregards its historical context. He thinks that imposing flexibility on Aristotle's political theory perverts it and using it to solve our ethical and political quandaries does not make sense. Wallach (1992) disagrees that, uncomfortable issues in Aristotle's views and prejudices, such as subjugation of women, slavery and so on, could be discarded as if inexistent. He divides these Aristotelians in three categories: analytical, fundamentalist and traditional "Aristotelianism"; each one reviving selective parts of the original Aristotle. The belief that *phronesis*, deliberation, practical reason or wisdom provides "what liberalism lacks – an objective, morally infused standard of reason that elucidates a rational hierarchy of purposive human value which also flexibly adapts to the variegated character of ethical and political life" (p. 621) as the main justification of their project, does not stand by itself, he thinks. Nevertheless Salkever says that his objective is not to supply a system or set of principles for resolving moral and political disputes, but to argue that certain questions, such as the question of the best human life according to nature, are worth raising over and over again.

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<sup>269</sup> "This priority of the good is the most conspicuous difference between the Aristotelian conception and all major liberal theories" Nussbaum (1990).

<sup>270</sup> "The list provides a minimal theory of good" Nussbaum (1990)

Discussion on virtue politics has also been difficult up to now, mainly because from a reasonable doubt about whether human beings have a nature to perfect, it immediately falls into an invincible certainty that human beings do not (Berkowitz, 1999). But the revivalism of virtue ethics together with the above mentioned discontent with contemporaneous politics is giving a window of opportunity for at least discussing the matter. This thesis aims to underpin and open this discussion.

Furthermore there are many thinkers within liberalism, who started thinking about virtue and its importance. Even John Stuart Mill<sup>271</sup> states that “what causes and conditions good government (...) are the qualities of the human beings composing the society over which the government is exercised”. So what at a first sight seems an incompatible issue within liberalism, might after all be at least debatable.

Does politics exist mainly to promote our interests or to defend our rights? If it seems to have started with the first, lately it is being focusing on the latter. But if promoting our interests is still a legitimate role of our institutional system then these have to be universalised. What are the interests that qualify as universal? Probably the answer is some sort of a common Good. This is also quite a disputed question.

### 6.2.3 The Good

Politically, considering that everybody should have the virtues that lead to *eudaimonia* seems difficult as it might be difficult to determine a specific notion of human flourishing and well-being. Furthermore organizing politics around a recognized common good is quite daunting to many people<sup>272</sup>. As most liberals, also Buchanan (1989) specifically says, that the role of the state is to protect

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<sup>271</sup> In “Considerations on representative government” as cited in Berkowitz, 1999

<sup>272</sup> Lund (1993) states: “the task of defining a widely shared but still determinate idea of human flourishing seems daunting beyond belief” (...) “a theory that leads to a politics that necessarily ranks and publicly endorses or penalises various lives”

basic individual liberties and not make citizens virtuous or impose on them a conception of good life<sup>273</sup>.

The advent of liberalism and its perceived added value of governments being neutral in morality and in refusing to define any Good for society have in a way inhibited discussions on the idea of a common Good. But throughout times this has been much debated and has changed according to different theories. Strauss (1959) says that political philosophy emerges when we make explicit that we want to acquire knowledge of the good life and good society. Tocqueville<sup>274</sup> had warned against the entropic course of political drift in a society in which the spirit of capitalism developed unchecked and uncivilised by political understanding.

Westra (1998) pinpoints the Achilles heel of modern democracies, claiming that what is lacking is:

- A common conception of the good that is not open to revision and rejection, based on utilitarian preferences and majoritarian choices;
- A holistic approach to the good, in contrast with the enshrinement of extreme individualism and the worship of technical maximality;
- A belief in the necessity for both reason and universality in both person morality and, in public policy.

She concludes that “individualistic free choices fostered by democracy, without the imposition of checks based on a philosophically commitment to the good, are intellectually, morally, and in our world even physically harmful to all” (p.155). There might be more than one reading of what Westra says. With her principle of integrity mentioned in earlier chapters, she privileges a sort of the

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<sup>273</sup> This is not to be seen literally as usual the liberal States (most Western ones) always interfere with the lives of their citizens, and even impose subtle conceptions of the Good. For example by taxing Casinos and other type of games and by subsidizing cultural events like theatre plays or opera shows, the State is clearly giving a sign of what it considers it is worth valuing. The important thing is to be aware of where to draw the limits of this interference. Where is the limit of liberal States for actively preserving a good environment? This is the difficult question to be discussed.

<sup>274</sup> Cited in Sullivan, 1982, where an analysis of what Alexis de Tocqueville wrote on his book “Democracy in America” is made in relation to Sullivan’s critic of liberalism and the individualism it fosters.

authoritarian type of environmental policy which is not a preferred version of politics in this thesis.

I would not like to enter a path of criticisms to liberalism or democracy or capitalism, which has taken different routes, from Marx to some contemporaneous American political thinkers (ex. Sullivan, 1982, Beiner, 1992, Sandel, 1996<sup>275</sup>). I would like rather to re-focus on the good issue. Westra above claims that we lack a common conception of the good, but Dworkin<sup>276</sup> (1978) defines liberalism as political decisions that must be as far as possible independent of any particular conception of the good life. This sort of liberalism of neutral concern espoused also by Rawls, is according to Taylor (1994, p.258) based on the idea that the policies adopted “empower all equally to discern and live up to their freely elaborated conception of good life. Neutrality resides in the fact that the society itself is not committed to one or another conception of the good.”

Nussbaum (1990) argues that the aversion that Rawls and other liberals have of the conception of the Good might be unfounded as there are several ways to look at it. Her own, an Aristotelian based view, is a “thick<sup>277</sup> vague conception of the good” (p.205) which is a “comprehensive conception of good human functioning (in contrast to Rawls’s “thin” theory), but at a high level of generality, admitting multiple specifications” (p. 206). She claims that this is not metaphysical but “an ethical-political account” that can be shared and allows pluralism in the specification of ends. It is a conception that allows for choice, because the objective is not producing people to function in a certain way, but rather “producing people who are *capable* of functioning in these ways”, giving them training and resources to do so, “should they choose” it. One of the capabilities is indeed “the capability of choosing: of doing all these functions in accordance with one’s very own practical reasoning” (p.214). As Nussbaum says (p. 214) “the government aims at capabilities, and leaves the rest to the

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<sup>275</sup> With suggestive titles like *Reconstructing public philosophy*; *What is the matter with liberalism?* and *Democracy’s discontent*, respectively.

<sup>276</sup> Cited in Beiner, 1992 from the chapter “Liberalism” in *Public and Private Morality*, ed. Hampshire, S., Cambridge University Press, 1978.

<sup>277</sup> “Thick – dealing with human ends across all areas of human life” Vague as it admits “many concrete specifications” and “yet it draws an outline sketch of the good life”

citizens". The task of political planning and political and institutional design should all have as a basis these capabilities. The citizens are entitled to receive "the institutional, material, and educational support that is required if they are to become capable of functioning in that sphere according to their own practical reasoning" (p.214).

In her latest work, Nussbaum (2006) develops this theory, and defends an outcome-oriented methodology (starting from the capabilities and ending in the politics that allow them to exist and give dignity to human life)<sup>278</sup> contrary to Rawls methodology who works the other way round, with a procedural methodology which if well designed and well performed it will have a good outcome<sup>279</sup>.

These two methodologies account for different interpretations of the question of the good in political philosophy. Should the good be defined and then policies designed to achieve it or should we design policies by just institutions and according to principles (that give shape to an abstract idea of dignity) which will surely deliver a just outcome. In this thesis I am using a mixed methodology, by proposing responsibility as a procedural concept, but also acknowledging that a good environment might be included in a conception of good which will in turn justify why investing on responsibility. Before getting into that it is interesting to investigate further Nussbaum who argues that her list of capabilities "can become the object of an overlapping consensus among people who otherwise have very different comprehensive conceptions of the good" (2006, p.70).

Nussbaum identifies a "list of *central human capabilities*, arguing that all of them are implicit in the idea of a life worthy of human dignity" (Nussbaum, 2006, p.70). These capabilities are to be seen as "the source of political principles for

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<sup>278</sup> Nussbaum is inspired by Grotius who also considered that "political theory begins from an abstract idea of basic entitlements, grounded in the twin ideas of dignity (the human being as an end) and sociability" according to Nussbaum (2006).

<sup>279</sup> In fact this "dichotomy" is a good characterizer of different approaches to political philosophy. If for some authors such as Plato, Grotius, Marx, Nussbaum their political philosophy is teleological oriented, in the sense they argue for a specific end to attain, for others, such as Locke or Rawls their main orientation is rather procedural. On the other hand, there are also other authors such as Aristotle or Jefferson who espouse an intermediate position of having both an end to attain but very concerned in how getting there. The position privileged in this thesis, is this latter conception of political philosophy. (Footnote inspired by personal discussions with Viriato Soromenho-Marques)

a liberal pluralistic society” (p.70). Nussbaum sees this list as open-ended, dynamic and prone to modifications. Her current (2006) version of ten central human capabilities is (summarized from p76, 77, and 78):

1. Life – being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length.
2. Bodily health – being able to have good health, nourish and shelter
3. Bodily integrity – being able to move, to be secure against violent assault, opportunities for sexual satisfaction and choice in matters of reproduction
4. Senses, imagination, and thought – able to use the senses, to imagine, think and reason – and to do these things in a truly human way
5. Emotions – to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude and justified anger. Not being blighted by fear and anxiety
6. Practical reason – being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about planning of one’s life.
7. Affiliation – A – being able to live with and towards others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction, to be able to imagine the situation of another. B – having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation, being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin
8. Other species – being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature
9. Play – being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities
10. Control over one’s environment – A. Political – being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one’s life, having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. B. Material – being able to hold property, and having property rights on an equal basis with others, having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others.

This list<sup>280</sup> might gather broad cross-cultural agreement, like other international agreements concerning basic human rights. The main characteristic of Nussbaum's proposal is to identify, clarify and define an outcome of a dignified human life as a starting point. Having it identified and agreed, policies can be designed and be judged against it.

I have now briefly discussed three issues within the frame of the relationship between politics and ethics, namely cosmopolitanism, virtue politics and the question of the Good. These three issues might start informing a possible political philosophy based on the idea of virtues complementing obligations and the possibility of a common Good along Nussbaum's proposal. Strauss (1959) said that "regime" was the guiding theme of political philosophy as it expressed the idea of the whole. For him (p.34) "Regime is the order, the form, which gives society its character. Regime is therefore a specific manner of life. Regime is the form of life as living together, the manner of living of society and in society". Conflicting regimes exist and finding which one is the best is the quest for political philosophy.

The challenge in this research is narrower, namely find the best manner of living of and in society within the environmental world. I have been proposing that responsibility should be the guiding value framing the relationship between man and nature.

### ***6.3. Responsibility in environmental politics***

Rawls (1985) when discussing "justice as fairness" published a paper claiming that this was a political matter, not a metaphysical one. He was trying to avoid philosophical disputes that would undermine the practical objective of his project, even though asserting that this did not mean these disputes were not

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<sup>280</sup> Other lists exist, for example by Max-Neef (1987) trying to oppose the belief that material possessions is the drive of human beings, established a list of the fundamental human needs that should otherwise define public policies. The nine items that compose his list are the following: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom.

important<sup>281</sup>. Rawls (1985) started by what he called “a basic intuitive idea”, the idea of society as a system of social cooperation. The main idea of my thesis is that environment would be better off if responsibility would be more widespread. I also assume it as a “basic intuitive idea”. The storyline of this thesis has been built up using a conception of responsibility as a virtue, which as we have seen in the previous chapter might be an important step forward in that crusade. This virtue of responsibility applied to individuals was seen as both a virtue of character and a virtue of thought. In this section the strategy is enquiring if this line of thought also makes sense within the political world, namely the environmental political world.

Regarding an ethic of responsibility in a political realm, Max Weber is certainly one of the most important references, mainly in his lecture *Politics as a vocation* where he opposes an ethic of ultimate causes (*Gesimmungsethik*) with an ethic of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*). He starts by stating that they are irreconcilable because the first one is sort of religious (in the sense that one does one's best and leaves the results with the Lord) and in the second one “has to give account of the foreseeable results of one's action” (Weber, 1919 [1993], p. 120). He thinks that ethics does not have a prime role in politics and are in different spheres<sup>282</sup>. Trying to think about what should be the relation between politics and ethics, Weber questions if the ethic that rules “erotic, business, familial, and official relations” ((Weber, 1919 [1993], p. 118) should all

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<sup>281</sup> Even though Hampton (1989) says that it is unfortunate that Rawls changed his mind and now considers his proposal only as political and not anymore metaphysical (especially as he is “primarily responsible for breathing new life” into political philosophy as will be explained in next chapter). She says (p.792) “we should reject his recommendation to do only political and not metaphysical theorizing about the structuring of our political institutions in constitutional democracies”. Next chapter, when talking about an environmental political philosophy, I will reassert the importance of metaphysics, but I can see his point of avoiding metaphysical potentially controversial theories and invest on “overlapping consensus” that should be able to incorporate “reasonable pluralism”. So Rawls arguments rest on the importance of the “overlapping consensus” as fundamental for his theory, and Hampton's on the belief that true philosophy is not seeking consensus but search for truth and for arguing for it with respect for opponents. Rawls and Hampton's arguments are much more complex but such interesting discussion would be outside the scope of my research. In this context, I am using Rawls argument only as to help me start in my own argument.

<sup>282</sup> As Gaita (1991, p.247) says “there is much confusion in Weber's essay, but it is deservedly a classic and that is, partly (...) those who say (...) that one must not do evil though good may come of it, are in one sense irresponsible”. Gaita believes that it is not possible to say ethics is in conflict with politics, unless one makes clear what one's conception of the ethical or of the political is, for a start. “A proper exploration of the relations between ethics and politics would require an exploration of that conception of politics and that conception of ethics which generate the conflict” (p.248). He also thinks that we might be tempted to think that it is rather a conflict within morality, than a conflict between politics and morality. But he reckons that what the conflict might be, above all, is a “conflict between politics and a certain conception of good and evil” (p.250). Again, this is an interesting discussion, but outside the scope of this research, even though I might use it again later on.

be the same. In truth Weber is questioning “the noble intention” as a justification to ethically differentiate regimes that nevertheless have all in common being backed up by *violence*. Weber is probably quite influenced by Machiavelli in the sense that he acknowledges the need for the prince, for the successful politician, for violence<sup>283</sup> but at the same time he regrets that it has to be so.

So Weber opposes two irreconcilably maxims: “conduct can be oriented to an “ethic of ultimate ends” or to an “ethic of responsibility.” The first one is inappropriate for politics because responsibility for consequences is lacking<sup>284</sup>. But he finishes his lecture by acknowledging that the true vocation, the true calling for politics, is when one can reconcile both ethics, when one is aware of one’s responsibilities, feeling them with heart and soul and in that case an “ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man – a man who *can* have the “calling for politics” (Weber, 1919 [1993], p.127). This is a line of reasoning that supports my belief in an environmental virtue politics<sup>285</sup>.

Weber says “politics is made with the head, but it is certainly not made with the head alone.” (Weber, 1919 [1993], p.127) and ends his essay with an optimistic and hopeful statement of reconciliation between ethics and politics: “man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible” (Weber, 1919 [1993], p. 128). This gives us strength in our endeavour of proposing responsibility as a virtue. Time and again, it appears throughout history the importance of people and their character, both as rulers and ruled.

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<sup>283</sup> He acknowledges for e.g. “The decisive means for politics is violence” and “Different tasks of politics can only be solved by violence”.

<sup>284</sup> Again using Gaita’s arguments that this sort of statement is allowing that “politics is *at the crunch* consequentialist (...) that politics will bring out the consequentialist in all of us” (p.248, 249). He questions it: “A form of Aristotelianism clearly offers a more serious account of ethics, of politics, and of their relation than does consequentialism. Why, then, is it thought that politics provides difficulties for those who are not consequentialists?” (p.248). If it is true that sometimes evil must be done to avoid even more evil, it is different to say that evil must be done to avoid terrible consequences. The considerations to do so are not necessarily “*consequentialist* considerations, for they thereby hijack for their own purposes, considerations which are common to any serious understanding of ethics and politics” (p.249)

<sup>285</sup> The re-emerging of virtue thinking, as mentioned in chapter five, comes after Weber, but this reconciliation that he is hoping for, is indeed showing a longing for some sort of virtue thinking.

To investigate how to enhance responsibility towards environment at both the individual and the political level is still my North. At the political level, of course external motivated environmental actions by legal or economic instruments are fundamental. But the line of this thesis is that even though those instruments are necessary they are not sufficient, or as Salkever would say they are a too “narrow” view. Going down the road of internal motivated environmental actions and their possibility, feasibility and interest is the challenge. Virtue ethics seemed a good ethical normative approach to enhance responsibility at an individual level. What are its potentials at a political level? Considering the assumption that responsibility is both an ethical and a political issue might ease the enquiry. Rawls started his *A Theory of Justice* by claiming that justice is the first virtue of social institutions. In earlier chapters, the role of responsibility within the relation between man and nature was defended as fundamental. Could we also claim that responsibility is the first virtue of institutions that deal directly or indirectly with this relationship?

Within this question, two distinct issues arise. The first relates to the possible role of public institutions in enhancing responsibility towards the environment at individual level. The second deals with how to develop responsibility towards environment at the institutional level. So there are two dimensions, the first with the political task of how to deal with people, and the second within the political structure itself. They are both related as for example, relations of trust between population and government depend on it.

### **6.3.1. Public institutions fostering individual responsibility**

The first part of the question is not straightforward because it implies interference by governments with individuals and might involve trying to “impose” a conception of “good”, in our case meaning a “good environment”, to them and might also imply interfering with values and beliefs that are usually praised as belonging to the private sphere. Nevertheless, the importance of the quality of citizens’ character has been gaining weight when thinking about developments in democracy as seen in the previous chapter. The increasing

need for responsible citizens prompts this question on the feasibility of the state fostering specific qualities in people. Nevertheless respect for individual choice and limited government are still important cornerstones of liberalism (which dominate Western political systems) and talking about virtues is still quite discomforting for many liberals. But as we have seen, some liberals are investigating civic virtues as a worthy project to improve and sustain our political systems. In fact, as other systems, liberalism also depends on some sort of restraint and responsibility, from both those on the governing side and those who are governed. The need of the virtues means the need to develop them, and it is the latter that produces “instability within liberal minds” (Berkowitz 1999)<sup>286</sup>. Berkowitz (1999) defends that nevertheless virtues must be part of any political theory, even though they might be given prime or secondary importance and emphasis. Repudiating virtue as aim of politics does not mean to repudiate the idea of virtue<sup>287</sup>. This position has been increasingly gaining weight within liberalism. Basically it invests on having the best of two worlds. Connelly (2006, p.50) also defends it “to assert the relevance of the virtues to green politics and citizenship is not in itself to endorse virtue ethics as such. (...) The position is defended (...) because exercise of the virtues is practically efficacious.”

In most political systems there is a need of a compromise between the so-called neutrality of the public institutions and their functioning in relation to people. One of the main objectives of public institutions is to improve the quality of life. As Lane (1994) says, quality of life is the relation between quality of conditions and quality of persons, but public policies tend to invest only on quality of conditions, undermining the importance of quality of persons. Human development has been an important theme from Aristotle, to Stuart Mill<sup>288</sup> up to Habermas<sup>289</sup> who tend to evaluate governments as the quality of their people.

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<sup>286</sup> Furthermore most of the responsibility for this type of education has been placed/given to the private realm: families, with whom liberalism does not like to interfere

<sup>287</sup> Berkowitz (1999) tries to demonstrate that within the making of liberalism, virtues have always been present, investigating from Locke to Kant, finding in all of the fathers of liberalism a tradition welcoming virtues.

<sup>288</sup> “The most important point of excellence which any form of government can possess is to promote the virtue and intelligence of the people themselves” Stuart Mill, Representative Government in Utilitarianism, as cited in Lane (1994).

<sup>289</sup> “The institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population makes of them”, Habermas (1992)

But Governments do not feel comfortable with interfering with people so directly. The Indian Nobel prize winner Amartya Sen was among the first to denounce the potential emptiness of quality of conditions when people could not fully enjoy it. His thinking inspired the Human Development Index, which has been adopted by the United Nations Development Programme, who since 1990 publishes an annual report<sup>290</sup> measuring it in several countries. His work gave rise to the capabilities theory which was later further developed by Nussbaum, who “transformed” it into a surrogate for the Good as just seen. Lane’s (1994) proposal is different as he does not think that the capabilities approach is sufficient to translate the “attitudinal, emotional and integrative” aspects of the whole person, whose development is what Lane considers necessary for a high quality of life. Lane develops nine conditions which form what should be the quality of conditions, but then defines also what would be the qualities of persons which would allow the full enjoyment of those opportunities. In fact he is proposing a virtue politics.

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<sup>290</sup> “Human development is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means —if a very important one —of enlarging people’s choices. Fundamental to enlarging these choices is building human capabilities —the range of things that people can do or be in life. The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible.” In UNDP site: <http://hdr.undp.org/hd/>

Fig. 6.1 – Quality of Conditions and quality of persons

<i>Opportunities (Quality of Conditions)</i>	<i>Qualities of Persons to Exploit Opportunities</i>
Adequate material support	Cognitive complexity, sense of effectiveness, productivity orientation
Physical safety and security	
Available friends and social support	Ease of interpersonal relations, self-esteem
Opportunities for expressing love	Ease of interpersonal relations, personality integration, self-esteem
Opportunities for intrinsically challenging work	Cognitive complexity, sense of autonomy and effectiveness
Leisure for creativity and relaxation	Self-knowledge (knowledge of own values)
An available set of values in the community	An ethical orientation, personality integration, self-esteem
Opportunities for self-development	Personality integration, self-knowledge, self-esteem
Justice (objective)	An ethical orientation

Source: Lane (1994, p.234)

One of the corner stones of liberalism is that the state should not interfere with different conceptions of the good and therefore could not interfere with how people are and what they value<sup>291</sup> as seen earlier. Sen and Nussbaum's proposal relies on the responsibility of governments for providing the conditions for people to develop themselves along a series of capabilities they should be entitled of. Interfering with the quality of persons, as Lane proposes, is a step further and enters the realm of a virtue politics. He reckons that given the uncompromising value of autonomy, his proposal does not promote intrusive or paternalistic assessments by governments. Lane says (1994, p.238) "If governments can help to develop the human personality, including the skills necessary for autonomous judgements and action, obstructing that help by invoking the value of autonomy is to mistake a symbol for its reality; it is self-defeating". So he defends that governments should devise programs that would promote cognitive complexity, autonomy, effectiveness, self-knowledge, self-

<sup>291</sup> Kant (1793) had a similar point in his essay *On the Old Saw: That May Be Right in Theory But It Won't Work in Practice* published in 1793. (In Kant, I., (1784- 1797). Kant argued that since each man thinks differently, then a state could not legitimately impose any particular conception of happiness upon its citizens. Furthermore Kant views happiness as empirical and contingent and therefore it would never qualify as universal. Therefore the idea of freedom, not of happiness, was the solid ground upon which the constitutional order should be established.

esteem and so forth<sup>292</sup>. Lane (1994) does not say how and which should be those programs. Nevertheless his proposal helps my argument that governments could devise programs to promote responsibility towards the environment as a virtue. In the previous chapter I dealt with three stages for people to develop responsibility as a virtue. I identified a need for work on affective and cognitive states and an active citizenship. Mainly the last two should be actively pursued by public institutions, not only promoting it but also providing the conditions for its development.

A positive answer to the first part of the question is then supported by Brown's five items rationale, by Nussbaum's capabilities theory and by Lane's further proposal. Before concluding that government can and should interfere with people, promoting responsibility towards environment as a virtue of character and thought, a positive answer to second part of the question must be justified.

### 6.3.2. Environmental responsible public institutions

The second part of the question was related with how to develop responsibility towards environment at the institutional level. The challenge is not so much that Government takes up environment as an issue, as this has been already done in the past 30 years across most Western public systems. The real challenge is to have a collective responsibility, meaning all different public institutions sharing the environmental objectives<sup>293</sup>.

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<sup>292</sup> We might remember from chapter 3, Brown's (2005) proposal for a social welfare strategy based on developing personal responsibility. The rationale for doing so, were, utility, self-respect, autonomy, human flourishing and fairness. These issues justified that Governments would pursue policies, in Brown's case, social welfare policies promoting personal responsibility.

<sup>293</sup> At the European level this is translated mainly by the integration principle already mentioned in chapter two. It is also related with sustainable development. Sweden might be a pioneer country in this endeavour by having as their core environmental policy the idea of: *Environmental Quality Objectives: A Shared Responsibility*. "The Swedish Parliament has established 16 environmental quality objectives, such as "Clean Air" and "Good-Quality Groundwater", to guide Sweden towards a sustainable society. The 16 environmental objectives will function as benchmarks for all environment-related development in Sweden, regardless of where it is implemented and by whom. The overriding aim is to solve all the major environmental problems within one generation", furthermore "All sectors of society must take their share of responsibility for environmental issues in their field of activity. A certain number of national authorities have been appointed as overall responsible for the environmental quality objectives. The overall responsibility includes proposing and implementing measures needed as well as monitoring, evaluating and reporting the progress." Source: <http://www.internat.naturvardsverket.se/index.html>

As pointed earlier, the alternatives of having a common good, not having a common good, or how to deal with several goods have been discussed thoroughly through the last two millennia. In this enquiry though, the scope is narrower, namely if a Good environment could be part of a common Good pursued, not only by environmental ministries but by all institutions within the government. For that a good environment has to be accepted as a main public goal. As Rawls would say, it must be subject to an “overlapping consensus”.

Is a good environment a goal that might be accepted and agreed upon without too much turmoil, with consensus? To answer it positively one might need, for a start, at least both anthropogenic and non-anthropogenic reasons. The first set of reasons comes from the well-proven relation between health and environment, aesthetics and environment, and possibly also related with care for future generations. The second set of reasons comes from a possible acceptance of the intrinsic value of nature.

Then again it might not be so simple, because for example the uncertainty and complexity that surround many environmental problems, because people might not agree with the above reasons or because sometimes environment conflicts with economic or social reasons highly valued by public institutions. This means that promoting or not promoting a good environment becomes essentially a matter of the political philosophical world. Mouffe (2005, p 14) says “that a question remains unanswerable by science or that it does not attain the status of a truth that can be demonstrated does not mean that a reasonable opinion cannot be formed about it or that it cannot be an opportunity for a rational choice”. In the political world, the validity and legitimacy of actions cannot afford being grounded in absolute truths. Following this transposing of spheres with Mouffe (1993), the proposal becomes of considering environment a “common political good” instead of a “common moral good”. Nevertheless, and following Hampton (1989), this should not exempt philosophers to keep on searching for that truth.

A political argument, then, is that even if a good environment is not a universal good, we can still accept it, and propose it as part of the political sphere.

Furthermore it might be argued that environment can give the political public discourse a philosophy whose moral conceptions are close to what societies need or want to hear. In fact, an ecological way of thinking, which stresses interdependence, nurture, care and responsibility, emphasises components in society, like justice, equity and cooperation which are part of any idea or conception of the common good we might be looking for, even if we do not acknowledge it as such. This means that environment might not only be part but also contribute to a potential good; i.e. there are positive externalities of an environmental politics on public life and on society in general. Nevertheless the potential conflict with other issues within the political sphere must also be dealt with<sup>294</sup>, and the potential continuing search for a truth not abandoned.

Apart from some win-win situations that ecological modernization stresses, the potential conflict with other political goods, namely the economic one arises mainly because in our western society and at least since the XVII century money/wealth is considered a basic attribute for the grounding of life. Wealth and economic growth are one of the major issues in public policy. If Machiavelli opened the way, then Hobbes and later on Locke established the modern paradigm of identifying wealth and property as one of the conditions for a good and happy life. Attempts to bring the good back to a less material life have happened<sup>295</sup>, but never strongly enough to change or even challenge the established priority of the public policy on promoting wealth and economic growth. Proposals of steady states have begun with Mill, and recently with Ophius (1977), Daly (1977) and (Czech and Daly, 2004) but have never attained mainstream thinking. The tension between economy and environment that pervades public policy, as seen in earlier chapters, arises in this discussion again.

The establishment of Ecological Economics based on the idea that the economy is a sub-system of the ecosphere and dependent on it for material and

<sup>294</sup> As mentioned earlier conflicts are legitimate, real and should not be undermined, ignored or avoided.

<sup>295</sup> Gilles Lipovetsky published recently (Gallimard, 2006) – “Le bonheur paradoxal. Essai sur la société d'hyperconsommation”, focusing on this theme of the happiness brought by material things being too ephemeral. Lipovetsky defends that we should start investing in other areas of our lives in order to avoid happiness to be so paradoxal, i.e. we have so many things that we should be happy, it seems we are in many statistics, and then anxiety, stress, dominate our lives.

process resources has also gaining ground since the early nineties (Ropke, 2005). The rise of environmental problems and the acknowledgement of the need for some sort of limits to growth both of our actions and of use of nature contribute to this cause, but there is a long way before this could be widely accepted. The focus on economic growth as the better mean to fight poverty has been dismissed by ecological economics, and recently Woodward and Simms (2006) published a report for the New Economic Foundation (a think tank on “economics as if people and the planet mattered”) denouncing “the tyranny of the numbers” as the reason for the fixation on economic growth, stating that it is due to “a growing obsession with quantifiable indicators of policy performance and a failure to make what is important measurable rather than making what is measurable important” (p25). Daly (2002, p.3) mentions that “Ecological limits are rapidly converting “economic growth” into “uneconomic growth” – i.e. throughput growth that increases costs by more than it increases benefits, thus making us poorer not richer”. This seems to be true with climate change as the late Stern Report (2006) has shown us. Its executive summary says that “the costs of stabilising the climate are significant but manageable; delay would be dangerous and much more costly”<sup>296</sup>

Reverting to Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* where he said that “the money-maker's life is in a way forced on him; and clearly wealth is not the good we are seeking ...” (1096 a 7) seems a difficult or even an impossible task. Western lifestyle is very comfortable and attractive and has been able to pervade almost all other conceptions of life in most of the other parts of the world. Economic growth is an established objective of public good life policy in almost all the world<sup>297</sup>. Of course other things also contribute for a good life like friendship, love, freedom, personal development, meaningful work and one might question

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<sup>296</sup> Available in:

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/999/76/CLOSED\\_SHORT\\_executive\\_summary.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/999/76/CLOSED_SHORT_executive_summary.pdf)

The executive summary clearly states that “Using the results from formal economic models, the Review estimates that if we don't act, the overall costs and risks of climate change will be equivalent to losing at least 5% of global GDP each year, now and forever. If a wider range of risks and impacts is taken into account, the estimates of damage could rise to 20% of GDP or more. In contrast, the costs of action – reducing greenhouse gas emissions to avoid the worst impacts of climate change – can be limited to around 1% of global GDP each year”

<sup>297</sup> Given the relation between happiness and GDP in recent studies, showing an initial dual growth followed by a decoupling, the question of national unlimited economic growth stands mainly if its objective would be a better distribution.

what should be the role of public policies for these other things<sup>298</sup>. Within a political common good other primarily non-economic areas like education, health, security, are also important. But my aim here is narrower. It is only the link between environment and a public good life policy, i.e. the role of the government on providing a good environment for its citizens as part of public policy.

Environmental objectives have been part of public policies for several decades. The potential conflict of interests within public policy, between environment and economic development has been managed through political artifices like ecological modernization and sustainable development. Even though one recognizes that environment cannot be the main and sole political good of governments, this does not mean, though, that it cannot be one of its goods even if sometimes it clashes with other goods. Above all this has to be a clear and transparent process. The lack of trust of most people on governments is caused by their mixed messages which are also one of the major hindrances for an environmental citizenship. Public policy is naturally fragmented in the sense that it must defend conflicting interests. Even if the environmental political good as such, which might be translated into goals to achieve, might be clear within the environmental area, it does not mean that it is important to other areas. If the environmental side of politics tries to tune into citizens, before tuning in to other areas of government, very easily relations of trust and coherence with society might break. Sustainable development as the official “environmental” policy philosophy shows in a certain way a sort of a dishonest discourse as it seems it isn’t directly aimed at politics itself. It seems it is above all a discourse, a nice discourse. It remains a discussion if the current conception of sustainable development is an appropriate or final and unique solution, and next chapter will discuss it further.

If politics assumes environment as a part of the political and also a common good then Weber’s reconciliation between a responsibility ethics and an

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<sup>298</sup> Sen’s and Nussbaum’s capabilities approach mentioned above relatively answers this question.

ultimate cause ethics might be emerging and with it an environmental political philosophy . Next chapter will further explore this suggestion.

## **6.4. Conclusions**

The conception of what politics should be about is well established, and the idea that the goal of the state should include promoting the conditions for the development of human excellence is quite eccentric these days, if not even outrageous. Humankind has struggled over the centuries to discover the nature of good and evil and to define the rightness and wrongness of human behaviour. A definite definition will never be possible but that doesn't mean that one should give up one's journey into being what one believes is the good and having what one believes is the right behaviour. For attaining a better environment this journey might be clearer but not easier. Even though this is a private journey, its impacts on the environment are so strong that the border between private and public gets muddled.

The border between the private and the public realms is a dynamic one and in need of a permanent redefinition. This redefinition is a painful process as it demands an open mind and the need to constantly compromise between the rights and the duties of being not only a person and a citizen, but a person and a citizen that are part of nature.

The aim of politics should not be moralizing. That might even be dangerous. Environment might be seen by some as a positive cause. But so was the equity that supported the totalitarianism of the communism. Climate change and the need to curb the emission of greenhouse gases have prompted important discussions on this issue. The substitution of traditional energy sources by "cleaner" sources is not as simple as, at a first glance seems. Recent debates on biofuels for example show how pervasive the discussion can be<sup>299</sup>. The

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<sup>299</sup> Biofuels are solid, liquid, or gas fuel consisting of, or derived from biomass. Its common use is as a fuel in transportation. Recent policy developments (for example the European Union Directive on the Promotion of the use of biofuels and other renewable fuels for transport - 2003/30/EC is promoting the use of biofuels for EU transport. It stipulates that national measures must be taken by countries across the EU aiming at replacing 5,75 % of all transport fossil fuels (petrol and diesel) with biofuels by 2010) are seeing

recent steep increase of wind energy, for example in Portugal, with the implementation of thousands of wind turbines is also causing some debate on both the aesthetics and on the impacts on local environments and bird species. The ultimate paradoxical example is the possible promotion of the use of nuclear power as a mitigation measure of climate change.

As mentioned time and again in this thesis, the environmental *problematique* is an extremely complex issue, and few things in it are straightforward. Having a responsible behaviour implies knowing what a responsible behaviour is towards the environment. The world is full of good intentions that damage unintentionally nature and the environment. The previous chapter dealt with this problem and nevertheless the journey must go on, both the private and the public one. One should do the best one can and the government should help as much as it can in helping that this best is going on the right direction, defined with the best knowledge available. This knowledge should be informed not only by science and economics, but also by nature, philosophy and ethics. The complexity of the situation and much of the uncertainty associated to environmental problems cannot be paralysing.

The suggestion in this chapter that politics should be more informed by ethics is supported by both the characteristics of environmental problems, and by the way societies are evolving. This evolution and much of its new demands of participation and transparency have been prompted in turn by these characteristics. Both the polity and individuals are realising that investing in education both at epistemological and ontological level is part of the solution to deal with the complexity of the situation. More than science and technology is needed. And much of this more is contained in philosophy.

This takes us to the following chapter, focusing on the need to enlarge the questions that are posed to the polity as Salkever would say. Thinking about

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it as a relevant substitute to other fuels that contribute much more to the greenhouse gas emissions. Rising demand for biofuels is causing problems at several levels, namely affecting the developing world where farmers are changing their crops from production of food to production of raw material for biofuels leading to a rise in food prices.

virtue politics led us to think about ourselves, who we are, who we want to be and what do we want after all. We are part of the polity, not in the narrow sense of a simple relation to its authority and to the social contract, but as responsible agents contributing to the project of a possible *eudaimonia*. This *eudaimonia* concept being a difficult one in our liberal societies has been discussed and suggesting that a good environment might be part of it and that this would be essentially a political good and not a moral good in a way simplified and even disentangled its complexity. Much remains to be discussed and the *Scherzo* chapter will tackle the idea of an environmental political philosophy informed by the discussions held up to here.

## **Chapter seven – Environmental political philosophy**

### ***7.1. Introduction***

One of the main objectives of this research is arguing that environmental politics should be more informed by environmental ethics. The latter has been both developing insightful views about the roots of environmental problems – troubled relationship between man and nature - and has been providing two main values – intrinsic value of nature and intergenerational justice - that could support philosophically the first. Could these values inform environmental policy? When the question of values is put within a political context we are entering the domains of political philosophy.

Furthermore last chapter hinted the necessity of responsibility as a virtue not to be only a political matter but also a philosophical matter. Reviving Rawls and Hampton discussion on the importance of metaphysics, also here there is a need of a complement between policy and philosophy. Hampton (1989) says that if getting to a consensus would be enough, then the main aim would be for the acceptance of the idea and not of the truth of the idea. If that were the case, then she says that one should invest in rhetoric, emotional appeals or socialization techniques in order to persuade others to accept the idea. This is fair enough for politics, but if we would rather aim at more than consensus building, then we would need to engage in philosophizing. So we enter political philosophy and a possible environmental political philosophy which will be discussed in this chapter. Showing a potential case of virtue environmental politics in the Dutch system will help making the case for a more widespread conception of virtue thinking in environmental politics. Discussing in more detail sustainable development still seems necessary since it is the current core principle of environmental politics. The chapter will finalize by getting into the new challenges posed to environmental politics. Reviving the questions formulated in chapter one regarding the contribution that responsibility might have in environmental policy and adding other difficult questions public institutions might need to tackle in the short term.

## 7.2. Political Philosophy

The main theme of political philosophy is as Strauss (1959, p.10) says “mankind’s great objectives which are capable of lifting all men beyond their poor selves”. Knowledge of these is not immediately available and its quest forms the political philosophical project. It is important to differentiate between political science and political philosophy<sup>300</sup>. Political philosophy had a decline in last century living essentially off the capital of the past (Strauss<sup>301</sup>, 1959 and Dahl, 1984). Great political philosophers started arguably with Plato and his ideal state based on justice and the Good and ruled by philosophers in IV B.C., and arguably ended in the century XIX with Stuart Mill and his democracy based on suffrage and respect for minorities. In between, many other great political philosophers set up several philosophical theories supporting the great political changes throughout the centuries. The decline of political philosophy associated with new demands of the political world, in the last century gave rise to political science and political theory.

These dedicated themselves mainly, according to Dahl (1984), to what is called “political theory”, seeing their subject as history, interpretation and criticism of earlier political philosophers. They were therefore not specifically creative and “the function of creating political theory moved sharply away from philosophy to empirically oriented political science” (Dahl, 1984, p. 122).

Political scientists with an empirical orientation produced empirical political theories about all subjects related with modern politics such as “voting

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<sup>300</sup> I would like to dedicate this footnote, or even this chapter to the late Professor Pedro Viegas, who in his wonderful lectures (2004) divided Political Action, Political Theory, Political Science and Political Philosophy. According to my notes, the first implied immediate actions; the second reflected about relating the common practice with current practice; the third used verification and falsification as a criteria to the acceptability of actions, used scientific techniques such as statistics and was devoid of value judgements. Political philosophy does value judgements is concerned with the structure of the governing society, how it should be politically organized, defines authority, power, citizenship and is also concerned with what founds power and political authority, and lastly political philosophy is concerned with defining what is the political, what is its essence. Political philosophy should establish principles that remain independently of the acting, while political theory had to be constantly renewed and had to compromise with the political action.

<sup>301</sup> “Today, political philosophy is in a state of decay and putrefaction, if it has not vanished altogether” says Strauss (1959, p.17) perhaps a bit too pessimistically.

behaviour, elections, election systems, political parties, political development, the conditions for democracy, the breakdown of democratic regimes, international politics, relations between politics and economics, and so on" (Dahl, 1984, p.122). These subjects were explicitly empirical and only implicitly normative and a potential political philosophy, (whose "distinctive contribution had been its special attention to beliefs about values, norms, standards" (p.123)) became mainly inexistent helped by an increasing neo-positivism defending that beliefs about values could not be rationally justified. The general decline in religious faith and the triumphant progress of science and the importance given to history helped this scepticism of what could political philosophy contribute to the political world (Dahl, 1984, Strauss, 1959). Strauss (1959, p.13-14) ironically comments that "the genuine knowledge of political things will begin when political philosophy will have given way completely to the scientific study of politics" and (p.18) "Science and History (...) have finally succeeded in destroying the very possibility of political philosophy".

Nevertheless objections that political philosophy could not be rational or even a reasonable undertaking did not prove to be lethal (Dahl, 1984). The upheavals of the twentieth century<sup>302</sup> added by the decline of the neo-positivism stimulated further thinking about fundamental questions of moral and political philosophy. Also Strauss (1959) defends that it is impossible to discharge political philosophy and namely the importance of value judgements, as political theory and political science had done. He says (p.21) "Generally speaking, it is impossible to understand thought or action or work without evaluating it. (...) The value judgements that are forbidden to enter through the front door of political science, sociology or economics, enter these disciplines through the back door".

It was the publication in 1971 of *A Theory of Justice* which contributed unequivocally to a renewal of interest in political philosophy and which prompted an "unprecedented outpouring" of articles and books, both supporting

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<sup>302</sup> These upheavals were "two world wars and innumerable small ones, the world-wide economic depression of the 30s, revolution, the breakdown of democracy in several countries, the use and expansion of nuclear weapons" (Dahl, 1984, p.124) and so on. Environmental crisis might also be added.

or attacking Rawls, or departing to alternate views (Dahl, 1984). The implications of this revival might be the acknowledgment that (Dahl, 1984):

- empirical orientation is not at odds with normative orientation and can enrich each other;
- it is possible and useful to have discussions about moral questions;
- and political philosophy is inescapable controversial

It came to be re-recognized that connection of policy with philosophy should not be lost, because also as Sandel (1996, p.ix) says even if political philosophy is unrealizable in one sense, it is unavoidable in another because political life is “full of a language laden with theory – of rights, obligations, citizenship and freedom, democracy and law; political institutions are not simply instruments that implement ideas independently conceived, they are themselves embodiments of ideas”.

Goodin (1995) also identified potential problems with political philosophy, namely:

- problems related with its supposed idealism in contrast with the real life of politics;
- problems related to the charge that it with pursued abstract ideals which are inaccessible to people, and difficult as a guide for people’s actions;
- Furthermore since political philosophy deals with several ideals at the same time, it is also charged as an unrealistic task, as it seems impossible to realize all ideals simultaneously.

But Goodin (1995) defends political philosophy from these criticisms by proposing that idealisms, utopias, unrealizable tasks have an important role in acting as “light-houses” in political fogs.

Strauss (1959) says that philosophy is a quest of something that is not immediately available. One might have opinions about the nature of political

things but not knowledge about the nature of political things and Strauss defends that transforming the first in the latter forms the political philosophical process. Transforming opinions in knowledge remains then the challenge for a possible environmental political philosophy.

This brief introduction to the fall and rise of political philosophy in the last century aimed at giving a context to the idea that the current environmental political situation might benefit from further questionings and therefore it makes sense to situate this thinking in an environmental political philosophy.

### ***7.3. Environmental political philosophy***

Dobson (1995, p.1) argued that ecologism which “holds that a sustainable and fulfilling existence presupposes radical changes in our relationship with the non-human natural world, and in our mode of social and political life”<sup>303</sup> was a distinct political ideology. He believed it was so, because it features characteristics that fit into the understanding one has of ideologies<sup>304</sup>. Baxter (1999) builds up on this idea and considers that metaphysical, moral, political, economic and cultural issues have to be dealt with within political philosophy, in order to develop this political ideology of ecologism. Accepting the moral consideration of non-humans, of future generations and of contemporary aliens requires working on a political philosophy which would provide normative arguments for organising political decision making in these conditions. Baxter (1999, p.104) says that any political philosophy should contain:

1. a theory of human nature and the human predicament justifying the proposed political organization

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<sup>303</sup> Dobson (1995) differentiated it from environmentalism, “managerial approach to environmental problems” and defended that environmentalism did not qualify as an ideology, like ecologism did.

<sup>304</sup> “they must provide an analytical description of society – a “map” composed of reference points enabling its users to find their way around the political world. Second, they must prescribe a particular form of society employing beliefs about the human condition that sustain and reproduce views about the nature of the prescribed society. Finally, they must provide a programme for political action” (p.2)

2. a theory of political morality setting up the basic moral concepts to be considered in the proposed political organization
3. at the meta-level, theories concerning how moral thought is to be understood, moral judgement and argument to be construed
4. A system of political economy stating which economic activities are required or compatible with the moral and political organization proposed (discussions on praxis, human individuality and distributive or social justice)
5. attempts to employ the findings of political science, economics and sociology in order to refine the concepts of what is feasible in the creation of human political systems
6. given political philosophy's orientation towards practice, attempts to operationalise its key concepts, how to get to what is proposed

Investigating each of these six features Baxter goes on justifying why ecologism can be considered a political philosophy. Baxter (1999, p.142) considers that "ecologism has a distinctive approach to fundamental matters of political philosophy with respect to large-scales matters of foundational considerations, democracy, the state and globalism". The premises of his political philosophy are founded in the moral consideration of non-humans, of future generations and of contemporary aliens.

The fact that we are "natural creatures" is, for Baxter (1999) the crucial and priority fact for ecologism<sup>305</sup>. We are "a species of animal inhabiting a rich and complex biological context" (p 232). Baxter believes that once we begin to view ourselves as mainly natural creatures we will become aware of the rest of the natural world and will see "important kinds of continuity between ourselves and that world" (p 232). This premise supports the belief that "human beings, as natural creatures, are capable of the kind of love of their rich, teeming, beautiful world which leads them to see their responsibility towards it" (p 234). This love

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<sup>305</sup> As for liberalism is that we are rational creatures, for the conservative that we are culture-creators, and for the socialist that we are social creatures. Not that these ideologies deny each other facts, they just give it different importance. "They disagree over the relative importance of such obvious facts about us, what the terms should be held to mean precisely and what their implications are" (p 232)

should lead us into promoting a good life not only for ourselves, but also for the other - distant in time and space - and for non-humans.

Baxter's environmental political philosophy can be enriched by other views which would add to the *corpus* of ecologism, or alternatively propose a different constellation of ideas.

Soromenho-Marques's (1994) proposal of ecopolitics, for example, can be considered as a contributor to this process as he proposes a new way of looking into politics considering man, not just related to the human condition but as dependent of the planet, of the biosphere, reinforcing item one of Baxter's list for ecologism as an environmental political philosophy. Soromenho-Marques's (1994) ecopolitics considers four dimensions:

- i. a new problematic of the political subject category – the individual is not the starting point, but a construction of the political praxis itself;
- ii. a new equation between means and ends – it should abolish the idea of perfect end that often justifies less correct means. The true political tasks should contain measurable objectives and identifiable methods that would allow its realization;
- iii. introducing the notion of limits of the political decision – the political praxis should avoid the idea of an unreal world and concentrate on the limited amount of time, and on the irreversibility of actions that lead to the rupture of the carrying capacity of the biosphere;
- iv. radicalization of the concept of solidarity – solidarity towards the future generations should rule the way the planet is managed today.<sup>306</sup>

These are very interesting proposals that go along the line of this thesis. To reinforce the idea of the importance of an environmental political philosophy we could also propose that it could frame the extensive but scattered work that

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<sup>306</sup> Personal translation and summary of: "1. Uma nova problematização da categoria de sujeito político; 2. Uma nova equação entre meios e fins; 3. A introdução de limite na decisão política; 4. Radicalização do conceito de solidariedade" (Soromenho-Marques, 1994, p 150-151)

exists, namely on environmental science, environmental ethics, environmental sociology, environmental policy, environmental economics, environmental philosophy<sup>307</sup>.

Furthermore we are entering a new era and we are being faced with new challenges. Environmental policy must deal with issues of uncertainty and its management, irreversibility, complexity, plurality of knowledges, values, transparency and governance. These are new challenges for both policy and philosophy. Since ultimately a discussion on environment involves discussion on public issues, on economy, on philosophy, on policy it makes sense to develop this idea of enriching an environmental political philosophy.

Environmental policy is an uttermost interesting field in politics because it involves an overwhelming range of issues that are new to politics. Usually it is said that environmental policy has gone through two stages. As mentioned earlier, first it focused on how to deal with the new problems of pollution, then on preventing them. Now some problems cannot be avoided nor mitigated and the new focus is on the complex relationship between science, policy and society, and on the management of uncertainty. Furthermore faced with problems of political legitimization in pluralistic societies, policy makers are facing new challenges. Given all the issues, governments have to learn new skills. They must work in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors. They must devolve power. Political systems have to deal with issues like (adapted from Weale, 2001):

- Novel problems
- Significant economic interests
- Incommensurable claims
- Imponderable problems
- Science and Uncertainty
- Potentially deep antagonism

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<sup>307</sup> Professor Pedro Viegas in his lectures (2004) considered that Political Philosophy had to be interdisciplinary in its context (not methodological) in order to accommodate different inputs in its search of fundamental principles.

All this demands thinking and framing and this new phase of environmental policy is demanding new challenges which might enrich this environmental political philosophy.

The contribution of this research is that responsibility and virtue thinking might be the structuring principle, framing this environmental political philosophy. For environmental policy it seems very appropriate, because of the shift of environmental policy from focusing on just solving the problems into solving them taking into account how to deal with the complexity of the relation between the problems and the social and human systems. The complexity of the situation is better addressed when responsibility flows naturally almost as an excellence of character. The primary sense of virtue (*arete*) in ancient Greek was that of a functional excellence. Human excellence does not exist. Because one accepts that human excellence does not exist, does not mean that searching for it is a lost quest. The path to responsibility, democracy, and virtue politics is hard and an endless quest. But the quest is itself part of the answer.

Reviving the discussion of the Good in last chapter, it is important to note that since the Good has been, in broader terms, withdrawn from politics with liberalism, that the moral realm of societies has been left alone. It seems unlikely that people would easily allow the governments to take part again on religious issues<sup>308</sup> or moral issues. So it seems that virtue politics, which aims at influencing the overall behaviour of individuals, is condemned by modern politics. But would environmental virtue politics also be such an *enfant terrible*? It seems that in environmental politics the role of people as citizens and as consumers is fundamental for the achievement of some of its goals, as seen in previous chapters. Would it then be acceptable to promote some kind of a virtuous environmentally friendly behaviour as was proposed in last chapter? Emerging issues and challenges in today's changing and turbulent society require an incorporation of moral principles in finding acceptable strategies to

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<sup>308</sup> The recent French law on prohibiting religious outfits in schools have prompted discussions of all sorts on several epistemic communities. It was the first time that a European government was directly interfering with religion in many years.

achieve acceptable goals. Could virtue and politics go hand in hand in creating a better environmental world? Coming back to the role of governments on promoting an environmental behaviour of its citizens, it would be interesting to look at the Dutch case, as this has been happening already for quite a long period of time.

### **7.3.1. Environmental Dutch policy**

The Netherlands has always been a pioneer in environmental policy. Having been among the first ones to realise the importance of environmental policy, the Dutch took it more seriously than other European countries. Since 1989 that a National Environmental Policy Plan is published every fifth year. Already in the first Plan it was acknowledged that the public had a fundamental role in working together with the government in attaining a better environment. The strategy adopted was to invest on a self-regulation policy, described by Weale (1992) as a moral reform. This consists in encouraging citizens to undertake voluntary actions by means of a strategy of internalizing environmental responsibility. The environmental ethos set up by the government has two stages, the first concerning the internalization of environmental value and the second the internalization of personal responsibility (Pellikaan and Veen, 2002).

The effectiveness of self-regulation policy depends on people's acceptance of the social instruments, as well as on their agreement with the basic moral message which is being communicated (Pellikaan and Veen, 2002). Citizens are convinced that their environmental behaviour presents problems of voluntary collective action, and that they have a moral responsibility to cooperate towards the solution of some problems.

Pellikaan and Veen (2002) do not agree on how Weale characterizes the situation because they see it as a policy strategy devoted to implicate the citizens in a web of responsibility for democratically agreed-on environmental goals, which government cannot achieve on its own. They claim it is still a neutral type of state intervention, despite its avowed aim of changing the ways

in which individuals behave in their private domains. It is also inherent to a participatory culture of governing, privileged by the Dutch.

So even though Weale (1992) says that the Dutch plan attempts to show how contemporary environmental policy calls for a virtue based conception of citizenship, and more in particular, that such policy must have as its object not simply a good environment but good citizens in relation to that environment, Pellikaan and Veen (2002) disagree as they see the doctrine of self-regulation not driven by the wish to create good citizens independently of a calculated assessment on the part of the policymakers, but only as an impossible task for the government on its own to attain the environmental goals wished (and voted) by all. They conclude that the emphasis on the role of the citizen in the doctrine of self-regulation is compliance-oriented, rather than virtue-based<sup>309</sup>. Citizen virtues are seen to be necessary for achieving policy goals otherwise unattainable.

Pellikaan and Veen (2002) undertook a major survey on waste disposal, energy consumption and on flying behaviour, trying to understand the effects that self-regulation might have on people's behaviour. They found that, in general, the population preferred these governmental self-regulation policies to legal regulation or economic policies. Even though environmental problems are typically problems involving collective action and therefore susceptible to all the problems studied by the theory of games like cooperation, free-riding, rational choices, "rational fools" choices, "tragedy of the commons", etc, they found that in their survey "unconditional morality seems to be quite common" (p.23).

The Dutch case is very important as it goes directly to the proposal I am doing in this thesis. Enhancing personal responsibility towards the environment is possible and acceptable. Recently, also Halpern et al. (2004) suggested that personal responsibility is indeed very important for behaviour change in a report

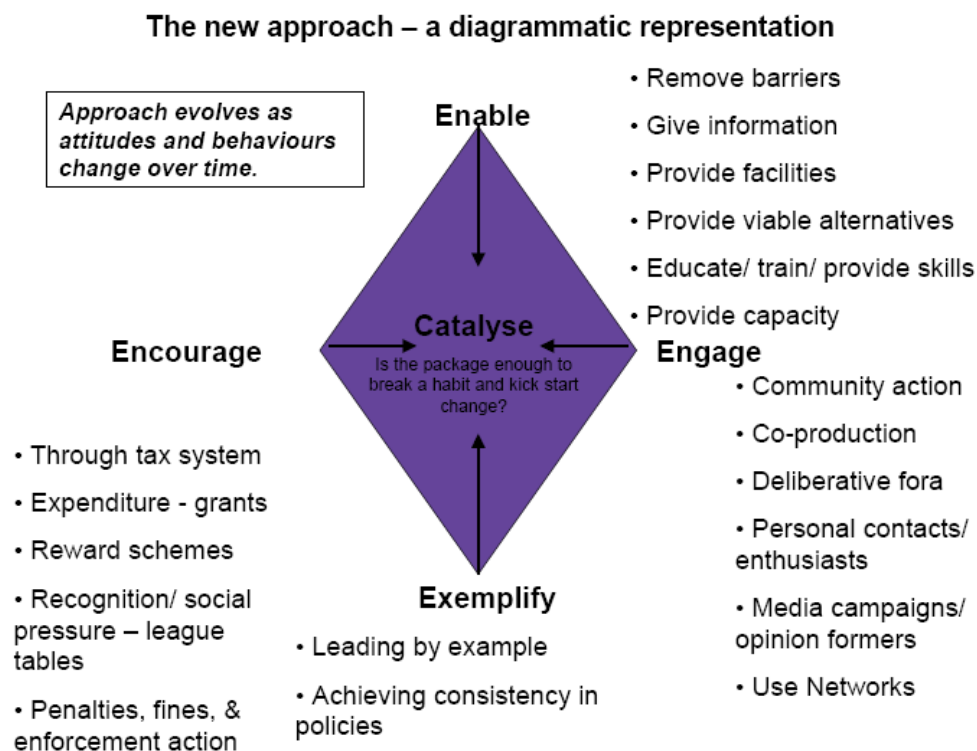
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<sup>309</sup> I believe that their difficulty in accepting it as virtue-based is more related with a prejudice against a possible virtue politics. I believe they reckon that virtue politics is in conflict with liberalism, and they are too committed to it, to accept it.

done in the UK. They recommended that governments should empower citizens instead of taking decisions on their behalf.

Recently the UK government has been promoting research projects on this area and published a report on the site of the Sustainable Development Unit: “Changing behaviour through policy making” where a diagram is presented (see below). Four actions are proposed in order to catalyse the breaking of habits: Enable – make it easier; Engage – get people involved; Encourage – give the right signals; Exemplify – government take the lead.

Figure 7.1 Policy making promoting changing behaviour



Source: UK's Government Sustainable Development Unit available in:  
<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what/priority/changing-behaviour.htm>.

These two examples, the Dutch and the British, show that environment is catalysing a shift in government's attitudes towards its citizens, acknowledging their role in helping achieve a better environment. The British case is still on a very cautious mode, and the proposal of figure 7.1 could be compared to

Nussbaum's capabilities approach, while the Dutch one gave already a step into Lane's suggestion of interfering more closely with people.

But nevertheless, these and an increasing environmental European policy investing in working with people (see the priority avenues of strategic action of the sixth action programme mentioned in chapter two<sup>310</sup>) added by certainly other examples that might already exist<sup>311</sup>, means that in a way, environmental virtue politics is pervading politics, in the sense that it is acknowledged that we are all on the same boat and should all try to row on the same direction. The rowing harmony should be attained also by internal motivation and not only by the external one (legal or economic instruments). The proposed direction is achieving a good environment through substantial change at both political and individual levels. This seems to be joining private and public realms. I will come back to that.

Last chapter mentioned the challenge of attaining a shared responsibility among all public institutions, regarding a joint effort to get to a possibly agreed environmental good as a political good. Integration, ecological modernization and ultimately sustainable development have been major attempts by the environmental EU politics to pervade overall EU politics. As mentioned in chapter two, EU environmental politics is the main driver of national environmental politics. Sustainable development has been adopted by all EU Member States, by designing their own National Strategies.

## ***7.4. Sustainable Development***

Above it was mentioned that there were two routes to achieve a better environment. Dobson (1995) called it ecologism and environmentalism. The first

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<sup>310</sup> See mainly the strategic action on the need to empower people as private citizens and help them to change behaviour.

<sup>311</sup> For example EEA (2005) report on household consumption and the environment, acknowledging that "millions of households in Europe are major contributors to environmental problems" and therefore there was a "renewed policy focus on sustainable consumption and production" (p.5). EEA concludes that "attaining a more sustainable consumption and production is first and foremost a common challenge where all parties, including public authorities, business and consumers come together to take responsibility and action" (p.11)

presupposes radical change, while the second is what Dobson dubbed as a “managerial approach”. This latter route has been the one privileged by the European Union and subsequently by most European governments. It has been labelled Sustainable Development and it has been guiding mainly environmental politics.

In chapter two (2.4.1.) it was already pointed out that sustainable development is the best compromise between economic development and environmental protection (and social policy) and is guiding EU's environmental policy, but probably not other sectoral policies.

Furthermore sustainable development as the main environmental policy philosophy of the European Union and its Member States has not proven to be, up to now, the panacea it was hoped for<sup>312</sup>. The latest EEA report on the state of the European environment (2005) starts by saying that “the last report, published in 1999 concluded that, despite 25 years of Community environmental policy, environmental quality in the European Union was mixed and that the unsustainable development of some key economic sectors was the major barrier to further improvements. That remains the EEA's key conclusion, despite significant progress on some issues demonstrating that environmental policy works.” (p.8)

Mouffe (1993) says that conflict and antagonism are part of the democratic political process, and that the obsession with consensus undermines the power of democracies, and even puts it at risk. Democracy will always be “a democracy “to come”, as conflict and antagonism are at the same time its condition of possibility and the condition of impossibility of its full realization” (p.8). Sustainable development seems one of these efforts to attain consensus that undermines the power of plurality of values and of interests in a healthy society. This is surely a very contentious statement and its only objective is to

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<sup>312</sup> “We cannot yet say we are firmly on the path to sustainable development.” Speech of Mr. Barroso on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at the opening of Green Week. Reference: SPEECH/07/392 Date: 12/06/2007, available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/392&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

re-open the discussion on environmental policy along other lines than its constant compromise with economic growth<sup>313</sup>. Higher economic growth and more and better jobs are the main objectives of the Lisbon agenda, initiated in March 2000, and are apparently non-negotiable objectives for Europe. Sometimes it even benefits the environment, when talking about clean technologies, green industries, renewable energy, etc, as defended by ecological modernization. It also provides some new and better jobs<sup>314</sup>. But not always, and most often its “unsustainable growth” as EEA calls it, hinders environmental objectives.

The revised 2006 European Union’s Sustainable Development Strategy<sup>315</sup> objectives: environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and meeting the international responsibilities do not seem compatible. The last years have proven it, and EEA reports clearly state it. It is truth that some synergies might be found, and ecological modernisation is indeed a striking example. Nevertheless to acknowledge that in many ways economic growth is not compatible with policies that privilege social or environmental priorities should be accepted. The strategy’s guiding principles: promotion and protection of fundamental rights; solidarity within and between generations; open and democratic society; involvement of citizens; involvement of businesses and social partners; policy coherence and governance; policy integration; use best available knowledge; precautionary principle; and make polluters pay, do not influence the economic sectors to act differently regarding the environment, as seen by statements from EEA reports<sup>316</sup>. The main challenges identified in the Strategy are mainly either environmental or social. Economic growth is part of another game, is part of the Lisbon Agenda.

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<sup>313</sup> For example the Sixth Environmental Action Plan, clearly states in Article 2 that its objective is “achieving a decoupling between environmental pressures and economic growth”. Source: Decision No 1600/2002/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 July 2002 laying down the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme. Economic growth is never questioned...

<sup>314</sup> “Environment policy has been a driving force in the development of Europe’s fast-growing eco-technologies sector. This sector is making a considerable contribution to the renewed Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs. Today it employs around 3.4 million people in the EU and its annual turnover represents more than 2% of EU GDP.” Speech of Mr. Barroso on the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2007 at the opening of Green Week. Reference: SPEECH/07/392 Date: 12/06/2007, available at: <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/07/392&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

<sup>315</sup> The first one is from 2001.

<sup>316</sup> One should hope that in the future, it might start influencing. In that sense, Sustainable Development could be seen as a vision for the future. A very valid one.

Sustainable development is nevertheless important in the development of a better governance of environmental issues, and I do not want, at all, to undermine its importance. Ecological modernization and sustainable development are very important policy developments. The only point is that they should be complemented as sustainable development seems to be essentially an environmental paradigm, not an economic or even a social paradigm. It is seen as the solution to problems of incompatibility and not as a starting point for dealing with those incompatibilities. It is working more as an objective than as a philosophy to guide politics<sup>317</sup>. Coming back to our issue, the question is if virtue thinking and the concept of responsibility might contribute to this inherently political problem. Could the concept of responsibility help in any way the ecological economics project of considering ecology and economics as intrinsically related and interdependent? Not in a “weak” understanding of sustainability but on the “strong”<sup>318</sup> one. It seems impossible to stop economic growth<sup>319</sup>, neither a steady-state seems feasible, but to compromise constantly with it, seems the weaker position. There are no perfect or final solutions for the environmental crisis and how to deal with it.

The key question might again come back to the discussion between Rawls and Hampton. Might sustainable development be an illusory consensus as Hampton (1989) says about Rawls's justice as fairness?<sup>320</sup> If so, then “we have an obligation as philosophers committed to arguing with, and thus respecting, our fellow human beings to persuade opponents of that idea and thus to change their minds” (p.813). She wanted to claim that metaphysics was still important,

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<sup>317</sup> “Europe is not yet on the path towards a genuinely sustainable development” p4 of the Communication on the Mid-term review of the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme (COM (2007) 225 final – 30.04.2007)

<sup>318</sup> Munda, 1997 clearly makes the difference, as Daly, 2002. Ecological economics argues that only a strong sustainable development should hold, one where natural capital is vital and not substitutable by man-made capital.

<sup>319</sup> Even if, as economic growth as the main mean of combating poverty has been challenged, for example by Woodward and Simms (2005, p.20) who say that basically the “question is whether economic policies should aim to maximise total income, and hope for poverty reduction as a by-product, or whether they should aim more specifically to increase the incomes of poorer households and treat growth (or the lack of it) as a by-product - that is, whether distributional effects should be integrated into the design of economic policies as a whole”. They claim that “We cannot afford to continue with a system which sacrifices the environment on which we all depend for our very survival to give yet more to those who already have too much, in the hope that a few more crumbs will fall from the rich man's table” (p.25)

<sup>320</sup> “(...) modern constitutional democracies are still not societies in which there is widespread agreement that all people should be accorded the same rights and opportunities” (p.813)

that searching for truth was still important, that arguing for it, in a philosophical mode was still necessary as the political could not do it on its own. In this chapter, I have been defending an environmental political philosophy also as a complement to environmental politics. The political philosophy, I am following is one that relies on virtue thinking, namely on grounding politics in a particular conception of well being as its main driver<sup>321</sup> and next section will underpin more of this environmental virtue politics.

## **7.5. Environmental virtue politics**

At the heart of my proposal is the proposal of responsibility towards the environment which should be promoted at several levels, namely at institutional level, individual level, civil society level, education (including academia and science) level and at the business (including technology and industry) level. I have been focusing primarily on the first and second levels<sup>322</sup>. What are the main implications of such a proposal at institutional level? There are three main implications as we saw in last chapter:

1. The need to acknowledge the importance of environment
2. Being able to promote an environmental collective responsibility at all institutional levels
3. To liaise with individuals, civil society, education and business at two levels:
  - a. Facilitating responsible acting towards environment (the four E's of figure 7.1.: enable, engage, encourage, exemplify)
  - b. Actively promoting some sort of environmental virtue ethics

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<sup>321</sup> There are some countries where well being is starting to rise in the agenda as for example in the UK. The UK's Government sustainable development unit is supporting studies and research on well being. The concept and different research projects are available in:

<http://www.sustainable-development.gov.uk/what/priority/wellbeing.htm>

<sup>322</sup> All other levels are very important as well, my reason for not tackling it is only a question of priority and definition of scope of the analysis.

The first challenge can be said to have been achieved at both European and National levels. A collective responsibility within all public institutions is a main objective of environmental policy (integration and sustainable development) meaning that it is on the right way, but, as pointed in chapter two and in the previous section there is still a long way to go. The third implies essentially an environmental virtue politics and it means that the foundations of virtue ethics should also inform politics, and might hopefully influence the second challenge.

Having considered in chapter five that character, *eudaimonia* and *phronesis* or practical wisdom were virtue ethics' distinctive characteristics, means that an environmental political virtue should also consider them as foundational. Behind virtue ethics is an assumption about the complexity of life and of human nature that render impossible a fixed theory or a code of rules to inform moral conduct. A virtuous person should have developed virtues of thought and virtues of character that help dealing with complex situations. As mentioned earlier, Drysek (1997) considered the environment as doubly complex for having to deal with the intersection of two complex systems, namely the human and the natural one. The environmental political framework must be such to accommodate these complexities, and the characteristics of environmental problems already identified in chapter two. The idea that not only with rules (economic and legal) can the environment be managed becomes then the cornerstone of environmental virtue politics.

The importance of economic and legal instruments is not denied, but it should be complemented by an investment in character, *eudaimonia* and *phronesis*. As mentioned in chapter five, *phronesis* is fundamental and too indiscussable, too evident and too researched, and arguably not exclusive of virtue thinking and therefore also not further pursued in this thesis.

Environmental virtue politics should foster the idea of environmental individual and political responsibility via virtue (environmentally cognitive and affective) and via the concept of *eudaimonia* or well-being and so it should promote virtues of thought and virtues of character in citizens, in order to enable them to

deal with the nature of the characteristics of environmental problems<sup>323</sup>. To ensure that the citizen is enabled (via education, training, social wellbeing, etc.) to be virtuous is then a major task of the relationship between governments and its citizens. Assuming that responsibility reflects personal autonomy, integrity, as well as social burden sharing, one will expect that it will also contribute to a feeling of wellbeing and fulfilment. Being able to confront, understand and tackle environmental problems might become a source of joy, as already mentioned in chapter five (the “feel good factor”). Even though I am focusing on responsibility as a virtue to help solving this type of problems, there is a connection with an overall virtuous behaviour, because as mentioned in chapter five one cannot be virtuous by only developing specific virtuous. It is also this unity of virtues that helps connecting with a conception of *eudaimonia*, as also mentioned in chapter five.

Virtue politics is therefore not only a project of governments but also a product of self-serving citizens with the confidence and capability of having sufficient self-worth and self confidence to go to the civic sphere “imposing” their virtues, in my specific case, responsibility towards the environment. This combination of self-orientated virtue and outward-orientated virtue would allow to link civic virtues with governmental processes.

The form of governance that may best encourage confident and responsible citizens towards the environment must be based on trust. Even though outside the scope of my analysis, and I have only mentioned it *en passage* earlier, trust is fundamental in the relationship between the government and its citizens. The five principles of governance as understood by EU (EU, 2001) - openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence - appear here as a major contribution for this matter, but I will not go further in that analysis.

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<sup>323</sup> Recalling from chapter two:

First group that defines environment as a policy issue:

Public good; Impacts arising as by-products of otherwise legitimate activities within society; A large technical core imposing its own requirements; Long term character of problems affecting future generations; It is not enough to solve the effects, but also the causes and therefore it interferes with other sectors of public policy; Transboundary problems

Second group that stem from the natural condition of the environment:

Complexity and uncertainty; Irreversibility; and temporal and spatial variability

Third group reflecting institutional structures:

Administrative fragmentation; and regulatory intervention

Having set the overall frame of a possible environmental virtue politics, it would be interesting to look into the challenges identified in chapter one, and for which responsibility as a virtue might be an added value. In fact that is what we have been arguing in the previous chapters for the first two challenges.

- How to tackle individuals: more and more emphasis is put on the role of consumers and the need for sustainable consumption
- How to uphold environmental values in balance with economic and social ones and to integrate them better

The other two challenges on the impacts of globalization and on the need to link local initiatives with global ones are also relevant problems for which responsibility might also contribute. They have not been tackled up to now, and they would deserve extensive research outside the immediate scope, but the first two challenges have been present throughout the thesis inspiring my proposal of an environmental political virtue based on:

- Behaviour change and outlook shift in favour of more virtue (responsibility) in sustainability responses
- The inter-connexion between these sustainability responses with a notion of well-being (e.g. the “feel-good” factor)

There are not many actual practical examples on behaviour change, despite the growing acknowledgment of its importance as mentioned earlier, but a British charity, Global Action Plan, has been working specifically on it. “Government policies increasingly call for people to change their behaviour, and Global Action Plan<sup>324</sup> has 14 years of experience of encouraging people to change behaviour” (Hargreaves, 2006). Global Action Plan suggests the following

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<sup>324</sup> Global Action plan is a British practical environmental charity that helps people to make positive changes at home, at work, at school and in the wider community. It has been running three distinct projects. Action at School helps schools to cut resource use and save money through the active involvement of the whole school community. Environment Champions helps organisations to improve their environmental performance and save money through the involvement of employees. EcoTeams helps groups of households to live more sustainably.

recommendations for how to communicate with the public on environmental issues and how to influence public behaviours.

Table 7.1. Attitude and behaviour change recommendations

1. Information should be broken down into manageable and understandable chunks, not just communicated as a single message calling for more 'sustainable' behaviours.
2. Information should be as local and relevant to its target audience as possible. Communicating that rainforests are being lost or ice caps are melting is likely to produce an emotional but ultimately despondent reaction. People are more likely to act on local issues that are relevant to their daily lives.
3. Communications should appeal to the heart not just the head.
4. Messages should be optimistic and aspirational not guilt-inducing and doom-laden.
5. Behaviour change programmes must be carried out over the long-term – decades not months.
6. Information alone is not sufficient to change behaviour, it must be supported by regulatory and fiscal measures to remove barriers and incentivise behavioural changes.
7. Different and targeted messages need to be communicated to different people and on different issues.
8. People do not always trust information that comes from Government, it should therefore be delivered in partnership with other organisations.
9. People often feel like their actions will make no difference as long as others, especially Government and Business, aren't acting as well. Government and business should thus work in partnership with the public to give people a greater sense of efficacy.
10. A change in attitude does not necessarily lead to a change in behaviour.
11. Community-based processes in which discussion about behaviours is encouraged are particularly useful for 'unfreezing habitual behaviours', negotiating new social norms, and providing on-going support for new behaviours.

Source: Hargreaves, 2006 (some words in the original are in bold)

These recommendations have been taken up by the UK Government and inspired Figure 7.1. on the four E's (Hargreaves, 2006) and some of them can be integrated within my virtue thinking, namely rec. 3, 4, and 5. A major issue concluded by this study is that changing behaviour is more difficult for individuals if they have to do it on their own, and the wider social structures are very influential making it essentially a social process (see rec. 2 and 11). Community-based approaches appear to be relevant as they employ social interaction to encourage change.

So the above question on the importance of local initiatives and the need to connect them with national and even international policies appears here. Community-based research is an example of community-based approaches which believes in the devolution of "decision-making to more collaborative,

communicative and knowledge-rich frameworks that support learning through adaptive management” (Bellamy, 2006, p.254) and has been used throughout the 1990s, mainly in complex, difficult or “wicked” problems, and “this experience shows their implementation is often complex, dynamic and evolutionary and not always successful” (Bellamy, 2006, p.255). Nevertheless the theoretical advantages of such approaches rely on the following elements (Bellamy, 2006, p.254):

- o Empowerment and legitimacy through meaningful and inclusive participation of all those who are likely to be responsible for, or to experience impacts from, decisions and actions;
- o Collaborative or consensual decision-making;
- o Enhanced geographical and inter and intra-governmental coordination and cooperation;
- o A more holistic and integrated science that crosses traditional knowledge boundaries;
- o Learning through adaptive management; and
- o Equity and fairness of process.

Despite the importance of local initiatives for both changing behaviour and contributing to the transition to sustainability, the limited scope of my research will make me go no further.

## ***7.6. Conclusions***

This and last chapter have been trying to underpin the political and philosophical issues that underlie and possibly justify an environmental virtue politics. The main objective of this endeavor is the belief that virtue thinking can and needs to pervade environmental politics. As mentioned in chapter two, environmental politics has come a long way from its beginning in the sixties of last century, but new challenges are constantly demanding new thinking, new approaches, and new set of minds.

The notion of virtue (which includes a mix of being and acting good for the self, for the other, for the future and for the planet) and the notion of pleasure of acting as an environmental citizen will hopefully imply a shift that will involve<sup>325</sup>:

- better governmental engagement at the collective level
- better consumer resolutions as looking for healthier and more sustainable products in the sourcing, use and disposal chains, and in overall consuming less;
- in promoting a creative business response that may well criss-cross with the public and voluntary sectors to form a more coordinated fusion;
- action in schools and universities as working and learning laboratories of sustainability;
- more participatory democracy;
- More and better science, observation and prognoses.

Not all these items have been researched in this thesis, but the last one, is rather important for our storyline. Science and its relation with policy, with society, with itself is a major issue throughout the environmental crisis and policy and a brief analysis of its new self assessment processes inspires the *minuet* chapter, on science and also on the precautionary principle.

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<sup>325</sup> List heavily inspired by Professor Tim O'Riordan suggestions

## **Chapter eight – Science and the precautionary principle**

### ***8.1. Introduction***

Throughout the thesis the precautionary principle has been mentioned as one of the most important principles in environmental policy. It was chosen as a sort of case-study so that the main issue dealt within this research could be tested. If the question: “would responsibility as a virtue improve the implementation of the precautionary principle?” is answered positively then it supports further investigating the importance of responsibility in an integrated environmental (personal, civic, institutional, scientific) setting. This chapter will explain what the precautionary principle is, where it comes from and what might mean in the future. I believe that the principle and its context are part of a new paradigm in environmental policy. This new paradigm is being shaped by a new relationship between society, science and policy. This relationship has been determined by many things but mainly by how science has been affected by the interface with society and by how the uncertainty question has been pervading society, science and policy.

The chapter starts by very briefly analysing the recent processes that science has been going through and its interface with society. This is a very exciting theme and matches what O’Riordan (2000, p.26) says about environmental science “This is a wonderful time to be an environmental scientist. You can be sure that, whatever your views on the subject matter now, you will have changed your stance in a decade or so. Such is the dynamism of the subject matter and its methods of enquiry”. Recent attempts to innovate the process of science and specifically environmentally policy relevant science will be mentioned. The issue of uncertainty, one of the most important causes prompting all this re-thinking and a major theme of research on how to deal with it will also be touched upon. Finally I will deal briefly with the interface between science and society, and its emerging themes of research. If in a decade or so, this chapter could be probably entirely re-written, that will be a good sign on the

much needed dynamism of processes of science, society and policy in an environmental context.

What is the precautionary principle, its emergence, its history and its evolution will then be described and eventually responsibility and its possible role in a better environmental policy will end this investigation.

## **8.2. Science**

In chapter three the scientific revolution of the XVI – XVIII centuries was briefly analysed, showing how science had evolved from a project of understanding the world into a project of also changing the world<sup>326</sup>. In the utopia *New Atlantis* of 1624, Francis Bacon wrote “The end of our foundation [the house of Solomon] is the knowledge of causes and secret motions of things, and the enlarging of the bounds of human empire, to the effecting of all things possible”, marking the beginning of that project of using science not only to attain the truth and understand the world but also to change it according to our own needs. And science and scientists have been doing so ever since without any particular scrutinizing by either society or even policy.

Through science and technology we have attained unimaginable “enlarging of the bounds of human empire” and we are now completely dependent of it for most or even for all of our activities. As Jasanoff (2002, p.254) says “People around the world are living with technology and sometimes dying of it” and (p.256) “After all, human welfare in the leading industrial nations depends at every point on the blessings of technology: increased power to control the vagaries together with dramatic gains in health, longevity, communication, mobility, reproductive choice and many other forms of personal freedom”. We have made our own reality and now we are its slave. As Jonas (1979) said

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<sup>326</sup> As Burt (1924, p324) put it: “Mind appears to be an irreducible something that can know the world of extended matter, love ardently its order and beauty, and transform it continually in the light of a still more attractive and commanding good. Mind has the power to feel, idealize, to recreate its world into something significantly better, as well as to know it”

*Homo faber* took over *Homo sapiens*. On the other hand, science has been quite an independent project creating vices typical of monopolies and it took a long time before the outside world took notice of it. For example only a couple of decades ago did Kuhn (1962) expose the difficult process of changing established scientific paradigms. This difficulty mirrored how some scientists were more attached to their own way of developing science and their own truths, than with science as a really independent truth-seeking project. Kuhn called this way of doing science a puzzle solving science and coined it as “normal” science. This was a first step denouncing that something was wrong.

Popper (1934), even though with different objectives (mainly criticize the problem of induction and propose the falsifiability theory in order to understand the logic of scientific discovery) already had a critical view of much of science problems. “The wrong view of science betrays itself in the craving to be right; for it is not his *possession* of knowledge, of irrefutable truth, that makes the man of science, but his persistent and recklessly critical *quest* for truth” (1972, p.281).

As mentioned in chapter two, also the sociological theory of social constructivism helped exposing the so-far ignored importance of scientific problem framing, and of science as a social construction. The neutrality and objectivity of science have therefore fortunately suffered strong shakings<sup>327</sup>. The objectivity of science had already been a cause of discussion and Popper mentions it, even quoting Kant. “Kant was perhaps the first to realize that the objectivity of scientific statements is closely connected with the construction of theories – with the use of hypotheses and universal statements” (Popper, 1972, p.45)

Because of its specific context, environmental science and the environmental crisis are contributing for some changes. For example a new social contract for science<sup>328</sup> has been proposed. It is based on the idea that the scientists collective responsibility to society must include a scientific community-wide

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<sup>327</sup> Gonçalves (2006, p.176) say that even if scientific knowledge is still greatly respected it is also “losing its aura of neutrality and objectivity, and is raising growing ethical concerns”

<sup>328</sup> In the 1997 Presidential Address at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of the Advancement of Science, by Lubchenco and afterwords published in *Science* (Lubchenco, 1998)

periodic re-examination of scientific goals and if appropriate the alteration of its course. Lubchenco (1998) considers that it is time for this re-examination as the changes in the natural and social world are so vast, pervasive and important that they require immediate attention from scientists. As she says (p.492) “Business as usual will not suffice”. So this new contract should recognize the extent of human domination of the planet, and the importance of scientific project in discovering new knowledge, communicating it and help society move towards a more sustainable biosphere. Therefore scientists should (p.495):

- address the most urgent needs of society, in proportion to their importance;
- communicate their knowledge and understanding widely in order to inform decisions of individuals and institutions;
- exercise good judgment, wisdom and humility

Gibbons (1999) published in *Nature* an article demanding also a new social contract between science and society and his rationale was similar to Lubchenco's. He emphasised that this new contract “must now ensure that scientific knowledge is “socially robust”, and its production is seen by society to be both transparent and participative” (Gibbons, 1999, p.c81). Next section will deal in more detail with this relationship of science with society.

Other cries exist from different quarters and for example Ravetz and Funtowicz (1990) acknowledged that especially on the environmental issue-driven field, there was a problem in the interface between science and policy-making and started talking about the need for something different. They reckoned that a new type of science was needed because with the type of environmental issue-driven complex science, very often the “decision stakes were high, values were in dispute, and potential error costs of wrong decisions could be huge” (Ravetz and Funtowicz, 1994, p.1882). With this setting, Kuhn's “normal” science could not do the job, and a new type of science that would be able to deal with it and with uncertainties was taking shape. They then coined this new type as “post-normal science”. This post-normal science would be able to deal with uncertainty and with the quality of scientific information through a new

approach, the so-called NUSAP<sup>329</sup> notational-scheme. Funtowicz and Ravetz (1990, p.7) reckon that environmental problems have prompted a new need because “science was previously understood as achieving ever greater certainty in our knowledge and control of the natural world; now it is seen as coping with increasing uncertainties in these urgent environmental issues”.

Another field of research also emerging and sharing many aspects of the “post-normal science” is that of “foresight knowledge”, which can be understood “as a form of “strategic knowledge” necessary for agenda setting/opinion formation (and vision development!) and problem-solving alike” (von Schomberg, Pereira, Funtowicz, 2006, p.151). “Fitness for purpose” is becoming a key issue in these processes of both knowledge production and quality of the process and of outcomes. These authors (p.157) connect it with “issues such as accuracy, completeness and adequacy of knowledge both within the context in which is going to be used and the relevant policy or governance issue”

More recently Funtowicz (2006, p.143) has been proposing “extended peer communities” meaning a wider circle of people involved in the process of decision-making and implementation of policy issues, and where “fitness for purpose” also features predominantly. The rationale for this proposal is that “for these new types of policy-relevant problems, the maintenance of scientific quality depends on open dialogue between all those affected”. Next section I will come back to this proposal.

O’Riordan (2000) mentions yet another proposal, coined by Lee<sup>330</sup> as civic science as a “form of science that is deliberative, inclusive, participatory, revelatory and designed to minimise losers. Its purpose is to recognise that groups in society have to be involved if fairer and more comprehensive

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<sup>329</sup> NUSAP - Numeral, Unit, Spread, Assessment, and Pedigree - is a notational scheme based on philosophy of mathematics which by dealing specifically with uncertainties and quality of scientific information helps exposing the fragility of some scientific beliefs. Furthermore it helps science dealing with new problems, problems that are not solved with more knowledge, but where there is a need to cope with increasing uncertainties in urgent issues.

<sup>330</sup> Lee (1993, p.161) “managing large ecosystems should not rely merely on science, but on civic science; it should be irreducibly public in the way responsibilities are exercised, intrinsically technical, and open to learning from errors and profiting from successes” (Lee, K., 1993. *Compass and Gyroscope: Integrating Science and Policy for the Environment*. Island Press, New York) cited in O’Riordan, 2000, p 9

decisions are to be made. It also accepts that certain types of uncertainty cannot be handled by traditional peer review procedures. A more widely based validation arrangement is required” (O’Riordan, 2000, p.9).

Another proposal for seeing, especially environmental science differently is the field of ecological economics already mentioned in last chapter. Constanza and Daly (1987) reckoned that both economic paradigms had too many shortcomings when had to deal with natural resources and that ecological paradigms tended to ignore human cultural behaviour as an important field of study. They reckoned that the latter was more “concerned with predicting the impacts of human activity *on* natural ecosystems, but not with understanding and predicting human behaviour in the context of natural ecosystems” (p. 2). The proposal of ecological economics as a more pluralistic approach to the study of environmental problems and policy solutions is put forward. It should be characterized by systems perspectives, adequate physical and biological contexts, and a focus on long-term environmental sustainability<sup>331</sup>.

More recently sustainability science has been proposed. In 2001 it was published in *Science* a two pages statement signed by 23 scientists, saying that “a new field of sustainability science is emerging that seeks to understand the fundamental character of interactions between nature and society” (Kates *et al*, 2001, p.641). They reckon that this sustainability science must differ in structure, methods and content from science as we know it, and they propose that it should: (p.641)

- i. span the range of spatial scales between such diverse phenomena as economic globalization and local farming practices
- ii. account for both the temporal inertia and urgency of processes like ozone depletion
- iii. deal with functional complexity such as is evident in recent analyses of environmental degradation resulting from multiple stresses

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<sup>331</sup> Ecological economics is a burgeoning field, with journals dedicated to it, an international society “dedicated to advancing understanding of the relationships among ecological, social, and economic systems for the mutual well-being of nature and people” (source: <http://www.ecoeco.org/>) and several other national and regional societies.

- iv. recognize the wide range of outlooks regarding what makes knowledge usable within both science and society

The idea is that Science and Technology must identify the highest-priority goals for a sustainability transition and work on them, but those goals cannot be defined by scientists alone but rather through a dialogue between all stakeholders in the process. The stakeholders in this process are all of us, scientists, the public, and the policy-makers. This process must bring together scholarship and practice, global and local perspectives from north and south, and disciplines across the natural, physical, technical and social sciences. This means that methodologies and intellectual frameworks must be developed avoiding reductionist approaches, and able to deal with complex systems. Ethics and responsibility becomes an important framework to encompass this process. So far it seems a promising avenue of progress for science and for all of us.

As Lubchenco (1998, p.496) said “it is time for the scientific community to take responsibility for the contributions required to address the environmental and social problems before us, problems that, with the best intentions in the world, we have nonetheless helped to create”. So these new trends of a new social contract between science and society, post normal science, foresight knowledge, civic science, ecological economics, and sustainability science<sup>332</sup> are all proposals for this move forward, for a different science to shape itself. Even though all these proposals differ in both semantics and in some of the contents, they all share a discontentment with traditional “normal” science and by identifying either already existing “weak signals” or even stronger trends they are promoting the need for a further re-thinking of science and its role and proposing different approaches on how to go on.

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<sup>332</sup> This summary was necessarily brief and simple, as the main objective was just to make a point of a move forward in the realm of science, nevertheless this is a major trend and other movements or initiatives might be happening elsewhere. Furthermore the initiatives reported, have had spin-offs in many areas, applying the principles to specific case studies and helping these fields to consolidate themselves. Above all it seems a healthy awakening of scientists and science to new realities.

Time will select those approaches which are the fittest for the survival of science. Or perhaps, they will all survive contributing to different dimensions and specific areas. It seems that increasingly there is not, one answer, one solution but rather several ones, just as different streams trying to reach the sea. In such a plurality of answers to problems of science, environmental problems, etc, the concept of responsibility might again be proposed as a fundamental common feature for an enhanced survival.

If the environmental crisis and the complexity of problems have been a major reason for prompting this emerging change, there are two other reasons which have strongly contributed to this current malaise of science. The first is the acknowledgement of uncertainty which has been a well kept secret within science, and the second is the pressure from society.

### **8.2.1. “I have no talent for certainty”<sup>333</sup>**

Uncertainty is a natural dimension of science, but for long, perhaps too long, uncertainties were neither made public nor openly acknowledged. Only during the last decade did uncertainty become an issue outside science. In fields of science that have close connections with the policy process, the acknowledgment and communication of uncertainty was becoming more and more urgent. In fact uncertainty is a phenomenon essentially from the domain of knowledge production, but in the context of decision-making it gains another dimension, and requires another treatment.

Environmental science is one of those fields intrinsically connected with policy because of its close interactions with the human and natural world. To understand more and better the environmental processes is the fundamental aim of environmental science. But complexity and uncertainty reins much in this field, not only on present actions but also in the fundamental predictions that one must do to evaluate them.

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<sup>333</sup> Inspired by a sentence in Jane Austen's novel *Mansfield Park*

O’Riordan (2000) considers three types of uncertainty in environmental science: data shortage, model deficiencies and beyond the knowable. If the first two are potentially solvable, the third always comes as a surprise. Fighting against uncertainty is sometimes a lost battle, and therefore the best one can do, is to learn how to deal with it. To the question “Are you sure?” one of Jane Austen’s characters once answered, “I have no talent for certainty” and yet did her deed. Uncertainty is part of life and we should accept it naturally and above all not ignore or hide it. Of course there are different dimensions of uncertainty<sup>334</sup>, and this one is almost as a personal attribute which might be independent of knowledge and basically an emotional state of mind<sup>335</sup>. The point here is that in whatever dimension uncertainty appears, one has to deal with it.

As there isn’t one uncertainty subsequently there is neither one recipe for dealing with it and it would be impossible to have a single approach that would be satisfactory in all contexts or circumstances. This does not mean that one should ignore it, and Funtowicz and Ravetz (1990), for example, proposed the NUSAP<sup>336</sup> system to deal with uncertainty within complex environmental problems as mentioned above. The Dutch have also been worried about it and have developed a booklet *Guidance for Uncertainty Assessment and Communication*, aimed at helping the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency (RIVM, 2003) to deal with it, by having a procedure and a checklist to go through. Van der Sluijs (2006) provides a review of these two methods, claiming their virtues within the post normal science approach which acknowledges uncertainty as a natural phenomenon and strives for quality of scientific information. Many of the “late lessons” in EEA (2001) are also examples on how to deal with uncertainty.

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<sup>334</sup> van der Sluijs (2006, p.73) has a good account of its multidimension: “Uncertainty can be seen as a multi-dimensional concept involving quantitative (technical: inexactness) and qualitative (methodological: unreliability, epistemological: ignorance and societal: limited social robustness) dimensions and it can manifest itself at different locations in risk assessments (for instance, context, problem frames, indicator choice, model assumptions, model structure, model parameters, and data).”

<sup>335</sup> In fact Austen’s sentence was an answer for a wedding proposal, which of course involves much more than knowledge as such

<sup>336</sup> NUSAP stands for Numeral, Unit, Spread, Assessment, Pedigree and is a notational system that aims to provide an analysis and diagnosis of uncertainty.

In a recent communication Funtowicz<sup>337</sup> emphasized that it is necessary to distinguish ‘uncertainty’ from ‘lack of certainty’ in order to have a better understanding of what is the uncertainty challenge. His point was that words as “lack” suggest that uncertainty would be solvable by cognitive or intellectual progress. However, uncertainty is an intrinsic characteristic of knowledge and might not be reducible. For example uncertainty may prevail in situations where a lot of information and knowledge are available. It might decrease it, but also might increase it. The point here is again emphasising the need and importance of acknowledge and deal with it openly.

In fact, the “late lessons” presented by EEA (2001) help understanding that uncertainty and ignorance cannot be avoided but they can be diminished if they are openly acknowledged. That leads to a greater humility, requiring greater care and deliberation in making and ensuing decision. It should also lead to a broadening of the regulatory appraisal as to include more scientific disciplines, more types of information and knowledge, and more constituencies (EEA 2001).

Uncertainty, its acknowledgement and its implications are enlightening of the new challenges put to science, policy processes and to society. Society is becoming both challenged and itself a challenger and therefore the interface between science and society becomes another important dimension on this rethinking of science.

### **8.2.2. Interfaces between science and society**

The interface between science and society, and the pressure that the public is making for politics to be done in an open, transparent, accountable and participatory way, is also a clear sign of the need to look at science differently. The context for the need to rethink this interface, especially on an environmental context is based essentially on four assumptions:

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<sup>337</sup> Colóquio Comunicação e precaução em ambiente e saúde. Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 23 Novembro 2006. What follows is a personal recollection of this communication.

1. Problems in environmental science are often related with policy<sup>338</sup>
2. Plurality of perspectives is increasingly legitimate
3. The nature and characteristics<sup>339</sup> of many environmental problems such as complexity and uncertainty prompt the scientific project to open itself
4. Europe is striving for a knowledge based society as fundamental for its competitiveness<sup>340</sup>

These four issues are driving the need for a more inclusive process of involving society in the scientific process. A “socially robust” science as Gibbons (1999) coined it. How to do it, remains as an issue which can qualify as a “wicked problem” and therefore in need of proper framing and of a plurality of visions to be considered and analysed. This has been acknowledged by the European Commission who in 2001 published a *Science and Society Action Plan* and has in its last Framework Programme again this as a field of research, now called the “Science in Society” area.<sup>341</sup>

Changes caused by the erosion of the public faith in science and technology are already occurring in this relationship between science and society, and Gonçalves (2006, p.176), organized it in three:

- The growing public perception of industrial and technological risk, particularly food and environmental risk
- The proliferation of instances of social resistance to science-based products and activities

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<sup>338</sup> As Funtowicz (2006, p.142) put it: “As long as science remained mainly academic, problems of quality were assumed to be resolved by the very nature of the scientific endeavour. (...) Now that science is so deeply involved in technology and related policy issues that crucially affect public health and welfare, the traditional trust can no longer be assumed”.

<sup>339</sup> Refer to chapter two

<sup>340</sup> EC (2006, p.11) “Current European policy-making is driving towards a competitive “knowledge-based society”, whilst striving to ensure effective stewardship of “democratic governance” and active efforts to promote “sustainability” and “precaution” in science and technology. These present a series of powerful imperatives for radical innovation – and require a commitment to change – in the science governance system”

<sup>341</sup> “Science in Society” is one of the six specific knowledge areas within the Capacities item of the Seventh Research Framework Programme (7FP) of the European Commission (2007-2013). This new area has a budget of 330 million euros and “aims to bridge the gap between science professionals and those without a formal science education”. Source, the FP7 page in Europa site: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index\\_en.cfm?pg=society](http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm?pg=society)

- Claims by social organizations and by social movements for active participation in the management of technological and ecological risk

Jasanoff (2002) is also very acute in identifying our contradiction in praising science and technology but starting to feel confused and resistant to constant further progresses because of the risks that it also prompts. Risks and their perception have in fact been important in this process and *Risk Society* (Beck, 1986) was a cornerstone book in acknowledging a new perspective on the way in which we experience risks and proposing that natural sciences should become more “reflexive”. There are several reasons behind this reflexive mood as we have been seeing and how to organize the future challenges put to this almost public governance of knowledge is a great task ahead. Pereira *et al.* (2006) edited a book organizing it in six themes for research:

- How to communicate among plural perspectives
- Accepting and learning how to manage uncertainty, complexity and value commitments
- Acknowledging new conceptions of knowledge
- Implementing transparency, openness and participation in science policy
- Valuing community-based research
- Exploring how new information and communications technology can support inclusive governance

Vaz and Pereira (2006, p.9) propose that “these themes provide a framework with which to conceive, discuss and evaluate the changes now occurring” and hope that its further research will help “our understanding of what and where are the prospects for further progress”. These themes are part of “a vision on how to improve the interaction between science and society” (p.14)

A “social robust” science is a better science and actions occurring within those themes are contributing to it. A European Commission Seminar organized by the Directorate-General for Research (EC, 2006, p.11) concluded that essentially there was a “move towards an emerging paradigm of “co-operative

research". This is a new form of research process, which involves both researchers and non-researchers in close co-operative engagement. It encompasses a full spectrum of approaches, frameworks and methods, from interdisciplinary collaboration through stakeholder negotiation to transdisciplinary deliberation and citizen participation" and so they propose "In short, we need to move away from the somewhat fragmented, introspective and reactive preoccupations of *science* and *society*, to a more integrated, open and proactive understanding of the inescapable place of *science* in *society*"<sup>342</sup>

The rationale behind "science in society" is that one should recognize "that research and innovation are not autonomous, but are contained within, and subject to wider economic, cultural and political processes" (EC, 2006, p.13)<sup>343</sup>.

The question of trust is essential in all this process and the quality of scientific knowledge and science communication are two consequent issues that become relevant. For the first Funtowicz's (2006) proposal for "extended peer communities" based on the premise that "participation is not only ethically correct or politically expedient, it is also epistemologically and methodologically necessary"<sup>344</sup> (p.145) becomes very pertinent. As mentioned in chapter two, environmental problems are often "wicked problems", Funtowicz (2006, p.144) also says that "Policy issues might well not have neat solutions such as puzzles in scientific textbooks" requiring creativity and innovation to be dealt with. All these proposals are therefore welcome to take the process forward.

Science communication is also an increasing field of research mirroring how fundamental it is for an effective public engagement. "Clear, accurate, intelligible, balanced communication of relevant prevailing scientific knowledge" (EC, 2006, p.26) becomes especially significant. The role of media is overtly

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<sup>342</sup> "Co-operative research", the following sentence, and *science* and *society* and *science* in *society* are in bold in the original text.

<sup>343</sup> "Scientific knowledge and technological innovation are produced by people. People's creativity and intelligence is conditioned by their relationships, motivations and values. And people work in institutions, each with their own agendas, priorities and interests. As a result, the direction and emphasis of science and innovation are in important ways driven and shaped by the wider society" (p.13)

<sup>344</sup> "Faced with a context of complexity where the existence of an irreducible plurality of legitimate perspectives or of non-equivalent description", participation is "the only way to reveal the richness and variety of the relevant knowledges and for quality, eventually, to emerge" Funtowicz, (2006, p.145)

important and therefore “efforts to inculcate a greater sense of responsibility in media reporting of science” (p.26) should amount to a serious preoccupation. The internet presents also an area of attention which should be further carefully researched. Finally the “science-shops”<sup>345</sup> movement also presents itself as an innovative and effective way of transferring knowledge (Mulder *et al*, 2006).

Interface between science and society or “science in society” is a burgeoning field of research and considering society both as one of the main driver for change and as part of the solution is a clear advancement in the project of an evolving science.

This was necessarily a brief account on how science has been scrutinized and how research is advancing different routes of exploration in order to cope with all the difficulties we are facing. The policy process also had to evolve as all this process also challenges the normative role of science as a provider of the unique solid background for good practice. It seems that more than facts are needed, which by now, may even not be facts at all. This means that the stable relationship between science and policy needs reframing. Science has been informing political processes, and most notably environmental political processes<sup>346</sup>, and if for long no one would question it, now decision makers are increasingly confronted with wider framings and therefore in need of being supported by broader frames of analysis.

If all this is creating a new paradigm in environmental policy, the precautionary principle has certainly been one of its leading actors.

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<sup>345</sup> “A science shop is a unit that provides independent, participatory research support in response to concerns experienced by civil society. For the most part, these units belong to universities, though some are organised as separate NGOs or not-for-profit companies. Science shops combine research with service to society” (Mulder *et al*, 2006, p.279)

<sup>346</sup> Sarewitz (2004) defends that often science actually makes environmental controversies worse, rather than help solving it. Drawing on examples of climate change, GMO's and nuclear waste disposal, Sarewitz claims that the scientific inquiry has become too politicized, and explores why some environmental political controversies become more scientized than others. He then defends that political processes must be more articulated about value disputes, before letting in science.

### **8.3. The precautionary principle**

The precautionary principle even if utterly simple in its most basic concept “better safe than sorry” is of an extended complexity when we try to underpin all its possible definitions, elements, implementations, uses and abuses, and implications. This is because it involves not only several areas but also their interfaces, namely, science, policy, economy, philosophy, law and politics. It excites controversies and it is loved and hated, defended and attacked and as all concepts in policy it has undergone a sensible evolution during these past three to four decades. The most interesting feature of this evolution is that it has acted both as cause and as consequence of an increasing intertwined relation between science-policy-society on the environmental and health fields. One could say that the emergence and evolution of the precautionary principle and its context have contributed to create a new paradigm in environmental policy. This new paradigm, which is materialised by concepts like the principles of governance (openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence), changing perception and role of science, freedom of information has implications on the ethical dimension of environmental policy. I will come back to this idea.

The precautionary principle has been object of many papers and books, on history, use in different countries, implementation, case studies, law, science, uncertainty, etc (books like those of Cameron and O’Riordan, 1994, and Cameron, O’Riordan and Jordan 2000; Raffensperger and Tickner, 1999, and Harding and Fisher, 1999 are probably the best collections of essays on the subject, and EEA, 2000 with a very illuminating collection of case studies adds brilliantly to it). Papers are unaccountable. Any literature review on the theme is necessarily limited as the subject is tackled in journals of all fields, from technology (Int. J. Biotechnology) to law (European Public law), from environment (Human and ecological risk assessment) to philosophy (Environmental Ethics), from policy (Environmental Politics) to science (Science and engineering ethics).<sup>347</sup> The *paphernalia* of information and this broad

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<sup>347</sup> These are given just as examples of journals for those areas; many others also publish papers related with the precautionary principle.

*spectrum* of publications mirror the complexity of the theme. Most literature is based on papers and even the published books are mainly collections of essays. This means that most knowledge is fragmented which is a sign of its multi-disciplinarity. Perhaps some inter-disciplinarity is missing.

### **8.3.1. Emergence of the precautionary principle**

The early environmental policy documents focused on the need for research and information. The need of more research and scientific knowledge and standardization of methodologies was seen as crucial for environmental policy. Thirty years later, in almost all western countries the legislative, executive and judicial systems do include environment as one of their fields and so the institutional and government setting is up and running. The body of information and research in the environmental field is impressive. Numerous research institutes at national and international level, government and supra-national institutions and academia hold a considerable amount of information in various formats. With such an unaccountable number of publications, papers, internet references and experts it almost seems that Bacon's dream had been accomplished. Bacon didn't know but we now know that there is always something more to be known, that there are things we will never know, others that we will know too late or only have a hint of it.

This is the nature of knowledge on all fields and notably also on the environmental field where complexity, need for previsions, and uncertainties are so relevant. And this did not take long to be discovered, so if in the seventies the world was investing in knowing more about the environment, in the eighties it knew already that this was impossible and something had to be done. The first step was the implementation of environmental impact assessment procedures, stating that it was needed to understand and study the impacts on the environment of a wide range of activities. Risk assessment is probably also a major step towards trying to understand better the perceived risks. And then there was the stage of using the best. Best available technology, best

practicable environmental option, best practical means, are some of those formulas to justify that we couldn't do any better. Finally the precautionary principle fully acknowledges that we will not know everything but we still need a strategy to keep on.

### 8.3.2. Brief history of the precautionary principle

Most literature (several papers in Cameron and O'Riordan, 1994, Cameron, O'Riordan and Jordan 2000, and Myers, 2002) establishes Germany as the first country to come up with the precautionary principle, considering the *Vorsorgeprinzip* its original stem. Nevertheless the German word underpins more than just precaution as it presupposes almost a philosophy for environmental policy based on precaution, foresight, caring and responsibility towards natural systems. In the eighties the (British) Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution commissioned a study on this German concept to best understand how to work with its "best practicable environmental option" concept, which can be seen as one of the precursors of the precautionary principle. Von Moltke (1988) wrote this report explaining the context of the principle in Germany.

From this report one can understand that both the context and the emphasis are quite different from the way the precautionary principle eventually took off later on elsewhere. The main difference is that the *Vorsorgeprinzip* is set as an encompassing policy for the environment and not only a specific principle to use in case of uncertainty or ignorance as now is its focus<sup>348</sup>. Apparently it was enunciated in 1976 by the federal government: "Environmental policy is not fully accomplished by warding off imminent hazards and the elimination of damage which has occurred. Precautionary environmental policy requires furthermore

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<sup>348</sup> The definition given in the report is as follows: "As a principle for political action, environmental Vorsorge comprises all actions which serve: i) the protection against specific hazards; ii) the avoidance or reduction of risks to the environment before specific environmental hazards are encountered; iii) and in a future perspective the management of our future environment, in particular the protection and the development of the natural foundations of life"

that natural resources are protected and demands on them are made with care” (cited in von Moltke, 1988).

There were at least two settings who stood behind it: the air pollution and damage to the German forests and secondly the importance for the recently elected Social Democratic Administration to show its commitment to environment and a fairer society (Boemer-Christensen, 1994).

The Germans started taking it out for international settings and in the discussion of problems of the North Sea it took very much the format that later on dominated its broader understanding: being able to take measures before damage occurs and with tenuous or inexistent cause-effect scientific knowledge.

The translation to the word precaution when it could have been to foresight also added the emphasis on the cautious dimension and made it loose the German emphasis of looking forward with care and responsibility. Stirling (2003) mentions that the word caution has a negative loading contrarily to the word foresight, which has a positive aura of looking forward and to the future, and therefore one wanders if its fate wouldn't have been different if the word foresight had been used instead.

Internationally the principle was actually well received and there are several summaries (eg Cameron 2000; Loibl 2002; Hanson, 2003) of its inclusion in almost all international treaties starting already in the 1985 Vienna Convention on Ozone Depleting Substances. The first international recognition comes in the World Charter for Nature, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1982 (Vilaça, 2004). Moreover several international *fora* have also consecrated attention to it, namely the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), International Law Commission (ILC), World Trade Organization (WTO), Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and international negotiating committees (eg Cartagena and POP) (Loibl, 2002).

Of course, also the European Union (EU) has been dealing with it. Again, several summaries do already exist (eg Jordan, 2001; Christoforou, 2002; Vilaça, 2004) about its mapping on Community law. Its first appearance is in the Article 130(r) [now 174(2)] of EC treaty, as modified by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. It says “Community policy on the environment shall aim at a high level of protection (...) It shall be based on the precautionary principle”. Nevertheless, and since EU is a party in some International agreements and conventions, it had already embraced it earlier on. Moreover it had already appeared in the European Court of Justice in 1982 in the Sandoz case (Christoforou, 2002; Vilaça, 2004).<sup>349</sup> Finally, the European Commission produced in 2000 the “Communication on the Precautionary Principle” laying down its understanding of how, when and why should the precautionary principle be applied (European Commission, 2000). Also the Council Resolution of 4 December 2000 is on the use of the precautionary principle. In the meantime The European Court of Justice had already been called to rule several cases where the precautionary principle was invoked (see Christoforou, 2002; Vilaça, 2004) and used.<sup>350</sup>

But, in 2007 the precautionary principle is still under discussion and scrutiny and will continue to be so, because as O’Riordan and Cameron (1994, p.262) predicted thirteen years ago, “it will best evolve slowly, through acceptance and discussion ...” and “... it should seep through the pores of social change ...”

### 8.3.3. Some examples of the precautionary principle in use

Even though the precautionary principle has been used in different countries, both in Europe and USA, we will limit our examples at the European level. For its application in different countries, Cameron and O’Riordan, 1994, and Cameron, O’Riordan and Jordan 2000 provide a good overview. Recently also

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<sup>349</sup> Case 174/82, Sandoz BV [1983] ECR I-2211, para 16 “In so far as there are uncertainties in the present state of scientific research with regard to the harmfulness of a certain additive, it is for the Member States, in the absence of full harmonization, to decide what degree of protection of the health and life of humans they intend to assure, ...”

<sup>350</sup> For example: Angelopharm v. Hamburg [1994]; Pharos v. Commission [1998] and [1999]; BSE [1998], etc.

the difference between Europe and USA on its use has been subject of research (see for eg. Christoforou 2004).

The question on the gap between theory and practice is tricky on the environmental field. Most of the Member States environmental legislation is triggered by European legislation as mentioned in chapter two. Environment is a contentious area and, even though on the European policy side it seems it has been growing wisely, the fact is that environment *per se* has not been improving so much as one could expect from looking at the policy side. One reason might be because the implementation and application of legislation have not been successful, as mentioned in chapter two. Other reasons might lie on the inadequacy of the policies to reality. With the precautionary principle the same applies and for the most cases, when it has been applied, it has not been a peaceful process. So, one of the sources of information is to look at court cases and in this case those of the European Court of Justice. The following two case studies have made history on the precautionary principle use in European environmental policy, namely the Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, and the Genetic Modified Organisms problematic.

### **Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE).**

The Commission published the Commission Decision 96/239/EC of 27 March 1996 on emergency measures to protect against BSE. It imposed, on a temporary basis, a ban on exports of bovine animals, bovine meat and derived products from the territory of the United Kingdom to the other Member States and to third countries.

In the two cases dealt with by the European Court of Justice (Case C – 157/96 and Case C – 180/96), the European Commission had been accused by both the Queen and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, Commissioners of Customs & Excise, *ex parte* National Farmers' Union, and secondly by United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland of misuse of powers and breach of the principle of proportionality with its Decision 96/239/EC, and in the second case asking for its annulment.

In both cases, the court ruled out the accusations, the first one<sup>351</sup> by acknowledging that the EU had acted in conformity with its powers and on the second case, also confirming that<sup>352</sup> the EU was not exceeding its bounds of discretion. But in both these cases, what was being judged was not the application of the precautionary principle itself; it was rather the power of the European Union to do so. And the Court never made an explicit reference to the precautionary principle in neither cases. The Commission by publishing that Decision was applying the precautionary principle to a case where it seemed that all conditions for its application were met. But the bottom line was probably the lack of responsibility on the UK side to take up the consequences of a dreadful handling of the case in the previous years (See Zwanenberg and Millstone, 2001). Economic reasons and national pride were probably behind these cases, but nevertheless it gave rise to important rulings from the European Union side reinforcing its commitment to the precautionary principle.

### **Genetic Modified Organisms (GMO)**

This is another typical case, where the European Commission decided to apply the precautionary principle and issued Directive 90/220 on deliberate release, which was designed to manage scientific and political uncertainty about hazards of GMO. It has been replaced recently by Directive 2001/18/EC.

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<sup>351</sup> The European Court of Justice, decided for the European Commission stating that: "the Commission acted within the framework of the powers conferred on it by Directives 90/425 and 89/662 concerning veterinary and zootechnical checks applicable in intra-Community trade, and did not misuse its powers or breach the principle of proportionality." It justified its decision saying that "the power to adopt such measures is justified by the fact that a zoonosis, disease or other cause is likely to constitute a serious hazard" and "As regards the principle of proportionality, it was open to the Commission, in view of the great uncertainty as to the risks posed by the animals and products concerned, to take the protective measures in issue without having to wait until the reality and seriousness of those risks became fully apparent." (Case C – 157/96 – available in [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int))

<sup>352</sup> "In the present case, the publication of new scientific information had established a probable link between a disease affecting cattle in the United Kingdom and a fatal disease affecting humans for which no known cure yet exists. Having regard, first, to the uncertainty as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the measures previously adopted by the United Kingdom and the Community and, second, to the risks regarded as a serious hazard to public health the Commission did not clearly exceed the bounds of its discretion in seeking to contain the disease within the territory of the UK by banning the export from that territory to other Member States and to third countries of bovine animals, meat of bovine animals and derived products" (Case C–180/96–available in [www.europa.eu.int](http://www.europa.eu.int))

When this directive was issued back in the beginning of the nineties, GMO's were not a big issue and so, it went on smoothly. But as companies tried to market their products and encountered a tough procedure process layed down by the EU, critics related with the industry started to accuse it of hampering innovation and later on when it was used for restricting imports from the USA, the EU has been accused of proteccionism.

The public concerns over GMO has increased significantly over the last decade, and irrespective of scientific or non-scientific proofs, there is a widespread attitude of fear and reluctance over GMO. This made some Member States take more restricted rules, than they were supposed by EU standards. This gives rise to confrontation and accusations of trade barriers. But the unavoidable fact is this fear.

In case C – 6/99 The French Supreme Court asked the ECJ help in interpreting the Commission Decision on a case between Association Greenpeace France vs French Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Greenpeace argued that the adoption by the Commission of the Decision 97/98/EC concerning the placing on the market of genetically modified maize (*Zea mays L.*) followed by adoption by the French Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, of a decree authorising its placing on the market had gone through an irregular procedure and should therefore be suspended or annulled. Its argument was that the opinion of the Committee for the Study of the Release of Products of Biomolecular Engineering had been delivered on the basis of a dossier that was incomplete. The French National court was asking the ECJ, if France had to give consent, after having applied for it and be given by the Commission this consent or could it retain a discretion not to give such consent? And if requiring the French Government had to give its "consent in writing", after the decision had been published.

From these two paradigmatic examples one could draw three conclusions:

i) The courts are dealing mainly with procedural matters rather than content matters. This means that the institutional discussion is missing the potential

richness of the precautionary principle, namely its role on the evolution of the science-society-decision-making frame. Nevertheless, many of the rulings of the ECJ can be used to understand the position of the EU in what regards the precautionary principle, and ultimately its rulings are arguably what it really matters.

**ii)** The precautionary principle has been brought into the political context of interests among states, industry, non-governmental organizations which means as O’Riordan, Cameron and Jordan (2001) have put it, the precautionary principle has become a political tool, it has been politicized.

**iii)** Fear/dread by society in general is becoming a reality. Hans Jonas (1979), as seen in chapter 4, when developing his “imperative of responsibility”, argued for a development of a “heuristics of fear” claiming that it would be the best to prompt responsibility. His work has been criticized exactly because fear is an uncomfortable feeling to work with, mainly because it is the tool dictatorships and authoritative regimes use. Hobbes, already in century XVII used it to justify his absolute monarch. Now, it seems we do not need to develop it (Jonas) or argue that it is a consequence of our state of nature (Hobbes). It seems we have created it already, perhaps even without noticing it. Food and health scares are becoming part of our “risk society”. And this means that decision-making in such processes needs to be very open and inclusive of different inputs, if any type of legitimizing is wanted.

This means also that public authorities must deal with the real perception of risk as people feel it. Considering public reactions as emotional or irrational discredits science and makes it elitist, which is negative to the whole process. Christoforou (2004, p.231) claims, “the perception people have of risk is wider than that of experts and reflects a number of legitimate concerns (e.g., familiarity with the risk, catastrophic potential, threat to future generations, and voluntariness of exposure), which are frequently omitted from expert assessments”.

### 8.3.4 Definitions of the precautionary principle

Coming back to the precautionary principle as a policy tool, it might be relevant to look at possible definitions even though it is not broadly agreed that it is possible to have a consensual one. But the most often used is the Rio Declaration (1992) definition:

*“In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by states according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty<sup>353</sup> shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation”.*

And more recently the Wingspread Conference one, is also often used (e.g. Tickner, 1999, Myers, 2002):

*“When an activity raises threats of harm to the environment or human health, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established scientifically”. And then it continues: “In this context the proponent of an activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof. The process of applying the Precautionary Principle must be open, informed and democratic and must include potentially affected parties. It must also involve an examination of the full range of alternatives, including no action.”*

These possible definitions already put the finger on some of the issues where controversy exists, as they are quite diverse and not only on semantics, but on the actual meaning of the principle. They are often considered the weak and the strong definition. In the Rio definition only serious and irreversible threats are considered, it only wants to prevent environmental degradation, cost-effective is a criteria for action, and action is not directly implied. On the contrary, the Wingspread definition talks about threats of harm to the environment and

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<sup>353</sup> As mentioned in the uncertainty section above, this wording of “lack” of scientific knowledge is what makes Funtowicz uncomfortable, reckoning that this type of wording dismisses uncertainty in all its dimensions.

human health trying to prevent both, does not talk about costs and implies action/measures to be taken. Furthermore it adventures into its associated elements such as changing the burden of proof, the importance of alternatives and of open and democratic issues.

The controversy around a proper definition has nurtured a sort of ambiguity which gives the precautionary principle a certain political strength coming from it being ill-defined and capturing the emotions of misgiving and guilt as O’Riordan (2000) says. While this is true, it is probably not the best way to continue, because even if it might be impossible to universally agree on all elements of the precautionary principle, it is not sustainable on a long term to rely on guilt emotions to its solid implementation in environmental policy.

Other definitions exist<sup>354</sup>, but probably more important than trying to get to an impossible universal definition<sup>355</sup>, we should see how the principle has been evolving.

### **8.3.5. Evolution of the concept of the precautionary principle**

A considerable effort has been made in the past decades, to get some part of science tuned into the needs of policy-making, especially on the environmental and health fields. This has proven difficult and in some cases potentially impossible to fully attain. Since the word uncertainty came out of its straight-jacket, luckily no one has been able to put it back again. And it has been influencing policy-making ever since. But the problem is not only uncertainty; it is also indeterminacy, ambiguity, ignorance and the quality of science itself and its legitimacy to assist policy. These are issues no-one had asked before and the implications relate to a broader question of how society and policy-makers can deal with complex environmental issues. This broader question

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<sup>354</sup> Sandin (1999) found 19 different versions of the precautionary principle.

<sup>355</sup> Different opinions exist about the need or not to better define the precautionary principle. For example Marchant (2003) claims that as it stands it is too arbitrary for application within the judicial system; others Sandin (2004) claim that an authoritative formulation is not necessary neither possible.

encompasses more dimensions of the problem and has marked the first step in the evolution of the principle. Let's look at the process.

Since we live mainly in a normative world, when we encounter problems our first instinct is to tend to respond in a normative way. So when science proved not to be the linear information, decision-makers expected it to be, the system came up with the first normative and regulative answers, namely environmental impact assessments, risk assessments and “best” methodologies. These were, as noted earlier, the precursors of the precautionary principle, which is itself also a normative answer to the problem. This normative principle protects and legitimises political decisions<sup>356</sup>. But increasingly both the protection and legitimising of decisions demand more than a normative principle, and the new formulation of the question was already in the air.

So if the main core of the principle was: “taking precaution in the face of scientific uncertainty” (SEHN, 1999) or “a willingness to take action in advance of formal justification of proof” (Jordan and O’Riordan, 1999), it has been evolving, not to its German ancestor but nevertheless to a broader scope. The evolution of the participation of society in political processes demanded more, than just dealing with uncertainty with the possibility to take actions. Uncertainty is a complex issue and the precautionary principle in its first and simpler form was dealing with it as if it was just another problem to tackle, as if it were just “lack of certainty”. Moreover the problem is not only uncertainty, it might have other dimensions as ignorance, indeterminacy etc.

In the meantime, having sensed that a normative answer was not enough to answer the problems around uncertainty, most thinkers on the subject started to add to the precautionary principle other elements potentially related with it. So it became common to relate it with:

- shifting the burden of proof;

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<sup>356</sup> This idea of the precautionary principle being just a normative answer protecting and legitimising decisions is from Silvio Funtowicz, who fears we lost an opportunity to go further in the original question (pers. comm.).

- opening the decision-making process, turning it to a more transparent and participated process;
- the consideration of alternatives.

This was clear in the Wingspread definition and Jordan and O’Riordan (1999) even go further and also consider the following elements:

- Proportionality of response
- A preparedness to provide ecological space and margins for error;
- A recognition of the well-being interests of nonhuman entities;
- A greater concern for intergenerational impacts on future generations.

This enlarging of the realm of the precautionary principle has been its first evolution at a conceptual level. This evolution is interesting because it mirrors how society, political establishment and science have been evolving. As O’Riordan, Cameron and Jordan (2001, p.9) say, “it has moved from a position primarily in the science and legal realms to become much more politicised in the context of environmental and consumer protest, in changing public perceptions on science, and in the social responsibility of corporations”. This last element will contribute to the next evolutionary step of the precautionary principle.

There are many views about the principle and if one extreme is that a lot of expectations are put in the precautionary principle as the trigger for a new attitude towards science, economy, environment and eventually policy, the other is more modest and wants only to deal with it case by case. The first extreme is for example Barrett and Raffensperger (1999) asking for a new science, a precautionary science opposing to the established mechanistic science. Or M’Gonigle (1999) suggesting that the precautionary principle must prompt a new way of seeing political economy, claiming that it is time for the State to abandon its Adam Smith 18<sup>th</sup> century policy of the wealth of the nation or economic growth, and should shift its gravity centre towards another concept of the State where an ecologically based economy should be the guiding principle. Those who stand in this first vision tend to agree on this broadening,

against those who have a more narrow perspective on it (for eg. Cazala, 2004 and Marchant, 2003).

The three main elements associated with the precautionary principle have not been universally accepted, which explains why there is some sort of un-matching between the evolution of the concept and its practical use. From these three elements the one which is more specific and causes more controversy is the question on shifting the burden of proof. And it seems that recent signs are pointing to a solution, and if so then more than half way would have been covered to a more consensual principle and a second stage of its evolution will take place. But we will come back to it later on.

### **i) Shifting the burden of proof**

The burden of proof question is related with money. Therefore it is so difficult to get round it. No one ever wants to pay anything voluntarily and will avoid it until it is impossible to continue doing so. This is the fate of our western society. So what does entail this shifting of the burden of proof?

Basically it states that the party that wishes to develop a new activity, project or substance or change the existing system has the burden of demonstrating that the proposed changes will not produce unacceptable adverse impacts on human health or on existing resources and species. Basically it requires a clarification of whom or what gets the benefit of doubt. Up to now, this burden has relied most on those complaining and not on those producing it. The question is tricky because usually it involves either industry and its powerful economic lobby, or it involves a government defending a national policy or even the European Union defending a policy (eg. Hormones in beef USA vs EU)

To shift the burden of proof is not an easy process to make, both because of its costs and because traditionally as O'Riordan and Jordan (1999) say, the law tends to privilege the polluters rather than the victims of pollution. Even though it is a common procedure within the pharmaceutical industry, other industrialists

or promoters of other potential harmful activities are objecting strongly to be held responsible to prove the harmlessness of their products. There is neither agreement nor even a common understanding of different levels of proof for different products or actions. But that is another long discussion<sup>357</sup>.

In practice, if science is for a specific case insufficient and uncertain, it might seem that shifting the burden of proof does not change much, because uncertainty will remain. But there are two main added values in the process. One is that if there is uncertainty, then the promoter has to acknowledge it, as well as of the values attached to decisions. The proponents must either try to prove the innocuity of their proposal, which economically makes sense as they would be their beneficiaries or if not possible to prove, and they must make the values they use for decision explicit. Even if a conflict of values will arise, that is positive because to acknowledge the conflict, to make it explicit and try to solve it is the only way forward. It is a more open and transparent process. As Myers (2002, p.216) says “recognizing and building from the primacy of values may offer a better solution”. Multicriteria evaluations and other techniques help in decision processes when there are different criteria/values.

The second main added value is related with responsibility. Shifting the burden of proof starts a new conception of sharing responsibility. It is not only a question of allotting responsibility only to one party of the process, but above all sharing it. Prompting all parties to take an active part in an implementing process of precautionary principle will foster looking at it more openly and taking the appropriate responsibilities. If this shared responsibility concept takes ground, and all signs point out in that direction, we will be in a new phase of the precautionary principle.

So shifting the burden of proof is at the same time more just economically and prompts a new attitude in policy making. The underlying values of decisions must be made explicit, and in that process, hopefully awareness and

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<sup>357</sup> EEA (2001, pp 184-184) discusses the levels of proof question.

responsibility are increased. And it implies a more open, democratic and transparent process.

## **ii) Democracy and transparency**

Democracy and transparency in the decision-making process represent mainly an ethical component translated into the right to know, the right to be included in the decision process and the duty to include (Myers, 2002). Information and participation are the key issues. The civil society is becoming increasingly present and new concepts of active citizenship are becoming routine. Moreover, the Aarhus Convention foresees the access to information on environmental decisions to be free and open and this will prompt an even more pro-active attitude on the citizen side. The institutional side will have to adapt for it, and in the case of the precautionary principle, where uncertainty is its main feature, the decisions must show they have been taken in an open and transparent process.

All this involves being open and allow a conflict of values if they exist, but not to allow a hidden, hypocrite and false discussion on science, progress, innovation and growth *versus* a negative loaded environmentalism. And again it prompts responsibility as a key issue on all sides, the institutional/regulator, the industrial, the scientific and the societal.

EEA (2001) made an assessment of case studies occurring during the past century, where the correct application of the precautionary principle would have made an important change in what were sometimes catastrophic impacts. From this assessment, lessons were drawn to improve the process of regulatory appraisal. Many of these lessons will be fundamental in this heading of democracy, openness and transparency, namely: identify and reduce interdisciplinary obstacles to learning; ensure that real world conditions are adequately accounted for in regulatory appraisal; systematically scrutinise the claimed justifications and benefits alongside potential risks; ensure use of lay and local knowledge, as well as relevant specialist expertise in the appraisal; take full account of the assumptions and values of different social groups;

maintain the regulatory independence of interested parties; and identify and reduce institutional obstacles to learning and action.

In Funtowicz's claim that the precautionary principle is not more than a normative principle legitimising political action, the inclusion of this element would answer many of his worries. Furthermore it would prevent the use of the precautionary principle as a political tool for any type of trade protectionism. And both the EU Communication and the Council Resolution do stress that the principle should be applied fairly and without discrimination.

For this element acknowledging a plurality of values has to be part of the process and trying to deal with it, even if difficult, is unavoidable. And responsibility comes up again as a feature determining much of the legitimacy and credibility of decisions.

This process of opening the decision process to be more democratic and transparent also makes the real use of alternatives as impossible to bypass.

### **iii) Alternatives assessment**

Looking at alternatives implies looking broadly and not being locked into the dictates of things as they are or as some inevitable march of progress and technology (Myers, 2002). The importance of considering alternatives might be a trigger for innovation, progress and to increase the freedom of choice. However, deciding what is "better" may again depend on the values that guide the process. So here again, we cannot avoid be confronted with making underlying values public.

In a more radical view of the precautionary principle, it might even change the type of questions. As Tickner (1999) says from "which activity is the best?" into "do we need this activity in the first place?" And by changing the questions, the problem frame changes, and the path is open to a more comprehensive understanding of what we really want and what our values are.

O'Brien (1999) presents the essential elements of an alternatives assessment, which are self-explicit of their importance for the implementation of the precautionary principle:

- Presentation of a full range of options
- Presentation of potential adverse effects of each option
- Presentation of potential beneficial effects of each option

Another fundamental feature of this element is that the process must be public, so that the assessment considers and takes into account the inputs the public might have. This involvement enriches the process by both enlarging the range of assessment, and at the same time, it empowers the public to responsibility and to environmental awareness.

EEA (2001, p177) recommends that the promotion and production of alternatives should take place within a culture of eco-efficiency, clean production and closed-loop material flows so as to minimize the size of any potential impact, and ensure that alternatives are really alternatives.

### **8.3.6. Main implications of this evolution**

Even though these elements are not widely accepted, one can see that they have influenced the way the precautionary principle has been evolving. The question that is behind the precautionary principle when acknowledging all these elements would be: What is the relationship between society, science and decision-making in policy processes? And by making this question, we are giving to the precautionary principle that importance hinted earlier, that of its contribution for a new paradigm in environmental policy. The implications of this broadening of the precautionary principle might be at several levels, namely epistemological, methodological, practical, institutional and political. But I would rather like to look at it on another perspective, the one that is prompting

changing behaviour on all those levels. And this change of attitude is based in mainly a challenge that has appeared in the development of those elements, namely how to deal openly with values. As mentioned in last chapter when working with values one gets in a political philosophy frame.

The importance of values is taking shape in all this process. An understanding of values is central to both our understanding of the world and our understanding of human action. Environmental discourse and social constructivism have been defending that cultural, social and political framings are woven into both the formulation of scientific explanations of environmental problems and their solutions, as seen in chapter two. Forsyth (2003) develops a critical political ecology claiming exactly that. The implementation of the precautionary principle is helping in understanding how false it is to claim that science based decisions are value free, even when science is certain. With uncertainty, which is the core element of the precautionary principle, it is impossible to discharge values so easily. Political decisions are never value free.

In fact, decision-making in face of scientific uncertainty demands, prompts and enlarges the discussion from only facts and science to considering values. The stable relationship between science and policy needs reframing into including the relationship between policy and uncertainty. Decision makers are increasingly confronted with uncertainties and their choices are often located in situations of conflict of values. All this brings up the need to know how to work with values.

In fact decisions are never value free, no matter if they are mainly scientific, political or both. Acknowledging it is the first step forward to avoid unsolvable conflicts. Jasanoff (1993) claims that when we deal with issues of great uncertainty, facts and values frequently merge.

Myers (2002) points out that the fundamental feature of the precautionary principle is that it puts values first. So probably the precautionary principle is putting for the first time values explicitly in the forefront of environmental policy,

and therefore an environmental political philosophy might help dealing better with it. This requires re-thinking on how to deal with it. The main thesis is that the precautionary principle triggers the need to openly and explicitly acknowledge the importance of values, because values have always been there, but just not openly acknowledged. Even when it is said that science is the main input for decisions, the implicit and subtle value of economic growth is often dominating. By prompting the discussion on values upfront, other values emerge and the process is more honest. Even if it implies the co-existence of conflicting values, the process gains credibility.

The need in environment policy for considering science has always been obvious, but decisions are needed independently of what science can or cannot give. And with or without science, the process of decision-making has always included, even if not always acknowledged, values. These values might be several, from economic, moral, cultural, political, aesthetic, etc. These values affect us all, either as scientists, as policy makers or as citizens. It is probably undeniable that our understanding of the world relies on ourselves and on a mixture of all our values.

When we do not acknowledge this and when science and policy have a close relationship, what happens is that more than the absence of certainty is the existence of contradictory certainties which makes the debate confusing (Hannigan, 1995). These certainties need deconstructing. There are no absolute truths or discourses and therefore our understanding of environment is our own construction. In chapter two we mentioned both social constructionism and environmental discourse pointing their relevance in the possible definition of an environmental crisis and of environmental problems. What is important is to expose these processes as to understand what is behind specific understandings and specific discourses about the problems.

When applying fully the precautionary principle, we might be facing actors with different values, and the more open the process is and more actors it has, then more values will be on the table. That in general the same values are not shared by all, is possibly not a problem because conflict is a natural process.

But one of the advantages of applying precaution is that conflict happens before the harm is done. And if the conflict is allowed to stay agonistic with an open dialogue involving discussing values and avoid falling into a deadlock antagonism then some hope for consensus remains.

And even if as Mouffe (1993a, p.81) says “all forms of consensus are based on acts of exclusion”, what it prompts is that efforts from all actors on the process are needed. All actors (citizens, policy makers, scientists, industry, NGO, other interested stakeholders) should engage in active participation but because probably they have different concepts of the good, they will have therefore to accept submission to certain rules of conduct. A bond should exist or be created among all actors in a way that reconciles freedom with authority.

Scientists should acknowledge that they have particular values and motives, which makes scientific knowledge a socially constructed product. And the same happens with policy. And the same happens with citizens. All their truths are valid but they need to accept that they aren't absolute truths. If the views and knowledge of nature and environment or of the subject in discussion are constructed by ourselves, then who we are makes all the difference in this construction. And because we are all different, these constructions are different, but this does not mean we cannot be open to understand other constructions.

The problem has been often that it is the “white male scientist or policy maker” that does all the work, which obviously implies that minorities or undervalued groups have been almost always marginalized from the debate, and therefore the predominant view is biased and has remained, for too long, unchallenged. And therefore are hard to let go. But all the new developments of policy in general and environmental policy in particular point into an opening of the process. And the correct application of the precautionary principle is another step into this learning process of dealing with and accepting different values.

This open acknowledgement of pluralism of values is probably the best heritage the post modernism has left us with. How to deal with it is probably one of the major questions that not only social sciences, but society in general has to try to

sort out. And this means that it is not a problem exclusive from environmental policy or of the precautionary principle in particular. It is widespread. The challenge is not to loose the “post modern assertion of the need to respond contextually and strategically to shifting frameworks of power and resistance, and to articulate a fuller recognition of multiplicity and difference” (Squires, 1993, p1-2).

The claims that “man is a social, historical or linguistic artefact; the celebration of fragmentation, particularity and difference; the acceptance of the contingent and apparent” (Squires 1993, p.2) are almost more real now then back in the sixties when they were originally made. The idea is as Lyotard (1984) pointed out the sensitivity to differences reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. And within the environmental field, the incommensurable is part of its daily routine. Therefore some of the thoughts of post modernism might be able to give some clues on how to deal with this plurality of values.

Weeks (1993, p.189) argues that we should start rethinking on values by exploring and not rejecting that plurality. “Rather than imposing an artificial order on moral confusion, we need to learn how to negotiate the hazards of social complexity and moral diversity”. Their heterogeneity needs to be charted. If the post modernism did the much needed deconstruction, we need now to do the reconstruction.

We need to avoid any sort of dichotomy type of framing like industry *versus* environment or facts *versus* values or objectivity *versus* subjectivity or human *versus* nature or mind *versus* body or reason *versus* emotion which are the usual suspects. These dichotomies, often referred in the literature, promote opposition and therefore exclusion, but more than that it closes the door to a much needed dialogue. Again the heritage of post modernism takes us into a deconstruction of these dichotomies, blurring any type of hierarchy and promoting an understanding of how actually the elements of these binaries are part of each other and internally related. Acknowledging other features like specificity, variation or heterogeneity prompts a more open dialogue and a possibility of togetherness in difference. As (Squires, 1993) says the challenge

is to attempt to realise the possibility of political togetherness in difference, by constructing and maintaining systems of political inclusion and representation.

Myers (2002, p.213) defends that the precautionary principle “may be most effective if specific values, in the form of goals, are allowed to guide the entire process from beginning to end”. Myers (2002) suggests establishment of goals, as the best way to achieve consensus about values. Deciding on goals might be easier, and from there compromise between different values might also be easier. Myers (2002) gives the example of the Swedish Government setting “the goal of eliminating toxins from mothers’ milk. Period. This is turn meant developing plans for how that was to be done, step by step, on many fronts, with intermediate goals to mark progress” (p.217). As seen earlier the Swedish approach of having defined sixteen objectives for its environmental policy and then having invested in promoting a shared responsibility for their attainment proves, also in this case, to be very positive.

Keeping attaining goals or values as an open-ended process is important. An opportunity for creativeness and choice is what we have in front of us, and we should not jeopardise it. This does not mean that decisions should be eternally postponed, because as one of EEA’s (2001) “late lessons” postulates, one should avoid “paralysis by analysis” and “take action to reduce the potential harm when there are reasonable grounds for concern” (p.194).

There are no final answers, what one needs to do is to constantly debate the problems and take the best possible decisions along the process. One should know how to identify when one should not to get to the end of discussion, because there is no final proof of what is right or wrong, and therefore should keep the possibility of continuing the debate, even after decisions are taken (if appropriate). By remaining open and honest about the basis on which we establish our moral and political projects we ensure that the dialogue can prove to be constructive. We might need to have some sense of minimum universal values and what is proposed, is that one of those minimum universal values should be responsibility.

### **8.4. Responsibility**

This chapter started by proposing that the precautionary principle might be a good case study to check the potential for responsibility. I have been defending that developing responsibility at both personal and institutional level might contribute for a better way of doing environmental policy and to a better relationship with the world (and with oneself).

Responsibility towards the environment should be internalised in our morality in a way that it should be harmonious for us to act responsibly, respecting and caring for the environment.

The problems associated with the application of the precautionary principle are various and I chose the dealing with values as a main topic and this approach took us to the conclusion that responsibility is a natural outcome of a new approach to environmental policy. Arguable the best way to attain some sort of credibility and even consensus is to act responsibly. And slowly this has becoming more and more acknowledged and might be the crucial factor for the second stage of evolution of the precautionary principle as mentioned earlier. The idea is that we should share responsibility in dealing with this complex relation between the scientific, societal, industrial and political systems. Or even more than that, we cannot avoid being responsible and sharing responsibility if we want to keep on.

### **8.5. Summary**

A horizontal sort of analysis, by claiming that the issue of dealing with values and considering responsibility as a fundamental virtue of the system were two possible routes for understanding how we might go forward. It is possible to summarize this chapter by re-constructing its story line or argument:

- New trends such as acknowledging uncertainty, interface between science and society, recent ideas on how to understand science and how these trends impact policy-making are prompting a new paradigm in environmental policy;
- There is a need for decision-makers to take a more sophisticated approach to scientific evidence and scientific uncertainty and the precautionary principle seems to be answering that need. In turn it triggers the need to acknowledge values in decision-making and might consequently propose a more close and open relationship between facts, norms and values;
- The precautionary principle is challenging “business as usual” which is a major condition for change. We are in a privileged era where advancements in environmental policy are possible because of these positive circumstances. The more grounded are the normative concepts, and most notably more philosophically grounded, the more chances they have of being consistent and therefore resistant to any challenge.
- A new paradigm of environmental policy is emerging based on these circumstances of working openly and responsibly with facts, norms and values. The triangle – environmental science, society and policy - provides a more socially robust science, a more participative society and a new policy.

## Chapter nine – Summary, conclusions and further work

### ***9.1. Summary or what do I think I said and why did I say it***

In chapter one I set the scene and put forward the question that would be the North, the South, the East and the West, as the poet<sup>358</sup> would say, of this investigation. In simple terms it was researching the possible role of responsibility within environmental policy and environmental ethics. Underlying this hypothesis was the hidden agenda of proposing responsibility towards nature as a virtue that would contribute to solve the environmental crisis and could also contribute to make us believe that we could invest in ourselves and ultimately be happier human beings.

In chapter two, an analytical description of environmental policy was undertaken where I tried to answer the following questions:

- Is it possible to define the environmental crisis and explain what are the main fallacies, coming from a non-critical way of analysing it?
- What are the characteristics of environmental problems and why do they persist?
- How has environmental policy started and evolved?
- How has European environmental policy evolved and what are its main principles?
- What has environmental policy achieved up to now?

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<sup>358</sup> W. H. Auden. Funeral Blues (April 1936)

(...)

He was my North, my South, my East and West,

My working week and my Sunday rest,

My noon, my midnight, my talk, my song;

(...)

In chapter three on environmental ethics I tried to answer the following questions:

- How did the relationship between man and nature evolved in philosophical terms?
- How did the philosophical understanding of nature evolved?
- How did environmental ethics started and what are its main currents?
- What is the relationship between environmental ethics and environmental policy?
- How could this relation be strengthened?

These two chapters provided background analysis and context for the research. Reviewing both environmental policy and environmental ethics allowed me to have a holistic understanding of the environmental scene, and where this research could make its main contribution. The analytical description of these two disciplines provided the following (predicted) insights:

1. Environmental policy and environmental ethics have been quite independent of each other and not terribly successful, even though they underwent through clear evolutions throughout these last forty years.
2. Each of these disciplines is rather complex and influenced by many different factors. An open dialogue between them might be positive, as their views complement each other. Environmental ethics focusing on finding the first causes of the environmental crisis and proposing two central values that could justify possible answers, and environmental politics actually solving them (by relying on science and technology, economic and legal instruments, and on a preventive approach).
3. Responsibility might be proposed as a platform of understanding for their fruitful reconciliation and ultimately to a more effective way of dealing with the environmental crisis.

Having provided the context for analysing in more detail the concept of responsibility, the fourth chapter was dedicated to scrutinize the conceptual world around it. To do so I tried to answer the following questions:

- Why do we need responsibility?
- What are the different ways of defining responsibility?
- What have different authors been writing about it?
- Could responsibility be part of morality?
- How could one enhance responsibility?

The analysis of this rich concept in both policy and ethics pointed me in the direction of its *aretaic* dimension, i.e. could responsibility towards nature be considered as a virtue, and how would that be beneficial to the adventure of contributing to solving the environmental crisis.

The following chapter was then entirely dedicated to virtue ethics, in order to better articulate the first proposed conclusion: the advantages of considering responsibility towards nature as a virtue. As the revival of virtue ethics is a relatively new normative current within ethics, much of the chapter dealt with what it was and why it had recently re-emerged. If normative ethics had been lately investing in the importance of the question on “what should I do?”, virtue ethics was providing an enrichment of the human nature tapestry by adding a more reflexive dimension by investing in asking “who do I want to be?” and “how do I want to live?”. The questions structuring this chapter were:

- What is virtue ethics and why did it re-emerge after so many centuries?
- What is environmental virtue ethics and what are its main objectives?
- What is the importance of character?
- How could responsibility as a virtue be developed?
- The importance of citizenship and environmental citizenship
- What might be the role of *eudaimonia* in this project?

There were two lines of investigation within virtue ethics that I thought would be worth pursuing: Character formation and *eudaimonia* (*Phronesis* is also certainly relevant but already thoroughly analysed and arguably not exclusive of virtue ethics). I suggested that to develop responsibility towards nature as a virtue at the individual level would contribute both for character formation and to

*eudaimonia*. I proposed a three phase process for the development of this virtue at individual level, namely education and habituation, environmental empowerment (environmental literacy, awareness and consciousness) and the promotion of an active environmental citizenship. The concept of *eudaimonia*, central in an Aristotelian virtue ethics is also important in the notion of a more ethically informed politics that would be further developed in the following two chapters.

Could this virtue, apart from being beneficial for the environment and for ourselves, also enter the political realm? What could be the government role in promoting it? For a more effective environmental policy would this promotion of an internal motivation be added to the traditional external motivations? To provide justification, background and context for following that path, it seemed fundamental to look into the complex relationship between ethics and politics. Discussing some aspects of it became the subject of a new chapter, which took as a task:

- Enquiring the cosmopolitanian project
- Investigating existing tenuous projects of virtue politics, mainly neo-Aristotelian authors' works on politics
- Investigating the possibility of a good environment be a political common good

With this background, I ventured then into investigating responsibility in environmental politics. Could we claim that responsibility is the first virtue of institutions that deal directly or indirectly with the relationship between man and nature? Within this question, two distinct issues arose. Firstly, how to develop responsibility towards environment at the institutional level? Secondly what could be the role of public institutions in enhancing this virtue at individual level? Having provided a constructive proposal for these two issues the seventh chapter got into the idea of environmental political philosophy for further supporting of environmental policy.

Chapter seven started inquiring political philosophy and proposals for an environmental political philosophy. This provided background for environmental ethics to pervade environmental policy thinking. The idea of having a political philosophy providing the foundational principles to organize politics does give room for innovative perspectives upon what might be a new environmental governance. In view of all previous discussions I proposed an environmental virtue politics which should foster environmental, individual and political responsibility via virtue (environmentally cognitive and affective) and via the concept of *eudaimonia* or well-being.

At the last stage, a further enquiry was necessary, as science has been informing environmental policy for long and this relationship has started to be questioned because of recent developments on the relation between society and science and how science deals with uncertainty and with emerging proposals of enlarging its core essence. The precautionary principle, an innovative policy instrument, very dependent on a broad understanding of the relationship between science, society and politics was analysed as a possible case-study on the importance of responsibility in all the political process. The objectives of this last chapter were therefore:

- Investigating the relationship between science and society, emerging new “sciences”, and the importance of acknowledging uncertainty.
- Discussing the precautionary principle
- Assessing the philosophical and political elements of the Precautionary Principle in the contemporary scene
- Coming back to responsibility also as a key concept in this context.

## ***9.2. Conclusions or what do I think is worth pointing out***

Responsibility is the concept I have been dwelling with for the past years and past hundreds of pages. Responsibility, whose importance we have been told since our childhood. Now we tell our children the same. Would it be possible to

argue, politically and philosophically, the importance of responsibility towards nature? The three main existing reasons for responsibility are:

1. Jonas, the first proponent of responsibility as structuring of an ethics, was a doomsayer defending that the power of our technology was so great that the possibility of mankind to disappear was getting real and therefore, fear should be used to prompt responsibility.
2. Most environmental ethicists defended that nature has an intrinsic value, and even though they have not spelled like that, this value should prompt responsible acting towards nature.
3. Other environmental ethicists defended that next generations had a right to enjoy living in this earth, as at least we are living, and therefore we should, again not specifically spelled, act responsibly towards nature.

I defended throughout this thesis that:

1. Environmental policy has been relying mostly on science and technology and on economic or legislative instruments to protect the environment. Environmental policy should pay more attention to environmental philosophy, its efforts in understanding the roots of problems and in proposing a philosophical justification for the rationale to tackle them. Environmental policy might profit from invest in shifting its course of action into working more with people, people as consumers, as citizens, as polluters and as someone with a role in our relation with the environment.
2. Accepting that being virtuous is a source of happiness, using responsibility towards nature as a virtue might attain two objectives at the same time, improving the environment and eventually help us feeling more meaningful and ultimately happier persons.

These first statements took me to support a trend already emerging in existing literature: the need for an environmental political philosophy. Political science and political theory without political philosophy supporting it might eventually become devoid of a structuring frame, and virtue thinking might take that role.

The current environmental crisis and the “wicked” character of environmental problems have been persisting or have been constantly substituted by yet other “wicked” and also potentially intractable environmental problems. The structure of the political systems of the Western world and its institutions are quite stable, and are supported by determined values. The understanding of these values, such as justice, equity, freedom, solidarity and others provide the basis on which political theories delineate political action. What are the values that stand behind environmental politics?

Environmental ethics has been defending that these values should be the intrinsic value of nature and the care for future generations but environmental politics has been following a utilitarian idea of the main value to be a narrow sense of human well-being. Its dominant rationale is that the environmental crisis has to be dealt with because it affects us. The question then has been if these other values could enrich the rationale for environmental politics? Up to now, this has not been explicitly accepted, as the implications for policy of such values would determine a radical change in our project of being in the world.

Ecologism, the proposed environmental political philosophy gives room for thinking innovatively, not only on the values that could support environmental politics, but also in the possibility of proposing changes in the structuring of the governing and of the institutional setting. But it has not attained any sort of mainstream.

Environmental policy has not been a disaster and has achieved many positive and fundamental improvements of the quality of our surrounding environment. But it is not enough. The current climate change issue, other global problems and local problems seem to be taking us into an increasing non-sustainable situation. The current responses are increasingly innovative but still given within the maintenance of the classic economic paradigm such as effective eco-taxation, ecological modernisation, corporate social responsibility, which all, ultimately relate to the traditional idea of human nature dominance and the need

to remain in a recognised paradigm of growth, wealth and survival of political structures.

Most governing structures and most western democracies keep on relying on non-sustainable processes. Therefore, sustainable development, even if a potentially perfect political principle, has been poorly implemented and unable to fully pervade other political areas besides the environmental one. In fact, integration of environmental principles into other sectoral areas, a cornerstone of sustainable development has been a constant Achilles heel of European environmental policy since 1983, when it was initially proposed in the third action Programme on the environment. Furthermore the lack of a real relation between environmental ethics and environmental policy, identified in chapters two and three, limits looking for transformational solutions and promotes concepts, approaches and mechanisms still firmly attached to a limited anthropocentric relation with nature.

Acknowledging the need for a widening of the political questions that are put to the polity is fundamental, as Salkever (1974) claimed, and might complement the effort started by Ecologism. The virtue thinking proposed in this research is believed to contribute to that broadening and to give more room to think about possibilities of changing this mode of thinking and acting and getting closer to those much needed transformational solutions.

As mentioned in the introduction, I do not aim to get to any conclusions or be prescriptive about what we should do, or where we should go. That must remain a challenge for all of us to keep on discovering as we are trekking this path. But I would like to emphasise that a normative ethics that make us investing in the self, in our connection with the other and with nature, might be, if nothing else, at least a reliable bet.

Sheila Jasanoff also got to the conclusion of the need for more creativity in the political world: "Accommodating plurality and complexity will not come easily to many existing institutions of governance, which were conceived in a simpler time when truths about nature and society were deemed to be largely self-

evident. Emerging global institutions, in particular, will have to engage in painful self-scrutiny (...) not enough to justify the centrality of development (...) it is time to invent other, more discursively open-ended concepts around which to crystallize our dreams and projects of human betterment. Not one modernity, but as many *new modernities* as the citizens of the earth can responsibly imagine should be the goal” (Jasanoff 2002, p. 272). The environmental virtue politics proposed in chapter 7 might be one of these “many new modernities”.

### **9.3. Work ahead**

As someone who comes to philosophy and political science departing from rather distant epistemological territories the thinking and writing of this thesis has been a constant source of fascination and bewildering. Even though the ultimate objective was at the *Kindergarten* level, the underpinning of all what was involved demanded the search and research of many utterly interesting themes. I kept on thinking that they were all fundamental for the storyline. That might not have been the case and above all it meant that most of those themes were not deeply investigated and I might have missed important points of their theories. If this symphony had the harmony I hoped for, remains to be the judgement of the reader.

Chapter two and three are examples of wanting to tackle vast and complex subjects in a limited amount of space, time and profundity. They have suffered from it, and alternative ways of transmitting that set of information might have been more effective. Chapters four and five, the ones where a philosophical background could have helped, might suffer from a slight confusion between history of ideas and philosophy itself. Chapters six and seven are less descriptive and introduce many concepts, each one of them in need of a deeper investigation and an improved connection for the whole idea to come across more consistently. I am very happy with chapter eight, even though I am not sure that the precautionary principle comes across as important as believe it to be for a new paradigm of environmental policy.

That is for the immediate shortcomings, which can be seen as incentives to improvement in further research about the subject, because as it is commonly said, one never finishes a PhD, one only decides at a certain point that it stops here. But the project, the themes, the ideas remain with us for long time.

Further work within the field of environmental political philosophy seems to be most promising. The concept, apart from Baxter's (1999) book is seldom mentioned, and it seems to be a powerful context for the furthering not only of the ideas put forward in this thesis, namely the importance of responsibility and the importance of working with the Self in an encompassing mode with overall sustainable living, but also other ideas coming from other quarters.

Environmental virtue politics, a political philosophy backed by the importance of the notion of virtue which includes a mix of being and acting good for the self, for the other, for the future and for the planet and of *eudaimonia* coupled to the notion of pleasure of acting as an environmental citizen need to be better supported both philosophically and politically. That remains the main avenue for further work proposed by this research.

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