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**MARTIN HEIDEGGER AND THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF NATURE:  
RETHINKING METAPHYSICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF MODERN WESTERN  
PHILOSOPHY FOR A SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS**

**BY  
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## **DECLARATION**

I, Dawit Merhatsidk Gebremedhn, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been fully acknowledged.

Declared by Dawit Merhatsidk Gebremedhn

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## ABSTRACT

*The alarming possible consequences of anthropogenic environmental crisis and global passivity to such insidious problems invoked philosophers and non-philosophers to study the root causes of environmental crisis. This problem beseeches the global humanity to come up with a sound and practical solutions. Among others, philosophers raised a question of what counts morally and why and this gave a birth for modern environmental ethics that is situated in modern Western philosophy. Significant numbers of philosophers propose a radical shift from the Western metaphysical tradition and other group of philosophers prefers to propose environmental ethics that works at the matrix of modern Western metaphysical tradition. A deeper analysis has been done in order to understand the debate on environmental ethics and to find out the faulty line of reasoning in the proposed ethical theories. I find out that modern Western metaphysical and technological assumption, that I situate on the philosophy of Rene Descartes, about human beings and of the natural environment could not provide us a ground to articulate a sound environmental ethics and thus a radical break from this intellectual tradition is an imperative. I hold that a sound environmental ethics should be holistic in its nature and ought to acknowledge intrinsic value of individual beings. So, the overall project of this thesis is to ground this kind of environmental ethics with a sound ontology base and technological practices. I argue that various philosophical works of Martin Heidegger could enable us to articulate a sound environmental ethics that afford intrinsic value of non-human beings in the interrelated world. I argue that Heidegger's fundamental ontology could help us to understand the main faulty line of reasoning in modern Western philosophy that caused environmental crises. Besides, regardless of the debate on the possibility of Heidegger's inspired ethics I argue that we can fruitfully apply his proto-ontological works to understand contemporary predicament of environmental crises and I used his concept of "Mitsein" to ground a holistic environmental ethics that acknowledges the intrinsic value of individual beings, including the non-human beings. In trying to show the relevance of this thesis in addressing practical issues, I have shown how contemporary debates on sustainable development goals could drive important elements from this kind of ethics that could have a significant impact in promoting and integrating the three goals of sustainable development.*

**Keywords:** Anthropocentrism, Challenging-forth, Dasein, Enframing, Fundamental Ontology, Intrinsic value, Holism, Hyper-separation, Technology, Standing-reserve.



## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

This chapter deals with the background of the study and briefly reviews relevant works. Besides, it deals with research questions that I will deal with it in the subsequent chapters. The whole project is to develop a holistic environmental ethics that acknowledges the intrinsic value of individual beings by using the philosophy of Martin Heidegger. I will situate my examination of environmental ethics in modern Western metaphysical tradition and cultural practice of the modern West. In this respect, the project requires a critical examination of both the metaphysical tradition and cultural practices of the West. In this chapter an attempt is made to identify research gaps in environmental ethics to mark the major premises and assumptions of mainstream environmental ethics and formulate research questions.

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a German philosopher, claims that “metaphysics grounds an age in that, through a particular interpretation of beings and through a particular comprehension of truth, it provides that age with the ground of its essential shape. This ground comprehensively governs all decisions distinctive of the age” (2002:57). Metaphysical reflection is quintessential in order to have a proper answer for what we ought to do and identify the proper place of human beings in the natural environment. For Heidegger, “metaphysics is a reflection on the essence of being and a decision concerning the essence of truth is accomplished” (2002:57). This metaphysical reflection is essential for environmental ethics for the reason that it is our metaphysical assumption that essentially shapes our values from which we derive our duties, actions and choices. Given this, it is logical to deduce that our quest for ethical inquiry for a quality environment is also a metaphysical quest. That is to say, what we ought to do can be discovered along with the question of what is (Holmes Rolston III, 1988:xii; John Baird Callicott, 1995:2). Philosophers have long been preoccupied with such and other related questions from the inception of philosophy assuming that the “unexamined life is not worth living”, to use a famous saying of Socrates. The same can be said for environmental ethics too that we need to raise deeper metaphysical questions to examine the question what counts morally and why.

Accordingly, modern construction of environmental ethics is developed in this matrix of philosophy, and a critical reflection on the long held metaphysical assumptions of modern Western philosophy is momentous for two reasons. First, it is believed among environmentalists of different times that Western atomistic and mechanistic metaphysical tradition bequeathed modern human beings to embrace anthropocentric ethics with its sheer instrumentalist belief. This metaphysical assumption begot science and technology that are driven to the exploitation and domination of nature that resulted in an unprecedented calamity in our ecology. After this line of reasoning, it is sensible to hold that we need to pause for a while and critically revisit such practices and metaphysical assumptions in order to take an essential lesson. Second, environmental ethics as a branch of philosophy is, for example as stated by Callicott (1995:2), a struggle to restore intrinsic value of the natural environment and a philosophical examination for a healthy environment that I think could only be possible as far as we examine the place of human beings in the natural environment. This in turn succeeds as far as we raise deep questions to our fundamental belief systems as well as to our cultural practices. I must commit, therefore, a deeper analysis on underlying premises of major tenets of Modern Western philosophy in special reference to the philosophy of Rene Descartes and Francis Bacon. However, this is only a half way to my thesis. Having identified the major faulty line of Western metaphysical assumption that, I suppose, could cause environmental crises, the next task is to suggest an alternative metaphysical base and cultural practice that I will situate in the culture of modern science and technology.

This being said, the history of environmental ethics tells us that the general project of environmental ethics got its inception from the most inflammatory book, in environmental ethics written by a renowned author and former Marine biologist, Rachel Carson, entitled *Silent Spring* (2002). In this book, she courageously tries to expose how human beings' unexamined dependence on technology, especially on pesticides, creates an absolute calamity in the natural environment. After Carson's reasoning, we can deduce that it is modern human being's unexamined dependency on technology and science that caused an ecological crisis. Science and technology, as a matter of fact, are the manifestation of our values and metaphysical assumptions about the natural environment and of human beings. Metaphorically speaking, "human knowledge is a tree, the trunk of which is physics, and *the root of which is metaphysics*" (Rene Descartes, quoted in Roger Scruton, 1995:27, emphasis added).

This reasoning suggests that today's environmental crisis is not an accidental phenomenon that happened out of the blue in natural history. It is caused by human being's inauthentic and improper living that in turn is caused by human being's false image about him/herself. This false image has a metaphysical ground that gives an essential shape to moral choices and actions. Heidegger claims:

[m]an is about to hurl himself upon the entire earth and its atmosphere, to arrogate to himself the hidden working of nature in the form of energy, and to subordinate the course of history to the plans and orderings of a world government. This same defiant man is incapable of saying simply what *is*; of saying *what* this *is*, that a thing *is*. The totality of beings is the single object of a singular will to conquer. The simplicity of being is buried under a singular oblivion. What mortal can fathom the abyss of this confusion? In the face of this abyss one can try to shut one's eyes. One can erect one illusion after another. The abyss does not retreat. Theories of nature, doctrines about history, do not remove the confusion. They further confuse things until they are unrecognizable, since they themselves are nourished by the confusion which surrounds the difference between beings and being (2002:280, emphasis in original).

Implicit in this quote are three points. First, the dominant Western culture and metaphysical tradition leads human community astray to have a false ontological image, specifically it furnished a ground to perceive the natural environment in mere "use" value. Second, this false ontological image is caused by oblivion of the question of being which human beings no longer wants to face the metaphysical questions that could help us to identify human beings' proper place in the natural environment. Third, this forgetfulness of the question of being requests us to debunk and revisit our metaphysical heritages and need to reawake the question of being anew. From this, it could be reasonably claimed that since we cannot find a good ground in modern Western philosophy, and since we cannot remove our confusion unless we understand the cause of that confusion, it follows that we need a paradigm shift that involves both ontological and cultural shift. This, I think, is a prerequisite in articulating a sound environmental ethics.

Given the urgency of the crises, practically-minded environmentalists could claim that we do not need to waste our time in articulating ontological thinking. However, even though my intention

will become clearer in the coming chapters, as a preliminary view it could be said that unless and until we raise deep ontological questions our quest for a sound and practicable environmental ethics is doomed to fail, for “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves, in relation to things around them” (Lynn White Jr. 1967:1205). I think that our belief systems are like eyeglass. If our eyeglasses are tinted with red color we see everything in red. Understood this way, our belief systems, attitudes and metaphysical assumptions are like a thinking paradigm from which we derive our basic assumption for our actions and choices.

Being cognizant of this, my prime purpose in this thesis is to critically examine the metaphysical assumptions of modern Western philosophy that lead human beings to have an impoverished conception of natural world and of ourselves. The essence of science and technology, since they are developed at the root of this particular conception of nature and human beings, will be treated along the way.

The assumption behind this thesis is that what we are facing as ecological crises are the manifestations of the bigger problem behind our actions and choices, i.e., metaphysical crisis. As a result, I will argue that even though some economic, political and scientific adjustments have of course enabled us to solve some of our problems, but they might mislead us to consider environmental crisis as a simple physical crisis that can be fixed with some practical scientific and technological innovation. These misconceptions can exclude environmental crisis from the purview of ethics. In addition to this, a healthy and sound environmental ethics needs an appreciation of nature in its proper ontological status, and respect for intrinsic value of the natural environment is also an imperative. I will argue that a sound environmental ethics needs ethics that is holistic in its nature, i.e. acknowledge the value of the ecosystem, and it ought to acknowledge the intrinsic value of individual beings, both human and non-human beings. After this reasoning, I will argue that Heidegger’s fundamental ontology could furnish us with a sound environmental ethics in which our commitment to holism cannot invalidate our commitment to intrinsic value of the natural environment.

## **1.2. Conceptual Framework**

This thesis aims at applying the fundamental ontology of Heidegger to develop a holistic environmental ethics that acknowledges the intrinsic value of individual beings and the ecosystem. Heidegger’s work is a proto-ontology and this thesis aims at expanding this proto-

ontological works to understand the causes of environmental crisis and develop an ontology-based environmental ethics that could help us to articulate a sound environmental ethics. In what follows, I will introduce key concepts. Besides, I will mark major debates regarding these concepts to identify research gaps.

### **1.2.1. Environmental Ethics**

Environmental ethics is a branch of philosophy that studies human-nature relationship. The question of environmental ethics varies from metaphysics to ethics. According to Rolston, environmental ethics is

...theory and practice about appropriate concern for, values in, and duties regarding the natural world. By classical accounts, ethics is people relating to people in justice and love. Environmental ethics starts with human concerns for a quality environment, and some think this shapes the ethic from start to finish. Others hold that, beyond inter-human concerns, values are at stake when humans relate to animals, plants, species and ecosystems. According to their vision, humans ought to find nature sometimes morally considerable in itself, and this turns ethics in new directions (2003:517).

I will hold that environmental ethics is both theoretical and practical approach that needs metaphysical enquiry into the main tenets of philosophy that shape our ethical claims.

### **1.2.2. Intrinsic Value of Nature**

Environmental ethics, according to Callicott, is a struggle to restore the intrinsic value of the natural environment (1995:2). However, significant numbers of writers reject the intrinsic value of individual beings. For instance, John Passmore argues that human beings do not have any responsibility to the aggregate of materials called nature (cited in Callicott, 2009:xx-xxi). I think, this exactly echoes the thinking paradigm of modern Western philosophy and science that consider nature as a simple aggregate of materials devoid of values and meaning.

In order to have a clear vision of this assumption, I think, we need to understand the metaphysical tradition behind it. The ontological denial of values and meaning to the natural environment, according to Charles Taylor, is associated with an effort to build a new approach

towards the world which is instrumentally oriented. He writes "... their [modern human beings] action in expelling the sacred from worship and social life, and the instrumental stance they take to things and to society in the course of building their order, tends to drive out the enchantment from the world" (2007:83). According to Callicott, this conception "encourage callous ecological crime" (1976:295).

Despite this reasoning, Rolston argues that the deeper question in environmental ethics is to find out the ontological stance of the natural environment beyond resource relationship. He claims,

[o]ur place in the natural world necessitates resource relationships, but there comes a point when humans want to know how we belong in this world, not how it belongs to us. We want to get ourselves defined in relation to nature, not just to define nature in relation to us.... *The deepest task of an environmental ethics is this larger appreciation of nature, with appropriate conduct...The deeper ethic is about our sources, beyond our resources, and it is also an ethic of neighboring and alien forms of life* (1988:31, emphasis added).

Furthermore, Callicott argues that "... if no intrinsic value can be attributed to nature, then environmental ethics is nothing distinct. ...but a particular application of human-to-human ethics" (1995: 2). In this thesis I defend that the natural environment, among other things like systemic value, has intrinsic value. By intrinsic value, I am here referring to the non-instrumental value of the natural environment, i.e., nature is valuable for its own sake apart from human needs and wants.

### **1.2.3. Environmental Holism**

In the debate on what counts morally, environmental philosophers took two different and conflicting stands. Some environmentalists argue that individuals count morally, i.e., environmental individualism, and some other group of environmentalists holds that not individuals but the whole which counts morally, i.e., environmental holism. Now the question I would like to pose is that what metaphysical assumption is there behind environmental individualism and holism that leads to their ethical reasoning? As a matter of fact, an atomistic philosophical intuition of reality has dominated Western culture for years that plays a significant impact on the Western vision of reality and perception of life. This paradigm has, among other

things, portrayed nature as simple automata that can be reduced to, and understood in, a simple mathematical equation. Descartes claims that “I can likewise consider the body of a human being as a kind of machine....when I compare a sick human being and a badly made clock with my idea of a healthy human being and a well-made clock” (2008:60). This mechanistic and atomistic view of nature was empowered by the view that “there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted” (Weber, quoted in Leela Gandhi, 1998:36). It is from this philosophical intuition that the proponent of environmental individualism argues that only individual beings count morally. However, this environmental ethics is questionable and considered to be harmful for the good of the ecosystem at large and thus fails to address the question of the environment.

As an alternative to this individualistic and atomistic view of nature, deep ecologists, like Freya Mathews and Arne Naess, suggest a holistic view of nature. These radical ecologists hold that “nature is not just a collection of individual phenomena or even a community of related beings; in some sense there is a vast, encompassing totality that we can connect to and that has unqualified value” (Barnhill, 2001:77). Central to holistic view of nature is that human beings and the natural environment are interconnected and interdependent, and must be considered to be in unity. Warwick Fox argues,

...there is no firm ontological divide in the field of existence. In other words, the world is simply not divided up into independently existing subjects and objects, nor is there any bifurcation in reality between the human and nonhuman realms. Rather all entities are constituted by their relationships. To the extent that we perceive boundaries, we fall short of deep ecological consciousness (2003:255).

### **1.3. Problem Statement**

Good or bad, implicitly or explicitly, every community has a concept of nature. Yet it is a recent discovery of philosophy that nature is a moral agent and human beings have a responsibility to nature (Rolston, 1988:xi). In this thesis, I hold that a sound environmental ethics that is holistic in nature should recognize the intrinsic value of individual beings and the ecosystem. However, this seems problematic from its inception and environmental philosophers worry about this

pluralistic view for years. For instance, a prominent scholar and founder of Deep Ecology Arne Neass pronounces this issue as follows:

The widening and deepening of the individual selves somehow never makes them into one “mass.” Or into an organism in which every cell is programmed so as to let the organism function as one single, integrated being. How to work out this in a fairly precise way I do not know. It is a meagre consolation that I do not find that others have been able to do this in their contemplation of the pair unity-plurality. “In unity, diversity!,” yes, but how? (Neass quoted in Barnhill, 2001:77).

This exactly occupies the question that is at the center of this thesis. I systematically argue that by bringing various works of Heidegger, it is possible to bridge the gap between holism and individualism.

## **1.4. Objectives of the Study**

### **1.4.1. General Objective of the Study**

As it is already clear in the above discussion, notable environmental ethicists hold that environmental crisis has a philosophical root that is expressed in our values, choices and actions. In order to have a quality environment, therefore, we need to have an alternative metaphysical assumption and cultural practices. The general objective of this thesis is to develop a holistic environmental ethics that does not necessarily invalidate intrinsic value of individual beings, both human, non-human beings and the ecosystem.

### **1.4.2. Specific Objectives of the Study are:**

- ❖ To argue that what we are experiencing as environmental problems are the manifestations of a bigger problem, i.e., our impoverished conception about ourselves and of the natural environment.
- ❖ To critically examine and show how the metaphysical archetype of modern Western philosophy had influenced modern human beings to develop an impoverished conception of nature that ultimately leads to the making of anthropocentric ethics.
- ❖ To demonstrate that our commitment to holistic environmental ethics will not invalidate our commitment to intrinsic value of individual beings.



- ❖ To demonstrate that how our ethical quest for quality environment is also a metaphysical search, and
- ❖ To show how modern practices in science and technology disenchanting the world and lead us to ambivalence especially in the area of environmental philosophy that begs us to critically examine the question what went wrong with that metaphysical tradition and its impact on environmental policies.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The major research questions are:

- ❖ What are the nature and metaphysical archetype of modern Western philosophy and culture which are considered to be the causes of today's environmental crises?
- ❖ What is the nature of the human self and its relationship with non-human beings?
- ❖ How could one with a holistic conception of nature focusing on the interdependency of beings logically affirm the intrinsic value of individual beings without devaluing the ontological status of nature?
- ❖ How can Heidegger's conception of nature and human beings reconcile a holistic view of nature in an interrelated wave of beings with intrinsic value of individual things and how can we develop a non-technological conception of the natural environment, still not using technology?

### **1.6. Methodology**

My principal concern in this thesis is to inquire into the values, attitudes and metaphysical assumptions of modern Western philosophy and its impact on the natural environment. To address my research questions and meet both the general and specific objectives of the study, I will use qualitative research method. Because this research method enables me to deeply investigate our attitude towards the natural environment in general and environmental problems in particular. Thus, I review secondary sources on fault lines of metaphysical assumptions of modern Western philosophy that influenced human beings to have impoverished conception of nature. In order to have a full understanding, an excursion into what radical ecologists and historians and philosophers of environment have to say in this regard is crucial. The works of Val Plumwood, Arne Naess, Freya Mathews, Lynn White, Aldo Leopold, J. B. Callicott, Holmes Rolston III and Martin Heidegger will have a special place in this thesis.

### **1.7. Scope of the Study**

Since this study is philosophical, I will limit myself to philosophical analysis and description of the nature and causes of environmental problems. To this end, I will try to examine metaphysical bases that consider the world and human beings as a machine devoid of meanings and values. The scope of this study is limited to the investigation of the following central concerns in environmental ethics: examining the underlying premises of modern Western philosophy focusing on the works of Rene Descartes and suggesting the works of Heidegger as an alternative to modern Western philosophy in order to articulate a sound environmental ethics.

### **1.8. Outline of the Study**

This thesis consists of four chapters. Chapter one deals with the general introduction of the study, the background, justification and basic concepts of the study. Chapter two deals with “Modern Culture of Reason, the “Enframed” Nature and Ecological Crisis”. In this chapter, I critically examine the metaphysical archetype of modern metaphysics and culture of reason.

In Chapter Three, I discuss how Heidegger criticized modern Western philosophy. Special attention is given to his criticism of Cartesian metaphysics, scientific reductionism, and the essence of modern technology. My purpose in this chapter is to show the ontological decline of the West and the need to reawake the forgotten question of being not only in metaphysics but also in environmental ethics as well. Subsequently, I discuss Heidegger’s ontological structure of Dasein to develop 1) a conception of environmental holism and 2) to have a satisfactory answer for the question of the place of human beings in the natural environment.

In the Fourth chapter I develop holistic environmentalism that acknowledges the intrinsic value of individual beings, species and ecosystem. In order to do so, I use Heidegger’s fundamental ontology and demonstrate how we could apply his proto-ontological work to ethics and then to environmental ethics. Subsequently, I demonstrate how contemporary debates on the ethics of sustainable development could benefit from Heidegger’s inspired holistic environmentalism. Afterward, conclusion will follow.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MODERN CULTURE OF REASON, THE “ENFRAMED<sup>1</sup>” NATURE AND ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

In this chapter, I intend to examine the central debates of environmental ethics along with their metaphysical and cultural assumptions situated in modern Western philosophy. Since the aim of this thesis is to examine modern Western metaphysical assumptions that fundamentally shape anthropocentric ethics, I find it reasonable to start this chapter with the idea of environmental ethics within the broad framework of modern Western metaphysical tradition. Thus, firstly I will discuss the idea of environmental ethics and then mark the central debates of environmental ethics. Subsequently, I will discuss how Western metaphysical tradition had invented nature in Western mind. The upshot of this chapter is to indicate that until and unless we revise Western metaphysical traditions and its perverted culture of reason, our effort of building environmentally sound ethics, policies and practices is doomed to fail. Moreover, the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate that what we are experiencing as environmental crises are the symptoms of the bigger problem, confusion in our metaphysical assumptions which I call a silent crisis.

#### 2.1. The Idea of Environmental Ethics

Environmental ethics, as a unified and independent concern of ethical relationship that ought to exist between the natural environment and human beings, was initially inspired by a tragic history of environmental crises in the West and beyond. However, this is not meant to exclude the efforts of ancient and medieval ecological thinkers like Pythagoras and Francis of Assisi. Most environmental ethicists were initially informed by the underlying premises of Western metaphysical tradition that I will discuss in length in the subsequent topics. The idea that captures the essence of environmental ethics I think can be found in Holmes Rolston's III claim that “we humans are not so ‘enlightened’ as once supposed, not until we reach a more considerate ethic” (2003:517). This idea suggests that the non-human beings should be considered to be the subject of our ethical actions and choices. The idea of environmental ethics could also be considered as a challenge to the mainstream idea of ethics that holds human beings

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<sup>1</sup> I will use the word “Enframed” to indicate how the Western metaphysical tradition invented nature in Western mind. Originally, I found this word in my readings of Heidegger's works on *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (1977) on which he claims that modern technology and science enframed nature to mean that it reduces it to its own methodology and then subjugate it to serve human purposes.

as the only subject of ethics. Contrary to Janna Thompson (1990), environmental ethics tries not to limit moral considerability to beings with a “point of view” (cited in Workineh Kelbessa, 2011:202-203.); rather it tries to include all beings beyond the human community into ethical considerations. The central thesis of environmental ethics is to extend ethical theories to incorporate the non-human animals and the natural environment.

In order to understand this point clearly, it seems reasonable to invoke the question that what was the historical happening which caused philosophers to be perplexed about the nature of our ethical claim towards the natural environment and pursued to extend ethics towards the natural environment. According to *The Limit to Growth* (1972), one of the most influential reports in the series of The Club of Rome’s report, modern time<sup>2</sup> in human history, specifically in the 1960s and 1970s, was characterized by environmental crises, malnutrition, extreme poverty, rapid population growth, shortage of natural resources like coal, industrial growth and scientific advancement. This report plays a vital role in creating public awareness on how industrial growth and population growth were highly affecting the natural environment. More importantly, it undermines the long held practices of limitless economic growth and its relation with natural resources (Donella H. Meadows *et al*, 1972:195-196).

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that the then philosophers and non-philosophers raised a fundamental question on how our value systems, beliefs and practices are causing environmental crises. The problems that are identified “consist ... issues that require more than technical solutions” (Meadows *et al*, 1972:187) and this situation beseeches ethicist[s] to challenge and explore mainstream ethical theories and practices. This claim affirms that as we need science to understand the depth of the problem with its possible solutions, as we need economics to decide the least costly way of implementing the given solutions, we also need ethics to decide on what we ought to do. Andrew Kernohan writes, “good environmental policymaking rests, metaphorically, on three pillars .... We do not make final decisions about environmental policy just based on science and costs. We also consider fairness, justice, respect for rights, human flourishing, and even the flourishing of nonhuman entities and systems” (2012:3). Besides, the argument that the root causes of environmental crisis are philosophical in nature (Lynn White J.

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<sup>2</sup> I will use the term modern time in history in relation to philosophy that begins in the 17th century with the works of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) and of René Descartes (1596- 1650).

1967:1205 and Aldo Leopold, 1966: 237-239) gives the right to debate on the nature, causes and consequences of environmental crisis from broader philosophical perspectives.

Given this assumption, scholars from different perspectives argue for the need to reinvent our values and philosophical assumptions and make them friendly with the natural environment. For instance, Rolston argues that human beings should live in harmony with nature and thus, ecological ethics is needed that recognize the intrinsic value of the natural environment; thus an ecological ethics, which recognizes the intrinsic value of the natural environment, is needed (1988:xi). Leopold asserts that the causes of environmental crisis are philosophical. He emphasizes the need to have a “land ethic” which recognizes the values of non-human entities beyond human uses (1966:237). White’s paper on the “Historical Roots of Environmental Crisis” also concludes that in order to adopt a harmonious relationship with the natural environment, we need to revisit our metaphysical assumptions and religious roots of our ethical theories, for our ethical actions are deeply cultural and metaphysical (1967:1205, see also Ben A. Minter, 2009a:59).

This is enough reason to challenge the ancient discourses on ethics, which was considered to be philosophical inquiry, on the relationships between human beings alone. Instead, a contemporary study of ethics is characterized by its inclusiveness, i.e., it includes the non-human beings, future generation and the biosphere (Callicott, 2013:38). Since the study of ethics is directed to the study of what is a good, desirable and a justifiable life for human beings, since it is directed to improve the life of human beings by analyzing its relationship with fellow human beings and non-human beings, and since we are living in a shared world, it is thus reasonable to reflect on our ethical relationship that ought to exist between the natural environment and human beings. This I think constitutes the idea of environmental ethics. Environmental ethics, according to Workineh Kelbessa<sup>3</sup>, is a

... philosophical enquiry into the nature and justification of general claims relating to the environment. It is theory about appropriate concern for, values in and duties to the natural environment and about their application. It is concerned with what the people are committed to doing concerning the natural environment (2011:4).

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<sup>3</sup> I will use Ethiopian authors by their first name both in text and bibliography

From this we can understand three things. First, an idea of environmental ethics is groundbreaking in the sense that it radically breaks from the long held narratives of ethics and tries to extend ethics to encompass non-human entities. Second, environmental ethics is both theoretical, as it tries to understand the fundamental metaphysical assumptions that shape our ethical choices and actions towards the natural environment, and practical in the sense that environmental philosophers are required to participate in the ongoing environmental activism and environmental protection and are expected to impact upon national, regional and international environmental policies. Third, since it is very difficult to come up with a last solution for a *justifiable* relationship between human beings and the natural environment, environmental ethics contested different ideas and is plural in nature, ranging from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism. Rolston claims that “[w]e find representative spokesman for ecological morality not of a single mind” (1975:94). Thus, environmental ethics, being a diversified discourse, sets a task to look for a sound and a more harmonious relationship with the natural environment; studies ethical issues on the relationship between current and future generations, especially in the use of natural resources; tries to restore a healthy environment both for human and non-human animals; influences both national and international policy makings in the area of environment and development; systematically study the nature and causes of environmental crisis; and studies justice-related issues in the natural environment like environmental justice and land grabbing. This being the case, let me reflect on central debates in environmental ethics alongside their metaphysical basis.

## **2.2. Central Debates in Environmental Ethics**

### **2.2.1. Anthropocentrism<sup>4</sup> and Non-anthropocentrism**

The questions like whose interests count and why are the most gravely contested questions in the field of environmental ethics. Some environmentalists argue that only human interest counts morally. The proponents of this school of thought are called anthropocentrists. Some other groups of environmentalists challenge this view and claim that non-human entities also have a moral standing and the proponents of this school of thought are called non-anthropocentrists.

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<sup>4</sup> Anthropocentrism in philosophy could be understood in ontological, ethical and epistemological senses. As an ontological view it could mean the claim that the reality of “the whole transcends the reality of its constituent parts” (Michael P. Nelson, 2009:491) As an epistemological view it could mean that all values and knowledge are human values and knowledge (ibid). In this thesis I will use the ethical view of anthropocentrism.

Literally, anthropocentric ethics can be defined as human-centered ethics. According to anthropocentrism, “humans have a moral duty only towards one another; any duty they seem to have towards other species or entities is really only an indirect duty towards other people” (Yang, 2006:28).

It is from this judgment that most environmentalists hold that anthropocentrism is the cause of environmental crisis and in the 1980s the hallmark of the debate in environmental ethics was to reject anthropocentric world view. John Passmore’s denial of the need of non-anthropocentric ethics as “environmental “mystics” and “primitivists”” (Minteer, 2009:60) provoked environmentalists to rethink the merit of anthropocentric ethics and develop an alternative environmental ethics. In addition to its provocative claims, Passmore’s claim attests that environmental ethics is not synonymous with non-anthropocentrism (ibid).

Among many other efforts in refining anthropocentrism, Bryan Norton’s works seem notable. He distinguishes “felt” and “reasoned” preferences (cited in Eugene C. Hargrove, 2009:324). He argues that felt preference is ecologically irrational and not environmentally defensible and thus, ethically flawed. According to him, this kind of anthropocentric ethics is called strong anthropocentrism. Besides, he argues that any ethical theory that involves a critical reasoning to intervene towards the natural environment is logically defensible and ethically desirable. This kind of anthropocentrism is called “weak anthropocentrism” (cited in Ben Minteer, 2009:59 and 109). This approach in environmental ethics is considered by environmental philosophers as reconciliation “at the level of practical policies” (Workineh, 2011:200). Some “enlightened” or weak anthropocentrists acknowledge the intrinsic value of the natural environment. Unlike Bryan G. Norton (1991), Eugene Hargrove (1992) argues for intrinsic value of natural objects that are based on human value system. He bases his argument on nineteenth-century landscape painting and field naturalism. He argues that people ascribe intrinsic value to nature for they believe it is valuable or they judge it as beautiful or scientifically interesting. Not only this, but also weak anthropocentrism acknowledges interests of future generations and supports sustainable living (cited in Minteer, 2009:60; Behrens Kevin, 2011:39). This seems sensible in protecting the natural environmental at practical level.

However, some sections of environmental ethicists insist in rejecting this logic. Their logic has its root in White’s paper that claims environmental crisis as anthropogenic and caused by

anthropocentric ontological and ethical views. In addition to this, Eric Katz (1997) argues that the root cause of today's environmental crisis is motivated by anthropocentric view, i.e., both ethical and ontological anthropocentrism. Furthermore, he claims that "an anthropocentric worldview leads logically to the destruction of the nonhuman natural world" (quoted in Minter, 2009:61). These arguments suggest the necessity of rebuilding our value system and metaphysical assumption about nature and of ourselves anew. Hence, environmental philosophers try to build value systems that acknowledge the interests of non-human entities (Minter, 2009:60; Behrens, 2011:39).

Nonanthropocentric ethicists, whom I most prefer than anthropocentrism, claim that it is anthropocentrism that caused ecological calamity. The only way out from this tragic event is to avoid human-based ethics and go beyond the view that holds "nature as the stock for human needs and interests" to the view that nature is valuable in its own. In line with this, Richard Routley, (later on Sylvan) gravely attacks the ethics of anthropocentrism. In his famous article, "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?," he stresses the need for a new ethics that acknowledges the intrinsic value of natural objects. He also argues that traditional Western moral philosophy cannot give an adequate conceptual resource for intrinsic value of the non-human entities for it advocates "*basic (human) chauvinism* - because under it humans, or people, come first" (1973:207, emphasis in original). Rolston for his part suggests that "both anthropocentric and anthropogenic values have to come to an end before we can be the best persons. We have to discover intrinsic natural values" (Rolston, quoted in Minter, 2009:61).

### **2.2.2. Holism and Individualism in Environmental Ethics**

The question where final value lays on is an equally contested question as whose interests count and why. The answer to this question is fundamentally shaped by metaphysical assumptions. The term holism and individualism could mean different things in different philosophical discourses. It ranges from methodological to metaphysical holism and individualism. The concept of holism and individualism goes as far back as the age of philosophy itself (W. H. Dray, 2006:441-442). It is not the intention of this thesis to explain and deal with such historical and philosophical discourses. However, since my intention is to demonstrate how our perverted metaphysical assumptions have shaped our ethical actions and choices, I find it rational to clarify the metaphysical assumption of holism and individualism alongside their fundamental lines of



arguments. Hereunder, I critically evaluate the fundamental arguments of both environmental holism and individualism situating in modern Western metaphysical assumptions.

It is believed that modern Western philosophy characterized nature as an object to be studied and manipulated for unfettered growth of science and, also considered it as the “other” which is radically separated from the essence of human beings. This “other” is the negative form of human beings. This view about the natural environment is reinforced by atomistic, mechanistic and dualistic assumption about the natural world (Freya Mathews, 2002:1, Van Plumwood, 200:16).

Francis Bacon, who is considered to be the father of scientific method, epitomizes nature as a machine which should be controlled. In his book *The New Organon*, he claims that “[h]uman knowledge and human power come to the same thing, because ignorance of cause frustrates effect. For Nature is conquered only by obedience; and that which in thought is a cause, is like a rule in practice” (2003:33). Rene Descartes also considers nature as a machine or automata, and holds that human beings are totally separated from the natural world (2008:60). This view of nature, according to environmental philosophers, fundamentally shapes the way human beings understand the natural world and, their ethical choices and actions towards nature. Among other things, this dualistic view of nature creates hyper-separation between human beings and the natural environment.

In addition to this hyper-separationist metaphysical tradition, modern Western atomistic view of nature also promotes environmentally unfriendly view. Nature for atomists is an aggregate of different and independent atoms devoid of value and meaning. This view advanced the metaphysical assumption of disconnectedness of nature and, atoms are connected in causation alone and, thus, relatedness and interdependence are not the essence of the atoms. In relation to this, Mathews describes the essence of atoms as fundamentally determined by causal relation. She affirms that “atoms stand in causal relations to one another, but these relations are logically contingent, imposed from without; the atoms themselves could exist independently of such relations. Relatedness does not, in other words, belong to their essence” (1991:2). In relation to this, Mathews and Plumwood hold that this metaphysical assumption of nature leads human beings to develop a strong anthropocentric and mechanistic attitude towards the natural environment. Not only this, but also it furnishes a metaphysical base for individualistic ethics.

Joel Feinberg, in connection to this, claims that the cornerstone of individualistic tradition is the view that only individual beings are morally considerable in our interaction and, thus, are moral patients for which we have duties (1974:60-61). However, I am of the opinion that this view cannot be a base for environmental ethics—for both its metaphysical assumption and its practical implications.

Metaphysically, specifically in relation to the natural environment, I think, it is wrong to assume that the essence of the larger whole is defined by its parts, for the natural world evolved in history to make this complex process on which everything is interlinked with everything. Atomistic metaphysical assumption about nature reduces the natural environment to its parts which cannot represent the essence of the whole. This reductionist individualistic ethics concerning environment mostly fails to acknowledge the complex nature of environment. Besides, especially at policy implication, it is rare to find policy that isolate and protect individual things but the ecosystem at large. One may argue that we can have policies to protect endangered species, but a meaningful protection also needs to protect the ecosystem in which that endangered animal lives. Thus, it is logical to hold that individualistic environmental ethics cannot serve the purpose of environment and development-related policies.

As a result, most environmental philosophers hold that “we can return to a healthy relationship with nature only once we recognize that this attempt to separate ourselves is both fatuous and destructive” (Dale Jamieson, 2008:2-3). The idea of holism is advanced by scholars who are displeased by industrial culture and its isolationist ideology (Donald Worster, 1977:21). Worster, an environmental historian, presented holism as an idea that approaches all nature as a single indivisible unity (Worster, 1977:21).

In environmental ethics, ethical holism holds that not individual, but the whole matters morally. It assumes that the first law of ecology is that “everything is connected to everything else” (Barry Commoner, quoted in Jamieson, 2008:2-3) and, thus, it assigns moral significance to the whole above the individual. Leopold, a staunch defender of environmental holism, claims that the measure of right and wrong is dependent on how our moral choices and actions affect the ecosystem as a whole. He claims that something “is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community” and “is wrong when it tends otherwise” (Leopold, 1949:224-225, quoted in Eric T. Freyfogle, 2009:21). He further claims that human beings are

the plain citizens of this earth if they observe this rule. Following this, environmental holists hold a slogan that “human is the part of nature” (Jamieson, 2008:2-3). But, given human ingenuity, is it possible to make a human being a simple and a plain citizen of the earth?

However, a liberal dose of holism is appreciated by environmental thinkers. But, it is worth noting that there is an unsettled debate on what kind of holism is appropriate and it is becoming clear that there is no unanimous agreement among environmental philosophers on the extent and nature of holism (Simon Pual James, 2001:46-47). As a matter of fact, environmental holism receives criticism from different directions. The first group of criticism comes from environmentalists who believe that holism is short of affording intrinsic value and the second group holds that holism will not keep the promise of building a healthier environment and will fail to impact policy implications (ibid). For the sake of brevity, I will discuss only Callicott’s conception of holism and its critiques.

Callicott, following Leopold, argues that the measure of good and bad in environmental ethics should be based on whether something “tends to preserve the *integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community*” and “is wrong when it tends otherwise (Leopold, quoted in Freyfogle, 2009:2, emphasis added). So, all creatures are subordinated to this doctrine of ecological balance and stability. However, this ethical claim is problematic from biological point of view, for there is no clear notion of balance, and stability in ecological community. What does it mean to have a balanced ecological community? How many entities and to what ration is considered to be stable and balanced biotic community? These and other questions could not be addressed concretely. Epistemologically, I think, it is difficult to have a full picture of the working of balanced and stable ecosystem. What does it mean to have integrity in ecosystem? To what extent is an ecosystem called balanced? Such questions are not clear not only for philosophers but also for ecologists themselves.

The second problem of Callicott’s conception of holism is that it does not accommodate the interest of individual beings for it subordinates all individuals’ interests to the good of the whole. Paul W. Taylor (1985) accuses this version of holism as “environmental fascism”. In this conception of holism, the action, interests or values of individual beings including human beings as a whole are subordinate to the whole and, they are valuable as far as they preserve the stability of the whole. However, if the biotic community takes unconstrained priority, then this ethical

stand commits the same mistake as anthropocentrism. In this regard, it is only championing biotic community and disregards the interest of individual beings including the human community. Garret Hardin (2001) in his article “The Tragedy of the Commons” pronounces this issue. If the interest of human being comes into conflict with the biotic community, what do we do? Holism could answer that the biotic community come first as it is good to preserve the interests of the whole and individual interests have consideration as far as they preserve the interest of the whole. So, human rights could not be operational in this regard, which I think is one of the drawbacks of holism.

The third critique goes along with the second one. If our concept of holism could not accommodate the function of human rights, it is difficult for environmental policy makers to accept the notion of holism. Unless we approach holism in a new direction, even though there are positive aspects of holism, it is doomed to fail in addressing practical environmental concerns of this time. That is why I indicated in Chapter One that a sound environmental ethics should respect both the ecosystem at large and individual beings. I have a lot to say in Chapter Four, but for a time being I would like to comment that holism appears to me as colour blind in the sense that it did not acknowledge individual differences, interests and values. Its obsession for the whole makes it blind to see the undifferentiated plurality in the whole system.

### **2.3. The Ontological Status of Nature in Modern Western Philosophy**

It is beyond this thesis to give a full picture about modern Western ontological account of nature. However, I will try to give a brief analysis on how the modern Western philosophy has developed an impoverished concept of nature which most environmentalists consider as a cause of environmental crisis. As it has been clear in the above discussions, today’s environmental crisis could be considered as a symptom of the bigger problem, i.e., the problem of our perception and cultural practices. Thus, it appears logical to examine what went wrong with the Western modern conception of nature.

To start with, human epistemological history reminds us that we human beings do not remain passive to the regulations and workings of nature; rather we develop knowledge that enables us to understand the working of nature and master it if it is required so. Science, I think, could be considered as the study of these workings of nature and its laws. Our effort of understanding nature, however, is not passive, i.e., it is always with certain kind of mode. It is to mean that

science can be influenced and shaped by some historical, social and cultural aspects. This suggests that the way we perceive nature and its working can fundamentally shape our interaction with the natural environment. For instance, it can shape or influence our methodology. A culture which perceives nature as an aggregate of materials, and a culture which believes that nature has a spiritual value will certainly differ in their interests and ways of interacting with nature. This in turn suggests that our conception of nature plays a vital role in the development of science and our treatment of the natural environment (Sandra Harding, 1997:57-58). Following this reasoning, I am of the opinion that it is better to approach the ontological conception of nature in relation to the way science and technology treat nature. The reason I believe so is that this approach can give us a chance to see both the culture and the attitude that fundamentally shape the practice of Western culture in relation to the natural environment.

Richard T. De George (1994) discusses three Western conceptions of nature that are dominant in the development of modern Western science and technology. The first one is that nature is material that is opposed to spirit or mind. So, there is a nature/spirit dichotomy. As opposed to each other, nature is considered to be devoid of spirit, value and meaning. This is the presupposition of modern science that it is different from magic and spirit, i.e., science is supposed to be wholly dependent on observations and experimentations. If there is immaterial thing or spirit, it is beyond the sphere of science (De George, 1994:15).

This mechanistic<sup>5</sup> and material conception of nature, even though it goes back to ancient Greek philosophers, was popularized by modern philosophers like Descartes. As I have indicated above, Descartes advances the view that mind and body are two distinctive things which have nothing in common. This dualistic assumption considers nature as a thing whose essence is nothing, but extension and is devoid of spirit and value. This assumption on nature creates the “otherness” of nature as negative forms of the human self. Following this assumption, modern scientists try to reduce nature into a calculable “machine,” and to represent nature in one elegant and simple mathematical formula. This reduction of nature into machine gives birth to a reductionism that assumes nature as something that could be understood only in its parts, for it

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<sup>5</sup> One may argue that we need to be mechanistic before we pass to romanticism, but the point here that remain in the mechanistic worldview would be the worst possible way of understand nature.

holds that higher beings are nothing but composed of the lower one from which we can understand the whole reality (Michael P. Nelson, 2009:490).

This reductionist approach to nature provoked reactions from animism, romanticism and pantheism. Specifically, in the 1970s, materialist and mechanistic view came under attack from environmental philosophers. Not only a grave attack but also invoke scholars to question authority and credibility of modern science and technology. Plumwood describes modern science as an ambiguous term because she believes that as science helps us to understand the depth of environmental crisis, it also is contributing in producing environmental crisis (2002:37).

The second one is that nature is considered to be an object to the subject. This view creates subject/object dichotomy that fundamentally shapes the growth of modern science. This conception of nature leads to the view that nature is a resource to interrogate, manipulate and subdue for scientific and technological advancement. It is from this view that Western scientific practices desire to control nature. Human beings can control nature if they can understand the fundamental laws of nature. Since modern science considers nature as object to be studied, there is nothing wrong to manipulate nature to uncover its utterly dynamic nature. This desire for controlling nature might be justified for the reason that science has contributed a lot in making human life more comfortable and easy (De George, 1994:15-16). Still this claim recalls Plumwood's argument of science as an ambiguous word connoting two different and opposite meanings. Thus, it seems logical enough to claim that yes science could help us to make our lives comfortable but at what cost are we making our life comfortable? What does it mean to have a comfortable life for human beings? These questions might not be considered as central questions of this thesis but I think they are worthy questions that need to be understood if we need to understand the working of science and its impact on the natural environment. These questions at least help us to examine the practice of science in relation to ethics.

The third one is the dichotomy between fact and value. Modern Western science considers nature as value free and the results of scientific enterprises are fact. Even though many scientists are claiming that since science is a human enterprise, it could not be value free. But the point of modern science is that nature which is considered to be the object of science is value free and as such possesses no interest at all, and human beings have no ethical responsibility towards the natural environment (De George, 1994:16).

By now it must be clear that modern Western ontological thinking is inherently predominated by anthropocentric view. The problem in this conception of nature is twofold. The first one is related to its instrumental view of nature that inherently makes it anthropocentric. In anthropocentric ethics, what we consider as good is in relation to the wellbeing of human being. When we protect forests we are not protecting the forests as if they deserve our protection but, we are protecting the interest of human beings. Accordingly to this view, whatever that protects the interest of human beings is morally acceptable. However, it should be noted that what is good for human beings cannot be good for the ecosystem and in the contemporary study of ethics it is not morally definable to the claim that human interest is the measure of everything.

The second problem with this conception of nature is that even though we extend ethics to incorporate the interests of non-human beings, since we are extending human ethics to nonhuman beings, our ethics will be narrow. This means that whatever we think, whatever we feel and whatever we measure at the end it could not be others' feeling, but a human feeling, a human thinking and a human measure. As a result, we consider everything about animals and other natural entities from a human interest that implies that we measure every activity through human interest alone. Callicott argues that if we fail to come up with a new ethic, environmental ethics will be nothing, but the application of human ethics to non-human beings (1995:2).

This shows us that there is a need to radically break from this worldview, and necessitate the production of counter metaphysical assumptions that could include a non-instrumental value of non-human beings. De George considers Tom Regan as environmental ethicist who advocates animal right; Leopold who advances a "land ethic" and Christopher Stone who argues that even trees should have a standing as a "counter-culture" (1994:22). Radical ecologists suggest that a paradigm shift is an imperative to have a sound ecology that is not only limited in changing the assumptions about nature and extending ethics to cover the natural environment, but also a cultural revolution in the West. According to Plumwood,

[t]aking account of the role and history of human/nature dualism in dominant culture means then that change is not just a matter of adding to our stock of knowledge a 'new' area of scientific ecology, but *is also a matter of changing culture* by countering long-standing insensitivities and rationalist distortions in a wide range of areas, including knowledge itself (2002:10, emphasis added).

Following this, as I have argued in chapter one, our environmental ethics could be sound, meaningful and complete not only by extending our ethical values to cover non-human beings, but it should also be accompanied by cultural change, i.e., ecological culture, that can serve the practical needs of both human beings and non-human beings. Thus, in the following section, I will dwell on the cultures that I think reinforce anthropocentric ethics. This analysis can help us to rebuild counter cultural practices that are environmentally-friendly.

#### **2.4. Ecological Crisis and Modern Culture of Reason**

I think that the lingering effect and the continuity of environmental crisis in our period is not because of lack of scientific and technological advancement and economic and political adjustment. I think it is due to the fact that humanity is failing to revisit what went wrong in the modern period where environmental crisis reaches at its climax. Nowadays, there are a number of technologies which are “power efficient” and are so called “environmentally-friendly” in terms of power production which are dependent on sun rays and wind, but if we are using this power efficient technology to manipulate more, we totally miss the question of the environment. Unless we dare to rethink and be critical about the pillar of our civilization and if we believe that they are unchangeable, then I am of the opinion that change will never happen in our ecological culture and the continuity of any life form on earth will be problematic. Modern Western values that I have described as inherently anthropocentric can only fit to the attitude of domination and manipulation of the natural environment that resulted in ecological calamity.

Currently, it is becoming common among environmentalists to acknowledge the problem of this assumption, and there are attempts to establish a new counter-cultural practice and metaphysical assumption. As I have tried to indicate above, the root of the environmental crisis is closely related to ethics and scholars argue for this cause and suggest a paradigm shift in our ethics and conception of nature. Here let me invoke Rolston’s argument that an ethics of nature is needed that is concerned not only with the welfare of humankind, but also of all other things, including the environment. This suggests that environmental crisis is not a simple political, economic, and technological problem; rather it is the crisis of worldview and values. As I tried to argue above, our ethical and religious roots are more fundamental, touching the deep level of our actions and choices. Thus, what we need as lasting solutions should incorporate a paradigm shift in our



ethical assumptions and practice, and change in our conception of nature that includes cultural change.

Given the limitation of this thesis, I am afraid to represent what modern Western culture looks like. But in order to meet my objectives of looking into the main premises of modern culture alongside its metaphysical assumption, I would like to focus on the philosophy of Descartes and the establishment of culture of reason and “Othering” process that considers “Others” as the negative form of the rational “I”. When we see modern culture of reason, it is associated with the beginning of modern philosophy and scientific advancement (Plumwood, 2002:144:1994:104; Enrique Dussel, 1996:20). Philosophy of liberation writers argue that the advent of modern times began with the conception of “I conquer therefore I am” that makes the European self at the center and other as the negative of the European self (Dussel, 1996:51). The center of the debate in modern philosophy was the concept of “I” and its dialectical relationship with the “Others”. Perhaps there are a number of attributes for the dichotomy of the “I” and the “Other” but, it could be said that the “I” is the knower and the other is subjected and determined by the “I”. In political discourse, the “I” could be understood as a civilizer and the “Other” could be understood as primitive. Generally speaking, in this discourse the “Other” is understood as the negative of the “I”. This dichotomization of the “I” and the “Other” is notably enforced by Descartes (Dussel, 1996:20). It is not my intention to look deep at the political and epistemological aspect of Cartesian philosophy; it is rather to look at how the modern “Self” or the “I” is shaped by modern philosophy and uncover some ethical dilemmas on the hyper-separation of human beings and the natural environment.

In his attempt to formulate a philosophical ground for the development of modern science through methodic doubt, Descartes starts with the question of what could be known clearly and distinctively. The only emancipatory power from the long held false belief, opinion and dogma is reason and, certainty is possible through rational thinking alone that sets the “cogito” free. This method puts the “I” at the heart of modern philosophy. Unlike traditional philosophers, mind is active and the outside world should correspond to categories and concepts in our mind. This attempt is characterized as a “shift to the subject” which is highly advanced by Immanuel Kant that is considered to be “Copernican revolution” in history of philosophy (William J. Recharson, 2003:321-323). The central thesis of “shift to the subject” is that the human intellect is the

sources of knowledge and is the one which verifies human knowledge. This thesis strengthens the metaphysics of representation. I will address the logical defects of this thesis, in particular how it fails to address the true essence of other beings, in the next chapter where I argue alongside Martin Heidegger (1992) that unless we “step-back” from this tradition and let things be as they are by themselves, we will fail to understand the Being-question.

According to Descartes, true knowledge and the knowledge of ontological existence of the “I” is wholly dependent on human intellect. In his second Meditation, Descartes argues that the only indubitable truth is his intellectual activity that even an extravagant skeptic could not deny. He concludes that “having weighed all these considerations sufficiently and more than sufficiently, I can finally decide that this proposition, ‘I am, I exist’, whenever it is uttered by me, or conceived in the mind, is necessarily true” (Descartes, 2008:18). It follows that, the essence of the “I” is thinking. Moreover, by using the wax argument he intended to determine the essence of material objects including his body, and concluded that the essence of body and other things which are outside of the “I” is to be extended (2008:22).

I think that this conceptual resource on the ontological difference between the “I” and “Other” give birth to modern culture of reason, dualistic metaphysical assumption (I could say hyper-separation) and anthropocentric ecological culture. This nurtures the belief that the essence of human being is to reason and this essence makes human being unique, not only unique but also licensed human beings to dominate others which are considered to be the negative form of the human “Self”. Even epistemologically the “I” is more known than the “Other”, and the “Other” which is outside of the thinking substance has no values and meaning by its own— “the Other” is considered as something mechanical that could be known and be controlled by the thinking substance. Analogously, this metaphysical assumption, as I have claimed earlier, licensed the human “Self” to manipulate, subdue and control nature which is considered as an “Other.” This in turn allows the human “Self” to consider the natural environment as the object for the thinking subject which could be known and controlled. This polarization of human being and nature provides the logic of justification for domination of nature, and a mechanistic conception of nature. Descartes further argues:

[t]here exist no occult forces in stones or plants. There are no amazing or marvellous sympathies or antipathies, in fact there exists nothing in the whole of

nature which cannot be explained in terms of purely corporeal causes totally devoid of mind and thought (quoted in Plumwood, 1993:104).

By this, modern culture of reason develops the concept of “Other” as the negative of the “I”. This alienated human being from the natural environment. In relation to ethics, it plays a central role in developing reductive narratives about nature that creates an illusion to develop a dominant human-centered ethics (Plumwood, 2002:12). It is reductionist in two senses that, first, it tries to exclude the possibility of other essence and involve false bifurcation of everything in the world into mind (a thinking substance) and body (corporeal substance), and that, second, it reduces the whole nature as it could be understood by the intellect as an extended substance and be represented by a simple mathematical equation as machine. Its contrast of the “I” and the “other” as “consciousness” and “automata” polarizes the essence of the “I” and the “other” as a negative to each other with no inter-connection with each other. From this, it follows that, “I” which is ontologically superior than the “Other” has a capacity and right to dominate “Other” and treat nature as a warehouse for its desires and unfettered scientific advancement.

This metaphysical tradition of the West provoked environmental philosophers to build alternative metaphysical and cultural practices that could serve as an alternative metaphysical tradition. For instance, Plumwood argues for the need to establish a new ecological culture and proposes a counter-cultural practice against reason-centered dualistic metaphysical assumption and anthropocentric ecological ethics and culture. She believes that the ontology of separation and an impulse to conquer and dominate define Western culture of reason that bequeathed us with today’s multidimensional problems. She proposes that we have to restructure the reason-centered<sup>6</sup> culture that was blinded by economic rationality and human interest. She claims that:

[o]ur current debacle is the fruit of a human- and reason-centered culture that is at least a couple of millennia old, whose contrived blindness to ecological relationships is the fundamental condition underlying our destructive and insensitive technology and behavior. To counter these factors, we need a deep and

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<sup>6</sup> By reason-centered culture she is referring to the dualistic metaphysical assumption like man/ woman, man/nature reason/emotion and many other variants of this false dichotomy. In relation to the natural environment, this culture that tries to separate human being from the natural environment and advocate the ontology of separation. Her aim is to attack rationalist hyper-separation of human identity from nature, not of reason and rationality.

comprehensive restructuring of culture that rethinks and reworks human locations and relations to nature all the way down (2002:8).

This culture conceptually reduces the ontological status of nature in order to dominate and manipulate it. More importantly, this Western culture fails to see the natural environment in an ethically sound way and as a result it allows human beings to use the natural environment for their limitless desire for growth. I think that it is such a failure to recognize the values and meanings of the natural environment that “distort our perceptions and enframings, impoverish our relations and make us insensitive to dependencies and interconnections – which are thus in turn a prudential hazard” (Plumwood, 2002:9). Thus, it is safe to conclude that today’s ecological crisis is a crisis of perception that is fundamentally shaped by this dualistic metaphysical assumption and mechanistic conception of nature. This, I think, requires us to abandon modern Western conceptions of nature and of human beings, and to search for an alternative approach of understanding the essence of human beings and its place in the natural environment. This means abandoning anthropocentrism with its instrumental value system, mechanistic conception of nature, human superiority and subjugation of nature and the hyper-separation of human being and the natural environment. Thus, this counter-ontological and cultural alternative should include non-instrumental value of the non-human beings in holistic metaphysical assumption.

To summarize what we discussed so far, environmental crisis is not a simple physical crisis that can be addressed with economic, political and technological fix; rather by its very nature environmental crisis involves a crisis in our perceptions, i.e., silent crisis. The solution to this crisis is not out there but it is in our thinking system. So, a complete and meaningful solution to environmental crisis should involve a change in the way we perceive the natural environment and our place in it. This requires a shift from oblivion to the question of being to remembering the question of being; from control-obsessed-technology to technology that saves the earth; from metaphysics of representation to metaphysics of presentation. The next step in my argument will therefore be to suggest both ontological and technological thinking that would support this argument. In order to do this, I will bring Heidegger as a critic and alternative to modern Western metaphysical tradition. Besides, in the next chapter I will explore how Heidegger’s ontological thinking and philosophy of technology can help us in our effort of building a sound environmental thinking.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HEIDEGGER'S PHILOSOPHY AND HIS CRITIQUES ON WESTERN MODERN PHILOSOPHY

Having examined environmental ethics in the wider perspective of modern Western metaphysical tradition in chapter two, in this chapter I seek to develop an alternative metaphysical assumption and conception of technology that could provide an alternative ontological and technological base to articulate sound environmental ethics. Throughout the development of philosophical discourses in environmental ethics, the ontological status of both human beings and the natural environment occupy the central debate, for the reason that it is from this ontological status that we derive our ethical commitments. This is reason enough to deal with the ontological status of nature and of human beings in developing a sound environmental ethics. My overarching objective in this chapter is to demonstrate how both Martin Heidegger's ontological and technological thinking are good enough to furnish a sound environmental ethics. This chapter is designed partly as a background to the next chapter and partly to show how contemporary discourse in environmental ethics could benefit from Heidegger's works. The upshot of this chapter is to demonstrate the full picture of environmental crisis that is located in Western metaphysical tradition by using Heidegger's philosophical works and argue that Heidegger's project in ontology and philosophy of technology could be used as a ground to develop a sound environmental ethics.

#### 3.1. Heidegger and Western Modern Philosophy

Undoubtedly one of the most important philosophers in Western philosophical tradition is Heidegger. He sets a task for himself to reawaken the question of being that he believes that Western civilization forgot it since the time of Plato. The primary intention in his philosophical works is to discover how human beings lost a touch with the question of being that leads to the ontological decline of Western civilization and to deal with it concretely (Heidegger, 1962:19). The greatness of his work, I think, lies in his enduring concern to the oldest and the newest philosophical question: what does it mean to be? At the beginning of his *magnum opus*, Being and Time (originally written in 1927), he writes "Do we in our time have an answer to the question of what we really mean by the word 'being'? Not at all. ... Our aim ... is to work out the question of being and to do so concretely" (Heidegger, 1962:19). This oblivion to the

question of being has practical implications including ecological devastation. Before I discuss his ontological thinking and his conception of technology that have a direct relevance to my thesis, let me take a moment to outline his main arguments against modern Western philosophy.

## **3.2. Heidegger and the Discontent of Modern Western Philosophy**

### **3.2.1. The Advent of Modern Philosophy and World-as-Picture**

For the sake of brevity, I will try to discuss the major premise of modern philosophy that leads to the development of anthropocentric ethics and it must be clear from the outset that a single explanation on the transition and advent of modern philosophy is bound to be incomplete. Having this in mind, the history of philosophy shows us that the advent of modern philosophy is associated with the liberation of human beings from self-inquired tutelage. Modern human being<sup>7</sup> in this regard liberates itself by him/herself and made him/herself the center of the universe (William J. Richardson, 2003:321). This suggests that the advent of modern philosophy brings the end of theocentric world view and espouses anthropocentric world view. Hence, the advent of modern philosophy can be understood as a shift from considering human being as one among many other creatures to considering human being as a reference point not only of him/herself but also the being of other beings. In modern philosophy, not God but human beings fundamentally determine their own truth and the truth of other beings (Richardson, 2003:326).

Heidegger claims that “[t]he fundamental movement of modern times consists in conquering the world-as-picture...” (quoted in Richardson, 2003:326). The advent of modern philosophy can be found on the conception that the world is an aggregate of beings which can be represented and interpreted by human beings like a picture. This suggests that without human beings, the world has no meanings and values. This makes the natural environment to become the victim of human calculations and designs. Scientific researches which are at the matrix of this conception of the world-as-picture reduce nature into its quantitative aspect alone. These reductive scientific researches along with their metaphysical assumption about the natural environment give “the drive of technicity, whose origin may be found in Descartes” (Richardson, 2003:326). That is why Heidegger and other philosophers believe that “‘humanism’ comes in the wake of the new subject-ism” (quoted in Richardson, 2003:326). More importantly, this conception of world-as-

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<sup>7</sup> By modern human being I understand human being who began to conceive his/herself with the advent of modern philosophy that starts from the time of Rene Descartes.

picture resulted in the gradual self-concealment of the question of being. This is reason enough for Heidegger to refuse to read Western history as the history of progress, but as a gradual ontological decline that resulted in the oblivion of the question of being and decline in the “historical-spiritual world” of the West (Michael E. Zimmerman, 2001:1).

Heidegger comments that the blindness of the West to the question of being resulted not only to have a wrong ontological understanding about itself, but also to the destruction of the natural environment and of itself. He claims:

[t]he spiritual decline of the earth has progressed so far that peoples are in danger of losing their last spiritual strength, the strength that makes it possible even to see the decline [which is meant in relation to the fate of “Being”] and to appraise it as such ... or *the darkening of the world, the flight of the gods, the destruction of the earth, the reduction of human beings to a mass*, ... (Heidegger, 2000:40, emphasis added).

From this, it can be said that the blindness of modern Western philosophical tradition to the very question of being has caused the darkening of the world that we no longer know our being and the essence of other beings. The cause for this, Heidegger argues, is an excessive lust of controlling everything under the guise of self-liberation that blinded Dasein<sup>8</sup> not to play its noble and proper role of unconcealing its own being and the being of other beings. Heidegger, therefore, claims that in the modern world “all things sank to the same level, to a surface resembling a blind mirror that no longer mirrors, that casts nothing back” (2000:48). This for Heidegger is one manifestation of the ontological decline of the West.

### **3.2.2. Loss of Gods and Disenchantment of the World**

By now it must be clear that with the advent of modern philosophy, the world becomes disenchanted. In other words, the world has no more spiritual values and meanings apart from human needs and wants. As I have tried to show above, what consists the underlining premises that differentiate the medieval philosophy from modern philosophy is that in the latter human beings become the center of everything according to which things have meaning and value, i.e.,

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<sup>8</sup> Dasein” is a German word that could literally be translated as Being-there. I will briefly explain this under the ontological structure of Dasein

the measure of everything is not God, rather it is human being<sup>9</sup>. In this shift, modern human beings become disembodied from the horizons of social-cultural values. It is this aspect of modern philosophy that Heidegger characterized as a flight of gods from which human beings already liberated themselves from their medieval forefathers. This resulted in disenchantment of the world that human beings no longer find meanings and values from the natural world. This disenchantment of the world reduces the essence of the natural environment to a simple aggregate of materials whose essence can be understood in mathematical expressions, i.e., in its quantifiable aspect alone—no qualitative aspect of the natural environment is the interest of modern human being (Zimmerman, 2001:1; Richardson, 2003:327).

### **3.2.3. “Productionist-Rationalist” Metaphysics**

The ever-increasing tendency to view and understand the world-as-picture creates an “impression ... that everything man encounters exists only in so far as it is his construct. This illusion gives rise in turn to one final delusion: It seems as though man everywhere and always encounters only himself” (Heidegger, 1977:27). Besides, this illusion leads to the logic that nature is “valueless” and consequently makes nature to be the victim of human being’s unfettered economic, scientific and technological growth that leads to ecological crime. Once modern Western philosophy espouses the idea that nature is out there to be conquered, the modern human being got a justification for its crimes against the natural environment. In line with this, Zimmerman argues that this conception creates “productionist-rationalist metaphysics” which considers everything including human being as raw materials for the development of science and technology that are used as a weapon to dominate the natural environment. This metaphysical outlook “reduced modern Dasein to the world-conquering laborer” (Zimmerman, 2001:6).

### **3.2.4. Modernity’s The “I Conquer” Thesis**

Heidegger’s critiques of modernity and modern philosophy are based on his evaluation of how and why modern philosophy leads to the oblivion of the question of being, and how this self-withdrawal of Dasein from the question of being fundamentally shapes the metaphysical outlook of that age. As I have tried to discuss above, the decline of the West for Heidegger is associated

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<sup>9</sup> This is to mean that the sources and justification of epistemic enterprise is not more God, but human beings.



with loss of gods and disenchantment of the world, “productionist-rationalist metaphysics” and reductionist metaphysics. Must we not infer, then, that the philosophical thoughts of Western civilization already furnished the hierarchical relationship between the “I” of the human “Self” and the “Others” on which the human “I” is on the top? Certainly yes!

The self-liberation of modern human being from the grand-narratives of medieval philosophy and Aristotelian scholastic traditions come with its grave consequences on politics, ethics and on the way modern human beings value “Others”. That is why environmental thinkers could easily find the fundamental premises of modern Western philosophy as fundamentally destructive, especially of the natural environment. One of the faulty lines of reasoning in modern philosophy is associated with its thesis of “ego conquer” (Enrique Dussel, 1996:20). This fundamental assumption of Western narrative tries to build a hierarchical relationship that puts the European “Self” at the center of everything. As Dussel tries to argue, the dominating mentality of the “European man” started with the “ego conquer” thesis that preceded the *cogito ergo sum* argument of Descartes that separates human beings from other beings. He claims that “the ‘I’, which begins with the ‘I conquer’ of Hernan Cortes or Pizarro, which in fact precedes the Cartesian *ego cogito* by about a century, produces Indian genocide, African slavery, and Asian colonial wars” (Dussel, 1996:20, emphasis in original). It is not my intention in this thesis to look at the political discourse of the “I” and the “Other”, but how this thesis presents the logic of justification for the ultimate offense of modern human beings against the natural environment.

This thesis of modernity is furnished by modern philosophy’s emphasis on the *uniqueness* of human beings as rational animals. At this point, it is worthwhile to recall Descartes’ role of furnishing the hyper-separation of human being, that is, the “I” and the “Others” including the human body and all other beings. Philosophically, in chapter two, I tried to show how the “I”, that is rational, is prior to other beings which are non-rational. This hyper-separation and false bifurcation of beings into the “I” and the “Others” has environmental implication that a human being who is completely detached from the natural environment got a right and an ability to conquer the natural environment. Put differently, it is possible to argue that due to this logic of bifurcation and hierarchical relationship between the “I” and the “Others”, modern Western philosophical tradition furnished and provided logic of justification for all kinds of domination including the domination and manipulation of the natural environment by human beings.

### 3.3. Heidegger's Critiques of Early Version of Cartesian Metaphysics and the Ontological Status of Nature

Cartesian metaphysics tries to describe the ontological nature of everything based on “some type of occurrent entity that is taken to be directly intelligible” (Hubert Dreyfus, 1991:108). The fundamental ontology of Descartes lies in the relationship between a subject (“*res cogitans*”) and objects (“*res extensa*”). According to Descartes, the ultimate building blocks of the universe are those substances that could be understood by natural science. The natural environment for modern philosophers including Descartes is a simple aggregate of materials that could be understood arithmetically. Due to this, a modern human being becomes the prisoner of the law-like or rule-like understanding of the world (Dreyfus, 1991:108). The pragmatist believes that science works and thus there is no wrong with this understanding of the natural environment. But, the problem with such pragmatic belief is that to restrict human understandings in this way alone is to be blinded by our philosophical conceptions, for we are only contemplating what Heidegger calls “occurrent” nature. So, Heidegger’s critique of Descartes’s project is based on the way Descartes tries to understand and explain everything based on the law-like ontological understanding of human beings and of the natural environment.

At this point we must be clear that Heidegger does not want to deny that our first encounter with nature is equipmental<sup>10</sup>. For instance, our first experience of forest is a potential timber and hammer is for hammering. This primordial understanding of the world is a necessary aspect of human understanding. However, putting human understanding under the chain of this understanding alone, according to Heidegger, is “monstrous” (1977:16). And this is what the Cartesian metaphysics understood the word “natural”.

For Heidegger “[n]ature is itself a being which is encountered within the world and is discoverable on various paths and stages” (1996:60). In contrast to Cartesian naturalistic ontology, Heidegger ponders at least four ways of nature. The first one is that “[n]ature shows up as available” on which nature appears as what Descartes described it as something to be extended which could be understood mathematically. The second one is that nature could be “unavailable” meaning that nature escapes from the study of nature-as-such and become inaccessible and unavailable and sometimes it can become a threat to our “equipmental nexus”

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<sup>10</sup> By the word equipmental Heidegger wants to claim material oriented perception and activity.

(Dreyfus, 1991:11). The third one is that nature appears as “occurrent” on which nature appears as a pure presence-at-hand. Heidegger claims that “[i]f its kind of Being as ready-to-hand is disregarded, this ‘Nature’ itself can be discovered and defined simply in its pure presence-at-hand. But when this happens, the Nature which ‘stirs and strives’, which assails us and enthralls us as landscape, remains hidden” (Heidegger, 1962:100). So that we theorize about nature and we form different theories in natural science. However, our theories are “not passive contemplation but rather in a specific mode of concern” (Dreyfus, 1991:111). The fourth one is that Heidegger tries to show that way of being of nature, which the Greeks experienced as *physis* and which we still sometimes experience in a non-instrumental and yet non-contemplative relation to things (Dreyfus, 1991:112).

### **3.4. Modern Scientific Reductionism and One-eyed Technology**

Let me reiterate the above quotation that any scientific study is “not passive contemplation but rather in a specific mode of concern”. This “mode” of concern in modern science is shaped in certain methodology of study. Thus, modern natural science becomes interested in studying nature-as-such but not nature-as-it-is, for it tries to delineate only the calculable aspect of the natural environment. Consequently, natural science, which is developed under the naturalistic ontological understanding of nature, tries to understand the natural environment in some dominant and pre-established methodological lenses.

It is agreeable to say that natural science can tell us what works “what”, but not what the essence of a thing in question is. Natural science does this in naturalistic conception of nature that regards nature as available. It seems, therefore, sensible to argue that natural science once it is blinded by its methodology of representative metaphysics, it will never even try to understand nature-as-it-is at least phenomenological. And I am of the opinion that the validity of scientific thinking should not depend on whether it tries to understand nature-as-it-is; we must be critical of the foundations of that particular science from which it derives its basic assumptions, especially if we are interested in its implication to environmental ethics.

Once Descartes holds that the essence of the body and thing outside of the “I” is “to be extended”. He claims that the knowledge about the natural environment and other extended objects is possible only through measurements. Following this, modern natural science tries to understand the what-ness of nature in terms of its physical phenomena and develops its

methodology accordingly. If so, scientific study of nature is the study of “occurrent” nature. Accordingly, Heidegger contends that this natural science can only explain the working of available nature, and this is of course the poverty of natural science. Due to this, then, Heidegger claims that modern natural science is “utterly incapable of gaining access to that which is not to be gotten around holding sway in their essence” (1977:177). He further claims that the self-understanding of natural science about nature-as-such is mistaken, for its theories and assertions are fundamentally dependent on methodologies that ignore the possibility and existence of nature-as-it-is. This methodological decision only understands the measurable aspect of nature. Thus, modern natural science is based on some descriptive projection about “what is-in nature”, something that is calculable, and as a result it rests upon some “fixed ground plan” for its discoveries (Heidegger, 1977:118).

### **3.4.1. The Essence of Modern Technology**

Heidegger’s critiques on modernity project of disenchantment of the world and modern technoculture is based on the question of the “essence<sup>11</sup>” of technology. When we ask “the essence of technology” we are asking “what the thing is” (Heidegger, 1977:4). It is in this sense of essence that Heidegger sets a task for himself to examine the essence of modern technology.

Heidegger begins with the claim that “technology” and “essence of technology” are not identical. According to him, in modern understanding of technology, when we ask the question what is the essence of technology we can possibly have two answers. The first one is technology is “a means to an end ... [and the second one is] technology is a human activity” (Heidegger, 1977:4). These understandings of technology are inseparable. For example when we produce a computer, we intend to use it for our specific purposes, the technology of computer. At the same time, the process of production that is a human activity, which is the means, is also called technology. So the manufactured and the manufacturing, the means and the end are considered to be technology. This modern conception of technology is utterly “*instrumental and anthropological*” (Heidegger, 1977:5, emphasis added). This understanding of technology is “uncannily correct” (ibid) in the sense that in the modern world we are using technology to make things simple and accessible,

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<sup>11</sup> The question of the essence of thing is one of Heidegger’s central tasks throughout his philosophical career. “Essence” is the “ground” that “enables” things to be seen as they are. Being is the essence of beings in the sense that it makes them to be as they are or to be understood by themselves. Heidegger holds that “essence” of things holds the underlying ground of something (Julian Young, 2001:37).

but this conception of technology does not allow us to have a free relationship with the Being-question and thus is not true. Besides, this understanding of technology could not help us to understand the essence of technology (ibid). For Heidegger technology is not only manufacturing and utilization of equipment. So, what else could it be?

To answer this question Heidegger makes a long etymological analysis on the meaning of technology. He brings Greek words like *aletheia* (reveal), *physis* (the arising of something from out of itself), and *Technikon* and Romans word *veritas* for *aletheia* to demonstrate that the true meaning of technology is not manipulating the natural environment and manufacturing instruments. The word technology comes from a Greek word *technikon* which belongs to *techne*. “*Techne* belongs to bringing-forth” (1977:12). The word *techne* is also associated with *episteme*. Both words mean “to be entirely at home in something, to understand and be expert in it. Such knowing provides an opening up” (1977:13). Inferring from this, Heidegger claims that “[t]echnology is therefore no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing” (1977:12). So technology is a mode of revealing where the concealed beings come to un-concealment and *aletheia* happens.

However, due to language confusion and forgetfulness of human being to the Being-question, modern human beings understand technology as a human activity for human ends. Heidegger claims,

[e]verywhere we remain unfree and chained to technology, whether we passionately affirm or deny it. *But we are delivered over to it in the worst possible way, when we regard it as something neutral;* for this conception of it, to which today we particularly like to do homage, makes us utterly blind to the essence of technology (1977:4, emphasis add).

From this, we can understand that the way we conceive the essence of technology as a mere instrument of production resulted in concealment and denial of the essence of technology as way of revealing. Heidegger uses concepts like “challenging-forth” and “enframing” to criticize the practice and the essence of modern technology.

Since modern technology’s prime intention is a maximum production at a minimum cost, it tries to manipulate and put unreasonable demand on the natural environment. Modern technology,

like modern natural science, is interested in measurable and calculable aspect of the natural environment and conceives the natural environment as a raw material for human ends. In addition to this, modern technology also “challenges” the natural environment. It is to mean that it did not allow nature to present itself as it is: it rather forced nature to manifest itself as other than it *is*, i.e., as something that could be controlled and commanded by human being at any place and time. To concretize this argument, Heidegger tries to compare a farmer who uses the land to provide him/her a crop with a modern energy production like coal mining and hydroelectric power. The farmer does not challenge the land; he/she rather lets the land to nurture something and does not irresponsibly intervene in the process by which the farming land could reveal itself. But, modern technology “challenges” this land and the latter’s way of revealing is “setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth” (Heidegger, 1977:16). It establishes some prescriptive rules that put nature at human command. This “challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew” (Heidegger, 1977:16).

This challenging did not come to an end even after all these nature’s ways of revealing are challenged. Modern technology wants to secure that everything is under secure regulation “through regulating their courses...[and] everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately at hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering” (Heidegger, 1977:16-17). Heidegger calls this standing by of nature to human ends as “standing-reserve”. Standing-reserve is not simply like what anthropocentric environmental philosophers call “nature as a warehouse or stock” for human ends. It connotes more than this to mean that if something is a standing-reserve, it will never stand against someone as an object because it is under control. But, we have to note that nature in any time evidently could withdraw from the pre-established setting-upon and show its other sides which sometimes are beyond human imagination.

By this challenged-revealing, modern technology reveals the natural environment as a mere instrument that could be controlled and regulated by human will. This kind of technological attitude reduces everything, including a human being itself to its instrumental value and measurable character. The current talk about human resources, about the supply of patients for a

clinic, gives evidence of this (Heidegger, 1977:18). By this, modern technology not only orders, dominates and challenges the being of the natural environment, but also the being of human being. By challenging-forth, modern technology reveals the real as something standing-reserve. This smoothly leads us to the second character of modern technology, “enframing”.

Enframing (*Ge-stell*) like challenging-forth is a mode of revealing the standing-reserve as real. The original German word *Gestell* is to mean “frame”, “rack”, “shelf” or “stand”. But Heidegger uses this word as something different from this common understanding of the word *Gestell*. He uses the word *Ge-stell* to mean to set a frame or framing-up something (Young, 2001:44). It is like the thinking cup. So, when we consider at the first glance modern technology as enframing, it seems a human action like designing, enveloping, shaping and encoding, although it is in reality beyond human actions, designates a horizon of disclosures, and its meaning coincides with metaphysics or ontology. Heidegger claims that enframing is,

...the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological (Heidegger, 1977:20).

What is implicit in this quote is that enframing, as a mode of revealing or as a horizon of disclosure, reveals nature as something *Bestand*, a German word to mean “stock” or “supply” (Young, 2001:44). Accordingly, in modern technology “the real reveals itself as a standing-reserve” (Heidegger, 1977:23). It is to mean that the metaphysics of modern technology holds that to be is to be useful or to be is nothing but to be an item of production or resource for productive activity (Young, 2001:49).

This kind of horizon of disclosure, which reveals things everywhere as a standing-reserve under a firm controlled setting-upon, according to Heidegger, has two “supreme dangers.” The first one is that enframing as a changing-forth is “ordaining of destining” (1977:24). What Heidegger is claiming is that modern technology through its enframing wants to decide what things will become in the future. If the technological world represents the real as a standing-reserve, if this standing reserve does not allow us to un-conceal or disclose the true essence of things around us, and if it creates an illusion as if we completely understand the

working of nature, then humanity becomes blind about the true essence of things and even fails to understand this perception that something is real when it serves the interest of human beings. This is not only an arrogance but “... man, ... , exalts himself to the posture of lord of the earth” (1977:27). Besides, human being him/herself will be considered as a resource that “...,[if]man in the midst of objectlessness is nothing but the orderer of the standing-reserve, then he comes to the very brink of it precipitous fall; that is, he comes to the point where he himself will have to be taken as standing-reserve” (1977:26-27).

The second grave danger of enframing is that it eliminates all other forms of revealing and declares that it is the only way of revealing (Heidegger, 1977:27). As I have tried to show in the above discussion, enframing involves ordering and revealing the real as a standing-reserve, i.e., as something that is under a firm command and a rigorous setting-upon, and as a result it does not allow things to present their true essences. Modern technological attitude holds that this is the only way of revealing the truth of these changed-forth things, both the natural environment and of human being him/herself. This tenacity of technology puts the orderer and the ordered in constant conflict. In other words, enframing puts human beings and other human being, human being and the natural environment and human beings with their own beings as an antithetic to each other (1997:27). Furthermore, this mode of revealing “... threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth” (Heidegger, 1977:27).

Logically, the solution for these grave dangers lies in letting things to be. As it is clear from the above discussion, the danger is that modern technology resulted in one-dimensional human being. More importantly, modern technology resulted in the oblivion to the question of being that created “homeless” and aimless human beings (David Cooper, 1996:65, cited in Rory Edward Fairweather, 2012:56). By homelessness Heidegger wants to indicate that the modern human being lost touch with the question of his/her being and the being of other beings, and nowadays illustrated and cartoon films are becoming real than the natural environment (Heidegger, 1977:18). Regardless of this impoverished conception of technology, Heidegger ends in a positive note that we should not simply abandon technology. While using technological products, we can say “No” to technological attitudes and devices



which claim our entire being and the being of other beings in enframing and by challenging-forth and “Yes” to those which let things and help us to have a free relationship with other beings (Rory Edward Fairweather, 2012:59).

In order to concretize this argument, Heidegger brings an old German word, “Gelassenheit” to mean “releasement”. By releasement means that we can “use technical devices as they ought to be used without discarding them as ‘the work of the devil’, all the while leaving ‘them alone as something which does not affect our inner... core” (Heidegger quoted in Fairweather, 2013:59). As it is clear from the above discussion, the question of being “builds a way”, i.e., it can help us to uncover the true essence of things. This questioning has an interrogative form and is not intended to dominate and shape an answer for what the thing in the question is. Rather than dominating, the being-question is intended to let things to present themselves and “attend” them, and this is what Heidegger calls “Horen” a German word to mean “attend-ing” (Richardson, 2003:253). So, from this we can understand that releasement is using technological devices as they ought to be used. The hope is that we can use technology without dominating the natural environment (Graham Harman, 2007:151).

### **3.5. Heidegger on The Ontological Structure of Dasein**

Heidegger’s reading of medieval philosophy, especially the philosophical works of St. Augustine, gives him a new insight into the assumption that a human being is not a being like other beings that its “own Being is not from the beginning *a fait accompli* but something that he/she him/herself must achieve, a task in which he/she can default” (Richardson, 2003:28, emphasis in original). Inferring from this, Heidegger holds that the being of human being is not something said to be an accomplished fact and a permanent possession, but a “Being-process”. The purpose of the discussion hereunder is to understand the question “with whom Dasein is?” This question can be understood by examining the ontological structure of Dasein. It is hoped that this could enable us to understand the who-ness of Dasein and other fellow beings with whom it shares the world.

### 3.5.1. Dasein and Its Ontological Structure

The prelude to understand the meaning of the question of being, Heidegger claims, lies in human beings' "average everydayness"<sup>12</sup> (Heidegger, 1962:69). In average everydayness there are essentially "ontic" and "ontological"<sup>13</sup> structures that are crucial to understand the ontological structure of Dasein and thus the excursion to the analysis of average everydayness is momentous. However, it should be noted that Heidegger is not claiming that the average everydayness or the usual and ordinary self-understanding of Dasein could fully contain an authentic essence of human beings (Stephen Mulhall, 2005:19).

In order to understand the "who of Dasein", I find it convincing to start from the structure and components of Dasein in its average everydayness that are "ready-to-hand" and "present-at-hand". These essential structures of Dasein's average everydayness are the essence of Dasein in interacting or encountering with the natural environment. By the concept "ready-to-hand", Heidegger wants to claim that while Dasein exists in-the-world, he/she uses things around it unconsciously. For example, my mobile phone could be considered as "ready-to-hand" when I use it without paying attention to its working and as far as it is working properly it will probably continue to be "ready-to-hand". These kinds of encountered equipment are called ready-to-hand. However, if some problems happen to my mobile phone, I start to worry about it and pay an attention and it becomes the subject of my speculation. And now it becomes present-at-hand. As present-at-hand, my mobile phone becomes the subject of my study and speculation. What I unconsciously use now becomes an object of my study and thus becomes present-at-hand.

Heidegger brings these concepts in order to distinguish and discuss the essential ontological structure of Dasein. He argues that Dasein's being is not like other beings. For instance, the Being of Dasein is not a pure present-at-hand. So, what else Dasein could be? Heidegger claims that Dasein is an issue for itself and it is an "entities to be analysed" (1962:67). This is because Dasein is an entity to whom the being of itself and the being of other beings constantly manifest

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<sup>12</sup> By "average everydayness" Heidegger wants to mean the normal circumstances that all human beings share as an essential character of what human beings are, thus, any philosophical examination to understand the being-question has to start from the obvious, from our everyday life.

<sup>13</sup> Heidegger uses the word "ontic" for specific and surface approach of understanding while ontological is a deep and total understanding of something, the question of the meaning of being in this case. For example, if Heidegger is asked about today's environmental crisis, he would answer that this disaster is an ontic incident and the real cause is on our forgetfulness of the question of being that the case of this crisis is all about metaphysical confusion.

themselves to it. Heidegger claims that this way of characterizing Dasein has double consequences. First, the essence of Dasein “lies on its “to be”” (1962:67). It is to mean that “Being-what-it-is ... of [Dasein] must ... be conceived in terms of its Being (existential)” (ibid). But the existence of Dasein is quite different from Being-present-at-hand of a Hammer or a mobile phone, for the being of present-at-hand entities does not manifest its own being and its being is not an issue for itself. The second reason is that the “[t]hat Being which is an issue for this entity in its very Being, is in each case mine” and thus ontologically the Being of Dasein could never be taken as present-at-hand, to whom “their Being is ‘a matter of indifference”” (Heidegger, 1962:68). In contrast to this, Dasein as it is mine in any case “comports itself towards its Being as its ownmost possibility<sup>14</sup>” (Heidegger, 1962:68). As Dasein is its own possibility and as it is always mine, Dasein “‘choose’ itself and win itself; it can also lose itself and never win itself; or only ‘seem’ to do so” (ibid). In case it wins itself it becomes authentic and in case it fails to do so it becomes inauthentic. However, we should not take inauthenticity as ontological and moral lapse because the inauthenticity of Dasein does not “signify any ‘less’ Being or any ‘lower’ degree of Being” (Heidegger, 1962:68). I will discuss how these concepts should not be taken as having an axiological meaning in the upcoming chapter. By now it must be clear that it is due to its comprehension of the question of being, not its attribute of being living in the world in the sense that it occupies space and time, which characterizes the being of Dasein. In other words, this comprehension is the fundamental characteristics of Dasein.

Our comprehension of the Being-question, even though it first appears dark, vague and unclear, is momentous. It is momentous, and profoundly characterizes Dasein in the sense that this comprehension makes it not to be a mere entity among other beings, because Dasein is an issue for itself and, thus, it enjoys a primacy among other beings. According to Heidegger “Dasein is an entity which does not just occur among other entities. Rather it is ontologically, distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (Heidegger, 1962:32). For Heidegger, it is by this comprehension of being that existence is possible. Therefore, “to be” is to be in a ‘relationship’ with the comprehension of the question of being of beings. “Dasein always

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<sup>14</sup> The word “possibility” in this case should not be taken as a radical change of essence and it is not a possibility to be achieved and secured rather it is the state on which Dasein compare itself with its own Being. it should not be understood in Aristotelian contrast between actuality and potentiality. “Dasein has already compared itself, in its Being, with a possibility of itself. Being free *for* one’s ownmost potentiality-for-Being, and therewith for the possibility of authenticity and inauthenticity ...” (Heidegger, 1962:236).

understands itself in terms of its existence – in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself” (Heidegger, 1962:33). So, it is up to Dasein itself to decide its own existence (Heidegger, 1962:67).

Furthermore, this comprehension of being, even though somehow suggests finitude and *a priori* knowledge, suggests that Dasein can transcend its own being. It is to mean “to-pass-over” its own limitations and achieve the comprehension of Being. By its very nature, Dasein comprehends the being of beings and passes-over beings to the Being-process. Richardson tries to ponder that transcendence is the “coming-to-pass” and the “achieve-ing” of the ontological comprehension of the being of beings. However, we have to note that this comprehension of the being of beings is not a permanent holding, the coming-to-pass is a dynamic process and is, therefore, happening which is always in the Being-process. So, Dasein is not a thing but a happening and this happening is transcendence, or I better want to say, transcending for the Being-process is always in a dynamic continuous process.

However, in addition to this transcending character, Dasein is also profoundly finite. Dasein finds itself at the midst of beings, and due to its virtue of comprehension of the Being-question, it continually engages with the world around it. This makes Dasein essentially referential “hence dependent upon them, it can never become either by culture or by technicity completely their master” (Richardson, 2003:37). This makes Dasein powerless not only over other beings, but also over itself. This is due to the fact that Dasein finds itself in its original position as existing thing amidst other beings. Besides, both its origin and destiny are not in its own hand and are obscure as well. Heidegger uses a word thrown-ness to describe the coming-in-to-existence of Dasein that has no mastery over its own being. That is why Heidegger argues that the decline of the West should be understood in the way of ontological decline that ends up in an unfettered lust for controlling everything in order to make everything a standing-reserve which is evidenced in modern technology. This point will be clarified further in the next chapter.

Heidegger claims that Dasein’s thrown-ness permeates fallen-ness. By this he means that Dasein is Being-with, not alone in the world but with a multitude of other co-Daseins. Dasein meets other beings not as a mere equipment for its needs and wants but as fellow beings. If Dasein

remains with its fellow beings and fails to exist, then Dasein falls into the “They”<sup>15</sup>. Fallen-ness is a condition or mode of Dasein when it is absorbed in the world in the way that it forgot to live authentic living, existence, and stops to be itself. So, it becomes “They self”. In this case, if Dasein forgets to be itself it becomes among the “They” and absorbed in the “They-self” that is manifested in the idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity. Heidegger claims that “[t]he Self of everyday Dasein is the *they self*, which we distinguish from the *authentic Self*—that is, from the Self which has been taken holds of in its own way” (1962:167, emphasis in original). He further claims that Dasein’s fallen-ness implies an innate tendency to withdraw from the Being-question and from the Being-process. Furthermore, he claims that “...herein lies the profoundest finitude of transcendence...” (quoted in Richardson, 2003:38). So, the need to a continual comprehension of the Being-question is grounded in this innate finitude of Dasein.

As it had been clear in the above discussion, Dasein’s ontological character consists existentiality, i.e., Dasein comprehends the Being-question and able to achieve its own possibilities that it is ahead of itself and thus projects itself to the future; facticity, i.e., that it is thrown and it is already in-the-world and Dasein’s existence is determined by this characteristics. As it is fallen being, Dasein is preoccupied with the world having an inner inclination to withdraw from the Being-question. Since the aim is to have a total understanding of ontological structure of Dasein, we must, at this point, ask what the unifying ontological character of Dasein is. Heidegger uses a word “Sorge” that could be translated to English as “care”.

The formally existential totality of Dasein’s ontological structural whole must therefore be grasped in the following structure: the Being of Dasein means ahead-of-itself-Being-already-in (the-world) as Being-alongside (entities-encountered-within-the-world). This Being fills in the signification of the term “*care*” [Sorge], which is used in a purely ontologico-existential manner (Heidegger, 1962:237, emphasis in original).

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<sup>15</sup> Heidegger claims that if Dasein fails to-be itself it becomes not itself, but the “they-self” (“Das-man”). The “they” could be manifested in (1) “idle talk” that is an average intelligence that deals with what is claimed, not what it is, about the thing at question and holds that this claim is truth. (2) “Curiosity”, which understands things at their surface approach and satisfies by these understandings, which fail to understand the true essence of things by focusing on new experience as a true and genuine task of human epistemic life. (3) Dasein’s “curiosity” and idle talk creates ambiguity, the third mood of inauthentic on which the “they” manifest themselves. In this mood Dasein always finds itself thrown into a collective understanding about its Beings and the Being of other beings and fallen from itself (1962:211).

This shows us that the concept “care” which Heidegger is talking about is not worry that someone has for something that could be “fursorge” that has an axiological meaning somehow. Care which Heidegger ascribes as a unifying character of Dasein is that Dasein as essentially Being-in-the-world must deal with the world. The world around Dasein will not fail to matter to it, for Dasein is already-in-the-world as ontological requirement. Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, “cares” about beings of present-at-hand and ready-to-hand. These distinctive characters we have discussed so far are unified by care. They are not separate elements rather they are the part of the whole, Dasein’s totality. Care in this sense should be understood as an ontological meaning, not axiological meaning, and is “structural unity of the intrinsically finite transcendence of There-being [Dasein]” (Quoted in Richardson, 2003:40).

In order to make the concept of “Care” clear and to demonstrate why Heidegger puts a great importance to “Care” as an existential-ontological structure of Dasein’s Being, he recounts an ancient fable. Heidegger tells us that Cura (Care) shapes human being from clay (donated from the earth), and Jupiter donates spirit. The three quarrel over the name and the ownership of this new creature and Saturn (the god of time) decides the name for this creatures should be homo for it comes from the soil, the spirit should go to the Jupiter when it dies and since Cura gives its shape as a living thing, she shall possess it through its life long. This tale highlights that Dasein’s being is essentially not a compound, but unitary and Dasein’s name as homo “suggests that the distinctively human way of being arises from its worldly embodiment rather than from any other-worldly capacity” (Mulhall, 2005:113) and Cura’s shaping suggests that “not only that care is the basis of its Being, but that this is something to which Dasein is subject – something into which it is thrown, and so something by which it is determined” (ibid) and last, three of them submit to Saturn, even Cura suggests that “the most fundamental characterization of Dasein’s Being must invoke not care but that which somehow conditions or determines care – time” (ibid).

We can conclude then that the oblivion to the question of being leads human beings astray and the unfettered development of modern science and technology that are under the matrix of modern Western metaphysical tradition makes the Being-question darker than ever in the sense that it furnished the belief that whatever we encounter, we encounter ourselves and this offset the place of human beings from a “shepherd of being” (Heidegger, 1993:234) to a master and

conqueror of being. This, in turn, leads to disregard the world-as-picture that could be controlled and manipulated for human needs and wants. The foregoing discussion focuses on the metaphysical part of Western intellectual tradition. In the next section I will try to briefly discuss how the culture of dwelling and building leads modern human being to destroy the earth.

### 3.6. The World, The Thing and Dwelling in the Fourfold World

One of the very important essays that environmentalist could pick up from Heidegger's essay is "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1971b) where he persuasively refutes the ontology of separation of the intellectual heritage of modern Western civilization and argues for holistic metaphysics that lets things to be. He argues that to live, to dwell and to build is not to pollute, to subjugate, to spoil and to destroy the earth, rather it is to preserve, cherish and safeguard the natural environment. Heidegger claims that to build is to dwell and to dwell is to live in the "fourfold" world where human beings preserve, care and save the natural environment. Dwelling, as basic character of human being or human way of being, brings the natural environment into its real being and building and dwelling are not related as means and an end. This fundamentally goes against the grand narratives of Western modern discourses on science and philosophy that espouse controlling nature as standing-reserve and modern conception of dwelling which suggests "[w]e work here and dwell there" (Heidegger, 1971:145).

By using etymological analysis, Heidegger purifies the concept of dwelling and building. He claims that the old word *bauen* means not only to build but it is also to dwell. He connects the word *bauen* with its verbs, like *bin* and *bist*, to claim dwelling is a human way of being, a human way of being on the earth as moral. Heidegger states:

[w]here the word *bauen* still speaks in its original sense it also says how far the nature of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen*, *buan*, *bhu*, *beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin*, *du bist* mean: I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans are on the earth, is *Buan*, dwelling (2001:145).

So, according to Heidegger, the modern confusion that considers building<sup>16</sup> as a means to dwell is rooted in modern confusion of language and the oblivion to the question of being. The modern understanding of means-end relationship induced human beings to understand the relationship between building and dwelling as they are related as a means and an end. Not only this, but also the place where we dwell and the place we build are isolated. However, Heidegger's etymological analysis shows us that to build is to dwell. The old word *bauen* also means that "to cherish and protect, to preserve and care for" (2001:145).

Heidegger goes deeper into the etymological analysis of the Old Saxon and claims that "the Gothic *wunian* like the old word *bauen*, mean to remain, to stay in a place. The word for peace, *Friede*, means the free, *das Frye*, and *fry* means: preserved from harm and danger, preserved from something, safeguarded" (Heidegger, 1971:147). This analysis, as I highlighted above, suggests that Heidegger refutes the pillars of modern Western metaphysical discourses of human being as a master of the natural environment and he places a human being not as a master, but a cherisher and preserver of the natural environment. So, when human beings dwell on earth, they ought to save the earth and "[s]aving the earth does not master the earth and does not subjugate it, which is merely one step from spoliation" (Heidegger, 1971:148, emphasis added).

Central to Heidegger's argument on dwelling and building is the simple oneness<sup>17</sup> of human beings and the world around them which Heidegger calls the *fourfold* world that "human beings are in the *fourfold* by dwelling" (Heidegger, 1971:148). The fourfold refers to the sky, the earth, the god and the mortals. The mortals, i.e., human beings whose indispensable being is Being-in-the-world and is fundamentally finite which is Being-towards-death ("mortal in dwelling initiate their own death"), and dwell in the sense that they preserve the *fourfold* world and save the earth, i.e., set it free and let it to be. So, an authentic dwelling saves the earth from exploitation and let it to present itself in its truer being. Thus, in an authentic dwelling there is no an anthropological (world-as-picture) and anthropocentric understanding of the world; rather there is a simple oneness of all beings where Dasein plays a vital role as the "shepherd of being" (Heidegger,

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<sup>16</sup> Building does not mean only constructing but also nurturing something that does not grow. In this way, "that mortals nurse and nurture the things that grow, and specially construct things that do not grow. Cultivating and construction are building in the narrower sense" (Heidegger, 1971:149)

<sup>17</sup> This "oneness" does not mean sameness; rather it acknowledges the alterity of other beings. I will briefly discuss this in chapter four



1993:234), who can do the clearing and opening of its own being and the being of other being, meaning that authentic living must allow things to emerge “as the beings they are” (ibid).

But how is it possible to dwell in the *fourfold* world in the sense of preserving and saving the *fourfold* world? Heidegger responds that dwelling, in its true sense, i.e., preserving and saving, will never be possible if it is simply to staying on earth. Instead, dwelling is possible as preserving and saving in *staying with things*. He further claims that “staying with *things* is the only way in which the fourfold stay within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity” (Heidegger, 1971:149, emphasis added). Heidegger uses the word “thing” in quite different sense from the ordinary use of the word “thing” as “equipment” or an “object” that could merely be understood in its qualitative properties or characteristics. He uses the word “Thing” with special connotation. Heidegger does an etymological analysis on the word and claims that an ancient German word for a thing connotes “Gathering or assembly” (Heidegger, 1971:151). For example, a bridge could be understood as a mere bridge which connects two river banks and thus is equipment or a symbol. But if it is correctly understood it is not a mere bridge; rather, it is a thing which preserves the sky, mortal, the river bank and gods or divinity together and thus is gathering.

However, the modern oblivion to the question of being and impoverished understanding of the world annihilated the thingness of the things and understood everything around us as a mere equipment and as standing-reserve. Modern philosophy and science understand a “thing” in its perceptual properties, in its extensions alone, and fails to recognize that “thing” also is gathering and, thus, has its own systemic value that could not be understood by reference to perceptual properties.

As already discussed to some length in this chapter, Heidegger provides us an alternative ontological thinking that could enable us to rethink the mainstream Western metaphysical accounts of nature, the being of human being, the essence of technology and the place of human beings in the natural environment. His central thesis is that modern oblivion to the question of being leads us to today’s problems including environmental crisis and thus there is a need to recapitulate the meaning of being, dwelling, thing and essence of technology afresh. But, what does this mean to environmental ethics? What implication does this proto-ontological thinking have to understand the question of the environment?

## CHAPTER FOUR

### HEIDEGGER, ETHICS AND THE ENVIRONMENT: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC ENVIRONMENTALISM

In this chapter, I will try to develop a sound environmental ethics in which our commitment to holistic environmental ethics did not invalidate our commitment to intrinsic or non-instrumental value of the natural environment. This in turn requires rethinking concept like “holism”, “intrinsic value” and the “environment”. To this end, I will first address how Martin Heidegger’s proto-ontological thinking could be translated into ethics, and then use his concept of “Mitsein” (Being-with) to address the question that with whom is Dasein. Subsequently, I will try to address how our commitment to holism will not invalidate our commitment to intrinsic value of individual beings. An attempt will also be made to check the relevance of this work on practical environmental concern that I will situate in contemporary dialogue on sustainable development. The upshot of this chapter is to argue for a kind of holism that acknowledges intrinsic value of individual beings, species and ecosystem.

#### 4.1. Heidegger and Ethics: From Proto-Ontology to Ethics

In his discussion of the relationship between the concept of Being and of “ought” in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (2000), Heidegger argues that the question of being since the time of Plato is “surmounted by the ought” (2000:220). This approach according to Heidegger, “ensuing degradation of Being” (2000:221). This intellectual tradition furnished approaches that established ethics separated from the Being-question. This had resulted, according to Heidegger, in metaphysical forgetfulness of the question of Being. It is under this assumption that Heidegger argues that ethics is an ontic question that he staidly refuses to deal with it for it blinds Dasein not to live as it has to live. But what is the reason behind this assumption? I will try to give three reasons why Heidegger refuses to deal with the “ought to” question.

Before dealing with the reasons that convinced Heidegger not to deal with ethics, let me outline his understanding of the concept of ethics. As usual, he makes an etymological analysis of the concept of ethics in order to arrive at what the word “ethics” really stands for. He claims that ethics was not a major study of philosophy until the time of Plato. According to him, ethics along with logic and physics came into existence in the school of Plato. And this was a time that thinkers are called philosophers. From that time onwards, “science waxed and thinking waned”

(Heidegger, 1977:256). This seems a pessimistic conclusion but the reason behind is astonishing. He claims that originally “ethos” is to mean “abode”, “dwelling place” (1977:256). He brings the saying of Heraclitus which goes like this: ““ethos anthropoi daimon” which is usually translated as “A man’s character is his daimon”” (1977:256). This dwelling, abode, allows human being to be in his/her true essence and be nearest to gods. However, through the ages starting from the time of Plato, the concept of “ethos” was being associated with character and treated in isolation from the Being-question.

From this it could be deduced that the first reason that Heidegger refuses to deal with ethics is that the question what I ought to do distracts Dasein from its proper mediation of uncovering the mysterious question or at least not to face the Being-question by keeping Dasein to worry about what he or she has to do or what not to do, not what he/she is and is not. This thinking paradigm will at the end dominate and subordinate the question of Being. This will set “something *above* Being that Being never yet is, but always *ought* to be” (2000:211, emphasis in original).

The second reason is that Heidegger claims that the ought-questions are modes of inauthentic existence. The question “what *I* ought to do” does not deal with the “I” in proper sense of the term. Rather, the “I” in this context tries to immerse itself with the “They” (“das man”) and thus Dasein fails to live authentically and forgets to deal with ontological questions about itself by being distracted in the ontic questions. The “das man” for Heidegger is a bank of public opinion where the “das man” or the “they” deposits their custom, culture, religion, opinion and character that are not an ontological but ontic. So, in this case Dasein is not itself, but “the they” who dictates and decides on matters that are worth of thinking, acting and deciding personally. At this stage, Dasein seized to be itself and absorbed in to “the they” and it starts to act, choose and even think like “the they”. Consequently, Dasein not only becomes among “the they” but it becomes “the they”. Dasein compares itself not with its own being but rather the spot light becomes “the they” and Dasein starts to worry about how to live according to the public opinion on which no one is responsible. Because, “the they” “is everyone and no one, and tranquillizes Dasein in its being-in-the-world” (Graham Harman 2007:67).

The third reason, I think, that keeps Heidegger not to involve in ethical issues is that modern moral philosophy considers some of existential conditions like fall-ness, guilty and inauthenticity

as a moral lapse. However, Heidegger persuasively argues that these conditions are not a moral lapse; rather, they are inseparable and even important existential conditions. These are conditions that testify what we are. More importantly, these existential conditions are important in Dasein's way to authenticity because this constantly reminds that it is essentially Being-unto-death, that is to say, human being is ultimately finite. Following this, he does not want to deal with these existential categories as a moral lapse. Rather he prefers to treat these conditions as existential categories, and thus as ontological. So, must we not claim that his works are proto-ontological, not proto-ethical? But, is this the end of the story? No!

As it is evident from the above discussion, I understand that Heidegger is not completely denigrating ethics as a complete failure to Western philosophical tradition, but rather he wants to free ontology from the subordination of ethics and makes ontology as a supreme question from which ethical claims could be derived from. This underlying notion could be summed up by the following quote:

[i]f the name "ethics," in keeping with the basic meaning of the word ethos, should now say that "ethics" ponders the abode of man, then that thinking which thinks the truth of Being as the primordial element of man, as one who ek-sists, is in itself the original ethics. However, this thinking is not ethics in the first instance, because it is ontology. For ontology always thinks solely the being (on) in its Being. But as long as the truth of Being is not thought all ontology remains without its foundation (1977:258)

After this reasoning, we can understand that ethics in its original sense means dwelling, near to being and seeing it and responds to it. I think that it should be under this context that Heidegger must be approached in the study of ethics. Given this, I am of the belief that we can derive ethical claims and then deal with the question of the environment. But the question is: which concepts could appropriately be applied to our bothersome environmental ethical issues?

A number of writers have dealt with different concepts of Heidegger in order to develop Heideggerian ethics. To mention only few of them for instance, Michael Lewis (2005), Frederick A. Olafson (1998) and Joanna Hodge (1995). Given a limited space and a limited scope, it is very difficult to deal with all scholars who precede this thesis for the quest of Heideggerian

ethics. Olafson tries to critically study how to ground ethics on Heidegger's concept of "Mitsein", a German word that could be translated as Being-with. Even though my choice of the concept of "Mitsein" as a ground for ethics is not without predecessors, but my effort of bringing this concept to articulate a sound environmental ethics seems fairly different. My prime purpose is to apply this concept to environmental ethics. The reason for my choice will be clear after a moment, but as a preliminary note it could be said that since Dasein is essentially -in-the-world- [with-others], that Dasein is a Being-with and Being-in which is also essentially Being-with, and since the core of environmental ethics is the study of our relationship *with* the natural environment, it follows that it is reasonable to critically look at the concept of Being-with, Dasein's *Being-with-the natural environment*.

#### **4.2. "Mitsein" (Being-with) as Base for Environmental Ethics**

In the forgoing discussion, we have raised the question that which ontological concept would be appropriate enough to deal with ethical issues, and what relevance does this concept have in dealing with environmental questions. One of the fundamental questions that Heidegger wants to answer in his philosophical works is "*who* it is that Dasein is in its everydayness?" (Heidegger, 1962:149, emphasis in original). It has already become clear that Heidegger's work fundamentally challenges the "I-Thing" false dichotomy which was advanced by Rene Descartes. The Western philosophical tradition had advanced the ontological separation of the "I" from the rest of the world. For Heidegger, no sense is attached to the idea of human being apart from its world. This does not mean that a human being is imprisoned in the world that connotes a negative sense of incapability to freeing itself from it. Rather, it is the way human being essentially is. "...[T]he world is always the one that I share with Others. The world of Dasein is a *with-world* [Mitwelt]. Being-in is *Being-with* others. Their Being-in-themselves within-the world is *Dasein-with* [Mitdasein]" (Heidegger, 1962:155, emphasis in original).

Thus, he argues that Dasein is essentially Being-in-the-world and shares the world with other fellow beings. Dasein does not simply share the world but the world is always and already mine. Human essence, in contrast to Descartes claims, could not be understood apart from this shared world. From this we could logically, as Heidegger does, deduce that Dasein is "Mit" (with) others, Being-with that is involved with others and dwell with them. So, to be Dasein is to Be-with- others. Here, I think that it is worth noticing that Dasein does not necessarily require a

physical nearness to things to be with things. The point Heidegger wants to make is that Dasein finds itself amidst other beings. And this is an ontologically given fact about Dasein, i.e., Dasein is essentially being-in-the-world and is especially referential. This could not affect the existential modes of Dasein and Dasein's with-ness also could not affect Dasein's mines. I will return back to this point later. Dasein's Being-with-Others involves Being-in-the-world. In order to make this claim clear Heidegger claims,

[i]n our 'description' of that environment which is closest to us-the work- world of the craftsman, for example, - the outcome was that along with the equipment to be found when one is at work [in Arbeit], those Others for the "work" ["Werk"] is destined are 'encountered too'. If this is ready-to-hand, then there lies in the kind of Being which belongs to it (that is, in its involvement) an essential assignment or reference to possible wearers, for instance, for whom it should be 'cut to the figure'. ... When, for example, we walk along the edge: of a field but 'outside it', the field shows itself as belonging to such-and-such a person, and decently kept up by him;... . The boat anchored at the shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes voyages with it; but it still is a 'boat which is strange to us', it still is indicative of Others (1962:153).

From Heidegger's reasoning, we can single out four points. The first point is that since Dasein is with-others and since it lives in the shared world, then, Dasein is always referential. The second one is related with the first in that the being of Dasein is inherently worldly and is social by nature. Our environment that is our work-world is related to us and that our "who-ness" is defined by the social and cultural tasks that we are performing. Dasein understands itself initially in relation to its purpose and possibilities in the surrounding world. It is necessary for Dasein to claim a role or a position to relate itself as occupant of a role or practitioner in the social-web-of-being. By this he claims that Dasein could not be understood apart from its shared world and the role it occupies (Mulhall, 2013:72). The third one is that Dasein encounters other Daseins not as mere entities of ready-to-hand and present-at-hand but as its own being that they are fellow Daseins. Thus, Dasein as Being-with is Being-in-the-world and is always concerned about it (Mulhall, 2013:64-65). The fourth one is that Dasein's being as Being-with indicates to us that

human being like other things around their environment are the part of the same web; after all, Dasein's being is Being-in-the-world (Mulhall, 2013:72).

But we have to note that identifying Dasein as Being-with and Being-with-other beings is not an axiological claim, rather it is an ontological claim. To speak of Being-with is to speak the existential conditions of Dasein. Dasein's Being-with is not like Rise-with-Chicken. Rather, when Dasein meets other things including fellow Daseins, it is concerned about them and involved with them, discover them and let them to show themselves by themselves and thus Dasein's Being-with indicates the capability of doing a phenomenological activity and letting other beings to unconceal themselves. This is the case in ontological level.

However, this is not always the case that Dasein sometimes neglects other beings and pass over them as indifferent to them without involving with them and fails to Be-With. This unconcern to other beings is unauthentic solicitude<sup>18</sup> that involves the passing of one another as indifference to each other. But, we have to note that there is also authentic solicitude that is ontological and careful about other beings. In this solicitude, Dasein becomes conscious about other beings. This authentic solicitude of Dasein is a form of solicitude which inspires authenticity among other beings. Positive mood of solicitude requests other Daseins to be authentic and thus inspires authenticity. In this case, authentic solicitude treats fellow Daseins as an end-in-themselves (Heidegger, 1962:158; Simon Paul James, 2001:87). What I think more important about authentic solicitude is that Dasein in this mode recognizes other's freedom. It is concern about them in authentic way, meaning that it lets other being to reveal themselves as they are.

#### **4.2.1. With Whom is Dasein?**

So far we have discussed the Being-with-*others*, but still we do not discuss the "who of others" that is our first question we raise in line with Heidegger. Put it another way, with whom is Dasein with. A direct answer to this is with "Others". But what does it mean "Others" in this context? A significant number of modern environmental philosophers, post-colonial writers and philosophy of liberation writers would find this term offensive for it is under this terminology that the ultimate offence on human race and the natural environment was used to be justified. For

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<sup>18</sup> "Solicitude" is a Spanish word to mean request or leap ahead. In Heideggerian context Dasein leap ahead its everydayness and request not only itself but also other fellow Dasein to transcend everydayness and face the Being-question.

instance, an environmentalist could argue that it is under the logic of “Othering” that the natural environment was subjugated and manipulated and another environmentalist could also relate this “Othering” with anthropocentric claims that the “I” is the center and the “Other” is outside of the “I”. I think this idea should come as no surprise, because it is under this porous logic that a number of crimes were committed and are being committed. So, as the way out philosophers suggest the logic of sameness.

But, for me this logic is not good news. I think that it is the logic that claims that you are the same with me that leads us to social instability and environmental crisis. So, the solution I think is that we have to redefine what the word “Other” stands for in context. I prefer to hold Heidegger’s conception of “Others”. “Others” in Heidegger’s context does not involve subjugation and manipulating. As I have tried to discuss in chapter three, modern technology tries to pretend to be objective and thus is neutral. However, this is the ultimate fabrication ever in the history of technology because, alongside Heidegger, I think that there is no human action without interest, there might be some but it is not always. We can find this interest driven action in modern technology at its best. Modern technology “enframes” the natural environment in the ways that could serve its purposes. It is assumed that this standing reserve is something that will never and ever go against the prescribed human interests, because it is under control (Heidegger, 1977:16-17). This in fact, I think, is “Othering” at its best and like its predecessors of colonial discourses it provides logic of justification for the domination of the natural environment.

In contrast to this, Heidegger argues that technology is a way of revealing that a human being is able to perform this phenomenological analysis by letting things to be as they are or to reveal themselves without imposing his/her way of knowing, i.e., methodology, bias, and interest. So, “Others” in Heidegger’s context is not something out there to be conquered, studied and subjugated, but to live with as a companion with “Care” (“Sorge”). This “Care” let “Others” to reveal themselves and thus help “Others” to open or unconceal their true nature. As I have discussed in chapter three, Dasein cares not only about the being of its being but also the Being of other beings as well. Thus, Dasein is with others in the sense that it is Being-with others that respect the freedom of others and recognize that they are different. After all Dasein is Being-in-the-world and is essentially Being-with-others in the shared world, meaning that Dasein dwells in the world with in the web of other beings. One more sensible question that we have to raise is



that how does and where does Dasein lives? This smoothly leads us to discuss Heidegger's concept of dwelling in relation to Being-with-others.

According to Heidegger, dwelling is a human way of being on earth as mortal in the fourfold world. By dwelling Dasein meets other beings as fellow beings, and more importantly Dasein *stays with* beings and comes near to them by recognizing their otherness. As it is evident from our discussion in chapter three, one of the essences of Dasein is to build its home and this building is at the same time its dwelling (1971:143). So, Dasein builds in order to dwell on it. By making etymological analysis, Heidegger argues that to build is to dwell and to dwell is to care, preserve, gardening and cherish. Unless the modern hangover of end-means relationship chained our thinking system not to free ourselves from this thinking cup, it is sensible to hold that Dasein builds something and this building is a way of dwelling. After all, if dwelling is cherishing, preserving and saving the earth, then Dasein's authentic dwelling acknowledges the fact that Dasein is one among other beings inseparably intertwined in the web of beings. Heidegger calls this web of Being the fourfold world (1971:45).

The first encounter with the world being amidst of beings and unconcealment of Dasein in the world gives a gateway for Dasein towards an authentic living with-others. Among many other things, Dasein recognizes that nature is not the same as Dasein, and in this case it recognizes that nature has its own being which will never be dictated based on human rules, regulation and moral standards. The only way of authentic living amidst fellow Beings is to let them to reveal themselves and in this case Dasein plays the most pivotal role of serving as the shepherd of being. In other words, unlike Plato's philosophy of being, Dasein does not dictate the Being of other Being that in this case Being is out there from which all other beings derive their essential shapes or being from it. In contrast to this, Heidegger's philosophy of Being is a being that cares of other beings to reveal themselves by letting them to be, not as a dictator of essence of other beings. This philosophy of Being I think is one step forward toward the destruction of other beings by dictating their essence according to human needs and wants.

By refuting this main pillar of Western metaphysical discourses of being, Heidegger characterizes Dasein not as a master of all other beings but a "shepherd of Beings" who cherishes and preserves the earth (Heidegger, 1993:234). So, when human beings dwell on earth, they ought to save it and saving in this sense does not subjugate and create a built environment rather

it is all about to let it to be in itself (Heidegger, 2001:148). That is under this circumstance that “letting to be” becomes a guiding principle for Dasein to live an authentic life with-other-beings. However, I want to emphasize that “letting to be” does not mean only to leave the natural environment to reveal itself, but it also involves using the natural environment as equipment<sup>19</sup>. Thus, “letting to be” also involves using the natural environment as equipment on which Dasein by its authentic solicitude mode enables other beings or inspires other beings to show themselves at most of their possibility or to help them to unconceal themselves. For example Dasein could build a wind farm to reveal the winds power as having energy. In this case, Dasein performs its noble activity not only unconceal the being of its being, but also the Being of other beings.

Furthermore, Heidegger argues that dwelling is not simply to staying on earth; rather dwelling is possible as preserving and saving in staying with things. While “staying with things” Dasein becomes *near* to things and come to know them in their true essence. Becoming near in this case does not mean a physical nearness or proximity to things. A person in Mekelle who remembers Sidist kilo campus can be much nearer than the one in Addis Ababa who always pass by the main gate of Sidist Kilo Campus as an indifferent building. From this it is sensible enough to hold that dwelling is not a simple staying with things but one should be near to things.

However, this is not always the case that Dasein dwells in authentic mode-in-the-world. It sometimes becomes far to its being, which in fact is the most nearest thing that could Dasein will be, and do not stay with things and thus fail to come near to the things around it. Heidegger calls this homelessness which makes Dasein always to be restless and, thus, Dasein is called and prone to homesickness that creates an instinct to go back to its home. That is why Heidegger alongside Novalis (pen name of Georg Philipp Friedrich Freiherr von Hardenberg, 1772 - 1801) holds that “[p]hilosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere” (quoted in Heidegger, 1995:5) in the interrelated world.

But what does it mean to be *at home*? Being critical of modern Western philosophy, Heidegger argues that the modern human is already lost in an inauthentic life that forgets its true being along its best and truer possibilities. The modern oblivion to the question of Being resulted in

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<sup>19</sup> Equipment, our first encounter with the world reveals that the ready-to-hand things are encountered as equipment and in this sense equipment does not mean a standing reserve for human use but a thing that is being used by Dasein in authentic mode.

unfettered obsession with efficient, material accumulation, domination of nature and a naïve faith on the power of science and technology that are at the matrix of impoverished conception of the human “Self” and the natural environment.

Therefore, to be at home is to be with-oneself and to be-with-others-in -the-world. So, our philosophical expedition, according to Heidegger, ought to be to come to home and its driving force is all about homesickness, being rooted in a human world with-other fellow beings and this is the ultimate call. Heidegger successfully argues that Dasein is neither a ghost floating around the world, nor is an isolated being condemned to remain in its world with no communication with other beings, but rather Dasein for Heidegger is a being which is inseparably intertwined with the world on which Dasein could get its best possibilities, i.e., Dasein is always restless and is a happening that the comprehension of the being of being is not a permanent holding but this coming-to-pass is a dynamically continuous and, therefore, is happening which is always in the Being-process.

What makes Dasein restless is the inherent call to come back to its home and Dasein in authentic mode performs the comprehension of being because, as Heidegger notes, “we are, and to the extent that we are, we are always waiting for something. We are always called upon by *something as a whole*. This ‘as a whole’ is the world” (1995:5, emphasis added). This in other words means that authenticity is not a permanent resident that sometimes Dasein is prone to fail (but with no moral lapse implication) to be rooted in earth or to be at home and thus Dasein is “restlessness ... always already on the way to [the world]” (ibid) and be an isolated being even though it is amidst of beings and it becomes far even though it is near. So, in this case Dasein yearns for its home and wants a homecoming.

To come “home” implies that Dasein constantly needs to return back to its authentic being. It should not be in this case understood as a physical returning to a place you belong to, (1) it is a journey to oneself and feel belonging to the *totality* of beings that Dasein originally belongs, (2) it is a feeling of being involved with-the-world, (3) it is an encounter with the Being question or comprehension of the Being question (Simon Paul James, 2001:93). In doing this, Dasein dwells or returns to its home, to things around it and thus to the web of Beings to which it belongs and becomes near to things in a shared or communal world as well as to its truer Being. More importantly, in homecoming Dasein becomes “near to things” and dwell in the fourfold world.

After all, this is the original meaning of ethics that “ethos” is to mean to abide or to dwelling in a place (Heidegger, 1977:256) and this allows Dasein to be true to itself and “let other things to be” and, thus, lives in harmony in the intertwined world on which Dasein is the part.

This claim, which Dasein is one among other beings and could possibly be itself in the interrelated world, however, is half way for my purpose. There is still one sensible question which remains with us: does this drive of Dasein to the world as a whole diminish Dasein’s mines or does this holistic metaphysical outlook acknowledge non-instrumental value of beings including the being of Dasein? This leads us to the fundamental problems of holism and intrinsic value or non-instrumental value of things.

#### **4.3. Environmental Holism and Non-Instrumental Value of Nature: Bridging the Gap**

Certainly, one of the defining problems of environmental ethics, among other things, is to build a sound ecology that respects both the ecosystem and individual beings. This problem has occupied the central debate in environmental ethics so long. As I have tried to show above, it is possible to come up with a holistic environmental ethics by bringing Heidegger’s concepts of “Being-with”, “dwelling” and “homecoming”, and after all, I tried to show that it is a human inborn instinct to go back to its home, being in the totality of beings, and, thus, live in essentially interrelated and shared world being-un-to-death. This metaphysical ground, with no doubt, could provide a holistic world view wherein individual beings live in an interrelated world. Given the debate between holism and intrinsic value, one could logically argue that this holism may not grant intrinsic value of individual beings, and it is of course true that in mainstream holism, at least this is true. But, is this the end of the story? Or are we leveling Dasein to be a simple being locked or imprisoned in the world? No! This would be a penurious reading of Heidegger’s philosophy and of course it has some truth but not the whole truth about human nature and its place in the natural environment. A careful consideration of Heidegger’s writing reveals otherwise. It is the prime purpose of this thesis to argue for a kind of holism that acknowledges non-instrumental value of the natural environment and of human beings themselves. How is this possible? This is my next task.

By now, it must be clear that Heidegger’s overall project of his life time activities in philosophy is to rescue human thinking from Western metaphysical traditions that begot an impoverished conception about the nature of the Dasein and its place in the natural environment. In order to do

this, he steps back from the tradition and tries to develop an ontology of being that interplays between unity, in which Dasein is Being-in-the-world; and diversity, in which Dasein acknowledges alterity of things and let them to be in themselves or at least not tries to impose its definition and character on others and refrains from subjugating things in its world; authenticity, in which Dasein becomes true to itself and its surrounding and inauthenticity, somehow forgets the comprehension of being; worldliness, in which Dasein moves from its horizon let it be cultural or religious horizon and embraces its universal place and solitude in which Dasein faces that it is unto itself to feel responsible about its choices, actions and so on.

In order to make this clear in his book *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* (1995), Heidegger discusses how Dasein ought to be considered as undifferentiated plurality on which Dasein's unity with the world could not nullify its essence of being solitary and intrinsically connected with its historicity and horizons, and how Dasein should be understood as the interplay between unity and diversity and the like. Regarding this point, Heidegger claims that being at home in totality with other beings does not invalidate the uniqueness of Dasein. He argues that,

this demand to be at home *everywhere*, which means to exist among beings *as a whole*, is nothing other than a peculiar questioning about the meaning of this 'as a whole' which we call *world*. What happens here in this questioning and searching, in this back and forth, is the *finitude* of man. What occurs in such becoming finite is an ultimate *solitariness* of man, in which everyone stands for him-or herself as someone unique in the face of the whole (1995:8, emphasis in original).

However, this seems only spoken for Dasein that simply looks like the continuation of the anthropocentric worldview of the Western metaphysics that ultimately endorses the uniqueness of Dasein and that provides justification for human superiority in the ecosystem. Following this, we have to clarify two important questions 1) what does it mean being unique in the face of diversity or what makes Dasein unique in the face of the whole?, and 2) uniqueness for what? The first question leads us to recall the fundamental essences of Dasein. Dasein, as I have tried to discuss in chapter three, is finite, alone or solitary, and it is also universal in that it has the essence of worldliness. For example, as a matter of fact I am a mortal being and my understanding is limited to some historical horizon so that I am a finite being, and I feel my pain

alone because no one, even my dearest mother, could feel my pain and hence I am a solitary being and feel I am alone. But, there are also times that I feel beyond my horizon. For instance, kids killed in Syria by chemical attack provide me with a horrifying experience of war and I do not ask whether these kids are from my horizon, from my country, religion, culture or locality so that I transcend all of my given horizons and feel the universe and thus I become worldly. So my uniqueness in the face of whole is one attribute of my essential essence not the whole essence.

The second question is associated with the logic of Western culture of reason and of anthropocentrism that human uniqueness could provide Dasein to subjugate and control the non-human beings. As it was evident in Western metaphysical traditions, the uniqueness of Dasein, especially its reasoning capacity was seen as a license to dominate and manipulate the natural environment. However, the human uniqueness in the face of the whole, in Heidegger's sense, does not give a privilege to dominate the world, but to save it and saving does not include subjugation and domination. Dasein is unique in the face of the world so that it becomes the "shepherd of being", looking after beings and "let them to be".

As I have noted above, Heidegger's ultimate purpose is to argue for the undifferentiated plurality of Dasein in which Dasein is in unity with diversity. So when we think of Dasein at 'home' and being involved in-the-world with totality of "beings as a whole" at the same conviction, we have recognized that Dasein is unique as well. This is reason enough to consider Heidegger's ontological work relevant to bridge the gap between non-instrumental value of individuals and the holistic metaphysical assumption or holistic environmental ethics. However, this could not be taken for granted for at least it begs a question that needs a further clarification of terms and concepts like "holism", "intrinsic value" and "environment". I must, therefore, offer a deeper analysis of these fundamental concepts in order to bring them together and serve the purpose of this thesis.

To start with, different environmental ethicists both from Western and non-Western tradition have thought that in order to address the hyper-separation of human beings from the natural environment that was advocated by Cartesian Metaphysics and Judaeo-Christian tradition that fundamentally shape the moral choices and actions of the Modern period, it must be replaced by a thesis that advocates the unity of all beings, i.e., all beings belong together and they are

interrelated with each other, and come up with holistic environmental ethics. This holistic assumption at first instance seems a good way to cure the impoverished conception of nature that creates a pathological alienation of nature from the natural environment and of course certain level of holism was appreciated by environmental ethicist. However, some environmentalists are expressing their misgivings on an extreme form of holistic environmentalism due to two reasons. The first one is that holistic environmentalism does not acknowledge the intrinsic value of individual beings. For instance, Tom Regan (2003) argues that extreme form of holism results in the subordination of the right of individual animals. The second one is that scholars want to warn that an extreme form of holism will lead to environmental fascism that will not have a practical impact on the need and wants of human beings, for example, in development practices. In order to come up with a sound and practical holism that acknowledges intrinsic value of the individual beings an excursion into different understanding of the concept of holism seems an imperative.

The concept of holism from its ancient roots suggests a general thesis that holds that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. However, this understanding of holism even if it was praised by some environmentalists for its merit of prioritizing the ecosystem, it is also criticized. For instance, it is not clear on its claim of “greater than”, in what sense is the parts are less than the whole or in what context is that the whole be conceived more important than the part. Is an individual condemned to remain or chain its relationship with the whole only? What is the nature of relationship that exists between the individuals and the whole? If our understanding of holism reject any a pluralistic relation between individuals and the whole, then it rejects the plurality of life and value of individual beings. In addition to this, it seems it does not afford the intrinsic value of individual beings. So, shall we relinquish our hope of affording intrinsic value in holism?

Having this question in mind, now let us pause at this point for a time being and consider what we mean by “intrinsic” value of beings. The rationale behind this question is that I am suspicious that it might be our understanding of intrinsic value of individual beings that problematizes our claim that holism may not afford intrinsic value of beings. Intrinsic value mostly, in environmental ethics, is understood as value of something independent of any thing and this suggests G.E. Moore’s understandings of “intrinsic” value as non-relational which is the contrary of the notion of holism which holds that individual beings should be understood as relational and

dependent on the whole system (Kristin Shrader-Frechette, 1996:57; Simon Paul James: 2001:49). Like most environmentalists, and to be practical enough, I think this understanding of intrinsic value is problematic and after all it's misgiving on practical needs in addressing environmental crisis makes it to be highly problematic and makes us to lose our hope on it. Besides, it will not enable us to address the question of the environment, like what we may call the "justifiable" relationship/interference of human beings to the natural environment. So, extreme form of intrinsic value is impractical, inapplicable and short of addressing modern issues of environment and development.

Because of this, we need an alternative understanding, given our aim is to come up with a sound environmental ethics in which our commitment to holistic environmental ethics will not invalidate our commitment towards the right of non-human beings, of intrinsic value of the natural environment. Thus, by the concept of "intrinsic" value, I understand not the non-relational value, but the non-instrumental value of the natural environment which implies that we should not consider the environment as a means to human ends for I think that it has its own end by itself. And I think the crux of environmental ethics is to restore this non-instrumental value of the natural environment and I also understand environmental ethics, among other things, as a response for the short sighted and incomplete/exclusive ethics, i.e., which believes that what counts morally is a human being alone, and a response to anthropocentrism that advocates an impoverished conception of the natural environment and of human beings.

What is left is to reconcile holism with this understanding of intrinsic value of the natural environment. In order to do so, I argue that holism should acknowledge the following three points. The first one is that our conception of holism should not limit the relationship of individual elements only to the whole. As I have indicated above, an individual's relationship with only the whole leads to limiting the right of individuals and thus fails to acknowledge the complex nature of relationship of the individuals with the whole. I think will lead to for example to cull individual animals from the ecosystem and also the measure of good and bad in this context fails to understand the complex relationship that one individual animal could have in the given ecosystem. Thus, I am of the opinion that if we could accept the merit of holism, it should be understood as a thesis on which the relationship between individual elements with the whole depends on the context that they are in. This understanding of holism does not reduce individual



beings as a means to the good of the whole alone, rather it considers the system as a milieu on which individual's relationship is contextual and more importantly individual beings could be thought on the way of how they are related with other beings with whom they themselves are in the given milieu.

The second point is that our notion of holism should be considered as undifferentiated plurality of beings in which the uniqueness of individual beings is duly acknowledged in the face of the whole. This understanding of holism acknowledges, above all, the alterity of beings and does not reduce the properties of individual beings under the guise of ontology of oneness. One individual being is being-with other beings and got its essence in the whole and when it is involved in the totality of beings, in the milieu, but it also has unique properties in the face of the whole. This unique property of beings, I think, could be taken as its non-instrumental value of the given being in the sense that it is unique and be respected that it is different from other beings and its being is not considered as the means to some human ends or some other ends. If the whole recognizes the alterity of other beings as something unique, domination will have no place because it is under the logic of sameness by which the natural environment was subjugated and manipulated as if it is something "there" to be completely under control. So, the place of Dasein in this milieu of beings or in this totality of beings is to unconceal the being of itself and the being of other fellow beings and thus has a superior essence that provides it with a superior responsibility, that is, performing a phenomenological analysis and letting things to be. This enables Dasein to acknowledge the alterity of the natural environment and "let them to be". This understanding of holism could afford the non-instrumental value of the natural environment.

The third point is that our understanding of holism should be free from the object-subject relationship or means-end relationship of individual beings and the whole system. Had it been the case that Western metaphysics is free from such confusing and utterly mistaken relationship, our confusion in our understanding of holism would be free from means-end relationship on which individual beings are considered to be the means to the good of the end of the whole. But, this claim could not be taken for granted for at least it begs the question on how individual things could be related with the world that could be considered as the whole, and on what kind of relationship would they have. These questions lead us to discuss Heidegger's concept of "thing" and "world" and how they relate to each other, and I must, therefore, analyze these concepts

hoping to come up with a sound understanding of how the thing and the world be involved in the fourfold world where individual beings be-with other beings in unity in their own being.

As I have tried to discuss in chapter three briefly, Heidegger uses the word “thing” in different ways from the common usage of the word things. Heidegger claims that the German etymological root of the word thing suggests not equipment or an object but the word “thing” connotes “[g]athering or assembly” (Heidegger, 2001:151). Thus, in the language of *Being and Time* “thing” is not something present-at-hand, i.e., it is not an object, neither material nor abstract object. Heidegger persuasively argues that modern Western philosophy forgot not only the question of being, but it also forgot the question of thing that it fails to comprehend thing as thing. Modern physical science, that is the result of representational Western metaphysics, understands thing as an object which can be controlled objectively. As a result “[s]cience makes the jug<sup>20</sup>-thing into a nonentity in not permitting things to be the standard for what is real.” This scientific knowledge that is based on metaphysics of representation, not presentation, resulted in “long-since-accomplished annihilation of the thing: the confirmation that the thing as a thing remains nil. The thingness of the thing remains concealed, forgotten” (Heidegger, 1971:168).

This “long-since-accomplished annihilation of things” creates confusion that resulted in understanding the natural environment as a mere means to a human end and, in the language of Heidegger, it makes the natural environment including Dasein as a standing-reserve. However, the word “thing” connotes the gathering of the four elements—earth, sky, divinities and mortals—into a simple oneness in which each of individual beings mirrors his/her own uniqueness. According to Heidegger,

Earth and sky, divinities and mortals—being at one with one another of their own accord—belong together by way of the simpleness of the united fourfold. Each of the four mirrors in its own way the presence of the others. Each therewith reflects itself in *its own way into its own*, within the *simpleness of the four*. *This mirroring does not portray a likeness*. The mirroring, lightening each of the four, appropriates their own presenting into simple belonging to one another. Mirroring in this appropriating-lightening way, each of the four plays to each of the others. The appropriative mirroring sets each of the four free into its own, but it binds

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<sup>20</sup> Heidegger uses the word “jug” to indicate the nature of thing and nearness.

these free ones into the simplicity of their essential being toward one another (1971:177, emphasis added).

As such the unity of the fourfold does not affect the value and the uniqueness of individual beings. Three things are explicit in this paragraph. The first one is that, as I have mentioned above, as individual element is not considered to be the subservient of the unity and is not considered to be the same with the rest of the fourfold to be in unity; it rather mirrors its own being and is not required to be like other beings. Considered in this way, the uniqueness of individual being has its own place in the fourfold. In other words, the sky is the sky and could not be otherwise and is understood as a sky. The second point is that the unity of the fourfold sets individual beings free and this is all about letting things to be and thus domination for the good of the whole has no place in this regard. The third point is that that is in this mutual belongingness that individual beings come into light that “from out of staying’s simple onefoldness they are betrothed, entrusted to one another. At one in thus being entrusted to one another, they are unconcealed” (Heidegger, 1971:171).

But how is it possible to Dasein to dwell in the *fourfold* world? Heidegger responds that dwelling in its true sense, i.e., preserving and saving, will never be possible if it is simply to staying on earth, rather dwelling is possible as preserving and saving in staying with things. He further claims that “staying with *things* is the only way in which the fourfold stay within the fourfold is accomplished at any time in simple unity” (Heidegger, 2001:149, emphasis added). This begs ethical question on how the Dasein ought to act and this question reminds us our discussion of the original sense of the word “ethos” to mean abode, dwell in the place and it is this dwelling, abode which allows human beings to be to things on which Dasein’s thinking began to resurrect and comprehend the question of being and, thus, be virtuous.

But still, given the urgency of environmental crisis, practically minded environmentalist could possibly ask the application of this work in the real world to treat the most urgent environmental crisis. The subsequent discussion will focus on this concern; how could today’s discourse on sustainable development possibly use this environmental ethics to integrate a sound ecological thinking with the need of development and social justice.

#### 4.4. Sustainable Development<sup>21</sup> from Heidegger's Perspective

Given the term sustainable development itself is an elusive word, having a final definition of it and the policy implication as such is very difficult. However, this does not mean that the concept itself is problematic. Since my prime intention is to approach sustainable development from Heidegger's perspective, doing an analysis on what sustainable development is, its goals and its policy practice and implication has a paramount importance. The reason behind this study is that I think contemporary debates on sustainable development are suffering from lack of platform from which we derive our policies and practice and promote sustainable development goals. So let us look at what help could we find from Heidegger's inspired holistic environmental ethics to understand the complex relationship between the three goals of sustainable development and how we could promote sustainable development.

The sustainable development model is considered to be a challenge to the conventional form of development. Conventional approaches see development as simply modernization of the globe

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<sup>21</sup> According to the literatures on sustainable development, the concept of sustainability can be traced back to eighteenth and nineteenth centuries thinkers like Malthus (1766–1834) and William Stanley Jevons (1835–82), who were worried about natural resources scarcity in the face of population growth and the shortage of energy especially of the coal in the face of huge demand from the growing population. However, until the 1950s and 1970s the general public opinion was not significant that much significant. Contemporary understanding of sustainable development is derived mostly from the 1987 Brundtland Report (named after the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland who also served as the chair of World Commission on Environment and Development). At the beginning of the new millennium, the United Nations (UN) and global leaders set Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and “shape a broad vision to fight poverty in its many dimensions” (UN, 2015:4). This broad vision sets common goals for the world community to achieve by 2015. Even though there was a remarkable achievement in halving starvation worldwide, social inequality, climate change, environmental destruction and unsustainable use of natural resource remain urgent and continue to be the center of economic, political and social dialogues among global communities. As a result, the UN and global leaders agree to boost “sustainability” – in the economic, social and environmental dimensions. In other words, our economic activities must be in the ways that decrease environmental degradation, address social inequality and unemployment and lasting economic wellbeing that allows future generations to enjoy quality life. This is the hope expressed in “sustainable development” (Alan Holland, 2001:390). According to World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987), “sustainable development” represents the aspiration of the global community to have a bold transformation in how we live and relate to the natural environment (cited in Susan Baker, 2006:5). The basic assumption of sustainable development is that human beings, the natural environment and economic activities are interrelated. It holds that any development practice must consider the “three pillars” of sustainable development: social, economic and environment wellbeing. Besides, every development activity must consider the interest of future generation (Tracey Strange and Anne Bayley, 2008:25). There are a number of works, especially in the area of economics and social change perspective of sustainable development. My purpose here is not to discuss the ethical implications of sustainable development, but to demonstrate how the current debates on the policy implications of sustainable development could be understood from Heidegger's perspective. So, my discussion here should not be considered as an adequate discussion on the issue.

along Western experience of development (Baker, 2006:1). The transformation is possible by manipulation of nature for the unfettered economic and technological advancement (Baker, 2006:2).

Sustainable development tries to make a link between “development” that includes social wellbeing and economic growth, and sustainable ecology. Besides, it challenges the thesis of unlimited growth and de-growth thesis. Sustainable development aims at “promoting a form of development that is contained within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet, which is socially just and economically inclusive” (Baker, 2006:5).

Different works on sustainable development evidenced approaches towards the natural environment range from an “anthropocentric” to an “ecocentric” position. At the extreme end of the anthropocentric view, i.e., strong anthropocentrism, the natural environment is merely considered to be a warehouse for human needs and wants (O’Riordan, 1981 cited in Baker, 2006:28). In contrast, ecocentric approach to sustainable development holds the view that nature has intrinsic value. This ecocentric position aimed at creating a sound relationship between the natural environment and human beings (Baker, 2006:28).

In order to understand the policy implication and approaches that are associated with sustainable development, Baker develops the ladder of sustainable development in which, at one extreme, nature is seen only in relation to its use to human beings and, at the other extreme, nature is considered to be intrinsically valuable (Baker, 2006:28). My focus is to evaluate these approaches in relation to their policy implication.

The first approach is “pollution control approach”. This approach does not consider the interest and value of the natural environment apart from human interest. This approach holds that human ingenuity that could be expressed in technological and scientific advancement can solve environmental crises. The proponents of this approach hold that pollution is a problem at the early stage of industrialization and at the post-industrial stage; pollution will no longer be a problem (Baker, 2006:29-32). However, their fundamental attitude towards the natural environment and their solution to the crises make this strategy defective and incomplete, for I think that human ingenuity alone cannot solve the crises. In addition to this, this strategy ignores the fact that industrialized countries dump their waste in developing countries. This cannot control global environmental pollution; it can reduce pollution level in developed areas only, but

not at global level and thus this approach goes against the fundamental aim of sustainable development to insure environmental wellbeing worldwide. More importantly, it will encourage a compartmentalized worldview and practice that could undermine the practice of sustainable development.

The second one is “weak” sustainable development approach that aims at integrating capitalist growth with environmental concern (Baker, 2006:32). Baker states that this position is closely associated with David Pearce, and the highly influential green economy reports called *Blueprints*. In the report, Pearce *et al* suggest that environmental cost could be internalized by this economic growth (2006:31). This approach only echoes the thinking that nature is capital and in order to preserve it, we can make a cost-benefit analysis. Due to this, it fails to acknowledge the incalculable aspect of nature, and to recognize that there is nature which is “beyond price”. Besides, it also breaches many of the normative principles that have come to be associated with sustainable development like inter and intragenerational justice and equity. As long as the cost-benefit analysis is based on the ability to pay, I think that people who can pay can manipulate nature as long as they pay and this will make poor country the victim of environmental crises for the rich people can pay them to manipulate the biodiversity.

The third approach is “strong” sustainable development. This approach aims at a profound structural change in society, economic and political systems. In contrast to “weak” sustainable development, “strong” sustainable development suggests that environmental wellbeing is “precondition for economic development” (Baker *et al*, 1997 cited in Baker, 2006:33). Deep ecology also promotes sustainable development under the circumstance of intrinsic value of the natural environment. However, it also advocates non-interference towards the natural environment (Arne Naess, 1989, cited in Baker, 2006:35). This claim makes it problematic to promote and integrate goals of sustainable development. Deep ecology is being criticized for this stand of eco-fascism. It is also criticized for its inability to address the practical problem of the natural environment. Specially, it cannot address necessary economic development for the poor nations and thus goes against the principle of sustainable development that puts limitation on rich countries to allow a necessary economic growth in the poor countries.

In the discussion so far, we have seen that policy implication of sustainable development seems problematic in promoting a sound environmental ethics. And as a matter of fact, the given

approaches do not want to break from the traditional ethics of anthropocentrism and thus fail to redress the question of the environment afresh. More importantly, they fail to restore the full ontological stance of the natural environment and integrate it with the need of economic development and social wellbeing. This is the case in the first and second approaches of sustainable development. This provoked me to think how we could approach sustainable development from Heidegger's perspective.

Given that sustainable development promotes a global agenda that is basically a holistic approach, it needs a metaphysical platform to design policies. Heidegger's inspired holistic environmental ethics can be potentially forwarded as an alternative approach to promote and integrate goals of sustainable development. As we have discussed so far, Heidegger promotes a holistic approach in which "[e]arth and sky, divinities and mortals—being at one with one another of their own accord—belong together by way of the simpleness of the united fourfold" (1971:177). In this unity of the fourfold, the uniqueness of an individual being is acknowledged and more importantly individual beings are set free to be what they are. Understood in this way, the natural environment is not a simple capital that is used to promote economic growth; rather, it is considered as something "beyond price"—as having non-instrumental value. This basically challenges the first and second approaches that fail to acknowledge the non-instrumental value of the natural environment. Heidegger's concept of Being-with acknowledges the existence of others that are not the negative of the Self, rather fellow beings with whom Dasein shares this world. In addition to this, Heidegger's holism challenges the basic assumption of deep ecology that promotes non-interference towards the natural environment. As we have seen in Chapter Three, we could use technology without having a technological or instrument-oriented worldview by avoiding a challenged-reveling that makes the natural environment as something that can be ordered and thus be standing-reserve. And this is possible through releasement that lets things to be and let us to raise the being-question.

The forgoing discussion has shown two things. The first one is that the reason why Heidegger refuses to deal with the ought question and prefer to deal with ontological question is, among other things, his frustration that the "ought" question led modern human beings to forget the question of being. And it is argued that it is possible to withdraw ethical claims from his proto-ontological works and then treat the question of the environment by using his concept of Being-

with. His concept of Being-with enables us to determine the proper place of Dasein in the natural environment. The second one is that Heidegger's inspired form of holism can afford non-instrumental value of individual beings. We have also seen how we could approach contemporary debates on sustainable development and its policy implications by using Heidegger's conception of technology and holism.



## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis has dealt with the Western modern metaphysical assumptions about nature and human beings, which I claimed caused today's environmental crises by creating an impoverished conception about nature and of human beings. I tried to situate environmental ethics in modern Western metaphysical assumptions, and critically examine how Western conception of human beings and of the natural environment had created confusion and a faulty line of reasoning in the modern construction of environmental ethics which I tried to demonstrate in the presentation of the major assumptions of holistic and individualistic environmentalism. Having identified the major faulty lines of reasoning, I came to the assumption that metaphysical reflection is quintessential in order to have a proper answer for what we ought to do and identify the proper place of human beings in the natural environment. The questions that were an interest for this thesis are not a free-floating question with any practical implication; rather they are questions that need to be addressed anew. As it had been examined at length, the improper human actions and choices had already created environmental crises that nowadays beseech human community to come up with a sound environmental ethics that, I think, is only possible through philosophical enquires into the justifiable relationship between human beings and the natural environment. More importantly, understanding the metaphysical archetype of modern Western philosophy has a paramount importance in understating the bases of our environmental ethics from which we derive our basic concepts.

I argued that both individualistic and holistic environmental ethics are doomed to fail in articulating a sound environmental ethics, for individualistic environmentalism does not acknowledge the value of the system at large and holism does not recognize the intrinsic value of individual beings. So, revisiting this problem is important in order to have a sound and practical environmental ethics that will help us in addressing some of the burning questions in the literature of environment ethics, especially in the literature of pluralistic approaches in environmental ethics that acknowledges both the ecosystem and individual beings within the whole.

In justifying this thesis, I started with two assumptions (1) metaphysical reflection is essential for environmental ethics for the reason that it is our metaphysical assumption that essentially shapes our values from which we derive our duties, actions and choices, and (2) today's environmental

crises are manifestations of the fundamental problem, i.e., metaphysical crisis that I called the silent crisis. And thus I rejected an assumption that many of environmental crises that we are facing are simple practical problems that could be solved by a quick fix on our economic, political and social practices. These assumptions required a critical examination of both metaphysical assumptions and cultural practice of the West. While doing this, I situated my examination of metaphysical assumptions of the West on modern philosophy in relation to the philosophy of Rene Descartes and cultural practices on the techno-cultural practice of the West.

In chapter two I claimed that atomistic metaphysical assumptions of the West created materialistic conception of nature and of human beings that resulted in a controlled-obsessed science and technology that desires to develop one elegant mathematical equation to represent the whole nature, and to study nature-as-such, not nature-as-it-is—I termed this insidious desire a poverty of modern science. At the same time, dualistic metaphysical assumption has created a false bifurcation that resulted in hyper-separation of human beings and the natural environment. This metaphysical assumption has been used to justify the manipulation and domination of nature, for it invented nature as the negative form of the human Self in one way and, in another way, it invented the caricatured form of nature and thus making it the aggregate of materials to which human beings have no duty at all. Critical enquires into anthropocentric and individualistic environmentalism had shown us that the proponents of these schools of thought are not willing to break from this metaphysical paradigm and thus failed to articulate a sound environmental ethics. As a response to this, holistic environmentalism proposed a radical break from this assumption. However, our discussion so far has shown that a holistic environmentalism failed to acknowledge the intrinsic value of individual beings and is accused as eco-fascist that makes it defective in acknowledging the intrinsic value of individual beings and in reconciling the need to development and sustainable environmental and social wellbeing. In Chapter Two, I concluded that modern Western metaphysics cannot give us an adequate conceptual resource to articulate a sound environmental ethics and therefore a radical break from this intellectual tradition is an imperative.

This conclusion smoothly leads us to the question of how we could articulate a sound environmental ethics that is holistic by its nature and could afford the intrinsic value of individual beings? Before addressing this question, revisiting modern metaphysical tradition is

an imperative for two reasons. The first one is to identifying what went wrong in that particular intellectual tradition so as to take an essential lesson and the second one is proposing an alternative ontological base that could serve the purpose of this thesis. I find the work of Heidegger as exactly fitting to do so.

Alongside Heidegger, I argued that the basic tenets of modern philosophy triggered the assumption of the world-as-picture on which a human being is the master of interpretation and the ultimate measure of all things. This begot metaphysics of representation that studies nature-as-such not nature-as-it-is. With the advent of modern philosophy, there occurred a shift from theocentric to anthropocentric worldview. As I have reasonably argued, this shift ultimately resulted in the disenchantment of the world which in turn furnished a controlled-obsessed and productionist metaphysical assumption which regarded everything as a raw material. More importantly, I have shown that with the advent of modern philosophy, the false and irrational bifurcation of the “I” and the “Other” reached at its climax. What is worse about this intellectual tradition is that it regarded the “Other” as the negative form of the human Self. Among many other things, this resulted in an ultimate calamity in the natural environment. From this line of reasoning, I called this situation of science the poverty of modern science. This was reason enough for me to argue against the main tenets of modern Western metaphysics alongside its science and technology.

Thus, in chapter three, I sought to develop an alternative ontological base and technological attitude that could furnish a sound environmental ethics that, I argued, should acknowledge the intrinsic value of individual beings in the interconnected and interdependent world. This, as it had been argued, needs both ontological base and technological attitude.

In order to meet my objectives, I started with an argument that technology can never be neutral. The assumption that science and technology are neutral is the worst possible way of understanding technology. Given modern technology and science are on the trunk of modern Western philosophy which essentially is based on metaphysics of representation and productionist-rationalist metaphysics, its main concern is a maximum production at a minimum cost. As a matter of fact, this is possible only through challenging-reveling that demands nature to present itself in the way that could maximize human interest. Modern technology is, therefore, instrumental and anthropological. However, I have demonstrated alongside Heidegger that

technology is beyond mere manufacturing and utilization of equipment. What else could it be? Heidegger persuasively argued that technology is the way of revealing that is possible only through letting things to be and thus even though we live in technology dominated world we can have and practice non-technological thinking. It is to say that we can use technology in the way that could reveal or unconceal the essence of the natural environment that is free from challenged-revealing. Therefore, I am not pessimistic about technology, and I think it is not avoidable. But I am arguing against the challenged-revealing mode of technological conception that reduces nature as a standing-reserve.

However, this technological thinking ought to be furnished with ontological base. So, the next line of reasoning necessitated developing an ontological base that could serve this purpose. As I have shown in the subsequent chapters, Heidegger persuasively reconstructs fundamental ontology that appreciates individuals' values within the fourfold world that essentially is holistic. Alongside the question of what does it mean to be human, I tried to examine the question of with whom Dasein is? Heidegger demonstrated that a human being is a being to whom its being and the being of other beings are constantly manifested. This makes Dasein to uphold that it is not alone in this world and its authentic role in this shared world is to do phenomenological analysis by letting things to be. Thus, Dasein is not only concerned about its own being, but also the being of other beings. Following this reasoning, Heidegger argues that Dasein is not the master of earth, but the shepherd of being that unconceals its own being and the being of other beings. This enables Dasein to transcend itself and comprehend the Being-question. Even though this comprehension of the Being-question makes Dasein to be transcending but its being-in-the-world amidst of other beings makes it profoundly finite and referential. Due to this fact, Dasein is powerless, in the sense that it is not the source of its being and the being of other beings, to control and to be the master of nature rather a one who lets things to be by themselves.

As already discussed to some length in chapter three, I argued that both ontological thinking and technological conception of Heidegger could enable us not only to revisit the main tenets of modern Western metaphysics, but also they can suggest a conceptual base for a sound environmental ethics that I have defended. As it had been clear in the discussion, Heidegger's works are characterized as a fundamental ontology. This could make us skeptical not only to apply his thoughts to environment, but also to ethics. So, the next line of reasoning is to identify

which concepts are fundamental in our quest for a sound environmental ethics? What kind of technological attitudes and practices are appropriate to serve this purpose? Chapter Four of this thesis logically addressed this question.

Following this, it has been argued at length that the concept of “Mitsein” (Being-with) could be considered as a ground to ethics and then to environmental ethics. By Being-with, Dasein recognizes others not as the negative of itself as it was the case in the philosophy of Descartes, rather they are “Others” with whom Dasein shares this world in companion with “Care” (“Sorge”). This “Care” lets “Others” to reveal themselves and thus help “Others” to open or unconceal their true nature. This could challenge subjugation and manipulation and foster a free relationship between nature and human beings. I argued that since Dasein is with-Others in interconnected world and since its own being and the being of other beings are a concern to it and since this caring lets others to manifest themselves, thus the interconnectedness or the interdependence of beings in the whole does not logically invalidate the uniqueness of individual beings and it does not reduce the whole to its parts. Thus, I come to the conclusion in chapter four that a sound environmental ethics is logically defensible and ethically desirable.

From this line of reasoning, I argued that this fundamental ontology could serve us to reconcile the gap between holistic assumption and intrinsic value of individual beings. The Being-with-others includes the recognition of others not as the negative of the human self or as the exact copy of human self. Dasein, therefore, should let things to present themselves as they are, because even though Being-in-the-world-with-others involve being as a whole, it also recognizes the uniqueness of individual beings. Understood in this way, the natural environment is not a simple capital, but something “beyond price” having non-instrumental value. However, in order to articulate a sound environmental ethics, our conception of holism must be re-defined.

As I have indicated in the subsequent sections, if we want our concept of holism to acknowledge intrinsic value we must consider three important points. The first one is that our conception of holism should not limit the relationship of individual elements only to the whole. The second point is that our notion of holism should be considered as undifferentiated plurality of Beings on which the uniqueness of individual beings is duly acknowledged in the face of the whole. The third point is that our understanding of holism should be free from object-subject relationship or means-end relationship of individual beings and the whole system. This conception of holism, as

I have demonstrated, 1) does not consider individual beings as subservient to the whole. In this case, individual beings mirror their own being and are not required to be like other beings. Mentioned in this way, the uniqueness of individual being has its own place in the fourfold; 2) the unity of the fourfold sets individual beings free and this is all about letting things to be and thus domination for the good of the whole has no place in this conception of holism and 3) in this mutual belongingness, individual beings come into light and realize their being or unconceal their true essence.

In trying to show the relevance of this thesis to address practical issues, I have shown how contemporary debates on sustainable development goals could drive important elements from this kind of ethics. I think that ethical theory that acknowledges the undifferentiated plurality of the whole and the part could be suggested as an alternative ethical ground to sustainable development. Besides, it can be suggested as a base in promoting and integrating the three pillars of sustainable development, i.e., economic, social and environmental wellbeing.

In addition to this, it is hoped that policy makers in the area of environmental management, technologists, development agents, politicians and researchers can benefit from this thesis. In integrating our social, environmental and economic policies, this thesis hopefully gives a logical defensible and ethically desirable outlook. As I have tried to show, questions concerning environmental ethics are both practical and theoretical. Even though I tried to show the practical aspects of this thesis, I could not conduct field works due to time constraint.

Therefore, a further research must be undertaken to explicate the social and political implication of Heidegger's works. Among others the following questions need to be addressed: how can we utilize the works of Heidegger to reconstruct a sound social and political polices in just and humane societies? How can Heidegger's understandings of technology be fruitfully applied to contemporary debates on green economy and technological design? How could we rebuild global governance in the area of environmental management that gives autonomy to individual nations to entertain their unique local experience and still allows them to operate in the interrelated world? How can it help us to understand the debates about faking nature and restorative thesis in environmental ethics? How does this help us to understand global climate change?

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