



ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

AN INTRODUCTION

by
Luís Sebastião
University of Évora

WHAT'S ETHICS ABOUT

- Ethics is about desires
- Ethics is about duties
- But, above all, ethics is about actions
- In other words, ethics is about the way we live our lives

WHAT ABOUT DESIRES ?

- First of all, let us distinguish among desires and wishes
 - Desires come from our biological roots
 - Wishes come from our values
- Humanity has been dealing with desires in two ways:
 - The western way
 - The eastern way
- But all the humanity wishes happiness

SO, WHAT ABOUT WISHES?

- Here, we are facing a hell of a problem, because we have to make a new distinction: between adequate wishes and inadequate wishes.
- This is, we are facing the problem of the good and the evil.
- Even if we can't solve the problem, we can't deny it: in the end, good and evil is what ethics is about.

WHAT ABOUT HAPPINESS ?

- In a simple way, we can say that for a human being happiness means, to simply realize his adequate wishes.
- We have, in fact to go back to the real question: what is an adequate wish?
- Let us to seem wise like foxes and say: the adequate wish for a human being is to become, really and completely human.

WHAT IS TO BE A HUMAN BEING ?

- That is the oldest and the newest question that the humanity asks itself.
- The answer is always imperfect and is only possible inside a **world vision** wich respects the rule of the four C's
 - **Coherence**
 - **Consistence**
 - **Completeness**
 - **Consequence**

WHAT ABOUT WORLD VISIONS?

- World visions are like “the immortals”, they fight each other, each one try to cut the others “head” and profit from its wisdom and energy.
- We can’t prove that a world vision is true. We only can believe that one is better than the other.
- We have to “bet” on it. That’s why, in fact, Ethics is about choices.

The two main families of world visions

- In a certain way, we can say that there are two main families of world visions, with consequences in terms of science, culture, politics, ethics, religion. In a word, in human life:
- The reductionist one
- The holistic one
- And this too families are, also, the framework of two different trends in environmental ethics