

# The Metaphysical Bond between Natural and Human Beings: an Argument from Aquinas’s Natural Law for justifying Environmental Ethics

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## **Abstract**

I intend to discuss Aquinas’ natural law argument for justifying environmental ethics, by referring to the consideration of natural law as the participation of the eternal law. Before we examine views on what constitutes this participation of the eternal law, understood as an active and passive participation, we need to examine views on what environmental ethics strive for. In general, environmental ethics aims to argue the value of natural beings and moral attitude toward nature. The consideration of the passive participation of the eternal law both in human and natural beings is useful for justifying not only the value of natural beings but also the community of being between humans and the rest of nature. The consideration of the active participation of the eternal law in human beings serves to argue the moral responsibility for non-rational beings.

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## 1 THE AIM OF ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental ethics emerged as a philosophical subdiscipline around the 1970s as a reflection about the necessity to change the values related to the environment.<sup>1</sup> At first, different environmental ethics focused on identifying the causes of ecological disasters and lack of environmental awareness: a disenchantment of nature (neo-Marxist perspective on ecological ethics),<sup>2</sup> the logic of male domination (feminist ethics),<sup>3</sup> a lack of social conscience (social ecology),<sup>4</sup> and the deontologist and consequentialist approach (virtue ethics).<sup>5</sup> Some authors such as White (1967) stated that the Judeo-Christian tradition provided an anthropocentric view, which has led to despotic control of nature. Another author, Passmore (1974) criticized this position, arguing that Christian thought provides rather a conception of human being as *administrator* of the Creator's work, which makes him responsible and respectful of nature.

At present, environmental ethics also focuses on the following issues: biodiversity, the place of irrational beings in ethical theories (animal liberation, if irrational nature is susceptible to rights and representation in court, the protection of species, etc.), ecosystem health, environmental justice and poverty issues. In short, these issues require not just philosophical, but an interdisciplinary study because of the social and political factors involved.<sup>6</sup>

In general, environmental ethics make a claim against 'traditional' anthropocentrism and the most radical ones distrust the moral superiority of human beings in relation to the other species on the planet. Concretely, environmental ethics are concerned with arguments to justify assigning intrinsic value to the environment itself. If nonhuman living organisms have value in themselves, moral agents have a duty to protect them and prevent damage against them. If they have instead a merely instrumental value then, for example, the abuse of animals is not bad in itself. As Kant states, cruelty to animals is indirectly bad, since our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties to humanity. Therefore, cruelty to animals is bad because it is inhuman and damages humanity.<sup>7</sup> These statements are controversial for the majority of contemporary environmental ethics' approaches. We will confront them below when discussing one of Aquinas' remarks.

With other basis than Kantian thought, but with similar conclusions, some authors suggest an *enlightened* anthropocentrism instead of traditional anthropocentrism, arguing that moral duties toward the environment emerge from direct duties to people who live there. This *pragmatic* approach provides the basis for public policy development and solutions to environmental degradation. For this reason, their supporters

allege this anthropocentrism is sufficient and even more effective in ecological measures than radical ecological approaches in discussing theoretically the intrinsic value of the nonhuman environment.<sup>8</sup>

The different approaches to environmental ethics can be divided in two groups. The first group are the human-centered approaches that are divided into two types. One type considers environmental care as an element of *human welfare* not only of current, but also of future generations, e.g. *enlightened* anthropocentric approaches, environmental *pragmatism*. The other type of anthropocentric approaches do not focus on human welfare, but on *human perfection*: environmental care is considered as an aspect of the culture, knowledge, education or even virtue of the individual, e.g. virtue oriented approaches to environmental ethics.<sup>9</sup>

The second group are the non-anthropocentric approaches that argue in this way: if anthropocentrism has been the cause of environmental destruction, then the solution is a non-anthropocentric position in environmental issues. Non-anthropocentric approaches focus on nonhuman natural beings, alleging they have value in themselves, e.g. deep ecology, ecofeminism and new animism.

Non-anthropocentric approaches are more interesting for the present discussion, because they intend to argue the ontological relationship with the nonhuman natural environment; in general, a relationship of equality. Concretely, Arne Naess, a defender of *deep ecology* from the 1970s, stands up for a *relational* approach and a principle of equality among all beings of the biosphere (biospheric egalitarianism). All beings have value in themselves, regardless of their usefulness to others. All natural beings have the right to life and development. Inspired by the metaphysics of Spinoza, Naess' deep ecology rejects individualistic atomism based on the assumption that each being, as an individual, has a separate essence.<sup>10</sup>

According to Naess, individualistic atomism leads to the radical separation of human beings from the rest of nature, favoring selfishness not only with respect to other human beings, but also with regard to other natural beings. The relational approach suggests rather that the identity of a being is constituted in its relations with other beings in the world, especially living things. Moreover, Naess and his supporters state the possibility of widening the boundaries of the self beyond the body and consciousness: my *ecological Self*. Thus, respect and care for my *Self* implies respect and care for the natural environment that is part of me. The completion of the *Self* involves the individual human being's reconnection with the environment. Naess argues that a close relationship to nature produces a deep satisfaction, and in fact, contributes to our quality of life.<sup>11</sup>

Apart from the pantheistic philosophical assumptions of Naess's proposal there are other criticisms. Some feminist ethicists criticize the *extension of self* postulated by Naess, since the idea of nature as part of oneself might also justify the continuous exploitation of the nature. They state that this argument is another form of colonialism, unable to give to nature what is due as an *other* independent of human interests.<sup>12</sup> Another criticism to Naess' proposal points out the lack of impact in practice of the principle of equality of the entire biosphere. Other authors have accused deep ecology of being an elitist movement, since the experiences of contact with nature mentioned by them are reserved for a high socioeconomic status, and shows an excessive concern for preserving natural areas without considering the needs of the local population.<sup>13</sup>

These criticisms were effective and elicited a more modest rethinking of deep ecology, then called *ecosophy*. In the 1980s the egalitarianism of the biosphere was reduced to a less radical principle: both the life of human and non-human beings have value in itself. Naess argued that deep ecology would cease to be a specific doctrine to be transformed into a platform or line of thought with eight points, which could be accepted by people of different faiths and cultures.<sup>14</sup>

Ecological concern in general and the development of non-anthropocentric ethics is partly justified by human behavior in relation to the environment. It is undeniable that so much despotic human domination of nature through technology has brought humans to cease perceiving themselves as part of nature. Accordingly, the reaction of radical environmental movements is somewhat understandable. But the philosophical basis of their approaches often does not correspond to the reality of being, and consequently the practices or actions they promote are unfair and excessive.<sup>15</sup>

Nonetheless the ontological approach of non-anthropocentric ethics suggest interesting questions such as: what is the basis of such metaphysical bond of human existence with nature? Are all beings equally valuable? The type of ethical demands depends on how one answers these questions.

I suggest that Aquinas' understanding of natural law as the participation of eternal law in human and natural beings is useful to answer those questions placing the right philosophical basis of environmental ethics.

## 2 THE PARTICIPATION OF THE ETERNAL LAW IN HUMAN AND NATURAL BEINGS

Though Aquinas dedicated the whole *questio* 94 of *Summa Theologiae* I-II to natural law, the main text of his notion of natural law as the participation of eternal law is in *Summa Theologiae* I-II, *questio* 91, which discusses the various kinds of law, concretely in article 2, while asking if there is a natural law:

«since all things subject to Divine providence are ruled and measured by the eternal law, as was stated above (Article 1); it is evident that all things partake somewhat of the eternal law, in so far as, namely, from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends. Now among all others, the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence, by being provident both for itself and for others. Wherefore it has a share of the Eternal Reason, whereby it has a natural inclination to its proper act and end: and this participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is called the natural law» (I-II:91:2).<sup>16</sup>

The understanding of Aquinas' natural law as the participation of the eternal law invites and illuminates reflection on the relationship between humans and nature, posing clear metaphysical assumptions. Principally, all beings, human and non human, are governed by the eternal law, as originated from the same divine source.

According to Aquinas, law is an ordinance of every being to an end (I-II:90:1). Therefore, the way of all beings ruled by the eternal law is throughout their respective *natural inclinations* to given acts and ends. By having this ordination to their proper ends, human beings are related to the rest of nature under the common category of created beings. As such, each being is intrinsically ordered to perform what is due to its nature, subject to a law we have not given ourselves. This is the *passive* participation of the eternal law both in human and non-human beings, which advocates for a metaphysical union – even equality – of all natural beings.

To understand what does it mean being intrinsically ordered to given acts and ends, it is necessary to refer to the natural inclinations explained by Aquinas:

«Because in man there is first of all an inclination to good in accordance with the nature which he has in common with all substances: inasmuch as every substance seeks the preservation of its own being, according to its

nature: and by reason of this inclination, whatever is a means of preserving human life, and of warding off its obstacles, belongs to the natural law. Secondly, there is in man an inclination to things that pertain to him more specially, according to that nature which he has in common with other animals: and in virtue of this inclination, those things are said to belong to the natural law, “which nature has taught to all animals” [Pandect. Just. I, tit. i], such as sexual intercourse, education of offspring and so forth. Thirdly, there is in man an inclination to good, according to the nature of his reason, which nature is proper to him: thus man has a natural inclination to know the truth about God, and to live in society: and in this respect, whatever pertains to this inclination belongs to the natural law; for instance, to shun ignorance, to avoid offending those among whom one has to live, and other such things regarding the above inclination» (I-II:94:2).

There are three groups of inclinations: the inclination to life-preservation, to life generation and to the rational life. All of these are present in human beings. It is interesting for this discussion to focus not only on the rational inclination of human beings, but also on the other two groups of inclinations. As said, both the first group, which refers to the preservation of life and the second group, which refer to the specific aspects of sensory-animal life, are present in humans as well. Human beings share with all beings, from the simplest ones, the tendency to self-preservation avoiding anything that threatens their lives. At the level of sensory life, human beings share with other animals all sensory tendencies such as memory knowledge, sexual intercourse and education of offspring.

The sharing of natural inclinations tell us first that human beings are also natural beings, a part of nature, and have the same tendencies as other beings. Second, these inclinations are given in our nature of living beings, that we cannot change or delete them, because they are inherent in our way of being. Third, the tendencies aim for some goods, the ends of each inclination are good for our development as such beings. Accordingly we share with every being in a *passive* way, as something given to us, the more basic inclinations, because we are under the same eternal law.

This being true, it is no less true that every being is under the eternal law *but* according to their specific nature. In other words, the participation of the eternal law involves not only a certain metaphysical union of all beings, but also their specificity, and therefore a different way of participation of the eternal law. For this reason along with the consideration of natural inclinations in general, we should consider also the specific inclination to rational life:

«Even irrational animals partake in their own way of the Eternal Reason, just as the rational creature does. But because the rational creature partakes thereof in an intellectual and rational manner, therefore the participation of the eternal law in the rational creature is properly called a law, since a law is something pertaining to reason, as stated above (I-II:90:1). Irrational creatures, however, do not partake thereof in a rational manner, wherefore there is no participation of the eternal law in them, except by way of similitude» (I-II:91:2 ad 3).

The quote refers to the particular way in which rational beings participate of the eternal law. Along with the *passive* participation of the eternal law in all beings mentioned above, there is a rational, and hence *active*, participation of the eternal law that is specific to humans. Rationality and freedom as human-specific capabilities make a difference in sharing inclinations with non-rational beings. Natural inclinations such as the inclination to life or sexual reproduction that, from a material standpoint, human beings share with other animals are, from a formal standpoint, radically different inclinations, because human beings can grasp intellectually the ends of these inclinations, and integrate them into a conduct guided by virtue.<sup>17</sup> In other words, rational beings can understand the sense of their tendencies and pursue their ends in a rational way, therefore not instinctively but freely.

These remarks do not contest my argument about the appropriateness of Aquinas' natural law approach for justifying environmental ethics, but support it. Precisely because «the rational creature is subject to Divine providence in the most excellent way, in so far as it partakes of a share of providence», human beings are «provident both for itself and for others» (I-II:91:2), meaning by others not only humans but also natural beings, the whole nature, animate and inanimate beings.

Consequently, since humans participate *rationally* and thus *actively* in the eternal law they are able to provide for themselves and for others (to legislate). At the same time, like the rest of nature, they also participate *passively* in that law (as legislated).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, human beings cannot forget themselves as a part of nature, and accordingly they must associate the destiny of nature to their own destiny.<sup>19</sup>

But in virtue of what can human beings be provident for natural beings? By virtue of their rationality, human beings are aware of the direction to the ends inherent not only to their nature but *also to the nature of other beings*. Since the rest of the natural beings tend to their ends not consciously, then human beings can grasp intellectually the proper ends to which natural beings tend, and eventually can help their development.

At this point, it is necessary to explain the use of *nature* underlying

Aquinas' approach to natural law. It is not the modern concept of nature as the physical and limited to functionality. In contrast, it is the notion of nature as dynamic internal principle of operation borrowed from Aristotle.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, *nature* means the principle of development and the specific activity of a being tending to its proper ends. That is to say, a way of being that has an inclination, a meaning, that expresses an intelligibility and an implicit rationality.<sup>21</sup> In other words, *nature* refers to the essence of a being as an internal principle of motion, which guides the individual toward its realization.

Based on Aristotle, Aquinas advocates a natural teleology, as we can observe in the remarks mentioned above: «from its being imprinted on them, they derive their respective inclinations to their proper acts and ends» (I-II:91:2). The ends are already inscribed in the nature of the beings and mark the direction of their development as such beings. This teleology, being natural, is original in the sense that it is already given in the constitution of every being, it exists in our nature. According to Aristotle, every living substance is in itself the end of its own process of tendencies, and through its being, participates in the divine.<sup>22</sup> Hence, humans and nonhuman beings are in themselves the end of their own process of inclinations, and this shows precisely their participation in the eternal law.

It is easy to see that the human being's active and passive participation of the eternal law has to be approached together for justifying any kind of environmental ethical demands. Therefore the *anthropological* approach (based on the active participation of the eternal law), that pivots on the consideration of reason, emphasizing the distinctiveness of human beings and the rest of nature needs to be complemented with the *ecological* approach that is based on the passive participation and emphasizes the community of nature between human beings and non-human beings.<sup>23</sup>

Environmental ethics based on these approaches would not need to oppose human beings with natural beings. This could avoid contradictory conclusions such as human beings are something completely separate from nature or that they are one species more.<sup>24</sup> Unlike these approaches, an anthropological approach complemented with an ecological approach can help in understanding an *inclusive* concept of nature — that does not override specific differences of being — with the consideration of an environmental community where moral agents — human beings — accept the responsibility for non rational beings.

By an *inclusive* concept of nature I mean the notion of nature as a *whole* — in a comprehensive sense. In this regard, it is interesting Heidegger's criticism on the reduction of the modern concept of nature and his proposal to



recover the greek concept of nature (*physis*) that originally meant heaven and earth, stone and plant, animal and human, human history, understood as the work of the gods, and finally, the gods themselves. This requires considering nature not as a separated sphere – and therefore not used for its indiscriminate exploitation – of the existence of humans and even more the manifestation of the divine. This quest for unity, this holism gives meaning to the differences of being.<sup>25</sup>

Turning now to the criticisms mentioned above attributed to a Judeo-Christian view about favoring a despotic control of nature, it seems that they lack basis. In fact, those criticisms often focus on the passage from *Genesis* wherein God commands man to *dominate* the earth. But *dominion* does not mean a despotic control of nature.<sup>26</sup> *Dominion* means rather *rational government*, because only a rational being is able to rule and provide for others. The action of providing for other beings means *to take care*, *to look after it*, as stated explicitly in *Genesis* 2, 15: «The Lord God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and *care for it*». Providing for the rest of nature, human beings are like God, since they partake of God's gentle and provident reason toward all created beings. That means that our care for things should respect God's providential plan for them. In order to understand how God cares for things, leading them to their perfection, we must first understand the ends to which God has ordered things, as «the ultimate perfection of anything whatsoever is in the attainment of its end».<sup>27</sup> Therefore, human beings have the responsibility to advance the knowledge of natural sciences for a better understanding of natural dynamisms and legislation dealing with the environment.

However, this does not mean that the protection of the environment is only a scientific or technical question; it is also and above all an *ethical issue*, as Saint John Paul II stated. In his words, «all have a moral duty to care for the environment, not only for their own good but also for the good of future generations », pointing out that human being should be in relation to nature *an intelligent and noble master and guardian* instead of a *heedless exploiter and destroyer*. Accordingly, environmental care «implies that life must be handled with care, including animal life and all of animate and inanimate nature».<sup>28</sup> In this regard, Benedict XVI has explained that «the book of nature is one and indivisible», and it follows that «the deterioration of nature is closely connected to the culture which shapes human coexistence».<sup>29</sup>

These quotations show that from the very beginning and increasingly in the contemporary world, Christian tradition has provided an anthropocentric view respectful of the environment, calling all citizens of the planet to remember their original nature as creatures according to Aquinas' remarks

about the common participation of the eternal law.<sup>30</sup>

Aquinas' remarks clarify also some discussions in environmental ethics dealing with the intrinsic or instrumental value of non-rational natural beings. Aquinas' statements concerning God's providential care of creatures are in harmony with what he maintains concerning God's love of creatures. He explains that some creatures are loved for themselves and also as a means, and others are only loved for themselves, and not as a means. Accordingly, Aquinas distinguishes three possible situations: one can love something *solely as a means* (e.g., an 8-track tape), or *solely for its own sake* (namely, a human being), or *both for its own sake and as a means* (e.g., health). His statements indicate that he places non-rational creatures in the third category.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, non-rational beings are to be cared both for their own sake and as a means. To recall, Kant's statements about the value of non-rational beings, as noted above, differs from Aquinas' conclusion. Kant states rather that non-rational beings have a merely instrumental value, hence they are to be cared only as means.

From Aquinas' perspective, the privileged position of humans — as rational beings loved for their own sake — within nature is rather a call to greater responsibility for its care,<sup>32</sup> respecting the teleology of beings, as noted. In fact, any type of help we provide to a natural being is possible because this being is directed by itself to some end, although perhaps sometimes it is too weak to attain it. This may be the reason for ecological actions of care or some interventions necessary for the conservation or the balance of some ecosystem, like for example to prevent species from going extinct. In any case, any action is always possible, because it is based on the natural tendency, i.e. the natural dynamism that impels the development.

As a final remark, I should have answered the questions posed above about the basis of the metaphysical bond of human existence with nature and the (equal) value of all beings. As noted, the answers to those questions need to be based on the right anthropocentric and ecological view. In this sense, the specific differentiation of human being plus the common metaphysical origin of all natural beings — the human being included — (the anthropological and ecological approach together) reveal the plausibility of justifying an environmental ethics based on the participation of the eternal law. This implies to consider the natural teleology underlying Aquinas' approach to natural law as well as a comprehensive view of nature as a whole.

## NOTES

1. See the works of: L. White, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis*, «Science», 55 (1967), pp. 1203-1207 (reprinted in Schmidtz and Willott, 2002); J. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature*, Duckworth, London, 1974, 2nd ed. 1980; Arne Naess, *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary*, «Inquiry» 16 (1-4) (1973), pp. 95 – 100; R. Routley, R., *Is there a need for a new, an environmental ethic?*, in *Proceedings of the 15th World congress of Philosophy*, vol. 1, Sophia Press, Sophia, 1973, pp. 205-210 (see also Sylvan, R.); C.D. Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?*, «Law Review», 45 (1972), pp. 450-501; H. Rolston, *Is There an Ecological Ethic?*, «Ethics» 85 (1975), pp. 93-109.
2. See S. Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1996, pp. 61-68. Particularly interesting is the exposition of Habermas's thinking about the possibility of treating nature as an interlocutor, therefore, as a moral entity.
3. See V. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, Routledge, London, 1993; S. Collins, *A Different Heaven and Earth*, Judson Press, Valley Forge, 1974. The 'ecofeminism' postulates that the cause of ecological disasters, as a consequence of the domination over nature, is due to patterns of patriarchal or male thought.
4. See Murray Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism*, AK Press, Oakland, 2007, p. 19: «Social ecology is based on the conviction that nearly all of our present ecological problems originate in deep-seated social problems. It follows, from this view, that these ecological problems cannot be understood, let alone solved, without a careful understanding of our existing society and the irrationalities that dominate it. To make this point more concrete: economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts, among many others, lie at the core of the most serious ecological dislocations we face today – apart, to be sure, from those that are produced by natural catastrophes».
5. See Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007.
6. See Andrew Brennan & Yeuk-Sze Lo, *Environmental Ethics*, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Winter 2002 Edition; substantive revision Winter 2008, <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental>.
7. See I. Kant, *Duties to Animals and Spirits* (1780), in *Lectures on Ethics*, Louis Infield trans., Harper and Row, New York, 1963, pp. 239-240: «Our duties towards animals are merely indirect duties to humanity... If a man shoots his dog because the animal is no longer capable of service, he does not fail in his duty to the dog, for the dog cannot judge, but his act is inhuman and damages in himself that humanity which it is his duty to show towards mankind».
8. See A. Light & E. Katz, *Environmental Pragmatism*, Routledge, London, 1996; B. Norton, *Toward Unity Among Environmentalists*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991.
9. See B. Norton, *Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism*, «Environmental Ethics» 6 (1984), pp. 133-138 and B. Norton, *Toward Unity among Environ-*

- mentalists*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1991. In these works the author develops his idea on weak anthropocentrism. See also Ronald Sandler, *Character and Environment: A Virtue-Oriented Approach to Environmental Ethics*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007; J. Barry, *Rethinking Green Politics*, Sage, London, 1999.
10. See Arne, Naess, *The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movement. A Summary*, «Inquiry» 16 (1-4), (1973), pp. 95 – 100.
  11. From another perspective, Timothy Chappell states that it is a shared experience that contact with nature is the kind of good that might be called basic. He includes *natural world* among the basic goods. See T. Chappell, *Understanding Human Goods*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998, p. 43.
  12. See V. Plumwood, o.c., pp. 164-189.
  13. See R. Guha, *Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique*, «Environmental Ethics» 11 (1989), pp. 71-83: «What is unacceptable are the radical conclusions drawn by deep ecology, in particular, that intervention in nature should be guided primarily by the need to preserve biotic integrity rather than by the needs of humans». Guha's criticisms are very sharp and go to the core of deep ecology: the causes of environmental devastation do not lie in the distinction biocentrism-anthropocentrism, i.e. the man-nature relationship, emphasized by these environmentalists, but in problems of distribution of economic resources, and lifestyles marked by consumerism. Guha also criticized deep ecology in its quest to be a universal philosophy which does not take into account the social and cultural differences in different regions.
  14. «By an ecosophy I mean a philosophy of ecological harmony or equilibrium. A philosophy as a kind of sofia wisdom, is openly normative, it contains both norms, rules, postulates, value priority announcements and hypotheses concerning the state of affairs in our universe. Wisdom is policy wisdom, prescription, not only scientific description and prediction» (A. Naess, o.c., p. 99). The principles are collected in B. Devall, G. Sessions, *Deep Ecology. Living as if Nature Mattered*, Peregrine Smith, Salt Lake City, 1985, p. 70.
  15. Some radical views of deep ecology, like Rolston, *Feeding People versus Saving Nature?*, in W. Aiken and H. LaFollette (eds.), *World Hunger and Morality*, Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1996, pp. 248-267, have even argued that some people are a kind of planetary cancer. In this article, the author considers that sometimes the conservation of nature should be a priority over feeding people in need, but was criticized for these statements. See Andrew Brennan y Yeuk-Sze Lo, op.cit., <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental>.
  16. All translations of the *Summa Theologiae* are from *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas*, Second and Revised Edition, 1920, literally translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Online Edition Copyright © 2008 by Kevin Knight.
  17. See Ana Marta González, *El fundamento de la ley natural*, in Tomás Trigo (ed.) *En busca de una ética universal: un nuevo modo de ver la ley natural*, EUNSA, Pamplona, 2011, pp.147-166.
  18. The categories of legislator / legislated are explained by Aquinas in this way:

- «A law is in a person not only as in one that rules, but also by participation as in one that is ruled» (I-II:90:1 ad 1).
19. See Ana Marta González, *Éticas sin moral*, «Pensamiento y Cultura», Revista de Humanidades, Ediciones Universidad de La Sabana, Colombia, vol. 12, n° 2 (2009), pp. 303-320.
  20. In Aristotle's view plants and animals are paradigm cases of natural existents, because they have a nature in the sense of an internal causal principle which explains how it comes into being and behaves (*Phys.* II.1.192b32-3). All translations of Aristotle works are from *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, trans. & ed. under W.D. Ross, Ebook.
  21. See David S. Oderberg, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Law*, in H. Zaborowski (ed.) *Natural Moral Law in Contemporary Society*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2010, pp. 44-75.
  22. «The most natural act is the production of another like itself, an animal producing an animal, a plant a plant, in order that, as far as its nature allows, it may partake in the eternal and divine. That is the goal towards which all things strive, that for the sake of which they do whatsoever their nature renders possible. The phrase 'for the sake of which' is ambiguous; it may mean either (a) the end to achieve which, or (b) the being in whose interest, the act is done» (*De An.* II, 4, 415 a 23- b7).
  23. See Ana Marta González, *El fundamento de la ley natural*, cit., p. 162.
  24. See Thomas Heyd, *Relacionando Cultura y naturaleza*, «Azafea» 10 (2008), Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, Salamanca, pp. 161-178. It is not the case to raise a radical dichotomy of the human condition, nature vs. culture, because these aspects are integrated and correlated in the human being itself. Heyd's proposal to avoid falling into this dichotomy is rather to analyze what belongs to nature and what belongs to culture from a reflection on the categories of cultural heritage and natural heritage present in the current environmental debate.
  25. See M. Heidegger, *Serenidad*, Ediciones del Serbal, Barcelona, 1989. See also Ricardo Pablo Pobierzym, *Martín Heidegger: La propuesta del habitar como un desafío a la ecología*, 2004, <http://www.temakel.com/texfilhabitararq.htm>.
  26. It is rather a corruption of what is stated in *Genesis* 1, 27-28: «God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth"». This quote is to be completed with that of *Genesis* 2, 15: «The LORD God then took the man and settled him in the garden of Eden, to cultivate and care for it». The quotes are from *The New American Bible*, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/\\_INDEX.HTM](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENGo839/_INDEX.HTM).
  27. See Marie George, *Aquinas on the goodness of creatures and man's place in the universe: a basis for the general precepts of environmental ethics*, «The Thomist», vol. 76 (2012), pp. 73-124. The quote corresponds to I:103:1. Elsewhere, Aquinas says: «all parts are for the sake of the perfection of the whole... Thus, therefore,

- also in the parts of the universe, each and every creature is for the sake of its proper act and perfection» (I:65:2).
28. John Paul II, Post Synod Apostolic Exhortation, *Ecclesia in Asia*, 1998, available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va); John Paul II, *Address*, Representatives of Science and Art, Vienna, Austria, September 13, 1983, available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).
  29. Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009), 687.
  30. See the teachings of the last popes, where the question of the environment is closely related to other important social issues: Encyclical Letter *Pacem in Terris*: AAS 55 (1963); Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971), 21: AAS 63 (1971); Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (4 March 1979), 15: AAS 71 (1979); Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), 34: AAS 80 (1988); Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009); Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (18 June 2015).
  31. See Marie George, o.c., p. 77. The author refers to Aquinas's explanations in ScG I, c. 91. See Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa contra gentiles*, Translated by Vernon J. Bourke, updated by Joseph Kenny, O.P. Hanover House, New York, 1957.
  32. About the notion of *care*, see M. Heidegger, *Construir, habitar, pensar*, in *Filosofía, ciencia y técnica*, prólogos Francisco Soler y Jorge Acevedo, 5a ed., Editorial Universitaria, Santiago de Chile, 2007 (ed.original: M. Heidegger, *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken im Vortäge und Aufsätze*. G. Neske, Pfullingen, 1954) *Caring* means to guard the four elements — heaven, earth, mortals, divines — in its essence. What is taken in custody has to be hosted. Living is rather always to reside next to things. Saving the earth is more than to exploit it or even damage it. Saving the earth is not owning the earth, nor make it our subject, where one step leads to uncontrolled exploitation.

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