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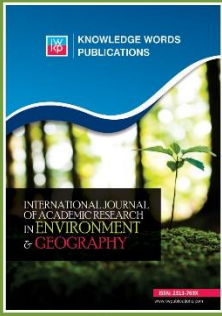
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## A Brief Review of Ethical Perspectives towards Water Pollution in the Malacca River

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### Abstract

Malacca is a historical place and appropriate to travel. Suddenly, water pollution became an issue to affect the state's economy. This situation happened due to the human development and has various negative implications for the environment. Manufacturing activities, human sewage and livestock waste may cause river water to become polluted. Even human have the right to use the water, but they don't have the right to damage the water resource. Accordingly, this article seeks to explore Malacca River pollution from an ethical perspective views. These ethical values involve prescriptivism and moral realism, God and religion ethics, human consequentialism ethics or deontology ethics, and the example of good human beings. Applying ethical perspective toward human activities may sustain the health of water in the Malacca River.

**Keywords:** Water, Water Pollution, Ethic Perspective, Malacca River.

### Introduction

Water is a natural resource that covers 71% of the Earth and is vital for every form of life. Water found in oceans is 96.5% of the water on earth, while groundwater makes up 1.7% and glaciers and the ice caps of Antarctica and Greenland make up an additional 1.7%. Freshwater only makes up 2.5%, and 98.8% of said freshwater water is in ice and groundwater (Gleick, 1993). Less than 0.3% of all freshwater is in rivers, lakes, and the atmosphere. An even smaller amount of the Earth's freshwater (0.003%) is contained within organisms and manufactured products (Gleick, 1993, p.13).

In the coming century, climate change and a growing imbalance among freshwater supply, consumption, and population will dramatically alter the water cycle. Many regions of the world are already limited in amount and quality of available water. Growing demands on freshwater resources have created an urgent need to research improved water management (Jackson et al., 2001). Maintaining water is important to prevent clean water supplies 'disappearing'. Sustainable development is needed as 'sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to

meet their own needs.’ (Brundtland Report-WCED, 1987). New approaches to long-term watershed planning and management that incorporate principles of sustainability and equity are required and are now being explored by national and international water experts and organizations (Gleick, 1998). Seven ‘sustainability criteria’ have been discussed. These principles are guaranteed access to a basic amount of water necessary to maintain human health and to sustain ecosystems, basic protections for the renewability of water resources, and institutional recommendations for planning, management, and also conflict resolution.

Generally, ethics involve prescriptive values, moral realism, consequentialism or deontology ethics, virtue ethics, and *agape* (love). These ethical values are appropriate for adoption by Malacca citizens for maintaining the quality of their environment. As we know, water pollution in the river can occur due to human attitude, such as dumping rubbish or waste product into the river without concern for the negative impact on the environment. At this point, law and regulations regarding destruction of the environment must be involved to prevent irresponsible citizens from continuing to dump rubbish into the river. However, sometimes laws cannot prevent people from discarding rubbish in the river. This shows that ethical values must be involved to prevent Malacca residents from throwing garbage into the river. Eventually, awareness and consciousness of bad attitudes towards the environment not only bring destruction to the ecosystem and environment itself but may also harm human society in the future.

Various plans for watershed sustainability have been discussed and debated to maintain the water from one generation to another generation. However, the main causes of water pollution are human activities. Therefore, peoples’ bad attitude towards the environment, especially water, must be improved to prevent further harm to the environment. One suitable way to stop human-generated pollution is awakening ethical values. A good example is the European Water Framework Directive (EU, 2000). ‘Water is not commercial product like any other but, rather, a heritage that must be protected, defended, and treated as such’ (EU, 2000,3). This statement places an absolute a moral value on water and implies a high ethical imperative for meeting such demands. To protect water, one example which may be used is ‘water ethics’ (Armstron, 2006).

Throughout history, the Malacca River has been important to transportation due to the Malacca Strait. People use the water from Malacca River for drinking, bathing, washing, agricultural activities, and a transport system. Continuous water consumption along the Malacca River hassled to development such as construction and manufacturing. Manufacturing activities may cause harm to the Malacca River when waste water is pumped into the river. This has caused the water of the Malacca River to become polluted (Norzela, 2010). Polluted water in Malacca River not only affects the citizens’ lives but also kills the aquatic life such as fish, prawns, bushes and trees. Citizens need guard their behavior from continuing to harm or destroy the environment. In this situation, ethical values will play an important role to control citizen behavior.

## Discussions

Ethics are a system of moral principles and a branch of philosophy which defines what is good for individuals and society. Ethics covers some dilemmas like how to live a good life, rights and responsibilities, the language of right and wrong and moral decisions – determining what is

good and bad. The water of the river can be protected from continuous harm by applying the ethical values to human attitudes and lifestyles. Water ethics play important roles in maintaining the water cycle without disruptions by outsiders. This cycle includes, for example, cooling the earth by raining and evaporation. Water may help to save life and prevent the land surface from becoming hot. Water also functions as an agent, especially in transport and deposition of material, responsible for erosion, and acts as a habitat for life in the river, lakes or even wetlands. So, 'saving, storing, and sustaining' water is very important to keep the earth from destruction. 'A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise' (Leopold, 1949).

Every human has the right to use the water for their own purposes. Gleick (1999) has his own stance for 'right' to use water, stating that water is a basic human right implied by the right to life, food and health. However, Malacca citizens use water without 'thinking twice', as they use double the water than they should; this wastes a lot of water. Moreover, human activities such as manufacturing, farming with organic matter from sewage and livestock wastes, and using nutrients from fertilizers (Manuwadi, 1988) cause the water to be polluted. This will lead the water in the river to become polluted while wasting a lot of water.

The suggestion of using ethical value in this paper is to overcome the problems extant in Malacca State. One of the examples is prescriptivism value. Prescriptivism values can be described as a person giving an advice or instruction to another person in a right and correct way to preserve the river (Hare, 1989). For example, "If I say not to waste and pollute the water, it's better for you not to". One person can advise another person to stop polluting the river and the water quality can be preserved for the next generation. In this situation, the people that live in a community will automatically take responsibility to protect the river. The people will advise one another, from one group to a community, and from one society to a state. The prescriptivism value and responsibility are believed to have a connection to prevent harm to the river.

The second value, moral realism, is more concentrate. Richard Boyd viewed moral realism as based on the idea that there are real objective moral facts or truths in the universe, while moral statements provide factual information about those truths. From the information, the people need to realize that "throwing litter into the river is wrong" because the rubbish that is thrown into the river can pollute the water; and it is a bad attitude to practice. The people that live near a large quantity of water should appreciate what they have and try not to waste or pollute the water, because this situation will bring a disaster call a "water crisis". The people should be aware that the water is a non-renewable resource and that they should love the water in the river.

The first and second values are discussed based on the human internal attitude itself, which means that the environment can change either into good or bad impact depending on human treatment. However, internal attitudes can be positively affected by other factors such as God and religion ethics, human consequentialism ethic or deontology ethic, and the example of good human beings. These issues have been examined by philosophers. Every person has their own religion and belief in God. Various religions teach people to respect and protect the environment from destruction. In Islam, Allah (swt) is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The whole universe, along with all of its factors, has been created with perfect wisdom (*hikmah*) (Akhtar, 1996). Nothing is permanent; everything exists for a fixed period. The Holy Quran says: "*We created not the heavens and the earth and all between them but for just ends, and for A*

*term appointed: but those who reject Faith turn away from that whereof they are warned.”* (Ali, The Holy Quran: 46:3)

The paragraph shows that the sustenance of His creation, Allah has placed a large quantity of environmental resources to meet demand in the universe. This shows the environment is in balance is a natural ecosystem. However, Abu Bakar (ra) advised Yazid, ibnAbiSufyan to observe environmental values, even in enemy territory. He wrote: “Do not cut a tree, do not abuse a river, do not harm crops and animals, and always be kind and humane to Allah’s creation, even to yours enemies” (Sayuti, Jalal al-Din, AbdalRahman, 1337H). The people must realize their role, as they can exploit the water for their own purposes but in turn maintain sustainability for the future.

Consequentialism ethics states that “all the things a person might do at any given moment, the morally right action is the one with the overall consequences.” (Sinnott-Amstrong, Winter, 2012). Consequentialism can be described in two ways, which is that whether an act is right or wrong depends only on the results of the act, and that the more good consequences an act produces, the better or more right the act is. Consequentialism ethics can help people to face and overcome the problem of moral dilemma (in which the people choose an action to maximize good consequences) and act as general guidance for living in societies (where people live to maximize good consequences). For example, one does not throw rubbish and unwanted product into the rivers because it may cause pollution. Pollution is bad. Therefore, one should not throw rubbish. So, when humans make a mistake in protecting the water, this will destroy the entire system water cycle on Earth and affect future generations.

Deontology ethics differ from consequentialism. Deontology states that an action is right if it follows the rules regarding that duty, regardless of the consequences (Alexander, Moore, Winter, 2012). The view was supported Immanuel Kant, as Kant argued that by acting in the morally right way, people act from duty, and that it is not the consequences of actions that make them right or wrong but the motives of the person who carries out the action (Kant, 1780). Deontology ethics teach people that some acts are right or wrong in themselves, whatever the consequences, and people should act accordingly as shown in the example “do not litter in the river and do not waste the water.”

Virtue ethics not only deal with the rightness or wrongness of individual actions but provides guidance as to sort of characteristics and behaviors a good person will seek to achieve (Hursthouse & Summer, 2012). In other words, virtue ethics is concerned with the whole of a person’s life, rather than particular actions. Virtue ethics teaches people to be a person who acts virtuously; an action is right if and only if a person does what a virtuous person would do in the same circumstances. Moreover, virtue ethics provide a moral characteristic that a person needs to live well. For example, a man or a woman should know and understand that rubbish and unwanted product should be thrown into a dustbin and not into the river. People also can help clean the river by collecting rubbish and throwing it into a prepared dustbin. These practices will show a person how to be a good human being and an example for society.

Situation ethics is a book written by Joseph Fletcher, which can be described as based on one principle: Ethics are a matter of always acting in *agape* (love). *Agape* is defined as benevolence or good will, or as giving love constantly and unconditionally, regardless of the actions of the loved one (Fletcher, 1966, p.176). He suggested that situation ethics is based on six fundamentals as follows:

1. Only one thing is intrinsically good, namely love: nothing else.

2. The ultimate norm of Christian decisions is love: nothing else.
3. Love and justice are the same, for justice is love distributed.
4. Love wills the neighbor's good whether we like him or not.
5. Only the end justifies the means: nothing else.
6. Decisions ought to be made situation ally, not precisely.

Fletcher stressed love and believed that love is born inside of the human being. So, when people are created with love, they should also love the environment, especially the water that flow in the river. For example, the people can protect the river by stopping factorization that produces nutrients from fertilizers, which may continue to harm the river.

### Conclusions

Humans play an important rule to protect the water in the river. Humans can stop various activities that harm the river by awakening of ethical values. Ethical values are carried inside people. When human pursue materialistic aims, eventually they forget virtues and loving values. The situation creates a greedy and selfish attitude. This will cause destruction to the environment, especially water, just to fulfill market demands. To save the river, reduce purchasing material that can cause pollution and promote ethical value to raise consciousness of the 'pain' that the river receives. Last but not least: "Throwing litter into the river is wrong. If I say not to waste and pollute the water, it's better way for you not to do. It may cause pollution. Pollution is bad. Therefore, you do not throw rubbish." The ethical sentence will help human to love, save, and protect the water in the Malacca River.

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