

## Enlightened Anthropocentrism in the Filipino Visayan Fisherfolks' Notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*

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### Abstract

Enlightened Anthropocentrism holds that moral duties towards the natural environment are derived from human beings' duties towards their fellow earth inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Using Hermeneutic Phenomenology, this paper contends that Enlightened Anthropocentrism is discernable in the Filipino Visayan fisherfolks' notion and practice of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* (or man's act of protecting the environment). The aim of this article is to examine this notion, which manifests concrete applications of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in the fishing practices of these fisherfolks. This study concludes that Enlightened Anthropocentrism is a call for moderation, an act done for man's self-preservation and an entry point towards sustainable development.

**Keywords:** Natural Environment, Fisherfolks, Moderation, Sustainable Development

### Introduction

The present generation of the world's citizens are faced with the challenge of balancing the aspect of sustaining the earth's carrying capacity in relation to the needs of its present and future population. Yet, despite these challenges, a number of people are still doing things

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Routley, Val Routley, and Richard Routley, "Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics," in *Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Don Mannison and Michael McRobbie (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 1982).

that are destructive to Mother Nature's well-being in exchange for material gains and profits. These human activities have to be addressed, otherwise, the world's limited resources would become depleted and the next generation of the world's citizens would be left with nothing. In the realm of Philosophy, a specific discipline that tackles this problem is Environmental Ethics. It is a discipline that has emerged in the 1970s which aims to challenge traditional Anthropocentrism.<sup>2</sup> However, if one looks at the nature of Anthropocentrism, it is not as negative as it was first perceived during the early development of Environmental Ethics.

As originally defined, Anthropocentrism is the belief that value is human-centered and that all other beings are simply means to human ends.<sup>3</sup> This definition gives Anthropocentrism a connotation that, as a concept, does not sit well with human beings' effort for nature conservation. However, when one looks at the recent trends in relation to the Mother Nature's capability to sustain the present and future generations, Anthropocentrism, after all, may also serve as an inspiration to protect and preserve what is left of the natural environment. Anthropocentrism's relation to environment conservation is discernible in the argument put forward by Kopnina et al., which says that since ecosystems constitute the "life-support system" for humans, Anthropocentrism can and should be a powerful motivation for environmental protection.<sup>4</sup>

Looking at the challenges that confront people in recent years, it is very discernible that the wrath and fury of nature had caused great hardships and sufferings for a huge number of people. A case in point is the Hurricane Katrina in 2009 in the United States, as well as Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in 2013. Both weather disturbances left thousands of people dead and millions of dollars of properties destroyed. These natural catastrophes have prompted people to seriously think of the underlying causes of these phenomena and to what extent do various human activities contribute and aggravate these calamities.

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<sup>2</sup> Andrew Brennan, "Environmental Ethics," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, June 3, 2002, accessed May 7, 2018, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-environmental/?PHPSESSID=95e59f66d429edbcf3cc2f98ac5a0175>.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Kopnina et al., "Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem," in *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 31, no. 1 (January 18, 2018).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

These happenings have also affected the way local Filipino Visayan fishermen think about their relation to Mother Nature. After all, their lives are closely intertwined with the sea and the sea is a big part of the natural environment. Thus, despite possessing almost unrestricted freedom to exploit the sea for personal gains, these fishermen have decided to limit their freedom to give way for the sea and everything underneath it to recover, recuperate, and regenerate so that it could support them in the years to come. For these fishermen, this is called *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* (man's act of protecting the natural environment) which is expressed in local indigenous words that connote acts of balancing man's freedom as exercised in the manner in which they utilize the sea as a source of livelihood.

This study would look into how the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon in Baybay City, Leyte have dealt with the behavior of the natural environment and their chosen steps of coping with the challenges that nature has brought to their lives, and examine whether or not such actions are expressions of Enlightened Anthropocentrism.

## Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature and employs Hermeneutic Phenomenology in trying to understand the manner by which these fishermen grasp the meaning of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*, and how it connects with and affirms the notion of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. This study utilizes the Phenomenological Method in entering into the lived experiences of the fisherfolks (which is understood here as research partners) as expressed in their stories.<sup>5</sup> In particular, Descriptive Phenomenology is used in this study. It allows the development of a perspective that is inclusive of external, physical, and isolatable stimuli which are "bracketed out" in order to capture the essence of the phenomenon.<sup>6</sup> It is for this reason that the researcher sets aside prejudice, prior knowledge, judgments and preconceptions about the phenomenon to truly listen to the

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<sup>5</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 2nd ed. (London, United Kingdom: SAGE Publications, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> S. Laverty, "Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A Comparison of Historical and Methodological Considerations," in *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 2, no. 3 (2003): <http://www.alberta.ca>.

contribution of the research partners with an open mind.<sup>7</sup> Yet, the researcher faces a challenge in describing the lived experiences of the research partners in a language that is free from the constructs of the intellect and the society. In addressing this challenge, this study employs Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Heidegger contends that the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation.<sup>8</sup> This is reinforced by Gadamer's notion that phenomenological interpretation is not just a means to understanding but also clarifying the conditions under which understanding takes place.<sup>9</sup>

Hermeneutic Phenomenology follows Martin Heidegger's contention that it is impossible to fully bracket the researcher's assumptions and reflections from the research process. Instead, in the hermeneutic approach, it is possible to bridle the researcher assumptions by continually scrutinizing, questioning and critically reflecting upon one's pre-understanding and involvement in the phenomenon.<sup>10</sup> The focus is to take cognizance on the details and seemingly trivial aspects within the lived experiences that may be overlooked in the process of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, through hermeneutic phenomenology, this study also aims at producing rich textual descriptions of the experience of selected phenomena in the life world of individuals who are able to connect with the experiences of the people collectively. From an identification of the experience of phenomena, a deeper understanding of the meaning of that experience is sought.<sup>12</sup> Hence, in order to have a full understanding of what the research partners want to convey, the use of any language that they are most comfortable with

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<sup>7</sup> C. Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

<sup>9</sup> H. G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1976).

<sup>10</sup> K. Dahlberg, "The Essence of Essences: The Search for Meaning Structures in Phenomenological Analysis of Lifeworld Phenomena," in *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well Being* 1, no. 1 (2006).

<sup>11</sup> H. Wislon and S. Hutchinson, "Triangulation of Qualitative Methods: Heideggerian Hermeneutics and Grounded Theory," in *Qualitative Health Research* 1 (1991).

<sup>12</sup> S. J. Smith, "Phenomenology of Educating Physically," ed. D. Vandenburg, *Phenomenology and Educational Discourse*, 1997.

is utilized. Indeed, to understand the life world, people need to explore the stories that others tell of their experiences.<sup>13</sup>

In determining the community and the research partners in this study, a purposive sampling is utilized. It is a sampling method where the elements selected for the sample are chosen by the researcher. Researchers using purposive sampling believe that they can obtain a representative sample by using a sound judgement which results in saving time and money.<sup>14</sup> After all, the main objective of this sampling method is to produce a sample that can logically assume to be a representative of a population.<sup>15</sup> Hence, in order to decipher the expressions of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in relation to the notion of *Pabulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*, the researcher has immersed with fisherfolks of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte. This is a fishing coastal community in the City of Baybay, Leyte where almost every resident is involved in fishing as a means of livelihood whether as a full time or part time. The researcher approached and asked the research partners for an interview at their most convenient time and place. The interviews were done through unstructured conversations to make the interviewee and interviewer comfortable with each other. This created an ambience where data are gathered through the sharing of their personal experiences using their local language. The researcher's task was to infer meaning from these shared narratives that give justice to the realities that they have experienced.<sup>16</sup>

## **A Discussion on Enlightened Anthropocentrism**

Enlightened Anthropocentrism argues that human beings have a moral duty to set limits in the utilization of nature's good in order to protect the needs of the future generation. However, because of unrestricted freedom, humans tend to over exploit Mother Nature. With this attitude, the natural environment inevitably becomes depleted in a faster pace since Mother Nature's capacity to regenerate follows its "built-in schedule" that is designed to be in harmony with

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<sup>13</sup> D. Langdridge, *Phenomenological Psychology: Theory, Research, and Methods* (London, 2005).

<sup>14</sup> K. Black, *Business Statistics: Contemporary Decision Making*, 6th ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Paul J. Lavrakas, ed., *Encyclopedia of Survey Research Methods* (New York: SAGE Publications, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Rogelia Pe-Pua, ed., *Sikolohiyang Pilipino* (Quezon City, Philippines: University of the Philippines Press, 2011).

the other beings within its system. Hence, so that human beings can continually enjoy the blessings provided by Mother Nature, they need to set concrete restrictions in the use of their freedom. This does not only enable the present generation to enjoy the goodness of nature but also give the future generations the chance to relish the same environmental resources when their time comes. This requires an Enlightened Anthropocentric approach.

Enlightened Anthropocentrism is governed by four principles which defines human beings' relationship with the natural environment. First, human beings must recognize their moral obligations to the present generation of human beings in relation to their utilization of the environmental goods. Second, the present generation must take into account the well-being of future generations and be aware that the stability and health of the future generations are directly affected by the decisions that the present generation makes concerning the environment. Third, people must understand and take into consideration the full value of the various ecological services provided by the ecosystem. Finally, people must recognize that nature has an aesthetic value.<sup>17</sup>

The use of freedom in relation to human beings' use of the natural environment could be properly limited and balanced. Human beings, after all, are rational beings who have the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. This act of balancing freedom and the proper use of the natural environment is an expression of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. In Enlightened Anthropocentrism, human beings' obligation towards nature is centered on the duty to preserve the world for the generations to come. If people tend to act in opposition to the natural environment's wellbeing, there will eventually be negative consequences for both humans and nonhumans.<sup>18</sup> Hence, for Enlightened Anthropocentrism, Mother Nature is nurtured and allowed to flourish since they also have that significant function of delivering services that are essential for survival.<sup>19</sup>

With this, human beings' act of balancing their freedom in relation to their penchant use of the natural environment is not merely dictated by blind desperation, but rather an autonomous decision that is aware of its consequences. This presupposes that every human

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<sup>17</sup> Richard Botzler and Susan Armstrong, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, 2nd ed. (MGraw Hill Companies, 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Bryan Norton, *Towards Unity Among Environmentalists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

<sup>19</sup> Jozef Keulartz, "The Emergence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism in Ecological Restoration," in *Nature and Culture* 1, no. 7 (Spring 2012).

being has the natural tendency to recognize and adhere to his or her moral obligations to the present generation. This is also accompanied with the desire of giving due consideration for the welfare of the future generations whose stability in relation to food, enjoyment of ecosystems services, and the gratification of the privileges given to them by Mother Nature are directly affected by the decisions that the present generation make concerning the natural environment.<sup>20</sup> Enlightened Anthropocentrism, therefore, is an expression of human beings' actions of balancing benefits and harms in relation to their capacities to make choices.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, it is also every person's duty to recognize the needs of the future generations. In other words, the present generation is obliged to do what is necessary to preserve and perpetuate what is good for the next generation.<sup>22</sup>

Enlightened Anthropocentrism manifests in the proper use of freedom in relation to the things provided by nature. Yet, in this exercise of freedom the balancing of benefits and harms is essential since moral life does not permit human beings simply to use benefits without considering the outcomes' effects on others.<sup>23</sup> Decisions have to be made in order to protect the complex processes of nature so that both human activities and non-human processes would have time to adapt. With human actions possessing great possibilities to disrupt natural processes, human beings must prioritize certain measures to balance its use of freedom in relation to its utility of nature since the capacity of the natural environment to produce goods has limitations.<sup>24</sup> This manifests the essence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism since man, in this perspective, balances his use of freedom to accommodate Mother Nature's carrying capacity even if he thinks he occupies the highest place in the hierarchy of creatures and hence, can use his freedom at will without limitations.

Nevertheless, the exercise of the use of freedom is very much different from the act of balancing its use to accommodate something good. Though the voluntary use of freedom is construed to be good

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<sup>20</sup> Richard Botzler and Susan Armstrong, *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, 2nd ed. (M.Graw Hill Companies, 1998).

<sup>21</sup> Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 4th ed. (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Bryan Norton, *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

<sup>23</sup> Joseph P. Demarco and Paul J. Ford, "Balancing in Ethical Deliberation: Superior to Specification and Casuistry," in *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy* 31, no. 5 (November 23, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> Bryan Norton, *Towards Unity Among Environmentalists* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

and desirable, limiting and restraining its use for the sake of something necessary and beneficial to mankind is arguably better. It is better in the sense that the act of limiting the use of freedom benefits everybody and not only the agent of the action. With this, human beings and the natural environment have both benefitted from such act. This becomes possible only when humans can effectively impose limits on his own personal growth which means putting voluntary limits to his wants or needs.<sup>25</sup> This again manifests the notion of Enlightened Anthropocentrism since it compels man to exercise his or her freedom in moderation.

In relation to man's utility of the natural environment, his act of using his freedom to balance between benefits and harm is founded on the fact that there is a point where man can already have enough. Man is not always a boundless optimizer and maximizer. A part of him is also modest in his desires and needs.<sup>26</sup> As a rational being, man can very much differentiate between good and its opposite. Hence, when reason tells him to act in moderation, it would not be difficult for him to do so because his acts are governed by reason. Even if man is at the summit of all of earth's creatures and has the power to exploit everything in the world for his benefit, his rationality would eventually tell him that he has to balance things in the exercise of his freedom to ensure his long-term enjoyment of the goodness of nature and ultimately, his survival.

Moreover, Enlightened Anthropocentrism is not only about balancing between benefits and harms. It is also about seriously considering the necessity for the present generation to ensure that the future generations could still enjoy, at least, the same benefits that they get from the natural environment. Certainly, the future generations would not be able to take part in the decision-making process on how the natural environment would be utilized at present. Worse, the future generations could not benefit from the wasteful activities that are currently happening in many societies.<sup>27</sup> Decisions concerning the use of the natural environment could surely have significant implications for the future generations. It would be unjust if the present generation overexploits nature and leave nothing for the future generations. The world's resources are for everybody including

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<sup>25</sup> Murray Bookchin, *Toward an Ecological Society* (Montreal, Canada: Black Rose Books, 1980).

<sup>26</sup> M. Slote, "Moderation, Rationality, and Virtue" (lecture, The Tanner Lecture on Human Values, Stanford, April 17, 1985).

<sup>27</sup> Bryan Norton, *Why Preserve Natural Variety?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).



even the future generation. People know that the generation of the future would also require the basic components of a flourishing human life. Hence, it would be proper and just to also give them a chance to have easy and reasonable access to food, clean water, physical health, and an aesthetic experience with nature.<sup>28</sup>

In order for the present generation to honor their obligations to the future generations, people must recognize the full value of ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are the conditions and processes through which natural ecosystems, and the species that make them up, sustain and fulfil human life. Humans are dependent on these ecosystem services for their existence and many of them are irreplaceable while a number of them are replaceable but at a greater cost. Yet, the majority of the people of the present generation have the tendency of conducting daily human activities without consciously considering the sustainability of these natural services. Hence, it is necessary that the present generation initiate activities and movements that protect significant ecosystem functions and services.<sup>29</sup>

Enlightened Anthropocentrism, therefore, also includes the responsibility to find the sustainable means to protect and improve the present state of the natural environment. Such measures have to be done so that nature could support the needs of the generations of the future. Human beings must put value on the environment in order to give practical reasons to protect a variety of other values associated with ecosystem services. Once quantified, human beings can determine which actions are needed to maintain ecosystem services as well as the general well-being of the natural environment at a critical capacity.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, Enlightened Anthropocentrism also entails giving due recognition to the aesthetic value of the natural environment. One way of doing this is to protect the beautiful parts of nature for the future generations to appreciate, relish and enjoy.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> John O'Neil and Allan Holland, *Environmental Values* (London, United Kingdom: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2008).

<sup>29</sup> Gretchen Daily, *Nature's Services: Societal Dependence on Natural Ecosystems* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997).

<sup>30</sup> Sahotra Sarkar, *Environmental Philosophy: From Theory to Practice*. (West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Allen Carlson, *Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

**The Filipino Visayan Fishermen's Notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan***

Most of the inhabitants of Sitio Lapawon are fisherfolks. Their means of livelihood are influenced by the geographical location of the community in which they live. The fisherfolk-respondents have built their houses very close to the sea that many of them consider the sea as part of their lives. Aside from the fact that the sea gives fisherfolks a source of livelihood, it also serves as a recreation area for the members of their family. Children and adults alike often take a bath at the sea since the beach is very near to their houses. It also serves as alternative food source for fisherfolks since sea-shells can be found on the shorelines of Sitio Lapawon during low tide. However, during southwest monsoon wind season or "habagat," the sea also causes a lot of inconvenience to the residents since strong waves often reach their homes and destroy some of their properties. During typhoons in the past, the sea destroyed their homes and sources of livelihood like boats, nets, fishing equipment, and artificial coral reefs or *payaws*.

Yet, despite these odds, they have continued to live in the said coastal community. For the research partners, the sea is their home and the sea is their life. Hence, in order to appease nature, they have initiated ways in which they could balance the use of their freedom in the utilization of the sea, on the one hand, and the responsibility to care and protect the natural environment, on the other. This manifests a semblance of Enlightened Anthropocentrism since they voluntarily set limits to their freedom to maximize the sea in exchange of its well-being.

In this study, the fisherfolks' way of life of the coastal fishing community of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte is construed in relation to their perception of their life world which is anchored on their belief that is expressed in the expression: *dagat maoy among kinabuhi* (the sea is our life). This expression is very much connected to their relationship with the sea which they regard as an extension of their lives. For the fishermen, the most recent challenge in relation to the way they live is, more often than not, connected with the capacity of the sea to support them and their families for a longer period of time.

However, there are certain challenges - mostly triggered by human beings' indiscriminate use of the natural environment - experienced by the fishermen that prompted them to decide on doing something to protect their seas. According to Antonio Cruza, a fisherfolk and a barangay official:

*The current concern of my neighbors in our community with regards to the way we live is mostly connected to the challenge of our will to survive in the long run in relation to the carrying capacity of the sea to support us amidst the number of undesirable human activities directed towards the sea. As a people dependent on the sea's generosity, we have to address this problem here and now so that the sea would be revitalized and hence, we can continue to reap the fruits of its goodness.*

For Antonio Cruza and his fellow fisherfolks, one way of addressing the said challenge is to address the problem head on. Since human activities are the main cause of this problem, they have to stop these activities in their community. To do this, they have to start by not doing undesirable things that directly and indirectly contribute to the problems. They have to take care and protect the sea as well as support activities and initiatives that are geared to conserve and protect the natural environment as a whole. The fisherfolks refer to this as *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* (man's act of protecting the environment). This initiative entails limiting one's tendency to maximize the use of their freedom in order to get the most out of the sea. When fishermen exercise their freedom to amass large quantities of fish catch, its effects on the sea are always disastrous. Hence, to prevent the devastating effects on the sea as an off shoot of indiscriminate fishing methods, the fishermen of Sitio Lapawon, Barangay Santo Rosario, Baybay, Leyte, have collectively decided that they have to protect the sea particularly their traditional fishing grounds. For Armando Baqueros, a fisherfolk who is also a member of the barangay council:

*With the way quantities of fish catch in our usual fishing grounds are going into a downward spiral, it is a must that we the residents of this fishing community have also to do something to address this phenomenon. In the past, we tend to get the largest quantities of fish catch in every fishing day with the use of whatever products of innovation available. Now, the fishing grounds are almost depleted and could no longer sustain our needs in the next few years if we do not do something about it. Hence, as a barangay official and as a fisherfolk myself, I make it a point to encourage my fellow fisherfolks and residents to make a little sacrifice of limiting our freedom to get as much of the sea and instead make measures to find ways to make our seas healthy again so that the marine life in it could regenerate enough to give us considerable amount of fish for a longer*

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*period of time. The fisherfolks should protect the environment so that it would also take care of them. This is supposed to be man's role in this world.*

For Armando Baqueros, *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* is manifested in the fisherfolks' efforts to protect the sea in order to maintain and sustain its capacity to support them and their families. *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* translates into actions that people proactively do to conserve nature. This enables them to fulfil their obligation as stewards of the environment. By conserving nature, people would reap the good things that nature gives to humankind since it is nature's reason for being. However, it is also important to know that while nature and the sea give fishermen blessings when properly cared and preserved, it could also be very cruel and fierce when abused.<sup>32</sup> The fishermen understand the notion of cruelty from nature in relation to their worry that the day would come that the sea would no longer provide them with enough catch for them and their families on a regular basis. This understanding prods them to do something to take care of the sea. In so doing, they are not only protecting the sea and the natural environment, they also protect themselves from the suffering brought about by scarcity of basic food. As Pedro Cabahit, a fisherfolk respondent has it:

*There is really a need for us fisherfolks to start protecting the sea because it is slowly affected by numerous human activities that are not good. There are a lot of abuses and gross exploitation through illegal fishing methods. Many people think that it is part of their "freedom". Yet, it should not be the case. Our freedom also has its limitations since the sea can only absorb so much. As a fisherfolk, my conscience tells me that I have also to protect the sea so that the sea could give something good to us in return. Hence, it must be expected of me not to indulge in illegal fishing activities. On the contrary, it is my moral obligation to do something for the annihilation of illegal fishing activities and report such activities to the proper authorities if by chance I would be able to catch these illegal fishers in the act.*

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<sup>32</sup> Guiraldo C. Fernandez and Geraldine D. Villaluz, "Teaching Indigenous Peace Concepts from Visayan Fisherfolks and Farmers through the Course Philosophy of the Human Person," in *Recoletos Multidisciplinary Research Journal* 5, no. 1 (June 2017).

Pedro Cabahit's contention entails the need of a balancing act between the use of people's freedom to maximize what they can get from the sea and limiting such freedom so that they could allow important marine life in the sea to go through the natural process of regeneration. In doing this, the fishermen have decided that they have to strictly implement the prohibition of illegal fishing methods in their community and within the vicinity of their fishing grounds. Illegal fishing methods naturally enable fishermen to gain large quantities of catch with less effort. However, its effects in the fishing grounds are catastrophic since it prevents marine life in the area to recuperate. If prolonged, the fishing grounds will be depleted in the near future and the fishermen in the area will be left with nothing. This is one thing that the fishermen do not want to happen in their community.

In response to this, the fishermen ban the use of *lagtang*, a poison derived from the seeds of *anamirta cocculus*, as a fishing method. For the fishermen, everybody must not use *lagtang* (expressed in the vernacular as "*walay manglagtang*") in their fishing grounds. *Lagtang* can kill fishes, big and small alike, which makes fishing easy. Nonetheless, this results in the eradication of fishes since they could no longer regenerate because even small fish are caught. In sum, there would be a decrease of catch for the fisherfolks which also means a decrease in income. By banning *lagtang*, fishes could regenerate since the fisherfolks will only catch those fish that are already mature for the catch. In this way, a bountiful catch can be sustained for a long period of time.<sup>33</sup> Florencio Casas, a fisherfolk research partner has this say:

*If there is the absence of the use of lagtang, fishes would not be indiscriminately killed including those that are not yet mature for the catch. If the fishing method with the use of lagtang continues to exist, there is a great chance for fishes that used to be caught near the shorelines to be totally annihilated. In the said method of fishing, fishes, big and small, are included in its catch. Aside from that, people who have eaten the fish caught with the use of poison would have great chances to be slowly but surely inflicted with the poisons that have been eaten by them.*

Aside from banning the use of *lagtang*, the fishermen also prohibit the use of dynamite fishing at all cost. In the local language, the fishermen have strongly emphasized "*walay mugamit ug tiro sa panagat*" (the prohibition of the use of dynamite in fishing). Dynamite

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

fishing could cause great damage to the fishes and the fishing grounds. Specifically, the corals that support the lives of many marine resources would also be destroyed. Hence, it slowly eradicates the abundance of fish in the area. Furthermore, dynamite fishing also puts the lives of many fisherfolks at risk. Thus, the prohibition of the use of dynamite fishing preserves the richness of the fishermen's fishing grounds. Yet, this could only be made possible when fishermen again limit their freedom to maximize the potential of the quantity of what they can get from the sea. Limiting their freedom enables them to have a rich and vibrant fishing grounds in the long run. Hence, for Jodi Baslan, a fisherfolk research partner:

*Even if fishing is already difficult, the use tiro sa panagat (dynamite fishing) must be prohibited at all cost. It damages the all there is in the sea. It damages the corals and it kills the fishes both small and big. Hence, there is no wonder why our fish catch is dwindling because, to my knowledge, this form of fishing is still popular. Hence, as a fisherfolk that cares for the future of my family, I have to use everything in my capacity to stop this kind of fishing method. Of course, I will start with myself since how can I convince others to do the same if I myself am not doing it.*

In conjunction with the prohibition of the use of dynamite in fishing, the fishermen also prohibit the use of *hulahop* (fishing vessels using nets that reach the sea floor with small holes in them). The use of *hulahop* assures a big catch for unscrupulous fishermen. However, the result would be devastating for fishing's sustainability since the long nets would eventually destroy the corals and the small holes enable fishermen to catch both big and small fishes. This again poses a problem for the fishes to regenerate since such method of fishing includes in its catch small fishes that would someday reproduce. With the small fishes included in its catch, the fishing grounds' sustainability is compromised and other fisherfolks' future catch is greatly diminished. Hence, for the fishermen, limiting its capacity to engage in fishing methods that would assure big quantities of catch at the expense of the health of the corals and other marine life in the fishing grounds enables the sea to rejuvenate.<sup>34</sup> With this, Francisco Villaceran, a fisherfolk research partner has this to say:

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

*Our fishing ground's capacity to support us would be sustained if no one uses Hulahop. This fishing method destroys the corals since the length of the nets used would touch and disturb the corals found underneath the sea. With this kind of fishing not used by fisherfolks, small fishes would not be prematurely caught since nets with small holes in them are not utilized. Hulahop also drives away fishes far from the shorelines since fishes' habitats near the shores are destroyed by it. If hulahop fishing method is no longer used, fishes could always be found in the fisherfolks' traditional fishing grounds near the shorelines. This gives us fisherfolks greater chances to have a bountiful catch the moment we venture to the sea to fish.*

Another manifestation of human beings' tendency to maximize the use of their freedom in relation to what they can get from the sea is manifested in another man-made environmental challenge - the presence of large-scale fishing vessels. These fishing vessels are referred to as *dagko nga sensuro*. These vessels are equipped with state-of-the-art fishing equipment such as sonar, fish finder, mechanized nets, and high-speed engines. They are designed to catch tons of fish in a single fishing night.

Despite the restriction that such vessels should not fish inside the seven-kilometer area from the shoreline, this is not always the case for the fisherfolks of Sitio Lapawon. Large-scale fishing vessels or *dagko nga sensuro* often pass by the seas of Sitio Lapawon and in the process deplete the marine resources in the area. This results to a fewer catch which affects the fishermen's capacity to buy the things they need. This unfortunate occurrence is caused by human beings' thrust, to again, maximize what they can get from the sea, and in the process, deplete and damage the things in the sea that are essential for marine life to continue to survive.<sup>35</sup> According to Avelino Barcus, a resident fisherfolk:

*The presence of dagko nga sensuro has affected the capacity of our fishing grounds to give us a consistent bountiful catch since they will catch all fish available if they are around. The owners of those boats should be sensitive to the needs of small fisherfolks like us. They should limit their capacity to haul all the catch available. However, those owners would not care and would continue to do the same thing as long as there are still fish available for the catch. Our only option as small time and*

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

*marginal fisherfolks is to report this activity to the authorities so that they can enforce sanctions against these fishing giants and force them to fish in moderation.*

Lastly, the fishermen also see another ordinary yet difficult task to keep the sea vibrant and healthy. This refers to the problem of trash especially the non-biodegradable ones in the vicinity of their fishing grounds. For the fishermen, it is necessary that their fishing grounds should be free from plastics and other household non-biodegradable wastes the soonest time possible. In the vernacular, *kinahanglan'g walay daghang basura nga di malata sa dagat* (the absence of non-biodegradable trash in the sea is a must). This man-made challenge poses a great problem for the fishermen.<sup>36</sup>

For them, the presence of garbage in the sea drives away fishes from their fishing grounds. Since Sitio Lapawon is a community that is a little bit isolated by a small gap divided by the sea from the main part of Barangay Santo Rosario, it is impossible for the garbage trucks of the local government of Baybay to reach Sitio Lapawon. The bridge that connects the Sitio to the Barangay is too small for four-wheeled vehicles to cross. Hence, to dispose of their garbage, the Sitio's residence only have the options to bury, burn, or throw their garbage into the sea. Of the three options, only the first seems friendlier to the environment. The other two are environmentally hazardous. The option of throwing the garbage to the sea is not only improper, but also drives away the fishes in the nearby sea and hence, makes fishing difficult. To mitigate this problem, the fishermen have to urge other community members to take extra efforts in disposing their wastes properly. To achieve this, the fishermen have to again balance their freedom to maximize time for themselves with the time that they allot to clean their beaches. This entails sacrifice, which in essence, is a form of service to the community that is characterized by the balancing act between the interest of the self and the interest of the community.<sup>37</sup>

### **Elements of Enlightened Anthropocentrism as Discernible in the Fishermen's Notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*.**

The fisherfolks' notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*, has, in its essence, semblances of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. Such notion and its related practices have manifested the fisherfolks' willingness to sacrifice their freedom to maximize in order for the natural

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*



environment to regenerate in due time. As a principle, Enlightened Anthropocentrism holds that the moral duties of human beings have towards the natural environment are derived from their direct duties to its human inhabitants.<sup>38</sup> Man must do good to the environment not only for environment's sake but also for the interest of the human race. In this study, the central tenets of Enlightened Anthropocentrism have been manifested in the fisherfolks initiative to exercise the notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*. For them, in carrying out this duty, they ought to balance the use of their freedom against the natural tendency to maximize what they can get from the natural environment. In doing so, they allow the environment to regenerate and extend its carrying capacity to support the present and the generations of the future. This is far different from traditional Anthropocentrism which holds that human beings are of central importance, and other species and things matter only if they are deemed useful to humans. Had the fisherfolks adhered to this traditional anthropocentric view, they would have continued to use their freedom to maximize rather than limit their freedom in favor of nature's well-being.

For instance, the fisherfolks' prohibition of the use of an indigenous poison in fishing as well as the prohibition of the use of dynamite fishing express the fishermen's desire and willingness to let go of opportunities to amass fish catch in large quantities in exchange of allowing marine life to recover. These practices manifest elements of Enlightened Anthropocentrism since the fishermen's activities are geared not only for the environment and themselves but also for others. These interpretations proceed from the researcher's awareness that the fisherfolks' understanding of the natural environment and the world in which they live is not separate from the world that other people also live, but a formation of a historically shared and lived experience. The fisherfolks have realized that the sea's capacity to support them is leading towards a downward slope which has enabled them to decide to limit their freedom for their and the future's well-being.

Moreover, the fishermen's prohibition of the presence of fishing vessels with long nets that reach the sea bed with small holes in the net as well as the prohibition of large scale and state of the art fishing vessels in the fishing grounds also manifest and express the principles

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Routley, Val Routley, and Richard Routley, "Human Chauvinism and Environmental Ethics," in *Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Don Mannison and Michael McRobbie (Canberra, Australia: Australian National University, 1982).

of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. From the interviews, the fisherfolks have expressed that mechanized and large-scale fishing activities are causes for the depletion of their fishing grounds. With this, the fisherfolks have decided that they have to find ways to exclude and ban the presence of these fishing vessels near their shores. With the exclusion and banning of these illegal fishing vessels in the fisherfolks fishing grounds, they can be freed from undesirable anthropogenic activities, and hence, allow the sea to regenerate so it can provide the fisherfolks food security for a longer period of time.

However, one of the fisherfolks has expressed in the interview that they had actually allowed this large-scale fishing method to operate in their fishing grounds because they also benefitted from their huge catch. The operators of these fishing vessels usually give a fraction of their catch as a sort of bribe so that the fisherfolks would not report them to the authorities and stay quiet. This practice would have been favorable to the fishermen since they get their share without doing a thing in the fishing process. Despite this, they decided to prohibit them in their shores and fishing grounds for the sake of allowing their sea to undergo the natural process of regeneration. This is a manifestation of Enlightened Anthropocentrism since this would have been impossible without the fishermen's awareness of their responsibility towards nature, themselves, their families, and the generations to come.

Lastly, Enlightened Anthropocentrism is also discernible in the fishermen's care for the sea through their campaign and efforts to prohibit their fellow community members to throw their garbage to the sea. With man's freedom which is almost unrestricted in terms of their usage, people's thrust to limit such freedom for the sake of the welfare of the community members benefits not only themselves but also their families. With the fishermen limiting their freedom to just throw their garbage to the sea and instead dispose their garbage properly, they not only limit their freedom for the sake of a greater good. The fishermen are doing these as members of a community and of the world. They know that they have the responsibility to do something for the welfare of others. This is Enlightened Anthropocentrism. It is essentially a call for moderation. And most importantly, the fishermen are aware that, as human beings, their moral duties towards the natural environment are also derived from their direct duties to the earth's human inhabitants.

## Conclusion

This study concludes that Enlightened Anthropocentrism entails moral deliberation and sustainable actions that are grounded on the fundamental human inclination for preservation. The willingness of humans to balance the use of his/her freedom against the natural tendency to fully exercise it and maximize what he/she can get from the environment is based on a deeper sense of moral and practical urgency. As rational beings, humans are always aware of the things that surround them. Reason would tell them that the environment is there for their taking. Yet, despite this capability, human beings are also very much aware that irresponsible actions could translate to negative repercussions. Hence, to preserve themselves, human beings find it necessary to conserve and protect the environment because protecting the environment is also an act of protecting themselves and others. This validates Kopnina, et.al. who espouse the idea that since ecosystems constitute the "life-support system" for humans, anthropocentrism can and should be a powerful motivation for environmental protection<sup>39</sup> which paves the way to the emergence of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. Indeed, Enlightened Anthropocentrism is about protecting the environment so that it could support and sustain the needs of human beings for a longer period of time as they strive to live and survive in this contemporary complex society.

Moreover, this study also concludes that the Visayan fishermen's notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* (man's act of protecting the environment) is a unique form of Enlightened Anthropocentrism. For the fisherfolks, the sea is their life. Hence, they have to protect the sea in order for them to fish and accumulate enough catch to support them and their families. Hence, *Pabulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan* balances and limits the use of freedom to freely exploit the sea in exchange of preserving the sea's carrying capacity and allow it to undergo the natural process of regeneration. In this kind of expression of Enlightened Anthropocentrism, the fishermen express their willingness to be in harmony with nature. In this regard, the fishermen are assured of a consistent availability of fish to catch in their fishing grounds. This means greater chances for the fishermen to have an income on a daily basis. This also gives them the reason to protect the sea and the natural environment. Lastly, this study concludes that

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<sup>39</sup> Helen Kopnina et al., "Anthropocentrism: More than Just a Misunderstood Problem," in *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 31, no. 1 (January 18, 2018).

Enlightened Anthropocentrism leads the fishermen to create sustainable activities for continued development. Enlightened Anthropocentrism, as expressed in the fishermen's notion of *Pagbulig sa Tawo sa Kinaiyahan*, contains all the necessary requirements to achieve progress that accommodates and sustains the environmental support system of the lives of the fisherfolks. In this context, sustainable development manifests in their practical and sustainable efforts to take care of their fishing grounds so that it could meet their present needs without compromising the ability of the future generations to also meet their own needs.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Manfred Steger, Paul Bettersby, and Joseph Siracusa, eds., *The SAGE Handbook of Globalization*, 2 vols. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2014).

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