



To cite this article: Schmitt Siqueira Garcia, D. & Siqueira Garcia, H. (2020). Ethical dimension of sustainability: the need to change values and attitudes. *Sostenibilidad: económica, social y ambiental*, 2, 33-47. <https://doi.org/10.14198/Sostenibilidad2020.2.03>

Ethical dimension of sustainability: the need to change values and attitudes

La dimensión ética de la sostenibilidad: la necesidad de cambiar valores y actitudes

Denise Schmitt Siqueira Garcia
Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, Brasil
denisegarcia@univali.br
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1710-3642>

Heloise Siqueira Garcia
Universidade do Vale do Itajaí, Brasil
helo_sg@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT

Sustainability is a vital theme in the discussions around the world when it comes to maintaining life on the planet. This sustainability must be supported by its five dimensions: environmental, social, economic, technological and ethical. In this context, the present article will focus on the ethical dimension, listing as a general objective to analyze the content of the ethical dimension of sustainability and the need to change values and attitudes to reach this dimension. From the research, it can be seen that the ethical dimension analyzes the necessary change of life of human beings with the observance of ethical principles and virtues. This dimension is born by the existential issue of man, the guarantee of life, the need to rethink, reflect, re-understand that the human being is part of the biosystem and depends on it. Therefore, in this paper, the discussion will be based mainly on sustainability, on the ethical dimension of sustainability and on the principles and virtues of ethics for sustainability by means of the inductive method.

Keywords: ethics; sustainability; ethical virtues.



License: this work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

RESUMEN

La sostenibilidad es un tema vital en las discusiones de todo el mundo cuando se trata de mantener la vida en el planeta. Esta sostenibilidad debe estar respaldada por sus cinco dimensiones: ambiental, social, económica, tecnológica y ética. En este contexto, el presente artículo tendrá su enfoque en la dimensión ética, proponiéndose como objetivo general analizar el contenido de la dimensión ética de la sostenibilidad y la necesidad de cambiar valores y actitudes para alcanzar esta dimensión. A partir de la investigación, se puede constatar que la dimensión ética analiza el cambio necesario de la vida de los seres humanos con la observancia de los principios y virtudes éticos. Esta dimensión nace de la cuestión existencial del ser humano, la garantía de la vida, la necesidad de repensar, reflexionar y volver a comprender que el ser humano es parte del biosistema y depende de él. Por lo tanto, en este documento, la discusión se basará principalmente en la dimensión ética de la sostenibilidad, así como en los principios y virtudes de la ética para alcanzar la sostenibilidad mediante el método inductivo.

Palabras clave: ética; sostenibilidad; virtudes éticas.

1. Introduction

Within the context of a capitalism that generates unbridled and unprecedented consumption, in which the main objective seems to be the accumulation of wealth, regardless of the means used for this purpose, the environment has been the biggest victim. Humanity is often faced with data that point to a consumption of natural resources so that they will be depleted for the next generations.

This eagerness for “having” is making relationships liquid, human beings with no “direction”, without stimulus, depressive and, therefore, unable to think of such important and vital issues to sustainability. Within this sad reality arises the debate about the sustainability that consists in the reach of the environmental, economic, social, technological and ethical dimensions, in order to guarantee the permanence of living organisms on the Planet, with dignified and just conditions. However, for this to happen it is necessary that there are more virtuous and concerned human beings with fundamental principles related to ethics.

The problem that led to the research was: Is there a need to change values and attitudes with the adoption of Principles and virtues to reach the ethical dimension of sustainability? Within this problem, the objective of this work was to analyze the content of the ethical dimension of sustainability and the need to change values and attitudes to achieve this dimension.

This research is necessary because, due to this consumist and immediatist reality, where “having” is more important than “being”, man is increasingly more individualistic and selfish, leaving aside the basic principles and virtues for achieving sustainability. In this sense, this research seeks to contribute academically in order to create a theory about a new dimension inherent to sustainability, which is ethics, presenting the reasons for which that dimension is as important for sustainability.

It is important to highlight that it will be taken as examples for the verification of the nuances of the theories treated cases and official Brazilian data, not to say that this research is a case study, since its intention is to contribute to the global academic community regarding the discussion of the dimensions of sustainability.

In this paper, the motivations for which the referred dimension is so important for sustainability will be presented. For this purpose, this paper is divided into four parts: the first deals with

sustainability; the second concerns the ethical dimension of sustainability; the third addresses the principles for an ethics for sustainability; and the fourth discusses the virtues for sustainability.

As for the methodology used it is noted that in the investigation phase¹ the inductive method² was used, in the data treatment phase, the cartesian method³, and the article is composed on the inductive logic basis. In the various phases of the research, the techniques of referent⁴, category⁵, operational concept⁶ and bibliographic research⁷ were use.

2. Talking about sustainability

In 1972, after the Club of Rome meeting, Donella H. Meadows, Dennis L. Meadows, Jørgen Randers and William W. Behrens III published the book “The Limits to Growth”, which brought up discussions based on the reality experienced on the rapid growth of the world population and industrial production based on the recognition of the scarcity of natural resources. From that, there is the end of the dream of unlimited growth came to an end, as the limits of Earth and life model were unsustainable. This realization stems from the great increase in environmental, social and economic problems on a global level.

Some of the environmental problems are: the depletion of natural resources; contamination and scarcity of drinking water; contamination of soil and air; the loss of biodiversity; overpopulation; genetic manipulation; global warming with the increase of volcanic eruptions, glacier thawing, greenhouse gas concentration, and a number of other problems. As economic and social problems, there was an increase in social injustices; technological dependence of developing countries on developed countries; the increase in environmental displacement⁸; increase in infant mortality; worsening of formal education and increase in poverty.

As for environmental displacements, mainly linked to climate disasters, there are around 25 million people, according to data reported by the UN in June 2017, who are forced to leave their countries, and, according to estimates of the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center (IDMC), by 2050, this number will reach one billion people

¹ “[...] momento no qual o Pesquisador busca e recolhe os dados, sob a moldura do Referente estabelecido [...]” (Pasold, 2015, p. 109).

² “[...] pesquisar e identificar as partes de um fenômeno e colecioná-las de modo a ter uma percepção ou conclusão geral [...]” (Pasold, 2015, p. 110).

³ On the four rules of the Cartesian Method (“evidência, dividir, ordenar e avaliar”) see (Leite, 2001, p. 22-26).

⁴ “[...] explicitação prévia do(s) motivo(s), do(s) objetivo(s) e do produto desejado, delimitando o alcance temático e de abordagem para a atividade intelectual, especialmente para uma pesquisa.” (Pasold, 2015, p. 65).

⁵ “[...] palavra ou expressão estratégica à elaboração e/ou à expressão de uma ideia.” (Pasold, 2015, p. 36).

⁶ “[...] uma definição para uma palavra ou expressão, com o desejo de que tal definição seja aceita para os efeitos das ideias que expomos [...]” (Pasold, 2015, p. 39).

⁷ “Técnica de investigação em livros, repertórios jurisprudenciais e coletâneas legais.” (Pasold, 2015, p. 215).

⁸ Souza & De Oliveira (2017, p. 8) affirms that environmental displaced persons would be the persons who are forced to leave their traditional habitat, migrating internally or internationally, temporarily or permanently, due to a certain environmental disturbance (natural and/or caused by a person) that , without setting an environmental persecution, compromises their existence and/or seriously affect their quality of life.

(United Nations Brazil, 2017). These data demonstrate the seriousness and urgency of the situation, making another kind (or type) thinking necessary: supportive and ethical.

The problem of poverty at national and global levels is very alarming. On average, 1.49 million Brazilian people live in extreme poverty, which would be people living up to BRL 136.00 per month. More than 113 million people from 53 countries worldwide were victims of extreme hunger in 2018 (EFE Agency, 2019).

Bittar (2016, p. 83) points out: Hunger, violence, inequalities, economic crisis, misery, ideological anesthesia, loss of referential, individualist vacuum, dilution of the family, loss of public spaces, relativization of social behavior, indifference, social cynicism, consumerism, as some of the issues of our times.

According to Bittar (2016, p. 86), the pragmatization of society, post-Industrial Revolution, post-Atomic Revolution has also made ethics obsolete, depriving it of meaning, causing it to constantly suffer from discrimination against the predominant monetarist mentalities, which dissolve all human values in economic values, and reduce all capacity to a productive and labor capacity.

Faced with this alarming picture began a migration of paradigm at a global level, starting from the paradigm of freedom lived in modernity for a transition to the paradigm of sustainability of postmodernity, as a political, ethical, social and care crisis is being lived.

Sustainability can be defined as: “*Enough, for everyone, everywhere and always*”⁹. The idea is that we should consume what is necessary for our lives, and reduce abusive and predatory consumption so we can guarantee life for all, encompassing all forms of life, in a biocentric vision, everywhere in the world and for the present and future generations. Well, the sentence expressed so little and, at the same time, so much.

For this sustainability to be effective, a global awareness for this world in crisis must arise. It is the idea brought by Rifkin (2010) in his work *La Civilización Empática* (Empathic Civilization).

It was with this idea of a global vision of these social, environmental and economic problems that in the year 2000 the United Nations (UN) presented the eight Millennium Objectives¹⁰ that were goals to be achieved by the year 2015.

Continuing this work, in August 2015, the UN presented the Sustainable Development Objectives that are composed of 17 objectives¹¹ with 169 goals. These attitudes are very

⁹ This simple and complete concept was taken from a variation of graffiti on a wall during the World Conference on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002.

¹⁰ 1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2. To achieve universal primary education; 3. To promote gender equality and empower women; 4. To reduce child mortality; 5. To improve maternal health; 6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7. To ensure environmental sustainability; 8. To develop a global partnership for development.

¹¹ 1. No poverty; 2. Zero Hunger and Sustainable Agriculture; 3. Good health and well-being; 4. Quality education; 5. Gender equality; 6. Clean water and sanitation; 7. Affordable and Clean energy; 8. Decent work and economic growth; 9. Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; 10. Reduce inequalities; 11. Sustainable cities and communities; 12. Responsible production and consumption; 13. Climate Action; 14. Life Below Water; 15. Life

important, since they provide a direction for various sectors, whether public or private, to adopt measures to strengthen sustainability in its various dimensions.

Thus, sustainability has foundations, which are its dimensions: environmental, social, economic, technological and ethical.

In the environmental dimension, it is discussed the importance of protecting the environment and consequently environmental law, understood from its global aspect and with the aims to ensure the survival of all species of living organisms on the planet.

The social dimension¹² is seen as human capital and consists of the social aspect related to the qualities of human beings. It is based on a process of improving the quality of life of society, reducing the discrepancies between opulence and poverty, leveling the income pattern, access to education, housing and food, etc. This confrontation of social problems necessarily involves a correction of the framework of confrontation of social inequality and the lack of access of the poor to their basic social rights, which, by the way, is a potentiator of environmental degradation.

Therefore, it aims, at least, to guarantee the existential minimum that must be identified as the core of human dignity¹³, including as a proposal for its realization the rights to basic education, health, assistance in case of need and access to justice, all of which are legally enforceable in a direct way, since they are provided for in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution.¹⁴

The economic dimension¹⁵ aims to reduce the negative externalities of production, seeking an economy concerned with generating a better quality of life for people, that would be the guarantee of the “existential minimum”, consisting of the basic social rights provided by laws around the world and by the international declarations for the protection of human rights. There is a great link between the economy and environmental law, both of which aim at improving the quality of life of people in order to achieve a social, economic and cultural development of quality.

The technological dimension¹⁶ is linked to individual and collective human intelligence accumulated and multiplied, which can guarantee a sustainable future. It is linked to the use of new technologies that are more sustainable and, therefore, less impacting on the environment.

Finally, the ethics debate is necessary because what is currently happening is the death of traditional ethics.¹⁷

on Land; 16. Peace, justice and strong institutions; 17. Partnerships for the goals. Retrieved from <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> Access: 27 march 2020.

¹² For further information, see Garcia & Garcia (2014).

¹³ For further information, see: Garcia (2016b).

¹⁴ For further information, see: Bendlin & Garcia (2011).

¹⁵ For further information, see: Garcia (2016a); Garcia (2014).

¹⁶ For further information, see: Cruz & Real Ferrer (2015).

¹⁷ “Um crescente processo de desintérica e frenética transformação ético-cultural está em pleno vigor atualmente: ascensão acirrada do culto às paixões; a propaganda da liberação dos instintos; a desestruturação de seculares tradições; a vitimização do ego pelas forças impositivas de hábitos de consumo; o exacerbamento do voluntarismo indiscriminado; o desaparecimento e a sensação generalizada da ausência de modelos; a relativização imoderada de todos os possíveis padrões de comportamento; a institucionalização do unilateralismo das minorias,

All of this demonstrates the importance and timeliness of the debate about the ethical dimension that is the focus of this paper and that is dealt within the next item.

3. Ethical dimension of sustainability

It is perceived that there is an urgent need for life changing action because it is already proven that the environment is finite and that life on the planet is threatened. Thus, the ethical dimension deals with an existential issue, since it is something that seeks to guarantee life, not simply related to nature, but to a whole relationship between the individual and the environment around it. In order to address this issue, therefore, we first need to talk about ethics.

The word ethics comes from the Greek *éthos* (Greek singular), which means the human dwelling, that space of nature that we reserve, organize and take care of to make it our *habitat*.

Ethics need to be born from the essence of the human, there must be a feeling of human happiness; “feel at home”. The man with conscience, intelligence, will and love is the caretaker of the Earth. This idea is closely linked to the 2000 UNESCO Earth Charter¹⁸: “To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2000, p. 1).

Nalini (1999, p. 73) points out that ethics studies the relationships between the individual and the context in which he/she is situated, that is, between the individualized and the world around him/her. It seeks to state and explain the rules, norms, laws and principles that govern ethical phenomena. Ethical phenomena, as stated by the author, are all the events that occur in the relations between the individual and his/her context.

The effectiveness of ethics lies in its use/practice. One can know a great deal about ethics, but the true value of ethics does not lie in this accumulated knowledge, but in the applied use of acts and behaviors that can be made out of them, as Bittar (2016, p. 34) reports.

The author affirms that ethics as practice consists in the concrete and conjugated action of will and reason, an interaction from which results are extracted that are embodied in different forms. Thus, ethical practice must represent the conjugation of permanent attitudes of life, in which, inwardly and externally, attitudes managed by reason and administered before the senses and appetites are constructed (Bittar, 2016, p. 30).

fragmentando ainda uma vez a compreensão da integração e da cooperação humanas; a criação de um consenso vitorioso (capitalismo, democracia e neoliberalismo) empacotado para venda internacional; a imposição da lógica do terror com único mecanismo de contradição com as forças imperantes e determinantes da estruturação das relações sócio-humanas; ainda uma vez, o acirramento renovado dos instintos fundamentalistas, de todos os tipos (raciais, culturais, nacionais, religiosos e étnicos...); a queda e o desaparecimento das grandes ideologias – radicalismo político de direito e/ou esquerda – e seu *revival* contemporâneo, como modo de saudosismo das lutas políticas e *re-politização* da apatia geral da consciência popular.” (Bittar, 2016, p. 84)

¹⁸“Universal Responsibility To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.” (UNESCO, 2000, p. 1).

According to the author, the one who knows much about ethics but practices little cannot be called prudent or virtuous simply by knowing. A distinction must be made between ethical knowledge and ethical practice (Bittar, 2016, p. 34).

Therefore, the following characteristics of ethics for sustainability are identified:

1. Systemic view of the world and life.
2. Recognition of limits on the use of nature and the finiteness of natural resources
3. Commitment to the construction of sustainable development, in a present and future perspective.
4. Satisfaction of basic, material, cultural and psychosocial needs.
5. Respect for cultural, ethical, political, religious and gender diversity.
6. Appreciation of others.
7. Individual and social responsibility with our attitudes.
8. Recognition of the right to life with our attitudes.
9. Commitment to human rights, democracy, peace, justice and love (Mininni-Medina, 1998).

From everything that has been said so far, there is no doubt that when it comes to sustainability, we need ethical practice.

4. Principles for an ethics for sustainability

In order to effectively achieve the ethical dimension of sustainability, as set out in the Agenda 21 and sustainability debate notebook, prepared by the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment¹⁹, used as base in this scientific research, it is necessary to be based on four principles: principle of affectivity, principle of care and compassion, principle of cooperation and principle of responsibility.

4.1. Principle of affectivity

We must consider that the essence of man is affection, feeling, emotion and love, because that is where all values are born. The first structure of the human being is not constituted by reason (*logos*), but by sensitivity (*pathos*). Bauman (2008, p. 31) affirms:

The call to love thy neighbor as thyself, says Sigmund Freud, is one of the fundamental precepts of civilized life (and, according to some, one of its fundamental ethical demands). But it is also the most contrary to the kind of reason that such civilization promotes: the reason of self-interest, of pursuit of happiness.

Today what is seen is an immediate society, “liquid modernity” in Zygmunt Bauman’s (2011) words, in which the citizen is concerned with having and not being; where relations are quick and superficial; where there is no time for children and they grow up accompanied only by screens of computers, tablets and smartphones, that do not deal with the world of life, only with the world of ideas and emptiness.

¹⁹ *Caderno de debate Agenda 21 e sustentabilidade. Ética e Sustentabilidade*. Retrieved on May 10, 2018 from www.mma.gov.br/agenda21.

The modern world has encouraged the ethics of individualism, abstract reason, capitalist accumulation and competition, social homogenization (Bittar, 2016, p. 95), making man an empty being without feelings for the other.

Bauman (2005), in his book *Globalization: the human consequences*, presents the great damage caused by globalization that has plagued human relations, causing serious damage, such as: distancing people; the liquidity of relationships; the oppression of the lower classes with the increase of the difference between these classes; the increase in the epidemic global hunger; depression; liquidity of the relations being that the people are collectors of “things”. Thus, it brought serious damages related to affectivity which drastically damages the dictates of the sustainability which, in order to have strength, needs a supportive individual, affectionate with the other, balanced and with minimum conditions of quality of life.

Nowadays the crisis that is experienced is that of sensitivity and affection, the human being is increasingly selfish and individualistic. According to May (2009, p. 4), one of the main problems of modern man is emptiness, it is not knowing what he/she wants and often not having the slightest idea of what he/she feels.

There is a great insensitivity related to the disgrace of humankind living in levels of poverty and misery, as well as indifference in relation to the degradation of ecosystems, pollution of air and soil, and extinction of species.

The human being is insensitive to solidarity²⁰, care, love and compassion, dimensions that are priceless, but have value and give meaning to life. To Bauman (2008, p. 35): “Loving our neighbors as we love ourselves would mean, then, *respecting each other’s uniqueness* - valuing each other for our differences, which enrich the world we jointly inhabit and make it a more fascinating and enjoyable place”.

If we do not raise the capacity to feel, to be indignant or to be sensitized to others, no ethics will be possible. To accept the precept of loving thy neighbor is the founding act of humanity. For that, a drastic change of life is necessary, with the rediscovery of what is really important.

4.2. Principle of care/compassion

Care is the essence of a human being. Without care one does not survive in the first hours of birth, does not flourish in love, does not fulfill his/her mission in the world, his/her intelligence does not blossom.

In the dimension of life that is developed, which arises from all adversities, from the multiple experiences which favors this integration from a hologramatic perspective²¹ by the motto *we are all in one and one in all*, we begin to determine another ethos to visualize the *Dignitas Terrae*, which does not exhaust itself in judgments of economic, industrial, aesthetic, utilitarian values, among others, but stimulates another “way of being”, that is, a “way of being-of-care”.

²⁰ For further information, see Garcia & Garcia (2016).

²¹ According to Morin (2005, p. 2017), a hologram is an image that each dot contains almost all of the information about the represented object. The hologrammatic principle means not only that the part is in the whole, but that the whole is inscribed, in a certain way, in the part. Thus, the cell contains all of the genetic information, which, actually, allows cloning. Society, as a whole, through culture, is present in the spirit of each individual.

This is the attitude manifested in the world by the Ethics of Care. Permanent and close contact with the natural and social world diminishes self-interest, the exclusively selfish posture before the Other. Through this *ethos*, other dynamic, creative, dialogical scenarios are unveiled in order to establish which project of common life becomes possible, lasting, insofar as the Other is recognized as an “own being”, far from ideology propagated by Instrumental Reason²² in the relations between human and non-human “subject-object”. It is the Care Ethics²³ that develops the architecture of Life Ethics and Sustainability.

Boff (2005, p. 31) states that, by carefulness, we do not see nature and everything that exists in it as objects. The relation is not subject-object, but subject-subject. We experience beings as subjects, as values, as symbols that refer to a frontal reality. Nature is not mute. It speaks. It evokes. It emits messages of grandeur, beauty, perplexity and strength. The human being can listen and interpret these signals. He/she stands beside things, at their feet, and feels attached to them. He/she does not just exist. Co-exists with all others. The relationship is not one of dominance but of coexistence. It is not pure intervention, but mainly interaction and communion. It’s about taking care of things. To take care of things means to have intimacy with them, to feel them inside, to accept them, to respect them, to give them rest. Caring is getting in tune with things. To listen to the rhythm and tune into it. Caring is establishing communion. It is not the analytical, instrumental reason that is called to act. But the cordial reason, the *esprit de finesse* (the spirit of delicacy), the deep feeling. More than the *logos* (reason), it is the *pathos* (feeling), which occupies the centrality here.

This relational dimension of complicity signals to the human that, in each place, in every closeness, there is a fragile balance that must persist in order to expand and preserve the chain of life. For this reason, the twenty-first century must be viewed/considered/thought from the angle of the Logic and Ethics of Care to constitute and clarify the communicational and existential meaning between humans and non-humans in which it is silently manifested in the subterranean galleries of the present moment. The reflection and praxis of Care is a presupposition of coexistence in this imperfect garden, whose name is Sustainability.

Without the *ethos* of Care, it is not possible to recognize the Earth as its “own being” to recognize how the flux of *interspeciesnets* maintains the balance - physical, chemical, biological, energetic, informational, psychological, ecological - necessary for the flowering of life, of living and coexisting. This statement (and concern) can be summarized from this proposition: When the absence of Care in human-nonhuman relations is observed, the efforts

²² Horkheimer (2000, p. 61) recalls the effects produced by the expression “Instrumental Reason”: the reduction of reasoning to a mere instrument finally affects even its character as an instrument. The anti-philosophical spirit which is inseparable from the subjective concept of reason, and which in Europe culminated in the totalitarian persecution of intellectuals, whether their precursors or not, is symptomatic of the degradation of reason. The traditionalist and conservative critics of civilization make a fundamental mistake when attacking modern civilization without attacking at the same time the embittering which is just another aspect of the same process. The human intellect, which has biological and social origins, is not an absolute, isolated and independent entity. It was declared to be like this just as the result of the social division of labor, in order to justify the latter on the basis of the natural constitution of man.

²³ Boff (2009, p. 75-76) states: Life, as we have seen, is fragile and vulnerable. It is at the mercy of the game between chaos and cosmos. The proper attitude for life is care, respect, veneration and tenderness. It is these attitudes that open us to the sensitization of the importance of life. They imply the change of the current cultural paradigm, based on power-domination, and the introduction of a paradigm of co-operative coexistence, of synergy, of distress for all that exists and lives. Because of this shift, it is urgent to redefine the ends inspired in life and to adjust the means to these ends. Only in this way will the life threatened have a chance of safeguarding and promotion.

made in the name of Sustainability²⁴ and Sustainable Development will be only empty promises.

Compassion that is very much linked to solidarity is the Eastern version of the term care. In the Buddhist sense is the ability to respect each other as another, not interfering with his/her life and destiny, but never leaving him/her in pain.

4.3. Principle of Cooperation

The idea is to allow each being, even the weakest, to be able to win with the cooperation of the other. It was the cooperation that allowed our ancestors to make the leap from animality to humanity.

Freitas (2019, p. 68) affirms: Cooperation emerges, in a similar context, as a magnificent evolutionary trait favorable to the continuity of life as an ecosystem, increasingly rich, multifaceted and culturally plural.

This sense of co-operation dwells within each person's inner self (though a faint spark in overly instinctive creatures), and it is incumbent upon those who have greater self-consciousness, without shrugging their shoulders, to protect social trust and integrity of character, to compensate for the unjust damages perpetrated by primitivism. All cruelty is forbidden, for never being an universalizable practice, as it is contrary to a life of quality, says Freitas (2019, p. 68-69).

Today we cannot only be spontaneously cooperative and supportive, because this is the logic of evolution and life, but we must act consciously and with a project of life. Otherwise we will not save our lives, nor will we guarantee a future commitment for humanity.²⁵

This idea of cooperation, therefore, must be tied in all the moments and acts of our existence.

4.4. Principle of Responsibility

To be responsible is to realize the consequences of our actions, taking responsibility for the common home and shared future. To Bittar (2016, p. 25): Ethics corresponds to the social exercise of reciprocity, respect and responsibility.

From this principle, it is highlighted that the essence of the protection of the environment is the responsibility of all humanity that must be united to establish common measures that are effective to environmental protection.

²⁴Leff (2011, p. 404) affirms: If we understand the problem of unsustainability of life on the planet as a symptom of a crisis of civilization – of the fundamentals of the corporate project of modernity – it will be possible to understand that the construction of the future (sustainable) cannot be based on false certainty about the effectiveness of the market and technology - not even about ecology - to find the balance between economic growth and environmental preservation. The crossroads in which the new millennium opens its path is an invitation to philosophical reflection, theoretical production and critical judgment on the foundations of modernity, which allows the generation of conceptual and praxeological strategies that guide a process of social reconstruction. Environmental complexity and the processes of self-organization generate synergies that open the way to a sustainable society founded on a new rationality.

²⁵*Caderno de debate Agenda 21 e sustentabilidade. Ética e Sustentabilidade*. Retrieved on May 10, 2018 from www.mma.gov.br/agenda21

It is necessary to worry about the destruction of life due to excessive food chemistry, the use of transgenics, genetic manipulation, nuclear weapons, chemical and biological wars, among other serious environmental, economic and social problems that plague humanity.

Alenza García (2001, p. 43) states that: This principle also stems from intercommunity solidarity. Environmental problems are common to all mankind, but the possibilities for dealing with them are very different from one country to another. In addition, not all countries are equally accountable for contamination. Hence the recognition that States have common but differentiated responsibilities, as indicated in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration.

The categorical principle is: act so responsibly that the consequences of your action are not deleterious to life and your future. Or positively: act in such a way that the consequences of your actions are promoters of life, care, cooperation and love.²⁶

5. Virtues for sustainability

Finally, for the ethical dimension of sustainability we need to talk about the virtues that are related to this theme. Virtues would be behaviors and standards that translate principles into practice.

Bittar (2016, p. 44) affirms: Ethics should encourage the cultivation of virtues. Following Jugeal's old adage (8:20), according to which the one and true nobility is virtue (*Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus*), it can be said that the formation of the person depends on the most varied stimuli, among which those who draw their behavior into the field of virtue. Therefore, this is a relevant social task, that of encouraging a social life guided by the valorization of the virtues.

For the strengthening of the virtues it is necessary a daily exercise, of an effort to lead the life within acceptable terms, for oneself and for the other, in the mid-term ethics, that is, that values the life distanced of excesses, as stated by Bittar (2016, p. 44).

According to Bittar (2016, p. 45), the great problem of modern life is the valorization of the present (but it leads us to permanent anxiety for the future), living (which occurs with intensity, not sobriety, and therefore leads to excesses of all kinds), "having/possessing" (which occupies the space of being, and therefore also permeates the world of direct and subliminal messages linked to immediacy and consumerism), pragmatism (which occupies the agenda of action and contorts the possibility of acting in relation to goals), and hedonism (making heroic vices/addictions, justifying any kind of action, and drawing all the social efforts into the spiral of the search for sensations, ideologizing life with the obligation of happiness).

That is why it is necessary to search for the virtues as an orientation to life and to combat evil. Bittar (2016, p. 46) states that, to confront the question of evil, only the union of social forces that grapple around the power of virtues, because it is where there is mercy, there is no rudeness; where there is forgiveness, there is no revolt; where there is prudence, there is no temerity; where there is solidarity, there is no hunger; where there is tolerance, there is no persecution; where there is understanding there is no obscurity. That is, the group of virtues offers a

²⁶*Caderno de debate Agenda 21 e sustentabilidade. Ética e Sustentabilidade.* Retrieved on May 10, 2018 from www.mma.gov.br/agenda21

reasonable range of forces for action, which must organize social life and become vectors of social behavior.

Thus, the importance of the virtues for ethical action is denoted. In the sequence, the virtues related to sustainability will be addressed.

The virtue of *hospitality* is related to the right that every human being has, since we are all sons and daughters of the Earth. Today there is a criminal lack of hospitality. There are about 300 million who, due to wars, economic, ethical and religious reasons, are refugees²⁷ or outside their homelands. According to Bauman (2008, p. 45):

The human waste of the global frontier, refugees are the outsiders incarnate, the absolute outsiders, outsiders represented and greeted everywhere with rancor and spite. They are out of place everywhere except in places that are themselves out of place - the “nowhere places” that appear on no maps that ordinary tourists use on their travels.

All beings have the right to continue existing, as well as to be protected and to have their habitats guaranteed.

The virtue of *coexistence* is founded on the knowledge that all beings form a cosmic and biotic community, but one of the great problems of globalized oriental culture is its inability to welcome the other as another. The social pact must be articulated as a natural pact. The coexistence with all beings of nature leads us to exclude violence and the merely selfish and utilitarian use of the goods of nature.²⁸

The virtue of *respect to all* is related to the tolerance of accepting the limitations and even the defects of others and living harmoniously with them, developing non-destructive ways of resolving eventual conflicts.²⁹

The virtue of *commensality* is extremely important, especially considering the reality that 1/3 of humanity suffers from hunger and are undernourished. This virtue is linked to the idea that we should “eat and drink together”. We constitute a community of life, we depend on other beings for our own life, and at the same time, we are responsible for their lives, guaranteeing them the habitat where they find their food.

In summary, it is seen that for the ethical being concerned with the reach of sustainability we must have virtues such as hospitality, coexistence, respect for all and commensality.

²⁷ There are distinctions between the terms environmental displacement and refugees. The former need to leave their countries due to environmental problems/disasters, while the latter are people who leave their countries because they are persecuted for reasons of race, nationality, social group or political opinions. For more detailed information on the subject the following work is suggested: Souza & Oliveira (2017).

²⁸ *Caderno de debate Agenda 21 e sustentabilidade. Ética e Sustentabilidade*. Retrieved on May 10, 2018 from www.mma.gov.br/agenda21

²⁹ *Caderno de debate Agenda 21 e sustentabilidade. Ética e Sustentabilidade*. Retrieved on May 10, 2018 from www.mma.gov.br/agenda21

6. Final considerations

Due to the seriousness of environmental and social problems that have intensified since the 1970s, there has been a paradigm shift within the society where we move from the paradigm of freedom to the paradigm of sustainability.

Sustainability, therefore, aims to bring a balance between environment, social, economic, technological and ethical. In this paper, the main focus was on the ethical dimension of sustainability.

Ethical practice must represent the conjugation of permanent attitudes of life, in which both attitudes managed by reason and administered before the principles and ethical virtues are constructed, inwardly and outwardly.

In order to talk about sustainability, we need to stop for reflection, to pause for spirituality, to go beyond the daily rush, towards the enchantment of the simplest things in life.

We have not been able to overcome individualism yet and we have not been able to internalize the desired and necessary intensity of the struggle for participatory democracy so that a mature and conscious discussion about the global problems faced can take place.

It is necessary then a new civilization project, which seeks economic development, subordinated to the needs of social justice and environmental preservation and recovery.

References

- Alenza García, J. F. (2001). *Manual de derecho ambiental*. Navarra: Litografía IPAR.
- Bauman, Z. (2005). *Globalization: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2008). *Does ethics have a change in a world of consumers?*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2011). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bendlin, S. L., & Garcia, D. S. S. (2011). Dimensão social do princípio da sustentabilidade frente ao artigo 6º da constituição da república federativa do Brasil de 1988. *Revista Eletrônica Direito e Política*, 6(2), 419-441.
- Bittar, E. C. B. (2016). *Curso de ética jurídica: ética geral e profissional*. São Paulo: Saraiva.
- Boff, L. (2005). O cuidado essencial: princípio de um novo ethos. *Revista Inclusão Social*, 1(1), 28-35.
- Boff, L. (2009). *Ética da vida: a nova centralidade*. Rio de Janeiro: Record.
- Cruz, P. M., & Real Ferrer, G. (2015). Direito, Sustentabilidade e a Premissa Tecnológica como Ampliação de seus Fundamentos. *Sequência*, 36, 239.

- EFE Agency. (April 2, 2019). Mais de 113 milhões de pessoas foram vítimas de fome extrema em 2018. 2 de abril de 2019. Retrieved on April 11, 2019 from <https://exame.abril.com.br/noticias-sobre/mudancas-climaticas/>
- Freitas, J. (2019). *Sustentabilidade. Direito ao futuro*. Belo Horizonte: Fórum.
- Garcia, D. S. S. (2014). A busca por uma economia ambiental: a ligação entre o meio ambiente e o direito econômico. In: D. S. S. Garcia (Ed.), *Governança Transnacional e Sustentabilidade* (pp. 7-27). Itajaí: UNIVALI.
- Garcia, D. S. S. (2016a). Dimensão Econômica da Sustentabilidade: uma análise com base na economia verde e a teoria do decrescimento. *Veredas do Direito*, 13, 133-153.
- Garcia, D. S. S. (2016b). Uma nova perspectiva para o Direito Ambiental: o direito ao ambiente como direito fundamental da pessoa humana. *Interesse Público*, 18, 95-110.
- Garcia, D. S. S., & Garcia, H. S. (2014). Dimensão social do princípio da sustentabilidade: uma análise do mínimo existencial ecológico. In: M. C. da S. A. de Souza, & H. S. Garcia (Eds.), *Lineamentos sobre Sustentabilidade segundo Gabriel Real Ferrer* (1st ed., pp 37-54). Itajaí: UNIVALI, 2014.
- Garcia, H. S., & Garcia, D. S. S. (2016). A construção de um conceito de sustentabilidade solidária: contribuições teóricas para o alcance do socioambientalismo. *Revista de Direito Ambiental e Socioambientalismo*, 2, 147-168.
- Horkheimer, M. (2000). *Eclipse da razão*. São Paulo: Centauro.
- Leite, E. O. (2011). *A monografia jurídica*. 5 ed. São Paulo: Revista dos Tribunais.
- Leff, E. (2011). *Saber ambiental: sustentabilidade, racionalidade, complexidade, poder*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2011, p. 404.
- May, R. (2009). *Man's search for himself*. New York, London: WW. Norton & Company.
- Mininni-Medina, N. (1998). *Educação ambiental em centros urbanos: a problemática da incorporação de valores éticos*. Paper presented at the Congresso Habitat II, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil.
- Morin, E. (2005). *O método 6: ética*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Nalini, J. R. (1999). *Ética geral e profissional*. São Paulo: Revista dos Tribunais.
- Pasold, C. L. (2015). *Metodologia da pesquisa jurídica: teoria e prática*. 13 ed. rev., atual. e ampl. Florianópolis: Conceito Editorial.
- Rifkin, J. (2010). *La Civilización Empática. La carrera hacia una conciencia global en un mundo en crisis*. Madrid: Paidós.
- Souza, M. C. da S. A., & Oliveira, M. R. de. (2017). *Migrações e refugiados: um olhar multidimensional e os dilemas da contemporaneidade*. Belo Horizonte: Editora Vorto.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2000). *The Earth Charter*. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/education/tlsf/mods/theme_a/img/02_earthcharter.pdf

United Nations Brazil. (June 22, 2017). *Mudanças climáticas devem intensificar deslocamentos forçados, dizem especialistas*. Retrieved on April 11, 2019 from <https://nacoesunidas.org/mudancas-climaticas-devem-intensificar-deslocamentos-forcados-dizem-especialistas/>