A CRITICAL ARBITRATION OF ANTHROPOCENTRIC vs ECO-CENTRIC
THEORETICAL CONTROVERSY IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS DISCOURSE

BY

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DEGREE OF MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.
DECLARATION

This proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

Signature __________________________ Date 27/05/2014

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We confirm that the work reported in this proposal was carried out by the student under our supervision.

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The purpose of this study is to settle theoretical dispute between anthropocentrism and eco-centrism on whether new ethics is necessary or not. In particular, the study aims at establishing whether either anthropocentric or eco-centric moral theory can be a sufficient basis for new environmentalism as their respective proponents argue. The central question of this study is: is either anthropocentrism or eco-centrism adequate or an alternative theory but in which the two antagonistic moral approaches are reconciled necessary and possible? Through historical survey we see that anthropocentric vs. eco-centric theoretical controversies have persisted with consequential serious negative impact on environmentalism. An attempt by eco-centrists to defend their position with testimonies from antiquity and with scientific facts and theories has not convinced anthropocentrists. Surprisingly, the latter invoke the same scientific facts and theories as used by eco-centrists as a counter-argument, thus vindicating their (anthropocentrists) position. This absurd situation has enlisted pessimistic attitudes among some philosophers on resolvability of theoretical controversies in environmental ethics. Consequently, there has been a tendency to abandon these theoretical pursuits. This is comprehensible given that the moral theory's consistency with scientific facts and theories is a crucial requirement for its adequacy. But the urgency for a resolution of anthropocentric versus eco-centric theoretical controversy still forces itself with inescapable necessity given serious implications of unresolved theoretical differences on environmentalism. This study aims at formulating a theoretical perspective that helps to resolve the controversy. To do this, each of the party to the controversy will be subjected to a comprehensive and impartial critical evaluation. Particularly, the two conflicting theories will be evaluated against the moral criteria for adequacy of moral theories. According to these criteria, a theory is adequate to the extent to which its underlying worldviews, especially metaphysical assumptions, are rationally and psychologically acceptable. The study will especially focus on rationality and psychological acceptability of metaphysical beliefs found in indigenous and Christian-modern European worldviews in so far as they underlie eco-centric and anthropocentric moral theories respectively. The study will adopt a combination of critical judge model and stage development of moral theory as its conceptual framework. Data collection will take place in library and as such, relevant information will be recorded in form of notes. Then, a philosophical method known as critical method will be employed in analyzing the data. This method consists of analysis and evaluation. It best serves the purpose of this study since the conflicting theories must be analyzed to their ultimate roots and be assessed in order to establish their strengths and weaknesses.