

# **A Global Water Crisis and Water Ethics under Development: How Can Bernard Lonergan Help?**

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**Lonergan-on-the-edge  
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# WATER is essential for life

‘sine qua non’ and ‘sui generis’

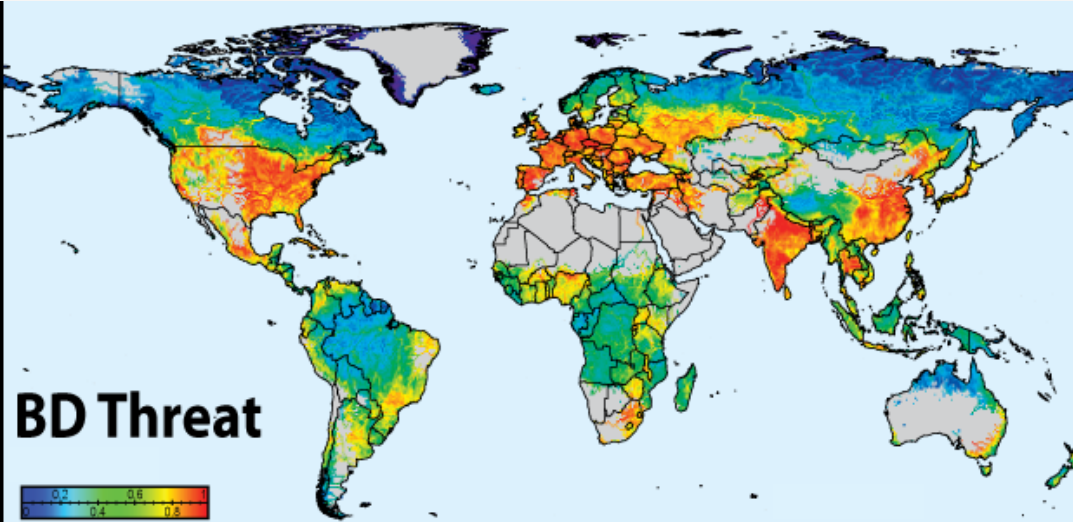
## Water is cross-cutting, multidisciplinary

Water and...

- Human health
- Agriculture
- Ecosystem health
- Energy
- Industry
- Conflict
- Collaboration
- Religions, spirituality
- Civilisation

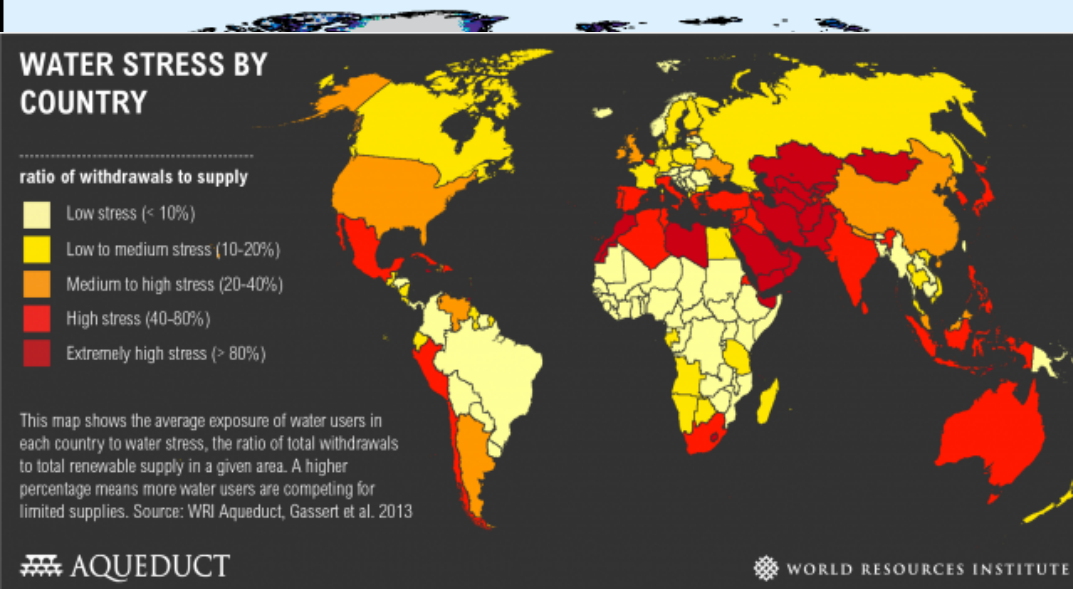
# WORLD WATER CRISIS

- Global threats to human water security and river biodiversity



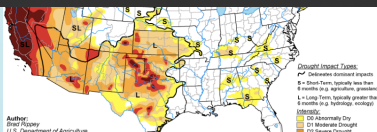
## Biodiversity

- 65% of continental discharge threatened (mod.-high)
- Globally, freshwater biodiversity has declined 35% since 1970” WWF



## Human Water Security

- “nearly 80% of humanity exposed to high levels of threat
- water security is essential to global food security
- 2/3 of world’s largest groundwater aquifers in decline (2015)





# WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

- 845,000 dams in world (2009)
- Municipal & rural water systems
- Agriculture – 70% of freshwater use

## Water poverty

- 870 million persons lack proper access clean potable water
- 2.5 billion persons lacking sanitation





# Water Decision-making

## Water Governance

- range of political, social, economic and administrative systems for developing and managing water resources, and the delivery of water services

Water Management – subset of WG, sometimes synonymous

## Main Actors

- Governments - national to local
- mandated bodies/commissions
- EU, UN,
- NGO's
- MNCs e.g. Bechtel, Enron, Vivendi

## Example:

“The US Bureau of Reclamation began releases of water into California’s Klamath River on Friday in order to prevent a large fish kill. The releases will continue into September. Last year, farmers unhappy about sharing their irrigation water with the river’s salmon took legal action to try to prevent releases, and were unsuccessful.”

New York Times (Aug.24, 2015)



## Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM)

- a principal global water management standard
- vs. conventional (top-down) state hydraulic paradigm

*“a process which promotes the coordinated development and management of water, land and related resources in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems.”*

GLOBAL WATER PARTNERSHIP, 2000



## IWRM has been critiqued

- How to deal with competing interests?
- Implicit values of the managers?
- What about cultural\religious histories of different peoples, and their values?

*“a new disposition toward “integration” must include the contextual and political specificities of different cultural orientations”*

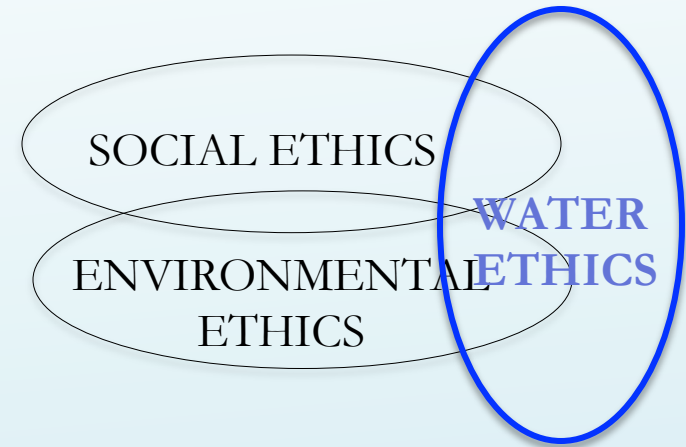
(Schmidt 2012, Akpablo 2011)

*“**Engaging the ethical dimension** of water governance requires very different processes than suggested by IWRM and other water “reforms” espoused within the water resources community.”* Ingram, 2008.

# Water Ethics as developing

Literature mostly since ~2000

- Most highlight concerns
- Propose big-picture guiding principles
- Plurality of approaches
- Philosophical background usually implicit



A few titles:

- The Missing Piece: A Water Ethic (2008)
- Troubled Waters: Religion, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis (2008)
- Water ethics: foundational readings for students and professionals (2010)
- Water Ethics - A Values Approach to Solving the Water Crisis (2013)
- Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis (2014)
- Laudato Si', recent CST (2003+)





# Water Ethics – many perspectives

Approaches	Questions/concern
Inadvertance	‘From knowledge to action.’
Utilitarianism	<u>Aggregated utility</u> in terms of economic welfare and consumption (now and in future)?
Liberal equality	What about equality (now and in future) and human rights?
Social contract and discourse	What are just conditions and procedures to arrive at water-related decisions?
Priority, threshold:	How does water management affect the poor, the excluded? Native peoples?
Feminist	Use of power and roles of men and women
Biocentric	How does human water use affect other species and ecosystems (now and in future)?
Theocentric	How to steward God’s creation?
Pragmatism	What works to solve problematic situations? Combinations of the above as suited



# Water Ethics - difficult questions remain

2004

1. “How could a water ethic respect value differences among individuals, groups, and societies?”
2. What would be an appropriate scale for such an ethic?

Priscoli JD, Dooge J, Llamas R. Water and Ethics: Overview. Paris: UNESCO; 2004

2014

“we do not claim there is a single, unified water ethics discourse but instead use the term to reflect an array of interdisciplinary reflections... worries, and principles. Our suggestion is that there are always multiple normative frameworks in play: **water ethics are inherently plural.**”

Schmidt and Peppard, (2014)

## **How to apply Lonergan?**



## **What is the major source of confusion in water ethics?**

Is it

- the intersection of science and values?
- lack of a reliable transdisciplinary methodology?
- the transcultural aspect?
- non-systematic blends of moral principles and philosophies?
- implicit and confused epistemologies?
- the exclusion of any role for human intentionality
- Neglect of the subject re. subject/object referrant?





## **Help from Lonergan to turn to:**

- a higher level of organization and integration

## **To the conscious intentional human subject**

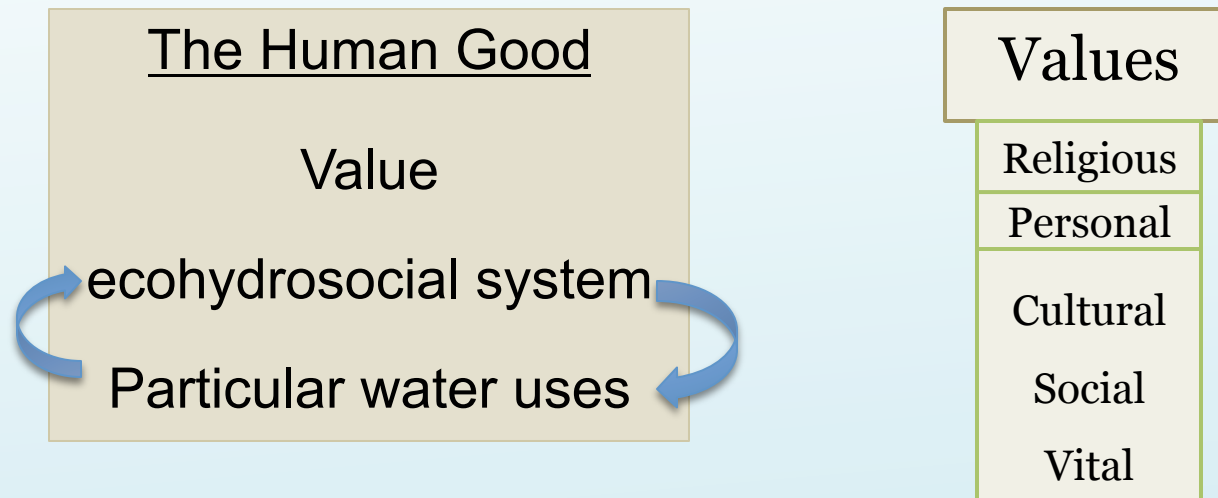
- structure of intentionality
  - underlies all communication
  - all knowing and doing



## Ethics of the developing Subject

- ‘An existential ethics’
- ‘an empiric and critical ethics of the incarnate developing subject’
- ‘An ethic of personal responsibility’
- Ethos as subject’s grounded existential orientation
  - authenticity in 3-fold self-transcendence
    - Cognitive, Affective, Moral

# Ethical deliberation applied to water decisions



- A process of collaborative inquiry
- Driven by questions
- Unfolding through all relevant human-water interactions  
\patterns of collaboration\ecologies

# *Questions and discussion.*

Tom McAuley (PhD cand.)

