

**PhD Dissertation**

Abdi Kitesa Keno

Szeged, 2026

**UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED**

**FACULTY OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

**A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO MODERN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS:  
AN EXAMINATION OF PRAGMATIC RATIONALITY AND  
SUSTAINABILITY**

PhD Dissertation

Supervisor

Dr. habil. Krémer Sándor

University of Szeged

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Doctoral School of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies

Author

Abdi Kitesa Keno

University of Szeged

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Doctoral School of Philosophy and  
Religious Studies

## **Declaration**

### **Candidate's Declaration**

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work undertaken under the guidance of my supervisor; and with the exception of references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged, this dissertation has neither in part nor in whole been submitted for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate Signature:.....

Date:.....

Name: Abdi Kitesa Keno

### **Supervisor's Declaration**

I hereby declare that the preparation and the presentation this thesis was supervised in accordance with the supervisor of thesis laid down by the University of Szeged.

Principal Supervisor's Signature.....

Date:.....

Name: Dr. habil. Krémer Sándor

## **Acknowledgments**

First and foremost, I thank God, the foundation of my faith and the reason for my existence.

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor, Professor Sandor Kremer, for his exceptional guidance throughout my dissertation journey. Your insightful feedback, unwavering support, and genuine kindness have been invaluable. From our very first meeting, your encouragement and thoughtful inquiries about both my academic progress and personal well-being inspired me to grow as a scholar and as a person. Thank you for helping me become a better version of myself.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Emese Mogyoródi for broadening my intellectual horizons through her thought-provoking insights during Plato course and research group discussions. Your feedback sharpened my critical thinking, and your prompt assistance with administrative matters was greatly appreciated.

I am also thankful to the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship and Wollega University, Ethiopia, for their financial support, which made this study possible. In addition, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the University of Szeged Doctoral Council for awarding me the prestigious Doctoral Excellence Scholarship for two consecutive years. Their financial support made my academic journey more rewarding and enriching.

Furthermore, my gratitude goes to the faculty members of the Doctoral School of Philosophy for their valuable feedback and kind cooperation throughout my studies.

Finally, I express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Kena Abdi, for her unwavering emotional support, patience, and understanding during my academic journey. Your encouragement has been my constant source of strength.

## **List of Publications**

Prior to the submission, portions of the dissertation and other related studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals while others are under review. This section lists these studies.

### **Peer-reviewed Journal Publications**

Keno, A. K. (2021). A Study of Sibu Oromo Environmental Ethic. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 6(6), 1204–1210.

Keno, A. K. (2022). Moral Relations Between Humans and Animals. *Pragmatism Today*, 13(1), 86–87.

Keno, A. K. (2023). The Possibility of Environmental Ethics from Pragmatist Perspective. *Pragmatism Today*, 14(1), 45–57.

Keno, A. K. (2024). Environmental Pragmatism as a Sound Environmental Philosophy. *Pragmatism Today*, 15(1), 88–100.

### **Conference Presentations**

Keno, A (2022). The Concept of Interconnectedness among the Oromo People of Ethiopia

Keno, A (2023). Logical Positivism and Normative ethics: A Philosophical Appraisal

Keno, A (2024). Environmental Pragmatism as a Sound Environmental Philosophy

Keno, A (2024). Verifiability Principle and Leap of Faith: A Philosophical Examination

## Abstract

This dissertation's central objective is to substantiate the pragmatic approach as a valid methodology in modern environmental ethics. Environmental ethics is the study of the moral relationships between humans and non-human animals, as well as the valuation of nature. Conventionally, the history of modern philosophy is regarded as beginning in the 17th century with the contributions of Francis Bacon and René Descartes. In this work, however, the term "modern" refers to the 20th- and 21st-century phenomenon of environmental ethics. This dissertation has three aims. First, it examines the role of reason in modern environmental ethics. Rationality is one of the most debated topics in philosophy and environmental ethics. This work assumes that hegemonic rationality is the root cause of environmental crises. Consequently, procedural pragmatic rationality can function as a framework within environmental discourse. Second, the thesis refutes the misconception of environmental pragmatism as presented by Lars Samuelsson, presenting environmental pragmatism as a legitimate environmental philosophy. Samuelsson argues that the stance adopted by environmental pragmatists has led environmental philosophers away from theoretical debates and falls short of being considered legitimate philosophical discussion. However, in light of the current ecological crisis, the need for practical, immediate solutions to address pressing environmental issues is paramount. Thus, this study advocates for environmental pragmatism as a robust ethical framework for environmental issues. Third, the text examines the application of Richard Rorty's philosophical concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* to sustainability. Despite the fact that a number of scholars have thoroughly examined the notion of sustainability as a means of addressing environmental issues, their efforts have frequently fallen into technological fix and the perpetuation of unrecognized anthropocentrism. Rorty's philosophical framework, as outlined in *Contingency,*

*Irony, and Solidarity*, offers a new interpretation of sustainability as an adaptable practice rather than an adherence to unchanging, universal principles. Methodologically, the study employs a pragmatic philosophical approach. This method is used to evaluate the practical relevance and usefulness of various theoretical frameworks and perspectives for addressing the research problem. Thus, combining pragmatic rationality, which is procedural, with Rorty's concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* promotes environmental pragmatism as a useful framework within the context of modern environmental ethics.

**Keywords:** Lars Samuelsson, Richard Rorty, Contingency, Irony, Solidarity, Sustainability, Modern Environmental ethics; Rationality, Pragmatism; environmental pragmatism; sound environmental ethics

## Table of Contents

Declaration.....	I
Acknowledgments.....	II
List of Publications.....	III
Abstract.....	IV
Keywords.....	V
Table of Contents.....	VI
Chapter One	
Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study .....	4
1.3 Organization of the Study.....	8
Chapter Two	
Overview of Environmental Ethics.....	9
2.1 Introduction .....	9
2.2 Modern Environmental Ethics.....	12
2.2.1 Anthropocentric Environmental Ethics .....	13
2.2.2 Non-anthropocentric Environmental Ethics.....	16
2.3 Conclusion.....	20
Chapter Three	
Environmental Pragmatism as a Sound Environmental Philosophy.....	21
3.1 Introduction .....	22
3.2 Overview of Pragmatism.....	22

3.3 Environmental Pragmatism.....	26
3.4 Moral Monism .....	28
3.5 Moral Pluralism.....	32
3.6 Conclusion.....	37
Chapter Four	
Critique of Samuelsson’s Views	
4.1 Introduction.....	38
4.2 Samuelson’s Critique.....	39
4.3 Conclusion.....	46
Chapter Five	
Pragmatic Rationality in Environmental Ethics and Its Practical Implications	
5.1 Introduction.....	48
5.2 Rationality as a Contested Issue in Environmental Ethics.....	49
5.3 Pragmatic Rationality.....	53
5.4 Pragmatic Rationality as the Procedural Guide.....	59
5.5 Application of the Pragmatic Rationality to Biological Diversity Conservation.....	62
5.6 Conclusion.....	67
Chapter Six	
Application of Rorty’s Ideas to Sustainability	
6.1 Introduction.....	68

6.2 Sustainability as Perpetual Reminder Ecological Crisis.....	71
6.3 The Notion of Contingency and Irony in the Context of Sustainability Discourse.....	75
6.4 The Concept of Solidarity in the Context of Sustainability Discourse.....	84
6.5 Conclusion.....	90
Chapter Seven	
Summary and Conclusion.....	91
References.....	97

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### 1.1 Background of the Study

Environmental philosophy is a broad subject that encompasses ethics, aesthetics, political philosophy, epistemology, metaphysics, the philosophy of science, and the history of philosophy (Jamieson, 2008, p. ix). However, environmental ethics is the systematic study of the moral relationship between humans and the natural environment. It posits that ethical norms can guide human behavior toward the natural world (Desjardins, 2013, p.17).

Some environmentalists claim that Western culture caused the ecological disaster (Evans, 2005, p. vii). Echoing this sentiment, historian Lynn White Jr. argues that current environmental degradation is rooted in traditional Western beliefs that justify human superiority. According to White, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever known because it affirms that human beings, created in God's image, are free to do whatever they want with their environment (White, 1967, p. 1205). White goes on to explain what he believes caused the current environmental crisis. According to him, science and technology originate from a Christian attitude toward humans and nature shared by Christians, neo-Christians, and post-Christians. For centuries, Western science has argued that the scientist's task and reward is to think as God does (White, 1967, p. 1205).

Moreover, in her recent book, *This is Environmental Ethics: An Introduction*, contends that capitalism, a system of economic exchange, plays a leading role in environmental destruction and the climate crisis. Capitalism assumes that all values can be converted into exchange value.

Unprecedented numbers of nonhuman species are losing their habitats, starving, and migrating. Biodiversity loss is one of the most troubling results of human dominance in the Anthropocene. Lee adds that environmental crises can cause new geopolitical issues and exacerbate existing ones. These include war, environmental damage, and greenhouse gas emissions (Lee, 2022, p. 10). The relationship between human beings and environment leads to crisis.

The environmental crisis of the 1970s inspired the development of environmental philosophy, a discipline which sought to address this pressing issue. A number of philosophers have examined human obligations to nature, with a particular focus on environmental ethics. The foundational works in environmental philosophy are closely intertwined with the development of environmental ethics. The field is rooted in Anglo-American ethical theory, drawing from the rich tradition of modern European and North American philosophy (Callicott & Frodeman, 2009, p. xv).

The theory of environmental ethics deals with questions such as: What are ethical norms? To whom are human beings responsible? How are these responsibilities justified? (Desjardins, 2013, p. 17). Similarly, Palmer (2002) claims that environmental ethics centers on the following questions: What is considered valuable, and where does that value come from? These questions raise challenging and concerning issues. Some disagree, but environmental ethics should include other environmental members. In line with this idea, Gudorf and Huchingson argue that we should extend moral consideration beyond humans to the entire ecosystem (2010, p.3).

Katz and Light (1996) observed that although environmental ethics has made progress in examining moral relationships among humans, animals, and other species, the field has faced a challenge — it has not produced real-world changes. Additionally, although environmental

ethics has proposed alternative models for valuing other environmental entities and has challenged the notion that humans are at the center of the moral world, it has been criticized for being more of a philosophical exercise in clarifying values than a practical approach (Andrew & Katz, 1996; Voinov, 2020).

A decade later, a group of fifteen philosophers convened to deliberate on the future of environmental ethics. Despite evident progress, it was asserted that the field continues to be characterized by an absence of a clearly delineated home and audience. Furthermore, it was asserted that environmental philosophy has been largely overlooked by philosophers and scientists. The legitimacy of environmental philosophy as a philosophical discipline is subject to debate, as it is often perceived as lacking in theoretical frameworks and immediate applicability. Environmental philosophers are frequently regarded as being disconnected from pressing real-world concerns. They ask questions like: The question of the intended audience for environmental philosophy is a critical one. A further question to be addressed is how environmental philosophers should interact with other groups. The question of whether environmental philosophers should assume the role of public intellectuals is a salient one. (Frodeman et al., 2007, p. 117).

In contrast, Callicot advanced the position that theoretical environmental ethics has exerted a substantial practical influence on environmental policy. This objective has been realized through the formulation of a novel discourse that has been adopted by environmental activists and professionals (Callicot quoted in Frodeman et al., 2007, p. 117).

Notwithstanding its contentious stance on certain issues, environmental ethics stands as a valuable applied discipline. However, the result of this philosophical endeavor must direct us

towards pragmatic solutions for the environment. This phenomenon is known as environmental pragmatism. According to environmental pragmatists, the development of an environmental ethics methodology is imperative. This methodology must be driven by the recognition that theoretical debates pose significant challenges to the development of environmental policy (Katz & Light, 1996, p. 2).

## **1.2 Problem Statement and Objectives of the Study**

The environment and its constituent parts play a significant role in our lives. Primarily, human beings subsist on these creatures, as they are indispensable to our survival. Secondly, these places are inhabited by humans who use them as dwellings and places of daily activity. These dwellings contain a combination of personal and social histories. Thirdly, human beings inhabit the natural world, which has existed prior to them and will persist beyond their existence. This environment is characterized by its enduring nature, and individuals are encouraged to respond with awe and wonder (O'Neill et al., 2008). Therefore, the ability to thrive within, from within, and in harmony with the environment necessitates the establishment of a set of guiding principles to govern our actions. The predominant environmental philosophies have formulated a series of overarching principles to direct human behavior. Conversely, environmental pragmatism has rejected the notion of overarching principles, asserting that such guidelines are superfluous due to their ineffectiveness.

According to environmental philosophers, natural ecosystems have limited capacity to produce essentials, including clean air and water, food, fertile topsoil, and a stable climate. It is imperative to acknowledge that natural ecosystems possess a finite capacity to assimilate waste, to undergo recovery from disturbance, and to support human survival. This assertion is supported

by the findings of Desjardins (2013), who concluded that these structures are more fragile than previously understood.

Furthermore, some scholars posit that unless we modify our lifestyles, we risk both the planet and our own existence. This necessity arises from the growing environmental crisis, which has led to a compelling argument that unless we alter our perspective on the relationship between humans and nature, it will be impossible to implement the necessary changes (Reitan, 1998:3). Despite the considerable divergence among environmental theories, a substantial consensus has emerged: the respect of nature is imperative. However, determining an appropriate valuation for nature constitutes a challenging task (Williams, 2019, p.7). Such theoretical tensions highlight the need for a practical framework, which this dissertation seeks to address.

Accordingly, the present dissertation endeavors to examine environmental ethics from a pragmatic perspective, with a focus on rationality and sustainability. In mainstream environmental ethics, reason has been regarded as a privilege of human beings over other creatures. The capacity for reason, a trait that distinguishes humans from other animals, has led to the attribution of moral reasoning to humans. In contrast to anthropocentrism, which confers a hegemonic status of human beings, non-anthropocentrism is characterized by a rejection of this quality. On this regard, Peter Singer and Tom Regan posit that reason should not serve as the primary criterion for moral consideration. Instead, they contend that the capacity to experience pleasure and pain, and to be a subject of life, should be regarded as the criteria for moral standing (Regan, 1983; Singer, 2002).

This thesis proposes a pragmatic form of rationality as a potential solution to the aforementioned arguments. Consequently, reason is best regarded as a pragmatic instrument that facilitates the

attainment of specific objectives. In addition, pragmatic rationality can be utilized as a methodological approach for resolving discrepancies among diverse perspectives, values, and methodologies within the domain of environmental ethics.

Furthermore, the notion of sustainability appeared to be a pertinent one. In order to avert impending environmental crises, a multitude of academic disciplines present sustainability as a perpetual solution. However, the notion of sustainability often falls prey to the pitfalls of technological fixations and unacknowledged anthropocentrism. Therefore, it is imperative that the concept of sustainability be approached with a pragmatic method to effectively address the dynamic and ever-changing environmental challenges that are continually emerging.

Conceptually, the thesis is mainly based on the works of the following scholars: Katz (1997); Katz & Light (1996); Norton (1999, 2015, 2016); Plumwood (2002); Rorty (1989, 1999).

According to Katz and Light (1996), contemporary ecological ethics is characterized by a theoretical framework that is divorced from the pressing environmental challenges that confront the actual world. Consequently, a pragmatic and pluralistic approach to environmental ethics is imperative.

In his literary contributions, Norton demonstrates a remarkable productivity, consistently producing substantial works on the subject of sustainability. In his 2016 article, "Sustainability as the Multigenerational Public Interest," he explores the concept of sustainability, positing that it is a problematic one. This is due to an excessive focus on the future generation, with a disregard for the needs of the current generation. Conversely, the present generation is given excessive consideration, while the future generation is underestimated. In this regard, he posits that by contemplating a range of issues, including renewable and non-renewable resources and

technology, the dilemma between these two extremes can be addressed and resolved. In this manner, he posited sustainability as a solution to the prevailing environmental crisis. In contrast, Katz (1997), a preeminent environmental pragmatist, has also expressed criticism of environmental pragmatism, citing its tendency toward anthropocentrism.

Lars Samuelson, a critic of environmental pragmatism, presents an alternate viewpoint that is at divergence with my own. He advances the argument that environmental pragmatism does not represent a legitimate philosophical stance. Consequently, I have formulated environmental pragmatism, which is a genuine environmental philosophy, as a response to these challenges.

Val Plumwood (2002), a leading ecofeminist philosopher, posits that the contemporary environmental crisis is the result of at least two centuries of a culture that is centered on reason and the human. The detrimental impacts of human activity, including both destructive behaviors and technologies, have led to a significant reduction in ecological connectivity. To address this issue, a shift in the prevailing cultural perspective on human and natural relationships is imperative. Plumwood advances the notion that reason can play a part in this process. However, it must be self-critical and benevolent. Drawing on her book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, this thesis develops a pragmatic notion of rationality. In addition, although Rorty was not an environmental philosopher, his 1989 book, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, has been instrumental in facilitating my examination of the issue of sustainability. I have employed and contextualized his ideas in the domain of environmental ethics. Consequently, while developing this thesis, I have drawn upon a range of concepts and theories that have facilitated my examination of issues in environmental ethics in general and environmental pragmatism in particular. The dissertation has been developed in accordance with

the aforementioned lines of thought. Additionally, a pragmatic method is employed to assess various theoretical frameworks, conceptual models, and perspectives within the domain of environmental ethics.

This dissertation principally employs a pragmatic approach to the study of modern environmental ethics, emphasizing the issues of rationality and sustainability. In more detail, the subject matter pertains to firstly, to demonstrate the importance of pragmatic rationality in modern environmental ethics; secondly, to show environmental pragmatism as sound environmental philosophy; and thirdly, to evaluate the sustainability from Rorty's perspective of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*.

### **1.3 Organization of the Study**

The present dissertation is comprised of seven chapters. The initial chapter elucidated the study's underlying context, problem statement, objectives, theoretical framework, and study organization. In the second chapter, an overview of modern environmental ethics presented. In the third chapter, environmental pragmatism posited as sound environmental philosophy. In the fourth chapter, a critique of Lars Samuelsson's concept of environmental pragmatism provided. The fifth chapter delineates a pragmatic form of rationality along with its practical implications. The sixth chapter provides a critical evaluation of sustainability by employing the philosophical concepts of *Rorty's Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. The last chapter of the study offers a comprehensive summary of the primary arguments and conclusions.

## **Chapter Two**

### **Overview of Environmental Ethics**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Clare Palmer considers environmental ethics to be a catch-all stance. It covers a wide range of ethical perspectives. These ethical positions are based on a bunch of different ethical traditions, like those of the pre-Socratics, Plato, Aristotle, Mill, and Moore (Palmer, 2002, p.16). Environmental ethics is also categorized as a sub-branch of applied ethics. The field of applied ethics came about as a result of discussions within the medical community about ethical concerns related to medical practice. The main subdisciplines in applied ethics are business ethics, engineering ethics, environmental ethics, and others. However, environmental ethics is not typical of the other fields of applied ethics. This is because it does not fundamentally focus on ethics. Instead, it is more closely related to other branches of traditional philosophy, such as metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, the philosophy of science, and social and political philosophy. Other areas of applied ethics tied to specific subject areas as subdisciplines of philosophy (Hargrove, 1989, p.2).

Hargrove's predictive claim was that environmental ethics may eventually disappear as a distinct philosophy once environmental concerns incorporated into mainstream philosophical subfields. He is not recommending it vanishing, just that if environmental issues become central in ethics, philosophy, politics or the scientific study of the natural world, environmental ethics will become redundant. Hargrove himself cautions against misinterpreting this as irrelevance and suggests that it is instead a reflection of the field's success in shaping wider philosophical discussion. Of course, whether this prediction is well-founded is debatable. Environmental themes have become more visible in mainstream philosophy, but have not replaced the specialized discourse

developed within environmental ethics, which continues to expand. In this dissertation, I consider that Hargrove's projection captures the important aspiration of mainstreaming environmental concerns, but I disagree that such integration would eliminate the need for environmental ethics. The persistence of complex ecological issues suggests dedicated philosophical subdiscipline remains essential.

Furthermore, some philosophers have argued that environmental ethics does not qualify as a genuinely philosophical discipline, maintaining that its foundational assumptions conflict with those of traditional Western moral theory. These critics typically claim that extending moral consideration to non-human entities disrupt long-standing anthropocentric frameworks. In contrast, Hargrove contended that no other branch of applied ethics engages more directly with fundamental philosophical questions than environmental ethics, precisely because it challenges and reexamines the basic assumptions underlying conventional ethical thought (1989, pp. 2–3). In line with Hargrove, I maintain that such conceptual challenges demonstrate the field's philosophical legitimacy rather than undermine it.

The entirety of existence intricately intertwined with all else in myriad ways. According to Leopold (1998), the sun's energy that absorbed by plants channeled through networks referred to as biota. The biota pyramid divided into layers, with each layer representing a different level of biological organization. The layer made up of soil at the bottom. The plant layer is dependent on the soil, the insect layer is dependent on plants, and the bird and rodent layer is dependent on insects. This pattern continues until it reaches the top of the hierarchy of larger predators. The logic of this interdependence regarding sustenance and other necessities called the food chain. Evans (2005) makes a similar point, noting that our existence as living beings requires that we

participate in the food chain. Our role as moral beings compels us to inquire about how we should engage with these chains and the individuals comprising them, including ourselves. This emphasizes the moral responsibility inherent in our ecological relationships and invites deeper reflection on how human activity disrupts these networks, making ethical engagement essential for addressing systemic environmental degradation.

While it is an inherent quality of beings to exert influence, humankind has extensively intervened on all fronts, altering their natural environment, populating it with their artifacts, and reshaping it. Nevertheless, people still live in natural environments where access to resources such as soil, air, water, sunlight, and a favorable climate is a matter of life and death (Rolston, 2003, p.518). The highlighting of this contrast gives an insight into how human reshaping of the environment often intensifies disparities, leaving those most dependent on natural systems the most vulnerable. It highlights the ethical need to consider how our actions affect those whose survival depends on ecological stability.

Humans are a part of nature. Our impact on it, therefore, is not surprising. The fact that our own impact on nature is natural does not necessarily mean that it is positive. Humans considered the constituent element of the environment and thus held accountable for the destruction of other species. Therefore, it is crucial for us to develop and maintain a comprehensive understanding of ourselves as an integral part of our environment. This understanding can serve as a guiding principle and help us reduce our impact on the environment in ways that are both sustainable and environmentally friendly (Christine & James, 2010; Kelbessa, 2005). This framing illustrates that acknowledging our place within nature carries ethical implications, necessitating

accountability for ecological damage. It also emphasizes the indispensable role of environmental ethics in guiding responsible action within the systems that we inevitably influence.

## **2.2 Modern Environmental Ethics**

The modern period of philosophy began in the early 17th century and encompasses most of the philosophy of the 20th century. This period can be further divided into three sub-periods: the early modern (1600–1800), nineteenth-century philosophy (1800–1900), and twentieth-century philosophy (1900–present). The modern history of philosophy, as understood by scholars, began with the works of Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and René Descartes (1596–1650), according to Kelbessa (2011). However, the use of the term "modern" Kelbessa refers to contemporary environmental ethics in its 20th- and 21st-century forms. In this section, I align with Kelbessa's usage of the term "modern environmental ethics."

Environmental ethics is the theoretical and practical framework for the proper care, valuation, and fulfillment of obligations to the natural world (Rolston, 2012). This subfield of Western philosophy emerged in the mid-1970s (Brennan, 1992; Brennan & Lo, 2002; Callicot, 1984, 1997; Light, 2005; Minteer, 2009).

The term "environmental ethics" originated in an article by Richard Sylvan published in 1973. In the article, Sylvan argues that traditional ethics cannot appropriately value non-human beings because human beings begin with anthropocentric assumptions and use other things as means to achieve human ends. Thus, Sylvan suggests that an ethics defining how people relate to their environment had not yet established (Routley quoted in Gunn, 2007, p.7).

The discipline of environmental ethics emerged as a response to the crises of the 1960s, including air and river pollution in major cities, soil erosion, the rapid depletion of natural resources, and population growth (Callicot & Nelson, 2004, pp. 2 – 3).

Human beings are introspective and cautious moral agents, and this quality reflected in their actions and decisions. This endows humankind with the capacity to act in accordance with ethical principles. However, this does not imply that humans are the only valuable beings. Instead, it signifies that human beings must assume responsibility for the environment (Callicot & Nelson, 2004, pp. 2 – 3). This perspective rightly broadens moral consideration beyond human interests, emphasizing that our ethical capacities heighten — rather than diminish — our responsibility toward other beings. Building on this foundation, the next section turns to the major theoretical approaches that influence contemporary debates in environmental ethics. It examines the two dominant approaches — anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric ethics — as well as key subdivisions of the latter.

### **2.2.1 Anthropocentric Environmental Ethics**

All the ethical theories established in the Western philosophical tradition—beginning with Socrates and Plato, extending through Aristotle’s virtue ethics, and continuing with Kant’s deontology and British utilitarianism — contended with two related issues. First, what does it mean to be human? Second, how should one treat others morally? (Evans, 2005, p.vii). These positions demonstrate the lack of unity among philosophers, who disagree on fundamental issues yet agree on the moral significance of human beings. The metaphysical and ethical position underlying these separate views is known as anthropocentrism. Religious teachings,

philosophical arguments, and scientific theories support and exemplify this view (Evans, 2005, p.vii).

Anthropocentrism is the philosophical perspective that prioritizes the interests of humans and justifies environmental policies and practices to the extent that they serve human interests. According to this perspective, human beings regarded as the sole possessors of intrinsic value and as their goal. Consequently, animals, plants, forests, wetlands, mountains, and all other natural entities regarded as instruments to achieve human ends, rather than possessing intrinsic value (Callicot, 1984; Gunn, 2007; Minter, 2009).

According to Mazzotta and Kline (1995), the concept of anthropocentrism defined as the belief that humans hold a position of utmost importance within the universe, allowing them to interpret the world from the perspective of their own values and experiences. This perspective suggests that the management and preservation of natural resources should be prioritized to ensure the well-being of human beings, even if this involves compromising the interests of other species. According to Mazzotta and Kline (1995), the prevailing ethical traditions of the West — including Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and virtue ethics — could not serve as a foundation for novel environmental ethics. This is since these traditions have brought nature to an end, rather than an end. The focus was exclusively on the benefits to human beings, with other living beings disregarded as unworthy of recognition. This perspective denied the notion that nature possessed any immediate moral significance.

Anthropocentric ethics posits that humans are both the subject and the object of moral consideration, and this human-centered focus shapes the scope of moral responsibilities it recognizes. On this view, human beings should not hold morally accountable toward

environmental entities such as rocks, rivers, animals, plants, or ecosystems, because they are not direct bearers of moral standing. Instead, anthropocentrists maintain that moral duties apply primarily to other humans, while the protection of non-human nature justified only as far as it contributes to human well-being or provides valuable benefits (Mazzotta & Kline, 1995; Rolston, 2003).

Furthermore, anthropocentrists regard humans as being distinct from nature. For instance, adopting the utilitarian principle of maximizing the good for the greatest number, natural resources utilized solely to the extent that they serve human purposes (Botzler & Armstrong, 1998). However, this view risks reducing nature to a mere instrument for human benefit, overlooking the intrinsic value that non-human entities may possess. This standpoint legitimizes the exploitation of the environment and underscores a significant constraint of anthropocentrism.

According to Botzler and Armstrong (1998), the philosophical concept of anthropocentrism posits that ethical principles are applicable exclusively to humans, thereby assigning human needs and interests to a position of paramount importance and exclusive value. Consequently, the interest in environmental objects constrained to objects of value to humans.

Norton identified two primary forms of anthropocentrism: strong and weak anthropocentrism. Strong anthropocentrism characterized by the prioritization of all values with reference to human beings' perceived preferences. A perceived preference defined as the want or need of an individual. Norton concurs with the notion that strong anthropocentrism is untenable and instead proposes a secondary form of anthropocentrism, namely, weak anthropocentrism. According to Norton, a value theory considered weak anthropocentric if all the values it encompasses pertain to individuals' subjective satisfaction with their recognized preferences and worldviews, which

play a pivotal role in the determination of these preferences. Intentional preferences defined as desires or needs that are consistent with rationally accepted worldviews, such as those of scientific theories and metaphysical frameworks. This deliberate preference delineates a clear distinction between strong and weak anthropocentrism (Norton, 1984, p.134). Norton's distinction demonstrates that, rather than dismissed outright, anthropocentrism can be reformulated in more reflective and environmentally responsible ways. However, this view still limited because the underlying moral intention grounded in human interests. This limitation opens the way for approaches that move beyond anthropocentric assumptions and lead into discourse on non-anthropocentric environmental ethics.

### **2.2.2 Non-anthropocentric Environmental Ethics**

In contrast with the anthropocentric perspective, which advocates for human supremacy over the environment, non-anthropocentric thought regards humans as a single component of a natural community, rather than as its pivotal or indispensable element. Non-anthropocentrists posit that it is nature, and not human agency, which is the origin of all values, including human values. The prevailing belief is that the natural world possesses intrinsic values that are genuinely independent of human values (Mazzotta & Kline, 1995, p.245).

Nonanthropocentric environmental ethics theories tend to adopt an individualistic or holistic approach. A non-anthropocentric individualistic environmental ethics predicated on intrinsic value assigned to all conscious animals (sentient-centered ethics) or to all living organisms (biocentric ethics). A holistic theory, also referred to as eco-centric ethics, attributes inherent value to inorganic environments (ecosystems), diverse life forms (species), and communities of life that interact with nature (Martin, 2007, p.31). It is noteworthy that ecocentrism predicated on

the notion that the natural world possesses inherent or intrinsic worth. According to Botzler and Armstrong (1998), two predominant forms of ecocentrism have identified: land ethics and deep ecology.

Firstly, according to Aldo Leopold, an exponent of land ethics, the Golden Rule is a unifying principle for society, while democracy serves to unify society with the individual. However, he posits that there is an absence of an ethical framework guiding the relationship between humans and the Earth, including its animal and plant inhabitants. He asserts that the exploitation of the land is not only unnecessary but also ethically problematic (Leopold, 1998, p.76).

Additionally, he posits that ethics predicated on the notion that humans are part of a community of interdependent parts. Leopold's argument posits that the concept of land ethics serves to transition the role of Homo sapiens from that of a conqueror to that of a mere member or citizen of the land community. This suggests profound respect for fellow members of the community (Leopold, 1998, p.76).

Secondly, the term "deep ecology" originally coined by Arne Naess in his paper "Shallow and Deep, Long-Term Ecological Movements." In this paper, Naess distinguishes between shallow and deep ecology. In this region, the shallow ecology movement is employed as a means of combating pollution and resource depletion. The promotion of health and well-being for individuals residing in developed countries constitutes the fundamental objective of this movement. Conversely, deep ecology repudiates the anthropocentric paradigm, opting instead for a more relational and holistic understanding of environmental issues. According to this provision, organisms said to be "entwined in biosphere networks or fields of interrelationships." This perspective also promotes the intrinsic value of living beings, regardless of their

instrumental usefulness for human needs. It calls for a radical reorganization of contemporary human society along those lines (Næss, 1973, p.95). In this way, deep ecology challenges not only anthropocentric ethics but also the broader cultural assumptions that structure human–nature relations.

According to Devall and Sessions (1998), the philosophy of deep ecology establishes a comprehensive worldview that goes beyond a limited and superficial approach to environmental issues. The foundational principle of deep ecology predicated on the fundamental intuition and experience of the self and nature, which collectively constitute ecological consciousness. In the context of deep ecology, the study of our place in the terrestrial ecosystem encompasses the examination of our own existence as a component of the organic whole. Beyond the confines of a materialistic scientific understanding of reality, there is a convergence of the spiritual and material aspects of reality. Consequently, this perspective challenges dominant Western metaphysical assumptions by redefining the human self as inseparable from the wider ecological community.

Contemporary non-anthropocentric environmental ethics significantly influenced by the very anthropocentrism it aims to supersede. New values are gradually emerging and released from their former contexts. The dialectic between prevailing and emerging contexts engenders a milieu conducive to the formulation of alternative paradigms of contemporary environmental ethics. Rather than attempting to reduce the theories to a single overarching one, it would be more beneficial to adopt a pluralistic and exploratory approach (Weston, 1992, p.321). Indeed, the attempt to make an ultimate determination is inconceivable. This discordance can be attributed to the fact that the scholarly community has yet to reach a consensus on the optimal

trajectory for advancement in this domain. According to environmental pragmatists, the absence of a cohesive environmental vision that can influence practical policy calls for a reevaluation of environmental ethics. They contend that environmental ethics must consider novel positions and reorient itself to address these challenges (Light & Katz, 1996, p.2). In this work, I propose adopting this line of critique.

Environmental pragmatists acknowledge the existence of values in questions of environmental ethics. A pluralistic moral perspective adopted, recognizing the presence of values. This concept is known as moral pluralism (Venkataraman & Morang, 2015, p.2). The subsequent chapter will provide a comprehensive discussion of this concept.

Anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric environmental ethics are both predicated on the notion that environmental entities are valuable. Norton's position is that the discourse between the positions of anthropocentrism and nonanthropocentrism, as well as among nonanthropocentrists, is ideological. The phenomenon under investigation involves the tendency to make decisions based on pre-experiential commitments, often characterized by a propensity to frame inquiries in a manner that exacerbates discrepancies rather than fostering avenues for mutual understanding and collaborative conduct. In mainstream environmental ethics, values interpreted in polarized terms, based on conflicting systems of value. This phenomenon impedes constructive discourse on environmental policy, which often devolves into a contest over the ownership of terms rather than a quest for broadly acceptable and rational policies (Norton, 2005, p.130). Thus, Norton emphasizes that deeply ingrained value frameworks can hinder productive dialogue and prevent the development of effective environmental policy.

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, the notion of centrism occupies a vital role in traditional environmental ethics. This approach underscores a specific and isolated facet of nature. For instance, anthropocentric environmental ethics places excessive emphasis on humans, whereas non-anthropocentric perspectives place greater emphasis on individual organisms, living beings, or ecosystems. From my perspective, this constitutes a distorted interpretation of environmental concepts because both approaches single out one component of the ecological whole and elevate it to a privileged moral position, thereby neglecting the systemic and interdependent character of ecological reality. Moreover, by framing environmental value around a particular center — whether human beings or specific non-human entities — these positions risk imposing conceptual hierarchies that oversimplify the complexity of ecological relationships.

Mainstream environmental ethics has played a role in addressing environmental problems such as population growth, overconsumption, deforestation, and pollution. Nevertheless, these issues are indicative of the current situation, rather than offering a solution to the problem.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

Mainstream environmental ethics has played a critical role in identifying the moral underpinnings of the ecological crisis. However, its application has been limited to theoretical reflection and value clarification, offering insufficient guidance for effective practical responses. To overcome this impasse, it is essential to adopt a more action-oriented and context-sensitive framework. Therefore, the adoption of a framework of environmental pragmatism is imperative.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Environmental Pragmatism as a Sound Environmental Philosophy**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

For environmental pragmatists, a fundamental question is why environmental ethics is incapable of resolving the practical issues at hand. One of the reasons for this is theoretical and methodological dogmatism. Mainstream environmental ethics grew out of the limited perspective that certain methods are more appropriate than others. This suggests that specific pathways in the development of the field are the only ones that will lead to effective policy. Of course, different perspectives have expressed in literature. These perspectives are about the inclusion of non-anthropocentrism, holism, moral monism, and intrinsic value. These perspectives are in a suitable and workable environmental ethic. Those who must adopt a different stance or challenge a traditional theory often tasked with proving their ideas. However, these individuals rarely listened to or taken seriously. (Katz & Light, 1996, pp.2–3). The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how environmental pragmatists place considerable emphasis on the concept of mainstream pragmatism rather than presenting a comprehensive overview of pragmatist philosophy. Consequently, it is comprised of six distinct components. The first part introduces the chapter. Part two discusses the brief historical development of philosophical pragmatism. In part three, I will carefully discuss how environmental pragmatists use the method of pragmatism in environment ethics. Part four and five will discuss moral monism and moral pluralism respectively, in the context of environmental ethics. The final part concludes the chapter.

### **3.2 Overview of Pragmatism**

Etymologically, pragmatism derived from the Greek pragma, meaning action, from which the words "practice" and "practical" are derived. The first person to use pragmatism to describe a specific philosophical doctrine was the American logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (James, 1907, p.21).

Pragmatism is a distinctly American phenomenon. The Metaphysical Club began as an ad hoc group at Cambridge in January 1872. Its members included thinkers such as William James, Charles Peirce, and Oliver Wendell Holmes. Their philosophy would later become known as pragmatism. Later, John Dewey drew this philosophy from entirely diverse sources. He eventually became the archetypal pragmatist as the doctrine understood by the end of the 1940s (Biesenthal, 2014; Ryder, 2004).

In the early 1920s, pragmatism was the predominant philosophy in America. It was a movement that opposed idealism and had a subtle impact on academic subjects, including law, education, political and social theory, religion, and the arts. Pragmatism best understood as a philosophy concerned with establishing specific, good goals (Godfrey-Smith, 2015; Thayer, 1981).

The apparent formative conditions of pragmatism are enigmatic for two main reasons. First, it is curious that the pragmatists' forebears did not give a precise or coherent account of the historical roots of their theory. As a philosophical stance or as an organizing principle, they did not fully agree with what pragmatism represented. Peirce and James, for example, adopted a broad perspective of historical lineage, attributing the idea that all philosophical behavior ultimately becomes pragmatism to figures such as Socrates, Aristotle, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Mill, among others (Thayer, 1981, p.5), whereas Dewey sees Francis Bacon as having

pioneered a pragmatic understanding of knowledge (Dewey, 1920, p.28). The second problem blurring the historical development of pragmatism is that it is a theory maintaining that criteria of practical usefulness determine the validity and meaning of reasoning (Thayer, 1981, p.5).

Despite the ambiguity and confusion surrounding specific aspects of pragmatism, there are some unifying themes in classical philosophical pragmatism. These include, inter alia, attempts to discard human knowledge by referring to a unique set of foundational beliefs that underpin all others. Pragmatism holds that both individual beliefs and general investigative methods should be judged by their outcomes and their effectiveness in achieving human goals. It also rejects traditional notions of truth, which assert that a true belief or statement accurately reflects the world as it is. Furthermore, it opposes philosophical frameworks that perceive the world as static or resistant to the consequences of choice. Finally, pragmatists also tend to have humanistic attitudes on morals and values. They reject nihilistic viewpoints. These are the viewpoints that discard any moral judgment as based on illusion. They also reject viewpoints that situate moral and other evaluative realities outside of the ordinary world of human striving and well-being (Godfrey-Smith, 2015, pp.2–3).

Pragmatism developed and expressed by thinkers such as Peirce, James, and Dewey. Each formed his own ideology, though they all contributed significantly to the development of philosophy. After studying psychology, James adopted pragmatism, carrying on his radical empiricism and pluralist philosophy. Peirce, influenced by Kant and Schelling, developed objective idealism. Dewey's philosophical naturalism is a well-articulated concept of his evolving pragmatism. In short, pragmatism is a philosophy that first articulated by Charles Peirce

in the 1870s. It was reestablished as a theory of truth in 1898 by William James and further developed by John Dewey and F.C.S. Schiller (Thayer, 1981, p.3–5).

"The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" are two major works by Peirce. They were published in the *Popular Science Monthly* in 1877 and 1878, respectively. In these works, Peirce discusses the relationships between doubt, inquiry, belief, and action. Peirce maintains that inquiry always commences with uncertainty. Doubt is what makes us ask questions, and asking questions leads to belief. According to Peirce, the essence of belief is the formation of a habit of action. This connection between belief and action was important to his philosophy. It was also important to the philosophies of other pragmatists. Peirce contended that science is the most effective means of dispelling uncertainty and establishing beneficial practices of action (Godfrey-Smith, 2015, p.3).

William James popularized the theory of pragmatism in his 1907 book, *Pragmatism*, the most widely read work by a pragmatist. Before he started calling himself a pragmatist, his views in his books aligned with Peirce's. James defined pragmatism as a technique for resolving binary philosophical disagreements, such as one versus many, fated versus free, and material versus spiritual. Such conceptions are controversially unending if not decided pragmatically. To make pragmatic decisions, we must understand each thought by tracing its distinct practical repercussions. In other words, when a disagreement develops between ideas seen as a binary opposition, we must ask one critical question: What would it make to anyone if this or that belief was true? If no practical difference can be found and the alternatives imply the same thing, then all debate is futile. In serious debates, we should be able to demonstrate practical difference that would result from one side being correct (James, 1907, p.21).

In his most influential work, *Experience and Nature* (1925), Dewey pursued the philosophical tradition by proposing an illusory distinction between mind and substance, thinking and object, and theoretical and practical. He argued for his naturalistic theory of mind and knowledge. The philosophical tradition loaded with problems due to dualism, which causes pseudo-issues and makes it difficult to communicate between realms that should not have placed against one another in the first place. The ancient Greeks established a separation between the flawless and the imperfect, the permanent and the changing, and the relational and the self-possessed, which serves as the foundation for these dualisms (Godfrey-Smith, 2015, p.6).

The dualism that dominated Western philosophy gave rise to pragmatic thought, which characterized by a focus on practical, achievable goals and the utilization of rational, effective methods. René Descartes, a French philosopher, proposed a separation of the mind and body and held that knowledge exists apart from the knower. Philosophical concepts like positivism against postmodernism or theory against practice viewed by pragmatists as linguistic games. For this reason, they disinterested in dualistic debates over these concepts. Pragmatists, on the other hand, prioritize the practical application, integration, and significance of these philosophical ideas over their ultimate meaning. Pragmatism dismisses the notion of absolute truth, contending that all knowledge, views, and scientific theories are impermanent. The truth only lasts if the idea provides useful, practical solutions. Knowledge is always indistinguishable from the knower (Biesenthal, 2014, pp.3 – 4). Additionally, Biesenthal points out that pragmatism serves as a unifying approach that transcends the dichotomy by placing emphasis on the problem-solving inquiry process. The conceptualizations of meaning and truth interpretation form the basis of this integrated philosophical investigation (Biesenthal, 2014, pp.3 – 4).

The fundamental idea of pragmatism — a problem-solving strategy based on practical knowledge — has remained constant, but the pragmatic method has applied to various professions since its origin in the late nineteenth century. As a result, it allows various theoretical perspectives. These perspectives are contradictory. Because of the internal dispute, a singular definition of pragmatism cannot be articulated (Biesenthal, 2014, p.8). As mentioned above, the purpose of this chapter is not to discuss mainstream pragmatism in depth. Instead, it will focus on its conceptual basis and how it affects environmental pragmatists. Now, it is fitting to direct our attention why it established the basis for environmental pragmatism.

### **3.3 Environmental Pragmatism**

The theoretical underpinnings of environmental pragmatism derived from philosophical pragmatism (Hourdequin, 2015; Loman, 2020). The three essential pillars of environmental pragmatism are as follows: acknowledgement of moral diversity, downplaying of the importance of theoretical arguments, and concentration on practical issues. Pragmatism in the environmental sciences characterized by a focus on the significance of experiential learning, often rejecting the notion of exhaustive knowledge or metaphysics. Moreover, environmental pragmatists eschew the replication of dualism or dichotomies, as they believe such practices impede the cultivation of productive dialogues (Campos & Vaz, 2021, pp. 4–5).

While environmental pragmatists hold divergent views on non-anthropocentrism, the intrinsic value of nature, and adherence to American pragmatism, they unified in their advocacy for moral heterogeneity in the approach to environmental ethics. The necessary consensus will not hinder theoretical incompatibility. For instance, the sentience criterion or the respect teleological center

of life criterion can both utilized to justify the morality of animals. Despite their theoretical differences, both approaches seek to address the morality of animals (Campos & Vaz, 2021, p.4).

Environmental pragmatists posit that the notion of environmental issues addressed solely through a total cultural change in basic assumptions that fundamentally alter human value systems is fallacious. The primary objective of environmental pragmatists does not lie in persuading skeptics of the inherent values of natural systems or sentient beings. Instead, they prioritize the establishment of a democratic framework for adaptive decision-making, a process that inherently encompasses the examination of fundamental principles. This approach prioritizes the identification of ameliorative solutions to conflicts and the formulation of pragmatic, ecologically responsible judgments. Environmental pragmatists cultivate a democratic environment conducive to adaptive decision-making, abstaining from the fundamental values dispute that has characterized environmental ethics since the 1970s (Fesmire, 2022, p.1).

Environmental pragmatists posit that in the absence of transcendental criteria, a priori deduction that detached from the investigative process, and unassured judgments, it is possible to intelligently address issues and navigate towards pragmatic objectives. Consequently, they adhere to moral naturalism. Furthermore, they ardently uphold a multitude of values that defy encapsulation into a singular, overarching principle. Consequently, they do not espouse the notion of an overarching moral principle, value, standard, legislation, or notion. Moreover, environmental pragmatism unequivocally repudiates the prevailing environmental movements' pursuit of a univocal model with which we may align ourselves. It is important to note that a monistic point of view not simply rejected; rather, it is remodeled in such a way that it serves as a tool that initiates an inquiry (Fesmire, 2022, p.2).

The debate between monists and pluralists has been of particular significance in the domain of environmental ethics. Scholars have posited that environmental crisis during the 1960s and 1970s can be attributed to both destructive ecological activities and conventional moral and philosophical frameworks that provided a basis for these practices (Fesmire, 2022, p.9). These frameworks developed in response to the mounting evidence of environmental catastrophe during this period. Given the pluralistic character of environmental pragmatism, it would be advantageous to engage in a discussion and examination of moral monism and pluralism. Both of concepts will be discussed in the following section.

### **3.4 Moral Monism**

According to the monists, there is only one legitimate and correct theory of morality. One of the primary motivating factors behind the adoption of moral monism is the apprehension of an alternative ethical framework, which could potentially lead to a fragmented and incoherent ethical theory. There is a prevailing concern that ethical relativism will supplant traditional moral frameworks. The remaining alternatives entail either the abandonment of the endeavor to formulate rational ethics or the adoption of a singular ethical system (Desjardins, 2013, p.256). Consequently, moral monism posits the notion of a unifying, overarching moral principle that governs an individual's conduct across all situations. This suggests that, within the domain of environmental ethics, it is imperative to prioritize a paramount value or principle in environmental decision-making. For instance, a moral monist would contend that safeguarding biodiversity should accorded the highest priority, superseding all other considerations.

According to monistic environmental ethicists, a unifying moral philosophy or theory of values is both necessary and sufficient to establish a foundation for our augmented responsibilities and

obligations to the environment. Their stance characterized by a suspicion of competing viewpoints, leading them to assert the primacy of a single, legitimate, and correct moral theory. The implication is that a single ethical framework must embrace the broad spectrum of diverse moral concerns that holism embraces. In addition, all humans, other animals, living things, ecosystems, species, and even the earth itself considered within the realm of concern (Chatterjee, 2017, p.32).

One method of classifying moral theories is based on their relationship to moral principles. For instance, given their shared foundation in higher moral principles, utilitarianism and natural law theory exhibit a formal structural similarity. In the ethical framework of utilitarianism, moral principles derived from the principle of utility. These theories are monistic in nature, founded upon an overarching moral principle that ensures unity and coherence (Edelglass, 2006, p.9).

It is evident that both anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism encompassed within the scope of monistic perspectives. Anthropocentrism, the concept of humans as the primary focal point of value, is a central tenet of this approach. Biocentrism posits that all forms of life possess inherent value, independent of their utility to humans. In contrast, anthropocentrism asserts that value is attributed to or created for humans. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, underscores the significance of the entire ecological system, encompassing natural processes, interactions, and the non-living components of organisms. A contentious issue in this discourse pertains to the question of whether value ascribed to individual entities or evaluated on a collective basis. A pragmatic perspective might inquire whether it is reasonable to expect individuals to pledge allegiance to one of these flags while disregarding the others, given the notion that authentic values cultivated at each level of focus (Parker, 1996, p.32).

However, adherents of pragmatism posit that all values derived from experience. The ethical question of what constitutes a good boil predicated on the question of what is good in the interaction of an organism with its environment. It is evident that the inquiry transcends the individual's subjective sentiments. The fundamental issue is that it simply recognizes them as the only viable place of birth. The fundamental question, therefore, is not what we should desire, but rather what each individual desires and the underlying reasons for these desires. A myriad of intricate explanations exists. This phenomenon cannot be accommodated within the confines of a classification theory, such as the utilitarian calculus of pain and pleasure (Parker, 1996, pp.25 – 26).

A fundamental principle of pragmatic ethics is the notion that the ethical nature of an action is contingent upon the prevailing system. Value emerges within a dynamic and intricate system of beings in various situations. Given the striking similarities between ethically challenging situations, the enlightenment goal of a universally valid ethical theory may appear to be a viable proposition at first. However, a pragmatist's focus lies in the examination of similarity and consistency, as well as the ability to distinguish and modify. As the world undergoes changes and human ideas and behaviors evolve, new kinds of ethically challenging situations will inevitably emerge. To address these challenges, it is imperative to develop novel frameworks for determining what is appropriate (Parker, 1996, p.26).

Parker's argument asserts that the fundamental issue with intrinsic value lies in the premise that authentic environmental ethics are impossible if the non-human world regarded as a reserve of resources possessing exclusively instrumental value. The non-human universe must offer more

than mere benefits to possess moral significance. This phenomenon therefore, considered beneficial (Parker, 1996, p.33).

Nonetheless, a community of scholars has seldom reached a consensus on the optimal direction for progress in this discipline. According to environmental pragmatists, the failure of this unifying vision to influence practical policy ought to provoke careful consideration. They conclude that environmental ethics must embrace new positions and reassess the direction of the field. Initially, the divide between acceptable approaches to environmental ethics and applicable and acceptable environmental policy must be addressed. Secondly, there is a need to explore other sources and foundations of moral environmentalism (Katz & Light, 1996, p.3).

Monistic environmental ethics has been the subject of examination for a variety of reasons. To illustrate, it simplifies intricate ethical dilemmas by reducing them to a singular value, such as the intrinsic value of nature. Furthermore, since its inception, moral monism has made only a negligible contribution to environmental policy. Similarly, environmental ethicists have been unable to offer substantial practical assistance by providing concrete management directives on the multifaceted and controversial subjects of environmental planning, management, and administration. Additionally, the monistic argument has the inherent and practical effect of narrowing and limiting the range of issues explored in environmental ethics. Consequently, the monistic perspective often poses a significant challenge for environmental ethicists in the context of environmental policy disputes. (Chatterjee, 2017, p.36).

In response to the evolving imperatives of the environmental landscape, contemporary environmental philosophers have relinquished their allegiance to a singular environmental philosophy, instead adopting a multifaceted approach that incorporates diverse environmental

ideologies. Environmental pragmatists posit that in the interest of environmental stewardship, discord must be set aside in favor of the unification of efforts toward the common goal of environmental preservation (Williams, 2019, p.5).

Furthermore, the rejection of the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive allows pragmatism to resolve the apparent contradiction. The existence of a being, whether human or non-human, defined by its relations to other things framework of meaningful connections. Consequently, all that deemed good considered instrumentally and intrinsically important. A taxonomy of values can delineated into two distinct categories. However, it is imperative to acknowledge that the instrumental value of an entity is contingent upon its inherent worth. As posited by Parker (1996, pp.34 –35), a fundamental aspect of pragmatic environmental thinking is the acknowledgment of our interconnectedness with the natural world. In this context, moral pluralism emerges as a relevant theoretical framework, given the limitations of moral monism in addressing the complexities of moral issues in a rapidly changing global environment.

### **3.5 Moral Pluralism**

Moral pluralism predicated on the notion that there is an absence of a single, all-encompassing moral theory. Pragmatism acknowledges the existence of authentic distinctions in moral scenarios. This phenomenon attributed to the intricate network of elements and interconnections that characterize the subject matter (Parker, 1996, p.31). Consequently, pluralists posit that a single monistic theory cannot comprehensively encompass the intricacies of the moral domain. However, a theoretical framework has proposed that delineates fundamental principles for various forms of moral behavior, intentions, and circumstances. Furthermore, moral pluralism is

an appropriate and necessary response to moral problems in our lives, rather than a form of relativism (Edelglass, 2006, p.9).

Pluralism considered an alternative to both monism and relativism. Its adherents reject the monist view that there is only one right answer to ethics, and the relativist claim that there can be no right answer. Conversely, the assertion put forth by moral pluralists is that there exists a multitude of moral truths that cannot distilled into a singular principle (O'Neill et al., 2008, p.74).

In the realm of environmental ethics, three prominent scholars — Andrew Light, Bryan Norton, and Anthony Weston — have put forth a theoretical framework known as moral pluralism. This approach, which these scholars have developed, posits that a comprehensive environmental philosophy can be operationalized in the context of real-world environmental regulation. Moral pluralists, who self-identify as environmental pragmatists, contend that there is an absence of a single, exhaustive ultimate principle that encompasses all aspects of environmental conduct. However, they contend that these discrete entities possess distinct moral obligations grounded in different principles. In contrast to the rejection of a theory in its entirety and the subsequent adoption of monism, pluralists and environmental pragmatists meticulously assess the applicability of moral principles to a particular situation when competing theories, such as animal rights and ecocentrism, yield discordant outcomes (Edelglass, 2006, p. 9 – 10)

Brennan (1992) advanced two divergent perspectives on moral pluralism. The first perspective suggests that individuals should be prepared to make challenging decisions when confronted with difficult choices. The second perspective posits that individuals should be able to take complex actions when confronted with a particular set of circumstances. Consequently, a multifaceted evaluation process is necessary to assess each circumstance. In the second type of

pluralism described, a single lens is not available for viewing a situation through the lens of a particular set of ideas, principles, or frameworks. Additionally, Kelly's categorization of pluralists encompasses two distinct groupings: radicals and moderates. The radical pluralist maintains that at least two, but usually more, values are incommensurable. In other words, the comparison of two disparate measures is invalid if the comparison is devoid of meaning, as in the case of body temperature and intelligence. According to the moderate pluralist: It is noteworthy that all values are comparable but not reducible (Kelly, 2014, p. 369).

Pluralism is a tool employed by pragmatists to challenge the fundamental principles that ethical theorists and philosophers consider to be the pinnacle of moral values. Unlike monism, pluralism is better placed because monist theories emerge solely from the recognition of a specific theory, whereas pluralism is supported by the fact that a multitude of hypotheses address significant and critical ecological issues. This implies that pluralism has greater practical flexibility. Given the environment's inherent dynamism and the need for practical intervention, I found the author's argument persuasive (Williams, 2019, p.9).

In contrast to theoretical frameworks, moral environmental pluralism predicated on a pragmatic philosophy, deriving moral principles from negotiated solutions to concrete, real-world management challenges. These guidelines provide a framework for the presentation of solutions to environmental dilemmas. Environmental pluralism has demonstrated to facilitate environmental decision-making by aiding in the identification of the values and trade-offs being negotiated (Hull, 2007, p.2).

According to pluralists, a single ethical theory is inadequate to address the variety of scenarios and ethical relationships with humans and nature that are present. From a pluralist perspective, a

single ethical theory cannot develop to appeal to all individuals and thereby garner support for environmental change. They acknowledge the potential for multiple hypotheses to be both acceptable and appropriate. The discourse surrounding moral pluralism among environmental philosophers has seen a marked intensification in recent years, attributable to the considerable heterogeneity in environmental policies (Chatterjee, 2017, p.32).

Pragmatists are in favor of value pluralism, which is the idea that there are different legitimate values. They tend to reject hierarchical perspectives in which a single value can justify all the others. This phenomenon can be attributed, at least in part, to the foundational perspective held by pragmatists concerning values as constructs that emerge through the dynamic process of valuation (Hourdequin, 2015, p.242).

Value pluralism posits that the universe comprises a multitude of fundamental, inherently valuable, and irreducible features. The utilization of pluralist theories of value is advantageous in comparison to existing monistic theories, as pluralist theories facilitate the capture of evidence of value more efficiently. While there are superficial aspects valued, including people and art, food and kindness, flowers and physics, autonomy, and enjoyment, it is the intrinsic aspects that carry the greatest significance. It is important to note that these are considered ends in themselves. If all possess intrinsic value, the monists must demonstrate that each possesses a unique attribute that determines its value (Kelly, 2014, p.112).

In contrast to the perpetual discourse surrounding intrinsic value, a primary objective of environmental pragmatism is to enhance the practicality and political relevance of environmental ethics. Two challenges presented to intrinsic value theories by the pragmatic school of thought. Firstly, in their a priori attempts to identify fundamental sources of value, they perceive these

theories to be flawed. The notion that values are diverse, situational, and derived from experience is incompatible with these aims. Moreover, environmental pragmatists have expressed concerns that a theory-first strategy would face significant challenges in practical implementation (Hourdequin, 2015, p.242).

Pragmatists for the environment posit that a more efficacious approach would be to initiate discussion by examining how individuals prioritize plants, animals, and the natural world, as opposed to concentrating on a solitary set of fundamental values. The notion of values is more associated with a complex, interconnected network than with a rigid foundation. In this network, values from one component serve as a source of support for values in other components (Hourdequin, 2015, p.242).

Environmental pragmatism regards moral monism as problematic due to its tendency to exclude or marginalize alternative perspectives, thereby reducing them to a unified, overarching narrative. Conversely, environmental pluralism posits that it is challenging to impose a singular concept as an overarching and structuring framework. This is since the world characterized by its infinite complexity, fluidity, and negotiation. It is expected that reasonable decision-makers from disparate communities of practice will hold divergent views on the matter. Furthermore, moral environmental pluralism posits the existence of a multitude of competing, overlapping, and self-consistent frameworks for distinguishing between right and wrong, as well as between good and bad. It is important to note that no single framework is universally applicable, and no hierarchical structure inherently supersedes others (Hull, 2007, pp.2–3). I contend that this pluralistic orientation offers a more realistic and context-sensitive foundation for environmental ethics. Multiple moral frameworks acknowledged as legitimate by environmental pluralism,

which avoids the reductionism inherent in monistic theories and better reflects the complex moral terrain in which environmental decisions are made.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

As demonstrated in the preceding discussion, environmental pragmatism is a viewpoint that prioritizes lived experience whilst challenging foundationalist conceptions of knowledge and value. Moreover, it is characterized by a pluralistic perspective and a comprehensive framework, the suitability of which is evidenced by its alignment with ever-changing environmental challenges. Consequently, pragmatic environmental ethics has demonstrated to be a viable ethical framework for environmental issues. The subsequent chapter will provide substantiation for this assertion.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Critique of Samuelsson's Views**

#### **4. 1. Introduction**

There exists a considerable body of scholars who do not align with the principles of environmental pragmatism, despite the fact that it is endorsed by numerous academic experts. Loman asserts that the principles of environmental pragmatism are internally incompatible. According to Norton, sustainability is defined as a set of behaviors (an institution, a policy, or a management practice) that endure over time, provided that the constraints confronting a given generation are not diminished for subsequent generations. Consequently, Loman concluded that sustainability had a firm foundation, even if environmental pragmatism did not. Nonetheless, Loman's critique of Norton's conceptualization of sustainability is misguided. Norton's definition of sustainability is employed not as a guiding principle but as a procedural framework.

Critics of moral pluralism contend that it reduces all ethics to rhetoric, thereby encouraging relativism and skepticism. The conceptualizations of right and wrong, good and evil, are determined by individual preferences and the influence of one's social class. This argument posits that pluralism enables eloquent and knowledgeable villains to exert influence over discussions, thereby justifying any conclusions they deem appropriate and any ethical norms they find persuasive (Hull, 2007, p.2).

Hence, such a critique of pluralism seems unworkable and even utopian from the perspective of pragmatic decision-makers. Decisions about how to build forest roads, how much sewage to discharge, where to build poultry houses, how to apply fertilizers, how to design power plants, how to release genetically modified crops, how to restore critical habitats, how to mine and drill, and so on, are all decisions that affect the quality and future of our environment. These decisions

must be made with imperfect knowledge and in a timely manner. There is no full awareness of values or their implications (Hull, 2007, p.3).

However, for the purpose of this chapter, I would like to focus on Samuelsson (2010) article entitled “Environmental pragmatism and environmental philosophy: a bad marriage!” In his paper, he argued that the goal of environmental pragmatists, which is to lead environmental philosophers away from theoretical debates and toward more practical discussions driven by pragmatic considerations, is not a proper philosophical position. Samuelsson contends that philosophy, inter alia, is an effort to gain clarity on the problems that matter to us (Samuelsson, 2010, p.405). In the following section, I will argue against his main arguments to make my point. I will then show how environmental pragmatism is a valid environmental philosophy.

#### **4.2 Samuelson’s Critique**

Samuelsson's argument asserts that pragmatic positions, which direct environmental philosophers away from theoretical debate, do not constitute legitimate philosophical discourse. Philosophy, as a discipline, is an endeavor to achieve clarity regarding the issues that are of concern to humanity (Samuelsson, 2010, p.405).

Given the variety of viewpoints, establishing a single definition of environmental pragmatism is a challenging task. As previously mentioned, a primary feature of environmental pragmatism is the prioritization of practice over theory. This implies a shift in the focus of the debate from theoretical discussions concerning nature's intrinsic value to more practical ones centered on environmental policy and decision-making. This viewpoint is rooted in the belief that theoretical arguments pose significant challenges to the development of environmental policy. These arguments are believed to hinder the influence of mainstream environmental ethics on

environmental decision-making and policy formation, thereby impeding efforts to address environmental challenges effectively. Accordingly, as Light and Katz have articulated, there is an imperative to explore the development of viable solutions to environmental challenges with utmost urgency us (Samuelsson, 2010, p.406).

This novel direction in environmental philosophy transcends theoretical discourse, thereby necessitating a comprehensive exploration of the practical advantages inherent in moral plurality. This plurality is further subdivided into two categories: theoretical and metatheoretical. The former involves the acknowledgment of several conceptually incommensurable bases for direct moral judgment, whereas the latter is open to the prospect of diverse ethical theories collaborating on the same moral effort. Samuelsson's position asserts that both types of moral plurality are not exclusive to environmental pragmatism. This assertion is based on the premise that, depending on the manner in which they are defined, both types of pluralism may be observed in conventional, non-pragmatist environmental ethical perspectives. This assertion is rooted in the position espoused by numerous environmental ethicists, who contend that there exist multiple rationales for moral judgment. Moreover, individuals who subscribe to competing ethical theories can collaborate to achieve analogous objectives. In fact, the majority of environmental ethicists, despite adhering to conflicting theories, can be observed working in tandem to achieve multiple shared objectives related to the environment us (Samuelsson, 2010, pp.407 – 408).

Samuelsson further posits that philosophy, in its broadest sense, is an endeavor to elucidate the difficulties that confound us. Consequently, the function of environmental philosophy illuminates the intricacies of these pressing environmental concerns. Conversely, environmental

pragmatism counsels us to disregard such issues. Consequently, Samuelsson advances the audacious argument that environmental pragmatism lacks validity as a philosophical viewpoint. The pursuit of clarity in the face of complexity is a fundamental tenet of a philosophical stance. An approach that counsels otherwise fall short of the requisite rigor and depth that defines a philosophical perspective. Therefore, philosophers should strive to prioritize their intellectual curiosity and the pursuit of philosophical problems that intrigue and challenge them, regardless of the potential implications.

As philosophy grapples with intricate problems, such as free choice, any attempt to circumvent philosophical inquiries into subjects like free must, by its very nature, be non-philosophy in nature. Samuelsson posits that certain individuals harbor the conviction that the act of challenging the concept of freedom would potentially jeopardize the very foundation of morality. However, he asserts that even if this argument were valid, philosophers should disregard it and persist in examining and developing the concept of free will. Conversely, if there existed a compelling rationale to eschew discourse on intrinsic value, it would constitute a non-philosophical justification. Furthermore, the question of whether nature possesses inherent value is a subject of philosophical interest. There is a compelling rationale for exploring this question, despite the potential impediments it might pose to the formulation of environmental policies. It is imperative that they confront the challenge posed by these obstacles.

He elaborates on this assertion, underscoring the theoretical nature of philosophy and asserting that areas of philosophy such as epistemology, metaphysics, and the philosophy of language bear little direct practical significance. It is possible for them to persist in their intellectual pursuits without first ascertaining the practical utility of their studies. In the event that this is the case,

environmental philosophers who are interested in the possibility of inherent value in nature should be permitted to carry out investigations without first demonstrating its practical usefulness (Samuelsson, 2010, p.410).

The fundamental notion posits that an individual identifying as an environmental philosopher must prioritize the preservation of nature as their primary objective. It is noteworthy to consider how environmental philosophy is situated within a broader framework, particularly in light of the urgency with which environmental concerns are perceived. Individuals possessing critical skills, such as astrophysicists, psychologists, and linguists, who do not prioritize the conservation of nature, must also be permitted to engage with environmental philosophy (Samuelson, 2010, pp.410 – 411).

From the perspective of an environmental pragmatist, two questions emerge as particularly relevant: (1) Which conditions of distinct natural systems best serve different human ends? (2) What are the most effective methods to motivate individuals to participate in the work of attaining such states of these numerous natural systems? These concerns are better addressed by empirical sciences such as ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology (Samuelson, 2010, p.411). Yet this view limits the scope of environmental inquiry by reducing complex ethical questions to empirical problem-solving. This overlooks the environmental pragmatist dimension that remains essential for guiding environmental decision-making.

Environmental pragmatists have expressed concerns that theoretical arguments in environmental philosophy impede the development of effective policy. However, Samuelsson contends that the tension is exaggerated for two reasons: The text's initial assertion regarding the practical significance of environmental philosophy is overstated. Additionally, the text's subsequent

assertion regarding the importance of investigating issues of intrinsic value in nature is underestimated (Samuelson, 2010, p.412).

The overarching objective of identifying pragmatic solutions to contemporary environmental challenges, as asserted by environmental pragmatists, is unquestionably a praiseworthy undertaking. However, it should not overshadow the fundamental purpose of environmental philosophy in general. The question of whether nature possesses inherent value is congruent with the matter of formulating efficacious solutions to environmental issues. Conversely, such issues frequently exhibit a correlation.

Samuelsson argues that environmental pragmatism structures things improperly. Instead of questioning what is valuable, i.e., what we have reason to value or bring about — environmental pragmatists simply state that there are some basic policy imperatives that we should carry out.

These imperatives are considered fundamental to the environmentalist movement, and their acceptance is widely anticipated among diverse groups, both in terms of their philosophical orientation and other considerations. The scope and content of environmental philosophy and political theory will be determined by appropriate environmental praxis (Samuelson, 2010, p.414).

It is evident that there are certain fundamental environmental measures that are desirable and should be supported. Nevertheless, this fact alone does not provide sufficient justification for these practices. If philosophers find these policies to be correct, it is their responsibility to provide reasoning that supports this conclusion. Furthermore, it is imperative to refrain from prematurely determining the veracity of such claims and subsequently constructing a framework that appears to substantiate them, with the objective of persuading decision-makers and relevant

parties of their accuracy. This approach, if applied universally, would constitute a form of dogmatism. Of particular concern is the fact that it is profoundly anti-philosophical.

Indeed, I am in agreement with Samuelsson's assertions regarding the necessity for a more inclusive environmental philosophy that incorporates the insights of professionals from diverse fields, including astrophysicists, psychologists, and linguists. These disciplines, I posit, possess the critical faculties necessary to evaluate and address environmental challenges. Moreover, environmental ethics concerns the empirical sciences, including ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology. However, it has to be noted that environmental ethics, from its inception, has been inherently multidisciplinary in nature. Despite its initial categorization as a subfield of philosophy in the 1970s, the field of environmental ethics has since grown to encompass a diverse range of academic and non-academic scholars from a variety of backgrounds. For instance, Rachel Carson, who authored a highly influential book entitled *Silent Spring*, was a biologist. In addition, Lynn White, a historian, authored a significant article entitled "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis." Overall, these examples demonstrate that environmental ethics is strengthened by its openness to interdisciplinary engagement, which continues to expand and enrich the field's conceptual boundaries.

Samuelsson's assertion that theoretical debate and intrinsic value are of paramount importance and that we should persist in deliberating these matters, even if doing so hinders environmental policy-making, is founded on the premise that theoretical engagement holds greater significance than practical concerns. However, this premise is flawed. As Light and Katz (1996, p. 1) emphasise, environmental pragmatists argue that extensive theoretical debates impede the environmental movement's ability to reach consensus on fundamental policy imperatives. This

does not mean we should dismiss the theory altogether. Instead, it highlights the importance of focusing on practical frameworks to deal with the urgent ecological issues we face. By prioritising continued theoretical debate over policy progress, Samuelsson overlooks the need for consensus-driven solutions. Furthermore, Samuelsson's analysis disregards the notion that environmental pragmatism inherently acknowledges the significance of theoretical discourses within the domain of mainstream environmental ethics. This is due to the fact that the discussions and debates in mainstream environmental ethics have been instrumental in helping them to understand the serious environmental crisis. The resolution of such a crisis necessitates a pragmatic solution. However, there is a divergence of opinion with early environmental ethicists regarding the identification of environmental problems that cannot be resolved through endless theoretical discussions. Instead, the solution must be sought in the realm of practical engagement.

Samuelsson's rejection of the environmental pragmatist stance was unequivocal, as it advocates for the abandonment of the pursuit of clarity in the face of perplexing issues, constituting a fundamental prerequisite in philosophical standpoints. The fundamental tenet of environmental pragmatism, however, remains unambiguous: the perplexing environmental issues have been identified and elucidated by prominent environmental ethicists. For example, questions such as: what duties do humans have to the environment, and why? Should we value human life above all other forms of life on earth? Or are they equal? How we should treat non-human animals is at the heart of traditional environmental ethics. But the idea is that we should not stop discussing these problems. Rather, environmental philosophy should move beyond theoretical debates to practical benefits.

Furthermore, environmental pragmatists claim that conventional environmental ethics is trapped in a dualistic dispute between individualism and holism, anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, instrumental and intrinsic value, pluralism and monism. Being using the method of philosophical pragmatism within the context of environmental philosophy, they argue that we should not get caught up in the dualism argument. Therefore, we must emphasize practice. Similarly, environmental pragmatists claim that it is unnecessary for anyone to ponder which side of these theories is right. Accordingly, transition to other projects is required, that is, the search for a unified theory that unites all others. Hence, it must be noted that such a theory is not a monistic theory. It is a theory that encompasses value pluralism. Pragmatists support value pluralism — the concept that there are various, legitimate values — and tend to oppose hierarchical perspectives in which a single value can justify all others. This is due, in part, to pragmatists' basic view of values as something we make, via the process of valuing.

Furthermore, it is important to note that environmental pragmatists do not subscribe to the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive. The existence of any given being, whether it is human or non-human, is defined by its relationship to the other components within a framework of significant interactions.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

Samuelsson's compelling argument that theoretical debate and intrinsic value are crucial and that we should continue discussing them, even if doing so would impede policy-making by environmentalists, is, however, flawed. This is due to the fact that it does not align with the pragmatic concept of an idea, belief, or proposition's meaning being stated to reside in the separate class of concrete experimental or practical results. This naturally follows from the

notion's use and application. Consequently, Samuelsson's argument on environmental pragmatism has been misinterpreted, necessitating correction.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Pragmatic Rationality in Environmental Ethics and Its Practical Implications**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapters Three and Four, the argument is put forth that environmental pragmatism is a viable approach for addressing environmental issues. This chapter explores the concept of pragmatic rationality and its practical implementation. The concept of rationality has been a point of contention since the emergence of environmental ethics. One set of philosophers contends that rationality is the defining characteristic of human beings, thereby conferring upon them a distinct advantage over all other living entities. Conversely, a divergent group of philosophers contends that while humans are rational, this does not render them entitled to hegemony over other members of the environment.

Plumwood contends that rationalism is founded on the notion that reason plays a pivotal role in human existence. It is also the practice of making oppositional constructions with other things, especially the body and nature, which are relied on but not fully accepted or taken for granted (Plumwood, 2002, p.18). Such a construction is problematic because it perpetuates the misconception that human reason, embodied experience and the natural world are independent of each other.

Furthermore, Rorty identifies three definitions of rationality. Firstly, the ability to cope with the environment through complex, subtle responses is paramount. This phenomenon is occasionally referred to as a technical reason or survival skill. Secondly, it is an inherent human characteristic that enables individuals to possess aspirations beyond mere survival. For instance, humans may assert that certain behaviors are preferable to death. Thirdly, the ability to maintain composure in the presence of disagreements and to refrain from aggressive reactions is paramount. The latter

definition is pertinent to the issue at hand because it facilitates the management of the array of conflicting ideas and viewpoints present in contemporary environmental ethics (Rorty, 1992, p. 581). This understanding highlights the importance of a deliberative approach that can navigate moral pluralism and prevent complex environmental disputes from becoming highly polarized.

The present chapter is comprised of six sections. The initial segment of the piece constitutes an introduction. The subsequent sections will address the concept of rationality as a contested matter and the notion of pragmatic rationality. The third part of the chapter aims to assess the pragmatic rationality while the fourth part examines pragmatic rationality as a procedural guide in dynamic, ever-changing environments. This assessment diverges from the conventional approach of hegemonic rationality, which is widely regarded as a fundamental principle. In addition, the fifth section of the chapter expounds on the applicability of pragmatic rationality to the conservation of biological diversity. The final section of the chapter offers a conclusion.

## **5.2 Rationality as a Contested Issue in Environmental Ethics**

A number of philosophers posit the argument that rationality is a human privilege, and that it is an ability that is exclusive to humans. For instance, Rene Descartes claims that animals are devoid of rationality. He perceives animals as merely mechanical entities. However, when the term "machines" is employed, it is not merely a reference to mechanical devices, but rather to machines crafted by the divine hand, thereby implying a significantly higher order. These machines possess significantly more complex internal mechanisms compared to those developed by human engineering. Descartes posits two rationales for the conception of animals as machines. The initial piece of evidence is that they never utilize words or other signs and never organize in the manner of humans to communicate their thoughts and ideas to others. Some

animals, such as magpies, have been observed to imitate human speech, yet they lack the capacity to comprehend or produce languages in the same manner as humans. The second reason is their apparent lack of rationality. According to Descartes, reason is a universal tool that facilitates uniform responses to specific circumstances. Animals, by virtue of their inability to reason, do not behave in a manner consistent with human reasoning. It is evident that certain individuals possess a remarkable aptitude for specific tasks, often outperforming others in these domains. However, it is evident that such a machine will inevitably encounter challenges in other tasks. This suggests that their actions are not driven by knowledge but rather by the inherent properties of their physical organs (Descartes, 2000, p.72). This implies that rationality is the primary marker of moral status. However, this view is limited because it empowers human beings to intervene with nature without limitations.

Immanuel Kant shares the view that rationality is an essential characteristic of human beings. He asserts that they have their own objectives. This prompts the significant question of the purpose behind the existence of animals. However, the application of such inquiries to human beings is trivial and devoid of meaning. Animals lack the capacity for self-awareness, rendering them as mere means to a higher purpose, which is ultimately defined by the human condition. Additionally, he contends that our obligations to animals are only indirect. The notion that animal nature mirrors human nature underscores the notion that fulfilling one's duty to animals assists in fulfilling one's duty to humanity (Kant, 1963, p.239). This phenomenon can be illustrated by the case of a man who kills a dog because it is unfit for service. In this scenario, the man is not neglecting his duty to the dog, as the dog is incapable of exercising judgment. Nevertheless, this same act has been deemed cruel and inhumane, with the potential to adversely

impact our interactions with others (Kant, 1963, p.239). This presupposes the fact that human beings have special privilege. This is because of this special tool, rationality. However, this argument is problematic because it can result in the mistreatment and exploitation of environmental entities.

This rationality-centred view has been widely challenged in contemporary moral theory. For instance, proponents of animal liberation (Peter Singer) and rightists (Tom Regan), despite the criteria they establish to substantiate their claims, vigorously contend that moral standing should be conferred upon animals. Singer employed the concept of capacity to experience pleasure and pain as the criterion for moral consideration. In contrast, Regan utilized the concept of the subject of life as the criterion for moral inclusion. Consequently, they reject the notion that reason is the exclusive or privileged basis for moral consideration (Regan, 1999; Singer, 1999). This is crucial milestone at least in extending moral standing from human beings to animals.

Furthermore, Paul Taylor (1986), an American philosopher and one of the most influential proponents of biocentrism in environmental ethics, takes this critique further by rejecting rationality as a morally relevant criterion altogether and extending intrinsic value to all living beings. He vigorously promotes egalitarian biocentrism in his book *Respect for Nature*. In this context, egalitarianism is defined as a philosophy that advocates for the equitable treatment of all living beings. Taylor's argument asserts that an emphasis on the degree of importance constitutes discrimination, as every living entity possesses distinct strengths. For him, the inherent value of every creature is paramount. Consequently, it is imperative to acknowledge and respect individuals with diverse abilities and potential. Taylor posits that human beings should not be regarded as superior to other elements of the environment on the basis of intelligence. It is also

posited that, while the pursuit of cultural and personal values cannot be pursued without a certain degree of destruction to the natural world, developing an attitude of respect for nature can nonetheless allow us to limit our interference in natural ecosystems and their biota to a minimum (Taylor, 1986, p.310). This demonstrates the fact that we should extend moral standing to all living beings, regardless of whether they are rational or not. While certain limitations exist, I agree with Taylor on two points: the moral extension and the inevitability of some degree of destruction in the pursuit of personal and cultural values.

In a similar vein, this critique is deepened by Plumwood who argue that Western conceptions of rationality themselves are structurally exclusionary, dualistic, abstract, and detached from ecological and lived contexts. She shifts the discussion from the ethics of moral considerability to a broader questioning of how reason has been constructed to justify human beings' privileged status. Plumwood contends that even though current state of environmental problems is caused by reason, she asserts that reason can play a pivotal role in this rethinking, but it must be a self-critical, benign reason (Plumwood, 2002, p.8). This indicates that the notion of rationality goes beyond merely justifying human beings' exclusive privilege; rather, it is structurally deeply rooted. I am in agreement with Plumwood on the idea that if we can understand reason's structural problem, we will be able to identify its root cause and deal with its consequences.

Furthermore, Plumwood contends that the responsibility for the contemporary global environmental crisis lies with humans and that a clear and appropriate response is imperative. Indeed, technology provides the means necessary for sustainable living on and with the planet (Plumwood, 2002, p.8). Plumwood's argument is predicated on the premise that the problem at hand is not confined to a mere augmentation in knowledge or skills. Instead, an eco-culture is

required that not only allows us to assess and fully understand the non-human realm and our dependence on it but also allows us to make the best choices about how we live with and affect the non-human world. It is within this trajectory that the need for a notion of pragmatic rationality emerges: a form of rationality that is procedural while avoiding the exclusions, abstractions, and hierarchical dualisms characteristic of the dominant rationalist tradition.

### **5.3 Pragmatic Rationality**

The preceding discussion shows that basing moral status solely on rationality both elevates human beings above the rest of nature and justifies patterns of domination. However, the challenges posed by Singer, Regan and Taylor reveal vulnerabilities in this anthropocentric framework. Recognizing these conceptual fault lines enables us to consider pragmatic rationality. Pragmatic rationality is a form of rationality that is experimental, context-sensitive and deliberative, and which is aimed at resolving concrete problems rather than settling ultimate metaphysical or moral disputes. This definition will be used consistently throughout the thesis.

Therefore, it would be beneficial to determine the process by which such rationality is achieved. The present study posits that Plumwood's conceptualization of rationality can serve as a foundational framework for this endeavor. Among other environmental philosophers, I preferred Plumwood because she offers a profound critique of how reason has been constructed and employed within Western thought. Furthermore, she not only critiques the traditional form of rationality, but also suggests that it could be repurposed in a non-exploitative way.

Plumwood asserts that the concepts of rationality have been perverted by systems of power, resulting in the adoption of hegemonic forms that establish, naturalize, and reinforce privilege. Dualistic rationalism is a theoretical framework that legitimizes the master-subject relationship

and naturalizes the appropriation of control and disproportionate rewards by those who are deemed worthy. Dualism, master-subject, and rationalism function in concert as a system of ideas that justifies and normalizes the domination of people by a privileged class identified with reason (Plumwood, 2002, p.17). The subjects in question constitute a civilized male elite; consequently, they are rational beings. However, the nature is merely a background element that is acted upon by the object in ways that do not typically require careful consideration after the object has been appropriated for personal use (Plumwood, 2002, p.20).

The development of rationalism has given rise to predominant forms of rationality that are characterized by monological modes of reasoning and the application of reason within the context of global free markets. These forms of rationality, however, have been shown to limit the access of non-human entities on Earth to the planet's natural resources, thereby impeding their ability to thrive. This rationalism is problematic for both the non-human world and the human race. If humanity persists in its current trajectory, it may face a significant threat to its own survival. In light of the decline and disruption of the non-human sphere and its own species, Plumwood arrived at the conclusion that rationalist rationality is, in fact, irrational. This is due to the fact that it is maladapted to the environment on which it depends. In the context of a planet that is considered to be in a state of scarcity and poses a threat to humanity and the rest of the planet's inhabitants, it is imperative to seek a higher order of reason that can critically assess these failures and generate new solutions. These forms of rationality are characterized by their ecological sensitivity, and their efficacy can be evaluated by the standard of ecological success or failure. The adoption of this rationality would facilitate the avoidance of irrational actions and promote ecological awareness without compromising rationality (Plumwood, 2002, p.18).

During the 1990s, while residing in a small coastal cabin in Tasmania, Plumwood frequently encountered the bodies of fairy penguins that had been washed ashore. Initially, she attributed the penguins' condition to dogs, but subsequent findings revealed a more complex narrative. This was evidenced by the discovery of a seemingly healthy penguin that had in fact perished from starvation. Further investigation revealed that the collapse of pilchard fish populations, an essential food source for penguins, was due to the importation of cheaper fish feedstock from overseas by fish farms. The introduction of fish species that were not native to the area led to the spread of diseases that resulted in the demise of a significant portion of the local pilchard population. This event, in turn, led to a chain of events that culminated in starvation among the species that constituted the marine food web.

For Plumwood, this was not an isolated tragedy but a "nested story" that revealed how systemic forces—particularly global capitalism and distorted forms of rationality—cause ecological devastation. The decision to import more economical fish feed appeared "rational" from an economic perspective, according to the principles of equivalence and replaceability. However, this narrow, abstract logic failed to consider the intricate ecological realities upon which living beings are dependent. In this sense, the concept of hegemonic rationality itself becomes the villain, producing patterns of thought and organization that destroy ecosystems while presenting themselves as efficient and rational. Therefore, the decline of the penguin population can be seen as an example of the broader ecological consequences of distorted rationality. When rational systems deny ecological realities, they do not lead to progress; rather, they generate crises of survival for both humans and nonhumans.

However, the analysis can be strengthened by acknowledging a possible counterpoint: ecological harm was not intended by economic actors and sufficient data about disease transmission may have been lacking. But this actually supports Plumwood's idea. The failure is not due to any intention on the part of the relevant parties, but rather as a result of a systemic blindness that is built into the dominant rational framework in place. These frameworks give priority to price signals over ecological knowledge. The penguin deaths are evidence that this rationality is inadequate for ecological realities and is therefore incapable of guiding sustainable action.

Furthermore, Plumwood differentiates between the complete rejection of reason and the advocacy for enhanced, more ecologically informed forms of rationality. She posits that contemporary culture is not only confronted with an "ecological crisis" but also a crisis of reason. The prevailing rationality, characterized by its monological and mastery-oriented nature, is inherently incapable of accommodating natural constraints or recognizing human reliance on the more-than-human world. The Western "Foundational Fantasy" of human autonomy and dissociation perpetuates the fallacy that economic and technological systems are rational, despite their simultaneous erosion of the very biospheric systems (oceans, carbon cycles, food webs) that facilitate life as we know it (Plumwood, 2002, pp. 14 –15). A critical implication of this analysis is that the problem lies not in rationality per se but in a distorted, hegemonic form of it — one that prioritizes abstraction, control, and economic efficiency while failing to register relationality and ecological limits. At this point, my aim has been to show why Plumwood's critique challenges dominant rationality and suggests the need for alternative forms of reasoning—a direction that opens toward the concept of pragmatic rationality and its distinguishing features.

This leads directly to contextualism. This is one of the distinguishing characteristics of pragmatic rationality. It is important to distinguish between the setting of goals and the selection of means for achieving them. This distinction is central to Norton's account of contextualism. When a comprehensive understanding of health within the ecological context is in place, efforts can transition from prohibition and regulation to the creation of incentives that motivate individuals to select less polluting activities and land uses that contribute to the conservation of biological diversity (Norton, 1991, pp.190 –191). According to Norton, a coherent environmental policy framework is created through the rational integration of ecologically and economically viable policy options. In the context of environmental ethics, this viewpoint is indicative of pragmatic rationality that is both collaborative and flexible.

Norton's argument posits that environmentalists of various ideological orientations have frequently transcended their differences to collaborate toward shared objectives. This phenomenon refers to the capacity of actors with divergent value commitments to converge on practical policy goals. This is exemplified in the historical interaction between Pinchot and Muir: although Pinchot's utilitarian conservationism emphasized the efficient use of natural resources, and Muir's preservationism stressed the intrinsic value of wilderness, both supported overlapping policy outcomes—most notably the establishment and protection of large public landscapes—demonstrating cooperation despite their differing moral foundations. A similar pattern appears in the case of the 1985 Farm Bill. Here, stakeholders representing conflicting values—such as agricultural productivity on one side and soil and wetland conservation on the other—negotiated these differences to enact conservation compliance measures. The urgency created by accelerating land degradation enabled diverse actors to converge pragmatically on shared

constraints to prevent long-term ecological harm. In the above cases, the common denominator of the obligations imposed on resource users cannot be understood as a commitment to any single moral principle. Rather, the unifying element is structural: individually motivated, economically driven behaviors are constrained because of their cumulative impacts on ecological contexts whose diversity and complexity underpin all life. Rapid alterations to such systems risk serious disruption (Norton, 1999, pp. 188–189). These examples illustrate pragmatic rationality: actors set aside competing moral doctrines and instead adopt solutions that work under real-world ecological constraints. What guides agreement is not shared values but shared recognition of consequences. The resulting cooperation is thus grounded in practical problem-solving rather than moral consensus.

In accordance with this perspective, Norton further posited that a necessity exists for a conceptual framework of rationality that would facilitate the formulation of judgments and facilitate the navigation of uncertainty and policy deadlocks (Norton, 2015, p.56).

In his discussion, Norton drew upon the concepts of rationality proposed by Herbert Simon, distinguishing between substantive and procedural rationality. The former attempts to identify a single correct answer through calculation or by determining the appropriateness of the procedure employed to the problem at hand. He further asserts the importance of recognizing that rationality persists when we relinquish the notion of a single, definitive answer; it evolves to address each problem, particularly in the context of identifying a sustainable path within diverse societies. Rationality, by its very nature, can flourish in the absence of certainty. Consequently, our actions should aspire to serve as both the first steps toward change and scientific tests, complete with their controls and methods (Norton, 2015, p.57). This view implies that, rather

than seeking a single, final solution, pragmatic rationality treats decisions as guided by experimentation and open to revision. Rationality emerges through adaptive problem solving in real-life situations. What follows deals with pragmatic rationality as a procedural guide.

#### **5. 4 Pragmatic Rationality as the Procedural Guide**

A methodological framework has been proposed with the objective of elucidating environmental issues. The aforementioned framework is based on an adaptive approach. The proposed approach is intended to be neither non-rational nor excessively chaotic, with the objective of preventing unending disagreements. It is imperative to adopt a novel approach that evaluates change and enhances processes to facilitate more effective decision-making (Norton, 2015, p.113).

The pragmatic method is based on the premise that individuals can acquire knowledge from those who hold divergent viewpoints. Consequently, adherents of pragmatism advocate for the implementation of open procedures. Recognition of this diversity is essential for fostering rational public discourse (Norton, 2015, p.114). Therefore, the necessity for a "procedural epistemology" is evident, as it would provide a framework for guidance regarding intractable problems.

According to Norton, environmental issues are largely wicked in nature. If the emphasis on theoretical concepts poses a significant risk, then empirical attention to cases of environmental conflict informs us that, in most cases, it is difficult to find clear-cut choices and decision points. As disputants define and redefine the problem, participants find themselves unable to reach an agreement on the subject of their disagreement (Norton, 2015:39). The complexity of identifying definitive choices and decision points led to the classification of the issue of biological diversity conservation as a wicked problem.

Norton employs Rittel and Webber's conceptualization of problems as both benevolent and malevolent in addressing environmental issues. A benign problem is defined as a problem that has one unique solution. To illustrate, such problems include the provision of a chemical analysis of a compound or the calculation of the most efficient design for removing sewage from an urban area. The resolution to a benign issue will be acknowledged by all once it has been demonstrated. It has been demonstrated that problematic situations frequently give rise to a variety of solutions, with varying degrees of effectiveness. However, these problems are not truly solved; rather, they are "resolved" for a certain period, until political or social forces demand a different balance among competing values and goals (Norton, 2005, p.132; 2015, p.37).

As previously stated, the concept of biodiversity posits that every species possesses an intrinsic right to existence, irrespective of its utility to humans. However, such claims frequently intersect with intricate ethical, social, and political considerations. To illustrate this point, consider the case of the snail darter, which exemplifies the challenges that arise when species extinction conflicts with human interests and broader societal priorities. The U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling that effectively halted work on a dam that was nearing completion. The court determined that the continuation of the project would constitute a violation of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, which categorizes the snail darter as an endangered species (U.S. Supreme Court, 1978).

Despite the court's 1978 ruling in favor of safeguarding the snail darter and the subsequent cessation of dam construction, the Congress, through the enactment of appropriate legislation, exempted the Tellico Dam from compliance with the Act. This legislative action also led to the removal of the snail darter from the list of endangered species. Furthermore, the Congress

outlined its efforts to transplant the snail darter and the construction of the completed dam (U.S. Supreme Court, 1978).

In this regard, Norton posits that the aforementioned case exemplifies the predicament environmentalists encounter when endeavoring to safeguard biological resources. He further posits that the utilization of economic aggregators would result in the release of the species if the dollar value were inadequate to influence the preservation outcome. Consequently, the species were conceptualized as a resource among other resources. Conversely, moralists posit that no species engaged in the pursuit of economic gain (Norton, 1991, pp.136 –137).

The aforementioned case exemplifies the manner in which diverse interests — comprising moral, social, economic, and political factors — can intersect. The management of such situations necessitates a systematic approach. In this particular instance, the court determined that it was imperative to prioritize the cessation of the dam's operations, even if it entailed a reduction in the economic benefits it had been providing. However, following a year of collaborative efforts with scientific experts, the Congress devised a solution to relocate the snail darter to a new habitat, and the construction of the dam was successfully completed. In this case, a single overarching solution was not identified; rather, the solution was procedural.

The appropriate reaction to wicked problems is to acknowledge their complexity and to focus on systematic, effective methods of addressing the aspects of these problems that contribute to their severity (Norton, 2015, p.58). In this chapter, the discussion of the detailed characteristics of wicked problems is beyond the scope of the present discussion. Nevertheless, the objective is to illustrate that the issue of biological diversity is regarded as a significant problem and that pragmatic rationality as a procedural guide can promote progress.

In the context of procedural methodology, the objective is to employ a process model that is normatively adequate. This process model is designed to facilitate the clarification and ranking of community values through an open-ended, adaptive process over time. Furthermore, the concept under consideration must be epistemologically effective. In essence, the concept must possess the capacity to facilitate a self-correcting process of action, evaluation, and realignment of multiple values.

### **5.5 Application of the Pragmatic Rationality to Biological Diversity Conservation**

In order to demonstrate the application of pragmatic rationality to the conservation of biological diversity, it is first necessary to establish the essential tenets of this field. The ongoing and accelerating loss of biodiversity, encompassing species of animals, plants, and birds, underscores the imperative for a thorough examination of the theoretical and practical foundations of biodiversity conservation. According to Dobson's assertion, the human species is merely one of approximately nine million species that comprise the planet's biodiversity. Nevertheless, none has exerted as profound an influence on its surroundings as we have. The profound influence of human activity on the global environment is such that its effects are not perceived in conventional time frames, such as weeks, months, or years, but rather in time periods that are familiar to Earth scientists (Dobson, 2016, p.122).

According to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, biological diversity is defined as the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, but not limited to, terrestrial, marine, other aquatic ecosystems, and ecological complexes of which they are part. This includes diversity among species, between species, and of ecosystems (Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2001, p.5). The biodiversity claims asserted that all species

possess an inherent moral right to existence, irrespective of their perceived utility. Nonetheless, this assertion is contested in a concrete case scenario, as it is intertwined with moral, social, economic, and political interests, as evidenced by the aforementioned case. In this regard, it is argued that pragmatic rationality would facilitate the management of such overlapping practical scenarios.

A recent study revealed that several mass extinctions over the past 500 million years have led to the demise of numerous species. These events have been shown to result in the extinction of entire lineages, as opposed to the extinction of individual species, throughout Earth's history (Ceballos, 2023, p.1). In alignment with this perspective, Wilson advanced the notion that the imperative for the prioritization of biological diversity as a global resource, necessitates its comprehensive documentation, utilization, and, most crucially, its conservation. Human populations are expanding at an accelerated rate, a phenomenon that is exerting a marked adverse influence on the environment, particularly in tropical regions. Secondly, scientific research has revealed novel applications for biological diversity, with the potential to alleviate both human suffering and environmental degradation. Thirdly, a significant portion of this biodiversity is being irrevocably lost due to extinction, a phenomenon that is particularly pronounced in tropical regions and is attributable to the destruction of natural habitats (Wilson, 1988, p.3).

To achieve this objective, the global network of protected areas is in a state of constant flux, and its dynamics are meticulously tracked by the World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA). The database was initiated with a list of protected areas mandated by the United Nations in 1959, and it now serves as a crucial source of key indicators that track progress toward area-based

conservation targets. The WDPA underscores the pivotal function of protected areas in the advancement of international objectives and agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Sustainable Development Goals (Bingham et al., 2019, p.737). Protected areas have played a pivotal role in biodiversity conservation, offering numerous benefits to both nature and humanity. These include ecosystem services such as clean water, food security, disaster risk reduction, and climate regulation (UNEP-WCMC & IUCN, 2012, p.1).

A contentious issue within the environmental and conservation movements is the question of whether the conservation of biological diversity should be pursued for its own sake or for reasons other than its own intrinsic value. For instance, Kareiva et al., in 2011, the author posited that the primary focus of conservation efforts should not be on biodiversity for its own sake. Rather, the emphasis should be on the enhancement of natural systems that provide the greatest benefits to the largest number of people, particularly those in need. The efficacy of biodiversity protection without a defined objective has been called into question. It is imperative to safeguard the dynamic and resilient nature that is intricately woven into the fabric of human communities. The following are the ways forward. The success of conservation efforts is contingent upon the ability to move beyond the confines of a prevailing, yet flawed, paradigm. This paradigm, as articulated by Rolston (2018, p.199), must be superseded if the endeavors to preserve our natural heritage are to be fruitful.

The new conservation initiative is a response to a series of interwoven ecological challenges, including but not limited to human population growth, escalating demands for resources, habitat degradation, and species extinction. Specifically, new conservation does not advocate for the abandonment of protected areas per se; rather, it posits that protected areas are unlikely to be

sufficient to accomplish our objectives. The ecological rationale for this phenomenon is well established. Firstly, from a strictly species-area perspective, the available land in nature reserves is inadequate to encompass 20 – 30% of the world's biodiversity. Consequently, the management of unprotected lands with resource extraction, agriculture, grazing, and forestry should be approached in a manner that seeks to minimize damage to biodiversity. Secondly, the environment outside protected areas is significant to a protected area's sustainability due to factors such as pollution, greenhouse gases, the introduction of non-native species, and the need for dispersal. Finally, the local population residing in and around protected areas can pose an additional threat. This phenomenon can be attributed to the potential for economic disadvantage, political instability, or resentment concerning the protected area itself, which can give rise to activities that are detrimental to the interests of the protected area (Kareiva, 2014, p.1). Such complexity illustrates why pragmatic rationality — dialogical, contextual, and flexible— provides an effective framework for addressing the ethical, social, and political dimensions of biodiversity conservation. It accommodates diverse motivations and shifting ecological realities. Consequently, pragmatic rationality proves not only theoretically sound but also practically viable.

As discussed above, the recent studies indicate that there is a significant rate of species extinction, the primary cause of which is human activity. Consequently, the conservation of biological diversity is imperative not solely for human well-being but for the integrity of every environmental component. However, the issue of biodiversity conservation is intricate, involving different aspects of life. In addressing this challenge, I opted for a pragmatic approach, guided by rational thought. In an unpredictable and constantly changing world, the account of pragmatic

rationality is relevant to biodiversity conservation. A significant rationale for considering pragmatic rationality as an effective framework for biological diversity is its emphasis on practical outcomes over abstract ideals. Therefore, rather than focusing on a single theory that is considered to be the ultimate explanation, it would be more beneficial to employ pragmatic rationality, which is iterative and contextual. In essence, the present study has advanced the hypothesis that pragmatic rationality, when considered as a procedural framework, can function as an effective instrument in the context of biodiversity conservation, characterized by its intricacy and variability.

Moreover, it can be observed that rationality has been interpreted and used differently. Most importantly, the discourse of rationality has a dubious place in environmental ethics. For some philosophers, rationality is a human privilege and thus, humans are hegemonic due to this special tool. However, such view has a devastating impact on human beings' relationship with other environmental entities. For Plumwood such rationality is hegemonic and monological. Because makes human beings, specifically male elite the subject of morality while all other environmental elements are object of morality. In this way it creates dualism. Therefore, rationality is the bases of dualism which creates environmental problems. Here, have turned to pragmatic rationality and disposed to believe that pragmatic rationality is crucial for two reasons — first it helps us to understand the real cause of environmental problems, i.e., hegemonic rationality as the root cause of environmental problems. Second, even though monolithic rationality was used to serve as the tool of exploitation environmental discourse, but the pragmatic rationality can serve as procedural framework.

The notion that human beings possess the faculty of reason is a concept that can be substantiated. Nevertheless, this does not imply that individuals are exempt from moral accountability and can uninhibitedly interfere with nature at will. The principles of rationality and the exploitation of non-human animals are not inherently incompatible, provided that rationality is applied in a responsible manner. A particular strand within the field of moral extensionism focused on identifying the common ground shared by both human and non-human beings. However, it can be demonstrated that such a search is unproductive. This conclusion is supported by the ability of actors to recognize clear differences while also acting in a harmonious manner.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

A thorough examination of the concept of reason in early environmental discourse reveals that environmental exploitation — an outcome of a prevailing monological form of reason— constitutes a significant concern. This chapter demonstrates that pragmatic rationality is of particular importance in environmental discourse because it enables the translation of diverse and often conflicting environmental values into workable, context-sensitive decisions that can guide policy and action without requiring prior agreement on a single overarching moral theory. The absence of this principle results in a dysfunctional environmental discourse, as pragmatic rationality serves as a critical intermediary between value pluralism and practical orientation.

## Chapter Six

### Application of Rorty's Ideas to Sustainability

#### 6.1 Introduction

Even though the notion of conserving resources and living in harmony with the environment is deeply rooted in many cultures and traditions, the current concept of sustainability emerged and became popular in the last decades of the 20th century — particularly the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, global awareness of environmental issues and the challenges of sustainability increased dramatically and put great emphasis on sustainability (UNEP, 1972, p.1).

The Stockholm Declaration emphasizes how humans preserve and enhance the environment as its creatures and shapers. It also emphasizes how humans constantly synthesize experience and continue to learn, invent, create, and advance. It was written with the knowledge that shared ideals and viewpoints are essential for motivating and directing people everywhere toward the preservation and improvement of the human environment (UNEP, 1972, p.1).

Additionally, in other important report "Our Common Future" from 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development — also known as the Brundtland Commission — popularized the modern definition of sustainability, which is: "development that meets present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." (Brundtland, 1987, p.8). Therefore, the terms sustainable and sustainable development have been used since the Brundtland Report and are frequently used in documents published by national and international organizations, corporate mission statements, and environmental advocacy groups. But justifiable doubt has been aroused about this very consensus. The idea that there can be conflicts between sustained economic growth and other environmental aims is supported by the way the term

sustainable is employed to modify nouns like growth and development. Concerned environmentalists believe the concepts are being used as green rhetoric to justify economic expansion (O'Neill et al., 2008, p.183).

The literal meaning of the word sustainability is the ability to sustain, perpetuate or persist. Also, it is an ecological term used to characterize the long-term diversity, stability, resilience, and productivity of biological systems a prerequisite for the survival of humans and other animals. Furthermore, sustainability has been accepted as a common policy objective as the environment and social equity have gained prominence as global issues. Accordingly, the term, together with its derivatives, is used in many ways. These include sustainable development, sustainable living, sustainable future, social sustainability, and environmental sustainability, among many others. (Kopnina & Shoreman-Ouimet, 2015, p.3).

Hence, a precise definition of sustainability is lacking. In line with this, Norton argues that sustainability is the most important idea in environmental policy discussions today. This is despite lacking a precise definition in the language accepted by academics. Because of this lack, practitioners in many disciplines are engaged in turf wars. Each seeks to 'own' the term by defining it in terms of their own disciplinary theories and terminology. Ecologists, for example, seek to understand sustainability by linking it to resilience, emphasizing the importance of system-level concepts appropriate to understanding sustainability as a way forward in a complex, dynamic system. Economists define sustainability in accordance with the principles of the mainstream theory of economic growth. In addition, conservation biologists often link biodiversity conservation to the idea of sustainability (Norton, 2016, p.355). Here, it can be concluded from this that sustainability is a key concept.

The issue of sustainability has begun to play a vital role in environmental policy decisions because it suggests that humanity can restore or repair the natural environment. For example, there is a push for planting trees to reverse the greenhouse effect. Developers must restore previously degraded areas in exchange for building permission. This notion of humanity's obligation to restore natural areas and entities, species, communities, ecosystems, is morally good. But it seems problematic. Regarding this, Katz (1997) in his book entitled *Nature as Subject: Human Obligation and Natural Community*, argues that the concepts of environmental policy and ethics are a distortion of reality and a misunderstanding of humanity's place in the natural world. He believes this concept has two problems. First, it views human science and technology as the solution to natural processes. Second, it is anthropocentric, meaning that "restored" nature is created for human needs — the deceptive dream of human domination over nature. Finally, humanity will "restore" and repair the degraded biosphere (Katz, 1997, p.95). From this, it can be logically concluded that sustainability falls into the trap of a technological fix and unrecognized anthropocentrism.

Similarly, transitioning to an ecologically sustainable world could have significant ecological impact. Adhering strictly to ecological sustainability means that human population cannot outgrow ecosystems' carrying capacity, natural resources cannot be used beyond their capacity to regenerate, and waste production cannot exceed ecosystems' ability to absorb waste or in any other way endanger or compromise biological diversity and ecosystem integrity (Eckersley, 2001, p.318).

Consequently, Jamieson argues that the main limitation of sustainability discourse is that, like other concepts, it focuses our attention on certain issues while neglecting others. In its most

common forms, sustainability is an anthropocentric and economic concept. Developing more precise understandings of sustainability is unlikely to impact the necessary moral reorientation that requires new interactions between humans and other creatures and the rest of nature. We need a discourse that allows for a deeper examination of moral, political, cultural, spiritual, and religious values (Jamieson, 1998, p.191). Therefore, this is where the concept of pragmatic sustainability comes into play.

As outlined in the preceding section, the initial part of this paper has delineated the historical evolution of the notion of sustainability. In the subsequent section, the discussion will centre on the manner in which the notion of sustainability assists in the recollection of ecological disasters. In the third and fourth sections, the application of Richard Rorty's philosophical concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* to the field of sustainability will be proposed. Rather than adhering to fixed, universal principles, Rorty's framework, as outlined in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, would be useful for sustainability as a dynamic, adaptive practice. In this dissertation, the claims put forward will be supported by a comprehensive examination of Rorty's notion of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. In conclusion, the following observations can be made. In the following discussion, sustainability will be addressed as a recurrent reminder of the ecological peril.

## **6.2 Sustainability as Perpetual Reminder Ecological Crisis**

Traditional person-centered ethics have dominated Western thought for millennia. These ethics aimed to optimize human well-being in the shape of joy, happiness, or preference fulfillment. Alternatively, it tried to maintain human rights: the right to life, property, and well-being. These theories emerged, at least in part, in reaction to the socio-political challenges of previous

centuries. Many of these challenges have subsided in the Western world, while new ones have emerged. The most serious of these is a rapidly deteriorating ecological environment (Kelly, 2014, p.111). In response, therefore, there was a need for intervention by multidisciplinary actors, including philosophers. In line with this, Callanan noted that when philosophers respond to environmental disasters, they need to return to the empirical question that gave rise to their concern. Otherwise, philosophers have an exhilarating problem. Given the immediate and potentially tragic consequences of failing to act, it is ethically impermissible to entertain a problem (Callanan, 2010, pp. 132 – 133).

Many believe that the current patterns of economic activity are unsustainable because they involve the depletion of natural resources and sinks, widespread pollution, and unprecedented effects on the climate, life forms, and life-sustaining systems. The twentieth century witnessed unprecedented environmental change, much of it the cumulative and unintended result of human economic activity (Holland, 2001, p.390).

Early on, the claim was that human civilization would have to accept zero growth instead of trying to better the lot of people through economic expansion. Political leaders eager to reassure people of better times ahead and businesses eager to continue operating considered the response to be understandably undesired. Because stopping economic growth is not always the solution, even if we acknowledge that it has been the main factor contributing to environmental deterioration. With a diminution of the influence on the environment, and even a partial reversal of the already occurring degradation. Sustainability as a concept expresses this sense of optimism (Holland, 2001, p.390).

The idea of sustainability has been absorbed into the world of policy with remarkable speed, impacting many aspects of the 1992 Rio de Janeiro United Nations Environment and Development Conference's agenda. Governments from all over the world have committed to executing Agenda 21, which is the agenda for implementing sustainability (Holland, 2001, p.391).

Sustainability raises different questions. Among the most crucial are the following two: what is sustainability exactly? How crucial is it to attain sustainability? The definition of sustainability, as most people understand, is grand and simple: it is about maintaining human survival while averting ecological disaster. In contrast, professional discourse is intricate and focused. There is an anthropocentric worldview present in both discourses. Nature just plays a supporting role in this situation because human survival and well-being are what count (Jamieson, 1998, p.184). Regarding the latter question Kopnina & Shoreman-Ouimet list two reasons why sustainability is necessary. Firstly, because without it, civilization as we know it could be under serious threat and ecological integrity could be all but lost; and secondly, because it offers us the chance to live in harmony with the magnificent planet of which we are a part into the future (2015, p.4).

Therefore, it needs to be emphasized even as our living conditions continue to deteriorate, and sustainability ideas become more accepted and widespread. This could mean one of two things: (A) there has not been widespread adoption of the sustainability practices, concepts and knowledge needed to halt and then reverse the planet's trend towards environmental degradation; or (B) the sustainability practices that have been adopted are inadequate or ineffective. To achieve sustainability, we must first consider the environment and the need to respect resources, ourselves and life, the earth, and future generations (Torelli, 2021, pp.719 – 720).

One of the most common themes in modern environmental thought is that we need to rethink how we relate to nature if we are interested in creating a sustainable human society within a thriving natural environment. It is not enough to simply change public policy. Simple societal improvements such as increased dependence on transport or recycling are not enough. Neither is environmental education that emphasizes care for the earth and the dangers of current activities. The moral responsibility we have to the next generation and to our fellow animals does not suffice to justify not doing more (Reitan, 1998, pp.3 – 4).

Nevertheless, a fresh perspective is required. More accurately, we must embrace a new perspective on the natural world and our relationships with it. Although there are environmentalists who disagree with this demand for a shift in viewpoint, the trend is evident. It is driven by a growing suspicion that the dominant modern worldview, a consumerist vision of life that reduces nature to the status of things, is responsible for unsustainable social and individual practices that endanger the health of our planet and ourselves. A new, ecologically conscious worldview must be adopted to achieve sustainability (Reitan, 1998, p.4).

Consistent with this, Reitan states that a worldview's importance should be judged by the kind of life it tends to produce. The criterion asks us to examine the implications of alternative worldviews for the sustainability of human-natural systems and distinguish them based on their practical impact on those systems. This is in line with environmental philosophy's advocacy of new worldviews for the promotion of a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature (Reitan, 1998, p.5). Therefore, the concept of sustainability helps us recognize multidimensional environmental problems and find an appropriate way out. It is at this point that Rorty's notion of *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* come into play.

Consequently, the goal of this chapter is to use Rorty's book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) to add an essential element given the dynamic and complex nature of global environmental problems. Accordingly, the following sections explore how *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* can provide a more flexible and responsive framework for sustainability. Through the acceptance of the subjectivity of our views, the avoidance of dogmatism through irony, and the building of community bonds, we can create sustainable practices that are more appropriate to an uncertain and changing environment.

### **6.3 The Notion of Contingency and Irony in the Context of Sustainability Discourse**

In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, Rorty (1989, p.xv) attempts to show what happens when we stop seeking a unifying theory of the public and private spheres, instead treating the demands of self-making and human solidarity as equally valid yet forever incommensurable. A discussion of the entire text would be beyond the scope of this paper, so the focus is on what is immediately relevant.

Rorty borrows the definition of 'liberal' from Judith Shklar, who states that libertarians are individuals who consider cruelties to be the most terrible of all. He combines this with the term 'ironist' to designate a person who has confronted the contingencies of one's most central convictions and desires – a person who is sufficiently historicist and nominalist to reject the idea that these convictions and desires point back to something beyond the reach of time and chance. Liberal ironists are people who include among these unsubstantiated desires their own hope that suffering will be reduced, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings will cease (Rorty, 1989, p. xv). Rorty's argument posits that metaphysicians and theologians, in their respective attempts to comprehend human nature, sought to integrate the public and private

spheres. The proponents of this theory posit that this sense of community is of significant importance, and thus, they argue that private fulfilment and human solidarity are inextricably linked. In contrast, Nietzsche and Hegel – who were, respectively, sceptics and historicists – rejected the concept of human nature. At the deepest level of self-reflection, Nietzsche's philosophy posits an absence of human solidarity, perceiving it as a "mere" construct of human socialisation. Conversely, Hegel's perspective asserts the absence of any fundamental essence or essence of humanity that precedes or is not defined by socialisation and history. Such thinkers aspire to gradually liberate us from metaphysics and theology, emancipating us from the trap of time and chance. They seek to substitute the concept of Freedom for Truth as the ultimate objective of both thought and social progress (Rorty, 1989, p. xiii).

For Rorty, authors such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Proust, Heidegger, and Nabokov are considered useful exemplars, as they illustrate the possibility of private perfection — a self-created, autonomous, human life. Conversely, authors such as Marx, Mill, Dewey, Habermas, and Rawls are regarded as fellow citizens rather than exemplars. They are engaged in a collective, social endeavour: the effort to render our institutions and practices more equitable and less brutal. Rorty (1989, p.xiv) posits that rather than opting for a binary choice between these two options, it is preferable to assign equal weight to both and utilise them for different purposes.

In Rorty's philosophy, a fundamental dichotomy exists between the existence of a world outside of our perception and the notion of truth as an external reality. The assertion that the world is out there signifies that the majority of phenomena in space and time are the consequence of causes that do not encompass the mental states of human beings. The argument that truth does not exist independently is merely the assertion that in the absence of propositions, truth is also

nonexistent. These propositions, as Rorty (1989, pp. 4 –5) notes, constitute elements of human language, which is a human creation.

Rorty's position is that vocabulary is not merely "out there" waiting to be discovered. As has been demonstrated by prominent thinkers such as Thomas Kuhn and Quentin Skinner, the utilisation of particular vocabulary does not inherently stem from external, societal dictates. While it may have an impact on our beliefs subsequent to the adoption of a particular language, it does not in itself constitute evidence for the existence of a universal language. This ability is unique to the human species. This realisation should not lead us to view language choices as arbitrary or purely subjective. Instead, it is important to acknowledge that the concepts of choice and criteria are not applicable to changes in language games. To illustrate this point, it is important to note that Europe did not consciously opt to adopt Romantic poetry, socialist politics, or Galilean mechanics. Furthermore, these shifts did not result from any form of argument or deliberate choice. Instead, it is the case that cultural changes occur as certain habits of language fade and new ones emerge, as is argued by Kuhn in *The Copernican Revolution*. These shifts do not represent the outcome of applying criteria or making arbitrary decisions. Similarly, an individual does not become a theist or atheist by applying criteria. The criteria for such changes are neither inherent to the world nor to the individual.

Rorty's reflection on the poem by Larkin addresses the concern of losing one's sense of personal identity. Larkin's concern is not merely for his own demise or nonexistence, but rather for the potential loss of his distinct identity. He refers to this as his "lading-list," a metaphor for the inner inventory that distinguishes his life. For Larkin, the terror lies in the idea that once he is gone, so is everything that made him different from everyone else (Rorty, 1989, p.23). Furthermore, this

fear of losing oneself is connected to a broader phenomenon, a concern shared by individuals in various fields of creative endeavour, including poets, artists and thinkers. Harold Bloom termed this phenomenon the "anxiety of influence", characterising the pervasive concern that one's own work might be perceived as a mere imitation or derivative of the contributions of preceding artists or scholars. Larkin is concerned that his work may be disregarded as mere imitation. His concerns do not pertain to the security of his position, but rather to the question of whether he will be remembered in the event that his work is not deemed to be exceptional. Larkin's poetry is notable for its lack of easy answers. His work reflects the human conflict between the individual and the universal. (Rorty, 1989, pp.24 – 25).

Rorty considers Larkin's poem reflects the ongoing philosophical tension between poetry and philosophy, particularly the conflict between embracing the contingency of human existence and seeking universal truths that transcend this contingency. This debate has been prominent in philosophy since Hegel and Nietzsche, with contemporary thinkers focusing on the freedom found in accepting life's contingencies rather than pursuing absolute truths. These philosophers, influenced by Romanticism, view the poet as a creator rather than a scientist or philosopher seeking to discover pre-existing truths. Larkin, like these post-Nietzschean philosophers, grapples with the limits of poetry in addressing the human condition within this framework of contingency implies that it might seem more fulfilling to discover universal truths — what past philosophers and religious figures claimed to offer — a set of conditions that define what it means to be human (Rorty, 1989, pp.25 – 26).

Rorty contends, Nietzsche dismissed the idea of objective, universal truth and promoted the concept of 'truth' as a construction. He argued that reality is something to be created. Humans

and poets should find their value in embracing and shaping their individual experiences. For Nietzsche, the poet-creator represents the ultimate figure: one who defines life through self-creation and rejects the idea that existence must conform to a universal order (Rorty, 1989, pp.27).

Moreover, Nietzsche values new descriptions of the contingencies of life, in contrast to the Western philosophical tradition's focus on transcending time to access permanent truth. From a "will to truth" to a "will to self-overcoming," salvation becomes the power to reshape the past and to assert, "Thus I willed it. Nietzsche believed that human life is a process of self-reinvention, driven by the fear of merely reproducing inherited forms. Poets strive to transform inherited realities, with success being the act of "giving birth to oneself" (Rorty, 1989, pp.29).

Rorty argues that Freud advanced Nietzschean and Bloomian ideas of human identity by demystifying the self and tracing the origins of conscience to upbringing. Unlike Kant, who made moral conscience universal, Freud grounded it in history and experience, thus de-universalizing morality. Freud's work, in contrast to Kant's inward turn towards moral righteousness, reveals that our moral consciousness is shaped by time, chance, and individual circumstances, like political and aesthetic consciousness. By doing so, Freud resolves the tension between Romantic individualism and moral universalism, making morality as personal and contingent as artistic creation (Rorty, 1989, pp.30).

In addition, Freud's exploration of conscience challenges traditional views by linking it to chance and upbringing. He claims that human life is shaped by chance. Freud's approach is unique in its psychological detail. He argued that conscience is formed from parental and societal voices. Freud says certain experiences contribute to intense feelings of guilt, fear, or anger. Repression

of the Oedipus complex results in a harsh super-ego, leading to obsessive-compulsive behavior (Rorty, 1989, pp. 31).

Furthermore, Freud redefines traditional moral concepts, revealing the contingencies underlying our sense of pity, guilt, and compassion. He shows how subjective experiences shape emotions. Also, he explains why we can be kind or cruel and how past events affect our capacity for love or guilt. Freud's terms allow us to construct personal moral narratives, replacing universal frameworks with a detailed, subjective vocabulary. This blurs the distinction between morality and practicality, challenging the dualism of reason and desire (Rorty, 1989, p. 32).

According to Rorty's account, Freud's rejection of a single paradigm of human nature avoids a Kantian moralist/Nietzschean poet dichotomy. He sees them as adaptations to upbringing and both as human. Freud breaks with Kant's moral absolutism and Nietzsche's exaltation of the exceptional in his theory of human nature. Freud stresses that people make the best of their situations. The boring conformist reveals a rich complexity. He moves beyond the search for universal truths about humanity and focuses on personal adaptation (Rorty, 1989, p.35).

In sum, Rorty asserts that progress in poetry, art, philosophy, science, and politics emerges from the accidental alignment of personal obsessions with societal needs. From a Freudian perspective, various forms of expression — powerful poetry, shared morality, revolutionary ideas, or individual fantasies — are all strategies for coming to terms with various, often blind, impressions that may be unique to an individual or shared within a historically conditioned community. None of these approaches is inherently superior; they are all equally valid expressions of humanity, much as different tools serve different purposes without one being more essential than another (Rorty, 1989, p. 35).

Thus far, Rorty shows that our ideas, language, and vocabulary change over time. Rorty challenges the traditional notion of unchanging truth. He argues that our beliefs, values, and vocabulary are shaped by history and culture. From my perspective, Rorty's denial of foundationalism is more than a mere critique of epistemology; rather, it is an ethical viewpoint that values openness to various viewpoints. This interpretation would help us to connect his thoughts to current debates in sustainability, even though Rorty himself does not discuss this topic. In order to establish a connection between Rorty's notion of *Contingency and Irony* and the concept of sustainability, this analysis mainly draws upon the works of Norton since it has similar pragmatist framework for sustainability.

Norton indicated that a useful analogy for characterizing sustainability is the pragmatic conception of truth envisaged by Henry David Thoreau and as further developed by C.S. Peirce and subsequent pragmatists. He argues that Peirce's definition of "truth" provides an attractive approach to sustainability for two reasons. First, it refocuses discussions of truth and objectivity from a search for 'correspondence' with an 'external world' (the 'correspondence' approach) to a more forward-looking or transformational approach. Second, it emphasizes the critical role of an evolving, questioning community in conducting inquiry (Norton, 1999, p.451).

Norton argues that Peirce's respect for a community dedicated to the search for truth is indicative of the kind of respect we need to develop for the future and for the knowledge and wisdom that will be required if we are to live in a sustainable way. For a discussion of sustainability aims, Peirce's philosophy of truth and objectivity, and the controversies it has generated, provide an interesting guide. Epistemic community formation and effectiveness is an essential aspect of sustainability because, as adaptive management proponents agree, sustainable outcomes are not

pre-definable but must emerge from a programme of active social experimentation and learning. Both definitions are best understood as characterizing evolving processes rather than ideal outcomes (Norton, 1999, p.461).

Norton (2015) argues that the concept of sustainability is paradoxical. On the one hand sustainability has absurdly strong notion. Such sustainability overly considers future generations and seems unfair to the present generation. To put it in another words, it is futuristic because it favors future generations over present ones. On the other hands sustainability has an absurdly weak idea. This implies that sustainability is no more than economic business. This could lead to presentism: not considering future people. However, a reasonable position should be taken between these extreme positions. Here, some questions affect the concept of sustainable change. These are: Is it fair to exhaust nonrenewable and leave only renewables? Can future systems be sustainable despite changes in the resource landscape? Is technology the problem or the solution? Is it a human controlled tool or is it autonomous?

Moreover, Norton and Steinemann (2001) offered a new valuation approach which embodies the core principle of adaptive management which is experiential, multi-scalar and place based. Accordingly, an approach results rather than an attempt to maximize a single variable such as economic efficiency, it considers multiple values within community-based ecosystem management (Norton & Steinemann, 2001, p.473). In addition, Norton and Steinemann further develop an unusual theory based on process rather than based on a theory of ultimate values. The problem is not to decide which theory of ultimate value is correct, but rather to design a process by which a diverse society, with many voices representing many worldviews and ultimate values,

can act in a way that tends toward a working consensus in environmental policymaking (Norton & Steinemann, 2001, p.474).

On that account, how well a worldview serves us to navigate the active realm of our lives is the truest measure of its validity. This includes not just how well it allows us to interpret our experiences consistently and passively, but also how well it functions in the world of experience. When assessing a worldview, we need to consider how effectively it is supported by actual experiences. Does it allow us to behave in a way that is consistent with the rules of our experience and the worldview itself in a sustainable way (Reitan, 1998, p.5).

The typical critique of the modern worldview subtly highlights the fact that it has been demonstrated to be pragmatically wrong. Though it may have functioned, at least partially, in the past, the consumerist worldview of today is no longer valid. We cannot solve the impending environmental crisis unless we act that strikes a balance between human activities and the surrounding ecosystems (Reitan, 1998, p.5).

Norton contends that ideological environmentalism, based on pre-experienced principles and moral commitments, is ineffective because it leaves no room for flexibility and learning from experience. To make matters worse, opponents have tended to adopt polarized theories of environmental value, dogmas that block communication and make compromising more difficult. Two opposed moral theories, one restricting all value to satisfying human preferences and one extending moral value to natural elements themselves, have polarized environmental thought. In Norton's view, what we lack today is a coherent, comprehensible vocabulary for discussing environmental problems as problems of our democratic society. It has less to do with choosing the "correct" definition of sustainability than with the proposal and refinement — the

construction of a new and improved language to discuss environmental issues (Norton, 2005, p.48).

The central emphasis on experience and on an experimental approach to establishing our knowledge and practices make a value theory that highlights the aesthetic dimension, sees ethics as a process of continual mediation of a conflict in an ever-changing world, and lays the groundwork for social and political change (Parker, 1996, p.25).

All value stems from experience. The issue of ethics — what is good — eventually leads back to the specific problems of what is perceived as good in the interaction of the organism with its environment. Of course, the inquiry does not stop with the individual's affective experience, but it acknowledges it as the only potential birthplace of value. The first value question is not what we should desire, but what individuals eventually desire and why. The answers are numerous and complex, and they are not fully reducible to categories such as utilitarian pleasure-pain calculus (Parker, 1996, pp. 25 – 26).

From the above discussion, it can be inferred that what is considered sustainable is constantly evolving and influenced by socio-cultural and environmental elements. Therefore, the concept sustainability is contingent. A contingent approach to sustainability in returns encourages the development of context-specific solutions. What follows will be a discussion of the notion of solidarity in sustainability discourse.

#### **6.4 The Concept of Solidarity in the Context of Sustainability Discourse**

Rorty envisioned a liberal utopia in which relativism is irrelevant and human solidarity persists, even beyond history. Rather than a shared essence, solidarity is our imaginative connection to

others' lives. He argues that solidarity is often rooted in shared identities, while some argue for a universal sense of obligation. During WWII, many Danes and Italians helped Jews because they saw them as neighbors or community members. Similarly, while many Belgians did not help Jews, they would have taken risks for those they felt a closer bond with (Rorty, 1989, p.190).

Moreover, Rorty claims acts of solidarity as a reflection of our inherent humanity, which emerges during crises like the Holocaust. Philosophers have traditionally described human solidarity this way. Those who commit atrocities or remain indifferent are inhuman because they lack this essential component. Those who reject a fixed essence stress that actions are contextual. While moments of upheaval make us long for something universal, this view argues that human solidarity can still be meaningful when we recognize it as a product of circumstance (Rorty, 1989, p.35).

This argument rejects the idea of a natural boundary between rational and non-rational beings. It suggests that benevolence and moral obligation can coexist. Our sense of solidarity depends on the similarities we value. These are based on historically contingent values. Although this is not a natural human characteristic, but a product of secular, democratic progress, Rorty wants us to include the other in our sense of "us". The driving force behind this progress is the view that differences are less important than the experience of pain and humiliation. In contrast to Kant's focus on rationality and moral obligation, Rorty argues that understanding the suffering of others is crucial to the expansion of empathy and solidarity (Rorty, 1989, p.35).

Rorty maintains that Kantian moral philosophy devalues emotions like pity and benevolence, favoring rationality and duty. Morality and human suffering are separate concepts. Kant's views have been critiqued by many, including Annette Baier and Bernard Williams. Williams views

morality as a rigid system of hierarchical duties. He believes much of meaningful human life exists outside this framework. He also says that morality overlooks the emotional and social aspects of ethical decision making (Rorty, 1989, p.193).

Sellars contends that solidarity is a social construct. In Sellars' view, moral obligations are the result of agreements within communities, whether small or large. Sellars argues that, in contrast to traditional views that rely on abstract concepts such as "humanity" or "rational being," these obligations are shaped by shared intentions and experiences within these groups. While abstract ideals such as "humanity" or "truth" have played a key role in the promotion of social and political change, problems arise when we overanalyze them as useful but flexible guides (quoted in Rorty, 1989, p.195).

According to Rorty, the idea of human solidarity is something we make, not something we find. By understanding solidarity as an evolving, historical invention, we can expand our sense of the "we" to include those who are marginalized. Our motto should be an inspiration for inclusiveness, not a search for moral foundations. Rather than grounding politics in "common humanity," we should use philosophy to adapt our moral thinking to challenges, building on inclusive, democratic societies. In this way, our focus is on moral growth, not the search for moral foundations (Rorty, 1989, p.196).

Similarly, recent environmental thought, particularly through the framework of deep ecology, offers an alternative to the moral dualism of academic philosophy by shifting focus from extending humanist ethical principles to non-humans toward a more inclusive and activist-driven ethic of solidarity with nature. Arne Naess's deep ecology challenges the limitations of traditional ethical approaches that treat non-human entities like trees, rivers, and wilderness as

mere resources for human benefit. Instead, Naess emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life, encouraging us to recognize our deep bond with the natural world through unity, identification, and self-realization. The goal of environmental activists to protect and preserve nature goes hand in hand with the notion of being part of nature rather than its mere master. Deep ecology challenges the way we look at the natural world — instead of seeing it as a mere resource, it helps us re-evaluate our relationship with it and develop a sense of solidarity and connection with the planet and all those who live on it (quoted in Plumwood, 2002, p.196).

In her book entitled *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, Plumwood (2002) critiqued the tendency of ethical frameworks to center on human similarities or unity with nature, noting that this approach risks maintaining a subtle anthropocentrism. By grounding solidarity in human-centered criteria: whether through similarity or unity — such frameworks fail to fully acknowledge nature's independence and difference. She struggles to balance continuity, and the difference creates a problematic scenario. However, there is a danger of reducing the ethical relationship to a one-sided, monolithic form in deep ecology's focus on unity as developed by Arne Naess. This undermines its potential for more mutualistic models of engagement and makes it unsuitable for addressing nature or animals as distinct communicative subjects. The struggle to balance continuity and difference creates a problematic scenario.

The contrasting perspectives of Arne Naess and Peter Reed best illustrate how humans should relate to nature. Naess promotes unity and interconnectedness with nature. Reed, on the other hand, argues for the importance of the recognition of an existential divide that distinguishes humanity from nature. He sees respect for diversity and difference, rather than the pursuit of unity, as the basis for ethical treatment. Plumwood, however, considers both but points out the

drawbacks of each viewpoint. She suggests that neither an overemphasis on unity nor on difference provides a fully adequate basis for environmental ethics. Rather, Plumwood suggests a third approach that balances continuity and difference, maintaining dynamic self/other tension. This approach offers a more flexible and nuanced ethical basis for environmental activism that can address the relationship between humans and nature and the broader complexities of ecological advocacy (Plumwood, 2002, p.197).

From what has been discussed so far, it can be logically deduced that in expanding our sense of "we" we should include not only our fellow human beings, but also nonhuman animals. Admittedly, the idea of moral obligations towards animals and other ecological entities is not a new concept in environmental ethics. Kant, for example, argues that we have only an indirect moral obligation to animals, because animals are not rational beings. Furthermore, Singer and Regan use different standards: the capacity to feel pleasure and pain, and the subject of life, respectively, to extend our moral obligations. Rorty differs from Kant, Singer, and Regan in the sense that our sense of solidarity is dependent on values that are historically contingent. In addition, he points out that values are not natural human traits, but rather the product of secular and democratic progress. There is, of course, a certain similarity between Singer and Rorty. Both used to experience pain as a criterion for our moral expansion, but in different contexts. For Singer, the capacity to feel pleasure and pain is the criterion for the moral inclusion of animals, while Rorty claims the experience of pain and humiliation in the expansion of empathy and solidarity. So, this has useful ecological implications.

Rorty argues there is no ultimate moral authority to resolve our dilemmas. We must work within the framework of our beliefs and values. They need to be adjusted based on experience and

ideas. Liberal democratic values cannot be justified by appealing to a universal truth. We must consider our present perspective on historical processes that have shaped us. This perspective is constantly evolving and expanding. It seeks to overcome narrow ethnocentrism and create a broader, more diverse sense of solidarity (Rorty, 1989, p.197).

Rorty distinguishes two conceptions of human solidarity: the ideal of identifying with humanity and the self-critical consciousness of democratic societies. Universal solidarity is considered impractical, a secularized version of religious oneness. The second stage reflects a growing sensitivity to the pain and suffering of others. It also reflects skepticism about the effectiveness of current institutions. This allows individuals to navigate both public concerns about justice and private reflections about meaning by distinguishing between moral convictions and recognition of suffering (Rorty, 1989, p.198).

I have argued that it is possible to contextualize Rorty's views of liberal ironism — the hope that suffering will be reduced, that the humiliation of human beings by other human beings will cease. This can be expanded to include not only human suffering but also the suffering of nonhumans and ecosystems. Accordingly, the liberal ironist would recognize that the desire for environmental sustainability is not based on an objective or absolute moral truth, but rather on a contingent hope for a future in which environmental crises and the exploitation of nature by human beings are minimized.

A liberal ironist would advocate for reducing environmental crises and promoting sustainability in the context of environmental ethics while recognizing the limitations of providing universal moral justification for these actions. In this sense, the hope of the liberal ironist parallels the aspirations of environmental ethics to minimize harm and promote ecological integrity, even

though such goals may be subjective or culturally specific. Also, there is also an acceptance that their stance is a form of moral commitment, not an unassailable truth. Furthermore, the notion of solidarity is an evolving, contingent, and historical invention by which we can expand our sense of the "we" to include other environmental entities.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Rorty's concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* offer valuable insights for developing a more flexible, adaptive, and inclusive approach to sustainability. By recognizing the contingent nature of our beliefs, adopting an ironic stance to avoid dogmatism, and fostering solidarity within communities, we can develop sustainable practices that are better suited to the complex and ever-changing challenges of the modern environmental discourse. This pragmatic approach encourages continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that sustainability remains relevant and effective in the face of new and unforeseen environmental challenges.

As the global environment continues to change, embracing the uncertainty and contingency of our situation is crucial for developing sustainable practices that are resilient and responsive to the needs of various communities. Rorty's philosophy, with its emphasis on flexibility, pluralism, and community, provides a useful framework for navigating the complexities of sustainability in an unpredictable world.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this dissertation, the focus has been on modern environmental ethics, with particular emphasis on the issues of rationality and sustainability. In essence, this study has adopted a pragmatic approach in its examination of both issues. The present study employed the perspective of modern environmental ethics to delineate the development of thought in the 20th and 21st centuries.

As was outlined in Chapter Two, contemporary environmental ethics can be approached from two perspectives: anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric. The anthropocentrists posit that only humans possess intrinsic value. Non-anthropocentrists have sought to identify the underlying causes of environmental issues by drawing upon a range of ethical traditions. Despite their divergent perspectives on the moral standing of other environmental elements, there is a consensus among environmentalists that these elements are deserving of moral consideration.

The question of who is worthy of moral standing is a fundamental inquiry that leads to the concept of value. In the domain of environmental ethics, values are predominantly classified into two distinct categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. The former signifies value in its own right, while the latter represents value that is contingent on a specific purpose. From the standpoint of anthropocentrism, human beings are considered to possess moral worth, whereas other entities are regarded as having instrumental value. Non-anthropocentrists, however, posit that the natural world possesses inherent value that is not contingent upon human existence.

Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that nonanthropocentrism manifests in various forms, encompassing two primary orientations: individualism and holistic. According to the

doctrine of individualistic nonanthropocentrism, individual non-human beings, such as animals and plants, are regarded as morally valuable entities. Animal liberationists and biocentrists exemplify individualistic non-anthropocentric beliefs. Nonetheless, from a holistic, non-anthropocentric perspective, moral consideration is attributed to ecology in its totality, encompassing species, ecosystems, and the biosphere. Consequently, early environmental philosophers were successful in their efforts to assign moral worth to environmental entities. Additionally, they were able to identify the root cause of environmental problems.

Nonetheless, in the 1990's, environmental pragmatist philosophers initiated an examination of the works of traditional environmental philosophers. mainstream environmental ethics, as theorized by environmental pragmatism, has been shown to have inherent flaws, primarily due to its theoretical nature. However, it should be noted that environmental pragmatists did not entirely reject theoretical discussion. Instead, they argued that theoretical debate cannot alleviate current environmental challenges. As discussed in third chapter, environmental pragmatism seeks to tackle mainstream environmental problems using the model of philosophical pragmatism. Environmental pragmatism is a viewpoint that prioritizes lived experience while challenging foundationalist conceptions of knowledge and value. Foundationalist theories recognize some significant ideas or values as basic or given and then support additional beliefs, values, or principles while taking these fundamental foundations into account. In contrast, environmental pragmatism, founded on the notion that ideas, programs, and proposals should be helpful, workable, and practical.

The notion of centrism occupies a central role in the realm of traditional environmental ethics. In essence, this approach underscores a specific facet of nature. For instance, anthropocentric

environmental ethics places excessive emphasis on humans, whereas non-anthropocentric perspectives place greater emphasis on individual organisms, living beings, and ecosystems. This perspective is a distorted interpretation of environmental concepts. Mainstream environmental ethics have contributed to addressing critical environmental challenges, including population growth, overconsumption, deforestation, and pollution. However, these apprehensions offer insights rather than prescriptions for resolving the present crisis. Consequently, environmental pragmatism has advanced an alternative perspective, proposing that the inquiry into environmental ethics should be addressed by establishing legitimate connections between diverse ecological networks, as opposed to emphasizing a singular facet of life. Pragmatists similarly prioritize pragmatic policies that can be derived from multiple moral principles, as opposed to advocating for a singular, universally valid, indisputable metaphysics of morality. These include the comparison of ecocentrism with anthropocentrism, biocentrism with sentientism, deep ecology with social ecology, pluralism with monism, and intrinsic value with instrumental value. Consequently, environmental pragmatism is a value pluralism.

In accordance with the fundamental principles of pragmatism, it is argued that environmental ethics should align with the tenets of environmental pragmatism. In order to demonstrate the validity of this approach, an argument is developed against Samuelson, a prominent opponent of environmental pragmatism. Samuelson posits that environmental philosophy should persist in its engagement with theoretical debate, as it is of philosophical interest. From his perspective, any philosophy that does not address the issue of intrinsic value is not considered to be philosophical. Instead, further discourse on the matter is warranted, despite the acknowledgment that this pursuit may introduce certain impediments to the implementation of environmental policy. He

asserts that environmental philosophy should be concerned with theoretical debates even though it introduces impediments to policy development. Samuelson advanced the argument that environmental pragmatist assertion constitutes an exaggeration in two respects. Firstly, it overstated the practical importance of environmental pragmatism. Secondly, it understated the theoretical importance of intrinsic value. Nevertheless, it has been contended that Samuelsson's argument is not valid. There is a clear distinction between downplaying the theory in its entirety and identifying the theoretical debate that hinders the basic policy imperative.

Additionally, the discourse surrounding rationality has been the subject of debate within the context of environmental ethics. One perspective posits that rationality is a uniquely human attribute. Kant and Descartes can be used as exemplars in this regard. The possession of this unique instrument by human beings has been identified as a primary factor contributing to their status as a dominant species. However, a thorough examination reveals that this perspective has a profound and detrimental effect on human beings' interactions with other environmental entities. Conversely, environmental philosophers such as Singer and Regan contend that rationality should not serve as the sole criterion for determining moral standing. Despite employing divergent criteria for moral consideration, Singer and Regan refute the notion that reason is a criterion of moral standing.

Furthermore, Plumwood contends that the prevailing global environmental crisis is attributable to a culture that is centered on reason. She contends that reason, in its enlightened and self-critical manifestation, is instrumental in reevaluating the nexus between human beings and the natural world.

The pragmatic form of rationality can be applied to resolve the aforementioned argument. Pragmatic rationality can be utilized as a technique for reconciling divergent viewpoints, values, and methods in environmental ethics. Accordingly, I argued that pragmatic rationality is not only theoretically important but practically viable. To indicate the practical validity of pragmatic rationality in chapter five, I used the issue of biological diversity conservation as the case study. Biological diversity refers to the variety of living organisms from all sources—land, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems—and the ecological complexes they form, encompassing diversity within species, between species, and among ecosystems. The issue of biological diversity conservation is problematic in environmental discourse. That is why on the one hand the claims of biodiversity conservation claims that all the species have moral right regardless of their usefulness. However, such argument is debatable. Therefore, I presented pragmatic rationality as the procedural guide which is iterative, contextual and situational.

Moreover, in contemporary discourse, sustainability has been advanced as a solution to various environmental challenges. Sustainability is a crucial element in addressing environmental concerns, yet it frequently becomes mired in the traps of technological fixes and unrecognized anthropocentrism. Therefore, the notion of sustainability has to follow the method of pragmatism. Because, the very nature of environmental problem is evolving and complex, therefore sustainability as the solution should be contingent not as the foundational principle. Rorty's concept of *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* enables a more in-depth examination of the moral, political, cultural, spiritual and religious aspects of sustainability. This examination looks at the interactions between humans and other creatures, as well as the rest of nature, which is ever-evolving. Accordingly, Rorty's concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* offer

valuable insights for developing a more flexible, adaptive, and inclusive approach to sustainability. By recognizing the contingent nature of our beliefs, adopting an ironic stance to avoid dogmatism, and fostering solidarity within communities, it is possible to develop sustainable practices that are better suited to the complex and ever-changing challenges of the modern world. This pragmatic approach encourages continuous learning and adaptation, ensuring that sustainability remains relevant and effective in the face of new and unforeseen environmental challenges. As the global environment continues to change, embracing the uncertainty and contingency of our situation is crucial for developing sustainable practices that are resilient and responsive to the needs of communities. Rorty's philosophy, with its emphasis on flexibility, pluralism, and community, provides a useful framework for navigating the complexities of sustainability in an unpredictable world.

In a nutshell, this dissertation proposes the utilization of a pragmatic rationality that is procedural, incorporating Rorty's concepts of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* to sustainability, thereby advocating for environmental pragmatism as a useful framework within the context of contemporary environmental ethics.

## References

- Biesenthal, C. (2014). Pragmatism . In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action* (pp. 647–650).
- Botzler, R. G., & Armstrong, S. J. (1998). *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill Companies
- Brennan, A. (1992). Moral Pluralism and Environment . *Environmental Values*, 1(1), 15–33.
- Brennan, A., & Lo, Y.-S. (2002). Environmental Ethics . In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- Brundtland, G. H. (1987). *Our Common Future: Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development* . Oxford University Press.
- Callanan, L. P. (2010). Intrinsic Value for the Environmental Pragmatist. *Res Cogitans*, 1(1), 132–142.
- Callicot, J. B. (1984). Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics. *American Philosophical Quarterly Non-Anthropocentric Value Theory and Environmental Ethics*,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 21(4): 299-309., 21(4), 299–309.
- Callicot, J. B. (1997). The Challenge of a World Environmental Ethic. *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy*, 18(1), 65–79.
- Callicot, J. B., & Nelson, M. P. (2004). *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study*. Prentice Hall.
- Callicott, J. B., & Frodeman, R. (2009). Introduction. In J. B. Callicott & R. Robert Frodeman (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy* (pp. xv–xxv). Gale Cengage Learning.

- Campos, A. S., & Vaz, S. G. (2021). Justificatory Moral Pluralism: A Novel Form of Environmental Pragmatism. *Environmental Values*, 30(6), 737–758.
- Chatterjee, R. (2017). In Defence of Environmental Pragmatism. *International Journal of Latest Research in Humanities and Social Science (IJLRHSS)*, 1(1), 32–41.
- Ceballos, G., & Ehrlich, P. R. (2023). Mutilation of the tree of life via mass extinction of animal genera. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 120(39).  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2306987120>
- Christine, E. G., & James, E. H. (2010). *Boundaries: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics*. Georgetown University Press.
- Cooper, J. M. (1998). Life and sources. Socrates (469–399 BC). In *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Taylor and Francis.
- Descartes, R. (2000). *Philosophical essays and correspondence* (R. Ariew, Ed. & Trans.). Hackett Publishing Company.
- Desjardins, J. R. (2013). *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*. (5th ed.). Wadsworth.
- Devall, B., & Sessions, G. (1998). The Land Ethic. In D. van DeVeer & C. Pierce (Eds.), *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book. Philosophy, Ecology, Economics* (2nd ed., pp. 221–226). Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Dewey, J. (1920). *Reconstruction in Philosophy*. Henry and Holt Company.
- Dobson, A. (2016). *Environmental Politics: A very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

- Donner, W. (2002). Callicott on Intrinsic Value and Moral Standing in Environmental Ethics. In W. Ouderkirk & J. Hill (Eds.), *Land, value, community : Callicott and environmental philosophy* (pp. 99–105). State University of New York Press.
- Eckersley, R. (2001). Politics. In D. Jamieson (Ed.), *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* (pp. 316–330). Blackwell Publishers.
- Edelglass, W. (2006). Moral Pluralism, Skillful Means, and Environmental Ethics. *Environmental Philosophy*, 3(2), 8–16.
- Evans, J. C. (2005). *With Respect for Nature: Living as Part of the Natural World*. State University of New York Press.
- Fesmire, S. (2022). Environmental Pragmatism. In *International Encyclopedia of Ethics*. Wiley.
- Frodeman, R., Jamieson, D., Callicott, J. B., Gardiner, S. M., Gruen, L., Klaver, I. J., Hargrove, E., Minter, B. A., Norton, B., Palmer, C., Rolston, H., Rozzi, R., Sterba, J. P., Throop, W. M., & Davion, V. (2007). Commentary on the Future of Environmental Philosophy. In *Fall* (Vol. 12, Issue 2). <https://about.jstor.org/terms>
- Godfrey-Smith, P. (2015). Pragmatism: Philosophical Aspects. In J. Wright (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed., pp. 803–807). Elsevier.
- Gudorf, E. C and Hutchinson, E. J. (2010) *Boundaries: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
- Gunn, A. S. (2007). Environmental Ethics in a New Zealand Context. *New Zealand Journal of Forestry*, 51(4), 7–12.
- Hargrove, E. C. (1989). *Foundations of Environmental Ethics*. Painter Printing Company.

- Hickman, L. A. (2004). John Dewey, 1859–1952. In A. T. Marsoobian & J. Ryder (Eds.), *The Blackwell Guide to American Philosophy* (pp. 155–173). Blackwell Publishing.
- Holland, A. (2001). Sustainability. In D. Jamieson (Ed.), *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy* (pp. 390–401). Blackwell Publishers.
- Hourdequin, M. (2015). *Environmental Ethics: From Theory to Practice*. Bloomsbury.
- Hull, R. B. (2007). Environmental Pluralism . In *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics and Philosophy*.
- James, W. (1907). *Pragmatism*. Global Grey.
- Jamieson, D. (1998). Sustainability and beyond. *Ecological Economics*, 24(2–3), 183–192.  
[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009\(97\)00142-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009(97)00142-0)
- Jamieson, D. (2008). *Ethics and the Environment: An Introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kareiva, P. (2014). New Conservation: Setting the Record Straight and Finding Common Ground. *Conservation Biology*, 28(3), 634–636. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cobi.12295>
- Katz, E. (1997). *Nature as Subject: Human Obligation and Natural Community*. Rowman & Littlefield.
- Katz, E., & Light, A. (1996). *Environmental pragmatism*.
- Kelbessa, W. (2005). *Discussion Paper: The Utility of Ethical Dialogue for Marginalized Voices in Africa*.
- Kelbessa, W. (2011). *Indigenous and Modern Environmental Ethics: A Study of the Indigenous Oromo Environmental Ethic and Modern Issues of Environment and Development, Ethiopian Philosophical Studies, I* . CRVP.
- Kelly, C. (2014a). Value Monism, Richness, And Environmental Ethics. *Les Ateliers de l'éthique / The Ethics Forum*, 9(2), 110–129.

- Kelly, C. (2014b). Value Monism, Richness, and Environmental Ethics . *Les Ateliers de l'éthique / The Ethics Forum*, 9(2), 110–129.
- Kopnina, H., & Shoreman-Ouimet, E. (2015). Introduction: The emergence and development of sustainability. In H. Kopnina & E. Shoreman-Ouimet (Eds.), *Sustainability: Key Issues* (pp. 3–24). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203109496>
- Kremer, A. (2018). The Moral Relationship of the Human and Non-Human Animals in Light of Ethology. *From Bioethics to Environmental Ethics*, 28–35.
- Lee, W. L. (2022). *This is Environmental Ethics: An Introduction* (S. D. Hale, Ed.). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Leopold, A. (1998). The Land Ethic. In D. van DeVeer & C. Pierce (Eds.), *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book. Philosophy, Ecology, Economics* (2nd ed., pp. 175–197). Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Light, A. (2005). *Ecological Citizenship: The Democratic Promise of Restoration*,” MA Thesis, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst. University of Massachusetts, Amherst.
- Light, A., & Katz, E. (1996). Introduction: Environmental Pragmatism and Environmental Ethics as Contested Terrain. In Andrew Light & Eric Katz (Eds.), *Environmental Pragmatism* (pp. 1–20). Routledge.
- Loman, O. (2020). A Problem for Environmental Pragmatism: Value Pluralism and the Sustainability Principle. *Contemporary Pragmatism* 17 (2020) 286-310, 17, 286–310.
- Martin, M. W. (2007). *Albert Schweitzer's Reverence for Life: Ethical Idealism and Self-Realization*. Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Mazzotta, M. J., & Kline, J. (1995). Environmental Philosophy and the Concept of Nonuse Value. *Land Economics*, 71(2), 244–249.

- McShane, K. (2009). Environmental Ethics: An Overview. *Philosophy Compass*, 4(3), 407–420.
- Miller, Ed. L., & Jensen, J. (2009). *Questions that matter : an invitation to philosophy* (6th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Minteer, B. A. (2009). *Nature in Common?: Environmental Ethics and the Contested Foundations of Environmental Policy*. Temple University Press.
- Næss, A. (1973). The Shallow and the Deep, Long-range Ecology Movement. A summary. *Inquiry*, 16(1), 95–100.
- Norton, B. G. (1984). Environmental Ethics and Weak Anthropocentrism. *Environmental Ethics*, 6(2), 131–148.
- Norton, B. G. (1991). *Toward Unity among Environmentalists*. Oxford University Press.
- Norton, B. G. (1999). Adaptive Management, and Sustainability. *Environmental Values*, 8(4), 451–466.
- Norton, B. G. (2005). *Sustainability: a philosophy of adaptive ecosystem management*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Norton, B. G. (2015). *Sustainable values, sustainable change: a guide to environmental decision making*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Norton, B. G. (2016). Sustainability as the Multigenerational Public Interest. In S. M. Gardiner & A. Thompson (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental Ethics* (Vol. 1, pp. 355–368). Oxford University Press.
- Norton, B. G., & Steinemann, A. C. (2001). Environmental Values and Adaptive Management. *Environmental Values*, 10(4), 473–506.
- O’Neill, J., Holland, A., & Light, A. (2008). *Environmental Values*. Routledge.

- Palmer, C. (2002). An overview of Environmental Ethics. In A. Andrew Light & H. Rolston (Eds.), *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology* (pp. 15–37). Blackwell.
- Parker, K. A. (1996). Pragmatism and Environmental Thought. In A. Light & E. Katz (Eds.), *Environmental Pragmatism* (pp. 21–37). Routledge.
- Pearson, C. H. (2014). Does Environmental Pragmatism Shirk Philosophical Duty? *Environmental Values*, 23(3), 335–352. <https://doi.org/10.3197/096327114X13947900181879>
- Plumwood, V. (2002). *Environmental Culture: The ecological crisis of reason*. Routledge.
- Regan, T. (1983). *The Case for Animal Rights*. University of California Press.
- Reitan, E. (1998). Pragmatism, Environmental World Views, and Sustainability. *Electronic Green Journal*, 1(9), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.5070/G31910326>
- Rolston, H. I. (2003). Environmental Ethics. In N. Bunnin & E. P. Tsui-James (Eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Philosophy* (2nd ed., pp. 517–530). Blackwell Publishing.
- Rolston, H. I. (2012). *A New Environmental Ethics. The Next Millennium for life on Earth*. Routledge.
- Rolston, H. (2018). OBSOLETE: Endangered Species & Biodiversity. In *Reference Module in Earth Systems and Environmental Sciences* (pp. 199–203). Elsevier. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-409548-9.10450-6>
- Rorty, R. (1989). *Contingency, irony, and solidarity*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, R. (1992). A Pragmatist View of Rationality and Cultural Difference. *Philosophy East and West*, 42(4), 581–596.
- Rorty, R. (1999). *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Penguin Group.

- Ryder, J. (2004). Early American Philosophy. In A. T. Marsoobian & J. Ryder (Eds.), *The Blackwell guide to American philosophy* (pp. 3–22). Blackwell Publishing.
- Salisbury, J. E. (2013). Do Animals Go to Heaven? Medieval Philosophers Contemplate Heavenly Human Exceptionalism. *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts*, *1*(1), 79–86. <https://doi.org/10.30958/ajha.1-1-7>
- Samuelsson, L. (2010). Environmental pragmatism and environmental philosophy: a bad marriage! *Environmental Ethics*, *32*(4): 405-415, *32*(4), 405–415.
- Schweitzer, A. (2008). *Philosophy of Civilization. Translated by C. T. Campion* (Boston). Action Press.
- Singer, P. (2002). *Animal Liberation*. Harper Collins.
- Taylor, P. W. (1986). *Respect for Nature: A Theory of Environmental Ethics* (25th ed.). University Press.
- Thayer, H. S. (1981). *Meaning and action: A Critical History of Pragmatism*. Hackett Publishing Company.
- Tennessee Valley Auth. v. Hill (1978).
- Torelli, R. (2021). Sustainability, responsibility and ethics: different concepts for a single path. *Social Responsibility Journal*, *17*(5), 719–739. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SRJ-03-2020-0081>
- UNEP. (1972). *United Nations Conference on the Human Environment*.
- Venkataraman, P., & Morang, D. (2015). Moral Pluralism in Environmental Ethics . *Asian Conference on Ethics, Religion and Philosophy*, 1–7.
- Voinov, C. A. (2020). *Environmental Ethics: A comparative analysis of bio- and eco-ethics*. SUM Centre for Development and the Environment, University of Oslo .
- Weston, A. (1992). Before Environmental Ethics. *Philosophy Documentation Center*, *14*(4), 321–338.
- White, L. (1967). The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis. *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, *155*(3757), 1203–1207.

Williams, C. D. (2019). *Environmental Philosophy: From Theory to Practice*. .