

In Defence of Environmental Pragmatism

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Introduction:

Monist and Pluralist Claim With Regard To Environmental Ethics

Since the early development of environmental ethics emerged in 1970s, it has encountered several meta-ethical debates regarding certain diametrical conceptual issues like, intrinsic or inherent value *versus* extrinsic or instrumental value, anthropocentrism or subject centrism¹ *versus* biocentrism or non-anthropocentrism, monism *versus* pluralism, and so forth.

Consequently, environmental ethics produces a series of moral theories which according to many, is nothing but an attempt to extend ethics beyond the traditional humanistic domain in order to bestow moral consideration to the non-human world. On the other hand, there is an inclination to restrict this plurality of viewpoints by forwarding arguments that only a narrow set of theoretical approaches could possibly generate or evolve into an adequate and complete or in fact, sufficing environmental ethics. Some of these theorists' argue that a coherent system of environmental ethics must embrace a restricted set of properties such as non-anthropocentrism, holism, moral monism and perhaps, a commitment to some form of intrinsic value. The debate has evolved over the question of 'whether preservation of the environment should be grounded on a monistic foundation or whether a coherent ethical view of it can tolerate pluralism'.

The monists² in environmental ethics argue that, a single moral philosophy or value theory is necessary and sufficient to ground our extended duties and obligations towards the environment. They claim that there can be a single valid and correct moral theory, since they are skeptical about any kind of alternative positions. This indicates that one ethical framework would have to cover the range of diverse objects of moral concern included under holism and all human beings, other animals, living organisms, ecosystems, species, and perhaps even Earth itself is included within the domain. Such a view would have the advantage of generating a distinct methodology for resolving disputes over conflicting issues and among these objects which is itself quite problematic, since an environmental ethic has a mandate covering many more competing claims for moral consideration than traditional ethic. Monists would reject the philosophical basis of scheme of environmental value that differs from the one they were defending and would reject alternative schemes of value even if it justifies the same policy and for certain different reasons.

However, the pluralists³ counter such an argument. According to them, it cannot be the case that we could have only one ethical theory because the multitude of contexts in which we find ourselves in different kinds of ethical relationships with both humans and nature demands a plurality of approaches for fulfilling our moral obligations. The pluralists argue that no single ethical theory could be made attractive to a good number of people to generate the support for meaningful environmental change. They accept the possibility of more than one theory, which can be possible and justified. In the recent years, owing to the wide-ranging disagreements and diversity in environmental policies and perspectives, the debate concerning moral pluralism has intensified among environmental philosophers. It gives priority to grounding environmental values in some form of non-anthropocentrism as long as these alternatives could be used to justify the same policy ends.

Starting from the mid 1990s, some environmental philosophers give attention to a more pragmatic approach towards the environmental issues, which embraces moral pluralism.⁴ 'Environmental pragmatism' was

¹Here it indicates human centeredness. Since anthropocentrism gives priority only to human being, hence, anthropocentrism has been termed as subject-centrism in this case.

²Monists are those philosophers who believe that a variety of existing things can be explained in terms of a single reality or substance.

³Pluralists are those philosophers who believe in the doctrine of multiplicity, often used in opposition to monism and dualism.

⁴Joseph R. Des Jardins, 2001, *Environmental Ethics: An Introduction to Environmental Philosophy*, Belmont: Wadsworth Thompson Learning, pp. 263-66.

outlined elaborately by Andrew Light in 1990s. The pragmatists possess different views regarding their field of thought. For, some of them seem to endorse a newer and general methodological plane, rather than applying the classical pragmatist analysis, all over. However, they will try to either shove off or discard the concept of intrinsic value, some with a refutation of it and some with a pragmatic outlook. The concept of environmental pragmatism thus, is a practical re-construction or re-orientation of classico-traditional and theoretical approach to environmental philosophy. Though the concept of environmental pragmatism is still a philosophical enterprise, yet it envisages a shift of focus from the theoretical discussion about the intrinsic value towards environmental practice and policy making.

The paper primarily attempts to defend the position of environmental pragmatism. In this connection, a brief critique of the monistic approach to environmental philosophy will be attempted. And, in the process, the paper also intends to show the significance of the claims made by the environmental pragmatists in the broader discourse of environmental philosophy and environmental practice.

Pragmatic Turn in Environmental Philosophy

‘Pragmatism’ here refers to a school of philosophical thought – American pragmatism, developed by philosophers such as William James and John Dewey in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,⁵ and not to that short sighted, allegedly ‘practical minded’ attitude towards the world that is a major obstacle to environmentally responsible behaviour in our time.

Pragmatism is one of the most distinctive contributions of American thought to philosophy, which emerged as a movement in the early part of twentieth century. Pragmatism as a method of philosophy was first propounded by Charles Sanders Peirce in 1878.⁶ Peirce defined pragmatism as a way for attaining clarity of ideas within the norms of continuing self-correcting enquiry directed towards truth, whereas James indicates philosophy to be the means for practical life. Deweyan pragmatism represents a brand of philosophy devoted to the articulation of new ways of practical thinking that might effectively address specific social problems. For, Dewey envisages,

“Change in patterns of belief, desire, and purpose lagged behind the modification of the external conditions, under which men associate.”⁷

He emphasizes upon the democratization of public opinion and thought, in particular.

Pragmatism as a constructive philosophical approach is strictly anti-foundationalistic, since it rejects foundationalist epistemology. For, the pragmatists believe that our knowledge is not built upon our beliefs and ideas or indubitable ‘given upon’, since there can be no absolute indubitable beliefs. Again, philosophical pragmatism is skeptical of monistic theories in both epistemology and ethics. According to the monists, there can be only one valid or correct entity, as distinguished from pluralists. Instead, pragmatism focuses on context dependent practical accounts of both truth and value.⁸ According to the pragmatists, truth is not an intrinsic property of a proposition. It is an acquired or extrinsic property of a proposition which is generated through its effectiveness in actual life. Truth can be verified or justified with the help of direct experiment, observation or simple perception. Although, pragmatism often rest upon an open declaration of war against rationalism, yet it is no longer blind in case of sorting out the value of thought while evaluating a concept, in the empirical interpretation of a matter. For, experience can at any time expose our settled beliefs as false or may reveal confusion present in our concept. So, all values emerge in experience. That is why, pragmatism is sometimes described as ‘radical empiricism’.⁹

⁵See for instance, John Dewey, 1920, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, New York: Henry Holt and Company; William James, 1907, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking*, Queen Street: Watchmaker Publishing.

⁶See for instance, Charles Sanders Peirce, 1982, “Introduction”, in Horace Standish Thayer, ed., *Pragmatism: The Classic Writings*, Indiana: Hackett Publishing Company, p.56.

⁷John Dewey, 1998, “Renascent Liberalism” in Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, eds., *The Essential Dewey: Pragmatism, Education, Democracy*, Indiana: Indiana University Press, p. 324.

⁸Joseph R. Des Jardins, op. cit., p. 267.

⁹See, William James, 1968, “Radical Empiricism”, in A. J. Ayer, ed., *The Origins of Pragmatism: Studies in the Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce, and William James*, London: Mac Millan and Co. Ltd.

What makes this a radical form of empiricism is not the exclusion of anything, which is not accessible to our experience but rather refusal to differentiate between the objects of experience and its parts. It is common ground among empiricists that the only things of which we can have any knowledge are within the grasp of our experience, in the sense that some possible observation would count as perceptual evidence of their existence. Not all empiricists, however, would go so far as to require that every such object be definable in terms, which are drawn from our experience, in the sense, which James and other pragmatists espouse.

Pragmatism rejects the dualistic 'spectator theory' of knowledge, which includes the knower and the known for example, wherein a set of *apriori* truth is there and there is an agent or spectator. According to the monists, body and mind are same attributes of an object. Thus pragmatism as only a theory of truth recognizes the philosophical implication of evolutionary theory, for, the characteristics and activities of an organism are always understood in light of the organisms' relation to its' environment. The basic level of pragmatism is that the rightness of an action is mainly system and context dependent. Pragmatism maintains that no set of ethical concepts can be the absolute foundation for evaluating the rightness of our actions, since it rejects foundationalism. Pragmatism promotes moral pluralism which is a better alternative to both relativism and moral absolutism.¹⁰

Thus pragmatism emphasizes action and values of experience, that, society should embrace the view that holds the world to be full of experience and in that experience is a world of diversity, change and pluralism. Pragmatism also supports democratic values such as tolerance and respect for diverse opinions and the commitment to engaging in free and open procedures for deciding rather than seeking the single "true decision".¹¹

A central feature of environmental ethics has been the ascription of intrinsic or inherent value to nature. This is how environmental ethics differs from other forms of ethics or human to human ethics. But, this feature of environmental philosophizing has also been a major issue of dispute among environmental ethicists. There were several debates whether intrinsic value is to be ascribed to environmental ethics or not.

According to pragmatist philosopher Anthony Weston, at the deepest level, non-anthropocentric environmental ethics may simply be impossible within the inherited framework of intrinsic value.¹² Here, Weston seems to suggest that a true pragmatic environmental ethics needs to be non-anthropocentric. However, the critics of that assumption have already reacted against the presumed usefulness of intrinsic value in the sphere of environmental ethics. In this context, G.E. Moore argues that some notion of 'valuable for its own sake' or 'valuable in itself' is required simply to understand the notion of 'valuable for the sake of something else',¹³ the everyday notion of instrumental value which we usually take for granted. Hence, means and ends are related, since an end seems to be implicated in the very concept of a means.

Philosophical pragmatism does not offer a theory of values, which is fundamentally anthropocentric. But it deals with inter-relatedness of our values. Though there is a plurality of values yet, it should not be clubbed¹⁴ together. Moreover, it must be noted that, the pragmatists never ground these values, rather, situate themselves in their supporting contexts, in order to justify their conflicts with others. The environmental pragmatists brought in a radical revision after criticizing the role of environmental ethics in cases of decision making and policy deliberation. For, it intends to ensure law and justice. But, this reconstruction raises serious questions to the traditional preoccupations of this field. For, the latter, *i.e.*, the traditional or mainstream environmental ethicists are not much concerned about public opinion, discussion, debate and criticism of their

¹⁰Kelly A. Parker, 1996, "Pragmatism and Environmental Thought" in Andrew Light and Eric Katz eds., *Environmental Pragmatism*, New York: Routledge Publishers, pp. 21-35.

¹¹Joseph R. Des Jardins, op. cit., p. 267.

¹²Anthony Weston, 1996, "Beyond Intrinsic Value": Pragmatism in Environmental Ethics," in Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds., *Environmental Pragmatism*, New York: Routledge Publishers, p.295.

¹³In his *Principia Ethica*, Moore indicates that to decide what things have intrinsic value, one should consider what things are such that, if they existed themselves, in absolute isolation, we should yet judge their existence to be good. Thus Moore points out that 'good as a means' as equivalent to 'a means to good' where the 'good' the latter case seems to be intrinsic. G.E. Moore, 1903, ed. *Principia Ethica*, New York: Barnes and Noble Publishers, p.187.

¹⁴Here clubbed means being reduced to. In other words, it indicates reductionism.

arguments for respecting the intrinsic value of nature. It seems that the monistic environmental philosophy is designed to avoid such policy deliberation.

Here, it will be appropriate to say a few lines about applied ethics and practical ethics. The former, *i.e.*, applied ethics should not be confused with pragmatism. For, the applied ethicists apply mainstream ethical theories, which embrace monism. On the other hand, practical ethics is aligned with environmental pragmatism. After 1950's environmental philosophers have become more concerned with the real world issues such as, pollution, environmental destruction or crises and the need for environmental justice.¹⁵ Following which some philosophers advocated a more pragmatic approach. Some of these observers also believe that the explicit philosophy of American pragmatists can be useful in contemporary environmental debates. Consequently, the inquiry into the meaning of social arrangements gets definite point and direction, communication, sharing, joint participation is the only actual ways of universalizing the moral law and end.¹⁶

Even though pragmatist philosophers such as Norton, wants to distance himself from value theoretical disputes but he rightly claims that, 'practice is prior to theory in the sense that principle are ultimately generated from practice, not vice-versa,'¹⁷ yet he is vulnerable to theoretical arguments. But the contention is that, however promising a philosophy might be from a practical point of view, if environmental pragmatism is supposed to be a new emerging trend and beginning for environmental philosophy - which environmental pragmatists have proposed- we have to understand their discipline clearly.

We know that ethics has been defined as the normative science of conduct, and conduct is a collective name for voluntary actions. In common speech, we judge many things other than human actions, to be good or bad; we speak for meta-ethical examples of good luck and bad luck. These words 'good' and 'bad' are used ambiguously in ordinary speech. For these values are context dependent or context sensitive issues. A single science may be required to deal with them in all their various meanings and to distinguish these meanings from one another, and such a science is sometimes called axiology or the science of values.¹⁸ Environmental pragmatist like, Andrew Light makes a distinction between philosophical pragmatism and meta-philosophical or methodological pragmatism. The philosophical pragmatism offers a theory of values which is by no means committed to the crude anthropocentrism or indeed to any anthropocentrism at all. It is an effect to apply the fundamental ideas of American pragmatism to environmental philosophy. Philosophical pragmatism is an attempt to generate a new position which engages fully with the already established theories in environmental ethics on their own ground.¹⁹ The latter, *viz.*, meta-philosophical pragmatism, on the other hand, is the effort to articulate arguments that will be morally motivating to both policy makers and general public in order to successfully promote policies which have practical applications to environmental policy.

According to Light, philosophers began working on environmental policies which can be implemented in environmental ethics to organize and shape responsible environmental policies. Light identifies two central tasks for environmental ethics. First one arising from philosophical pragmatism, is traditional philosophical task involving an investigation into the value of nature. Hence the main aim of pragmatism was to rethink philosophy in terms of its relationship to society. The early pragmatists like James and Pierce sought to avoid being pre-occupied with the search for truth and meaning, which were fundamental consensus in traditional philosophical studies.²⁰

During 1960s and 1970s, almost a decade after the death of John Dewey, there has been a growing evidence of environmental degradation owing to destructive environmental practices. Moreover, the traditional moral and metaphysical frameworks seemed to justify these practices. Some philosophers became aware of this and were motivated to overthrow the ongoing practices and replace or in fact, reform the existing system, for 'a

¹⁵Joseph R. Des Jardins, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹⁷Bryan G. Norton, 2003, *Searching for Sustainability: Interdisciplinary Essays in the Philosophy of Conservation Biology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 50.

¹⁸William Lillie, 1966, *An Introduction to Ethics*, New Delhi: Allied Publishers Private Limited, pp. 1-3.

¹⁹Andrew Light, 1996, "Environmental Pragmatism as Philosophy or Metaphilosophy? On the Weston – Katz Debate," in *Environmental Pragmatism*, Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds., New York: Routledge Publishers, pp. 330-331.

²⁰See for instance, A. J. Ayer, *op. cit.*

new, an environmental ethic.’²¹ Some new variety of theories were proposed and debated that recognize not just the value and moral standing of human beings, but also of animals, non-sentient natural beings, and even ecosystems and the earth itself.

Thus, it became evident that a useful environmental philosophical mission would avoid fruitless abstraction to some moral dilemmas. Since, a growing number of environmental ethicists have become dissatisfied with the limits of monistic theory, as atypical operating mode in the field of environmental ethics. This growing awareness led many philosophers to develop a pragmatic agenda for environmental ethics by proffering approaches which in turn will shift the focus of investigation to a more practical decision making process about the multiple values at play in specific matters of environmental policy. In this connection, philosophers such as Weston, Light and Norton made significant contributions to the surging tides to bring about a pragmatic turn in environmental ethics.²²

Pragmatic environmental ethics seeks to reform and solve environmental problems through policy deliberation and public decision making. But the reconstructions result into fundamental challenges to the traditional preoccupations of the field. But, many scholars are convinced that a pragmatic approach to the role of environmental ethics in policy making holds great promise for directing the environmentalist project in such a manner, that it is also uniquely capable of bringing the insights of environmental ethics into various natural resource management settings. A cooperative intelligence provides better ethical understanding and is an effective and democratic means for reconstructing the moral and political community. For, environmental pragmatism also reflects the shape of public thinking about human-nature relationships.

It becomes evident that environmental pragmatism arose as a response among few intellectuals who visualized the shortcomings of monism or monistic theory, which failed to provide proper solution in a particular situation. Hence, the crux of environmental pragmatism lies in the reconstruction and reformation of the overwhelming contemporary environmental problems. But only finding solutions does not solve intellectual puzzles, on the contrary it paves way towards environmental policies which arise as a response to it. For the theoretical virtues like consistency is secondary to practical applicability. Since, practicality is more efficient and promising than any theory or theoretical enterprise. But, it must be noted that, environmental pragmatism has been from the very beginning, been a metatheoretical enterprise with quite close relation to activism and reformation, which makes it different from other branches of philosophy.

Pragmatist Critique of Monistic Approach to Environmental Ethics

The debate between monists and pluralists has been particularly pertinent in environmental ethics. As discussed earlier, moral pluralism in the context of environmental ethics developed by Light, Norton, Weston and others, promotes an environmental philosophy that can be applied to practical environmental policies.

Application of the unified monistic viewpoint for developing a universal, absolute moral theory in all cases seems to be reductionistic. Since, there is multiple value system which is to be registered under a single theory, so that the solution to the moral quandaries gets generated through a single moral theory. This in turn has crippled environmental ethics in merely an irreconcilable dilemma. As, moral monism rejects the provision of any kind of alternatives hence, fails to solve environmental moral dilemma arising out of complex practical situations.

The monistic environmental ethics has been accused for several reasons. For, since the birth of moral monism, the contribution of environmental ethics towards environmental policy making is almost nil. Moreover, the environmental ethicists failed to offer useful practical advice by offering clear management directives regarding difficult and controversial problems in environmental planning, management and administration.

Another, very inevitable and practical effect of the monistic assumption is that the range of the topics discussed in the environmental ethics has been not only narrow but also limited. Consequently, monistic approach provides an often unhelpful role for environmental ethicists while making environmental policy debates. It is clear that, moral monism and applied philosophy are naturally complementary. Similarly, pragmatism is likewise complementary to practical ethics.

Pluralism is less rigid than monism, since, unlike monism it does not accept a single theory or principle but it allows us to access other, possibly conflicting theories and frameworks. For example, one may take up a utilitarian stance while dealing with intrinsic rights of animals or if resolving a quandary with regard to the ecosystem. One may accept a bio-centric viewpoint also. Unlike monism, pluralism does not give us one straight

²¹Richard Sylvan (Routley), 2003, “Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?” in *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, eds., Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, p. 47.

²²Anthony Weston, op. cit., p. 307.

forward reason for action, there can be several explanations. This is a positive idea. It helps us to select the best available option from among several other multitudes of options. By offering and considering a variety of views we are more acquainted to multiple views that are held by people, and subsequently we may appeal to them, more than producing a single view that is very different to their own. The environmental pragmatists emphasize on gaining consensus for action and representing the plurality of relationship and values that exists between the world and its inhabitants.

However environmental pragmatism has been criticized by the traditional philosophers to be accepted as an environmental philosophical theory. Hence, they need to get back towards a unified monistic theory. Such interpretation and criticism of pluralism is based upon Stone's extreme form of pluralism.²³ It enables an individual to jump between different theories in different situations. A situation that Callicott claims is relativistic and could result in "moral promiscuity".²⁴ Not all pluralism makes such demands, more moderate interpretations, such as Light's view have more consistency, restricting an individual to one theory, to one type of relationship or situation. For example, if a problem occurs in the ecosystem or the whole environment, we may be best to use the Land Ethic.²⁵

Environmental pragmatist like Light criticize the monistic approach that a single scheme of valuation is required to anchor our various duties and obligations in an environmental ethic. Because, this would mean that one ethical framework would have to cover the range of diverse objects of moral concern included under a complete environmental ethics: other humans, animals, living organisms, ecosystem, species and perhaps even Earth itself.²⁶ Again, Light asserts that a fair description of the work of the pragmatist philosopher would be to investigate the problems of interest to their community. Then, it articulates the policy recommendations of that community on these problems to those outside of their community i.e. to the public at large. A pluralist project is in attempting to articulate the considered interests of the environmental community is as broad a set of moral appeals as is possible.²⁷

A pragmatic environmental ethic would not rest with a mere description of or a series of debates on the value of nature. A public environmental ethical theory would further question, whether the non-anthropocentric description of the value of nature, which dominates the philosophical work of most environmental ethicists today, is likely to succeed in motivating most people to change their moral attitude about nature; taking into account the overwhelming ethical anthropocentrism of most humans. Any pragmatic environmental theory based on the pluralist principle recognize that, there are not only many ways to appreciate the natural world but also many ways to express that appreciation.

However, while considering what to do about an invasive species that is degrading an ecosystem, an eco-centric ethics that is not as attentive to the suffering and needs of individual animals might be the most prudent to follow. For, they follow different moral obligations derived from different principles for these distinct entities. Hence, the pluralist and the pragmatists seek agreement on practical policies that can be derived from a variety of moral principles. Environmental pragmatism places great emphasis on creating consensus and ensuring action. This is demanded by dire environmental situation.

The pragmatists also criticize monism for, it emphasizes upon theoretical consistency over practical implementation. The environmental pragmatists focus upon the need to change the agenda of environmental ethics, to do this we have to accept that there are already many things which could be implemented rather than spending precious time arguing over the fact. In other words, we need to discard some questions which are not relevant to practical implementation rather than spending a lot of time. According to the pragmatists, some of

²³The extreme pluralist adopts different ethical theories for different contexts, and/or for different general subjects, of application. See Peter S. Wenz, 2003, "Minimal, Moderate, and Extreme Moral Pluralism", in Andrew Light and Holmes Rolston III, eds., *Environmental Ethics: An Anthology*, London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., p. 222.

²⁴J. Baird Callicott, op. cit., p.13.

²⁵See, Aldo Leopold, 1966, *A Sand County Almanac: With Other Essays on Conservation from Round River*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁶Andrew Light, 2010, "Methodological Pragmatism, Pluralism and Environmental Ethics", in *Environmental Ethics: The Big Question*, David R. Keller, ed., London: Blackwell Publishers, p. 321.

²⁷Ibid., p. 322.

these questions include, ‘What is the intrinsic value of species that fuels a duty to insure their diversity?’, ‘What is the ontological relationship between humans and non-human animals?’²⁸

According to Light, the environmental philosophers operate in two separate spheres, the private and the public. In the private sphere, these types of questions are raised and are criticized and solved, wherein there is a scope for personal preference. But the public sphere is rather dynamic where there is a space for action or in fact, activism, in order to stand united. Thus, the pragmatists pave the way for more theories that are environmentally friendly which supports action. It gives space to people’s values in a positive way.

Monism on the other hand, projects conflicting views and brings in alienation among the people in the public sphere by criticizing theories that people may envisage as a good reason for action. What is important is achieving the ends rather than the means that we use to get there. For the pragmatists, the monistic approach is wrong since they tried to concentrate only on the importance of the truth of the framework, but doing so, may prevent them from a positive action. Since, they may reject a purposeful theory, even if it can yield a positive or good result.

There are two important dimensions of environmental pragmatism. These are ‘purposefulness’ and ‘usefulness’ which have been demonstrated by Robert Elliot. In the Kakadu National Park in Australia certain rare species of endangered animals, like pig-nosed turtle and hooded parrot are under threat. But, the habitat is to be preserved, but for two reasons.²⁹ The anthropocentrists may suggest that these rare species are to be saved, since, it brings a lot of revenue and we people enjoy the aesthetic beauty and witness such rare animals. The other group of non-anthropocentrists would say that these endangered species are to be protected, for, they have an intrinsic worth and have a right to live also.

Thus, these two groups want to achieve the same goal that is protecting the endangered species but possesses different perspectives. This is not a problem for the environmental pragmatists because as long as both groups want to achieve the same things *viz.* saving these animals, then it does not matter if they do it for different reasons. This would not be acceptable to the monists, who cannot accept disagreement. They would want to return to debate and establish which of the two groups would be saving these animals for the right reason. For the environmental pragmatists, this is simply not necessary and by the time that the monists have come up with an answer, if they ever can, it may be too late for these endangered animals.

Following an environmental pragmatist’s prescribed tolerance,³⁰ an animal rights supporter may say that their personal theory may not be the best one suited to the situation. An environmental pragmatist would now add this situation to our framework that prevents the position falling into relativism. Whenever there is a conflict between reducing the number of such an invasive, endangered species and allowing them their freedom we will appeal to a bio-centric theory rather than one of intrinsic rights.

The theoretical, conservative, narrow, unified, rigid system of monism seems to be incoherent. The shortsightedness of monistic approach that emphasizes on theoretical consistency and a unified value has created a large vacuum, before it was enriched by the emergence of environmental pragmatism. Since, any form of rigid monistic prescriptivism will lead us to the risk of *a priori* which will in turn exclude alternative ethical sentiments, jeopardizing a democratic tolerance of public ethical pluralism. It may undermine the multiple values of environmental decision making process. For, there is a diversity of moral positions regarding non-human nature which should be addressed theoretically and hence provided with a procedural framework for incorporating a range of ethical concerns in policy making. This gets actualized through the methods which we believe to be most effectively provided by a pluralistic and pragmatic approach towards environmental values and their implementation in policy, management and administration.

Conclusion

Environmental pragmatism possesses conceptual and practical validity which encourages environmental protection and maintenance of a better ecological balance, ensuring sustenance of a proper and

²⁸Andrew Light, 1996, “Compatibilism in Political Ecology”, in *Environmental Pragmatism*, Andrew Light and Eric Katz, eds., London: Routledge Publishers, p. 174.

²⁹Robert Elliot, 2003, “Environmental Ethics”, in *A Companion to Ethics*, Peter Singer, ed., London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., pp.284-285.

³⁰This is the tolerance of each other’s theories driven by the desire to come to a consensus extends to one side eventually accepting that their theory may not be the best one suited to this situation.

healthy biotic integrity. For it investigates into the social distribution of environmental benefits and burdens for the proper maintenance of our Mother Nature.

Environmental pragmatism is an effort to apply pragmatic notions to the understanding of environmental problems, for which the questions of justice is of utmost importance. Hence, ascription of value or respect for nature, though not original, yet it must be inculcated. Thus, proper grounding of non-human beings would have been difficult unless there is a proper policy for guiding and regulating the human and non-human relationship. This brings to the focus of the importance of environmental justice. One must consider that, natural resource management must be pluralistic in philosophy, pragmatic in process and evolutionary or adaptive in nature. Moreover, the political system gives explicit recognition and definition to pragmatism in natural resource management also needs to be appreciated. Since, natural systems are not static even when undisturbed by humans; neither are social and economic systems. Thus, it may be suggested that, there is no single environmental ethic or philosophical system existing, nor is one likely to be discovered that will guide natural resource and environmental policy. Several philosophical approaches help illuminate and bring into the open, the values and choice which are inherent in such policy. For example, natural resource policy is necessarily pluralistic.

However, one of the prominent criticism against pragmatism has been that it lacks universal intellectual appeal. For, some will assert that it is too modest as a theory in matter of environmental debate.³¹ Since, only bold theories make their mark in the world. It will obviously make its place if it brings in spiritual upliftment or it becomes an intellectual entertainer. So, accordingly, pragmatist theory, which is a modest theory of the middle way, will often get rejected. Some are troubled by its non-dogmatic approach to 'truth' and 'ethics' and its perceived insensitivity to the importance of metaphysical issues. Because of its conscious focus on experiential learning and experimentation, as well as its tendency towards a pluralistic, tentative notion of 'truth', pragmatism alone may often seem unlikely to provide right answers to a good many disputed environmental questions.

Rorty in his *Consequence of Pragmatism*,³² mentions that traditional pragmatism was criticized on one hand by the Platonists and transcendentalists, who argued that there was more to the notion of 'truth' than pragmatists accepted and on the other hand, by empiricists and positivists, who argued that the results of natural science 'facts about how spatio-temporal things worked' - was all the 'truth' there was. According to Rorty, most recently, 'neo-pragmatism' has been dismissed as: (1) at odds with modern notions of language; (2) insensitive to the importance of traditional problems of ethics, metaphysics and epistemology; and/or (3) tending to the removal of philosophy, as an autonomous discipline from Western intellectual culture. However, though philosophical pragmatists have attempted to defend pragmatic thought against each of these charges, yet, it lacks in universally accepted philosophical foundations.

Daniel A. Farber in his *Eco-Pragmatism*,³³ argued that pragmatism has the potential to furnish a useful set of intellectual tools for analyzing confused and hazardous environmental issues. Pragmatism stresses upon concrete facts, flexibility, experimentation and practical, workable solution to the realworld problems, combined with its clear preference for democratic consensus-building and social justice, seems to provide an intellectual innovative environmental decision making at all levels. Thus, pragmatic thought has much to add not only to contemporary discourse in environmental philosophy but also in regards to laws and policies.

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³¹A view expressed by scholars such as Joel A. Mintz.

³²See, Richard Rorty, 1982, *Consequence of Pragmatism*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota.

³³Daniel A. Farber, 1999, *Eco-Pragmatism: Making Sensible Environmental Decisions in an Uncertain World*, London: The University of Chicago Press.

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