ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM AS A SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT**:** By countering Lars Samuelsson's concept of environmental pragmatism, this paper presents environmental pragmatism as a genuine environmental philosophy. Samuelsson argues that the position of environmental pragmatists, which has led environmental philosophers away from theoretical debates, is not a proper philosophical debate at all. However, we are living amidst an ecological crisis. The problems we are facing are practical, not theoretical. Hence, practical solutions are urgently required for these tangible problems. To do so, a pragmatic environmental philosophy is established. Environmental pragmatism, a prominent viewpoint in the field of environmental ethics since the 1990s, would tackle the failure of traditional environmental ethics. Accordingly, it deemphasizes any dualistic discussion in conventional environmental ethics by leaning toward classic American pragmatism. As a result, it redirects the field's core focus from theoretical debates to tackling actual environmental concerns. This can be accomplished by prioritizing policy implementation. Therefore, this work promotes environmental pragmatism as a robust environmental ethics.

Keywords: Pragmatism; environmental pragmatism; sound environmental ethics

Introduction

Living squarely in an ecological crisis, we face practical and untheoretical problems. Practical solutions are therefore urgently required for these tangible problems, and one solution is the establishment of a pragmatic environmental philosophy[1]. Recently, the meaning of environmental pragmatism has been discussed among environmental philosophers. Environmental pragma-

tism, a prominent viewpoint in the field of environmental ethics since the 1990s, tackles the failure of traditional environmental ethics. Some believe that environmental philosophy has become meaningless because it overemphasizes abstract conceptual issues and does not address the pressing issues of environmental policy. This view implicitly suggests that philosophers must be concerned with real-world practical issues such as pollution, environmental destruction, and environmental justice.

For environmental pragmatists, one of the main questions is why environmental ethics is unable to resolve the practical issues at hand. One of the reasons for them is theoretical and methodological dogmatism. Conventional environmental ethics have grown out of the limited perspective that certain methods are more appropriate in this domain than others. This implies that only specific avenues in the evolution of environmental philosophy will result in environmentally sound policy. Of course, several perspectives have been expressed in the literature about the inclusion of non-anthropocentrism, holism, moral monism, and some sort of intrinsic value in a suitable and workable environmental ethic. The task of proof is usually placed on those who must take a different stance or push one outside the bounds of a traditional theory; these individuals are rarely heard or taken seriously (Katz & Light, 1996:2-3). This study, as previously mentioned, aims to show how environmental pragmatists significantly rely on the idea of mainstream pragmatism rather than providing a general exposition of pragmatism's philosophy.

Having questioned the role of environmental ethics in decision-making and policy discourse, environmental pragmatists offer a radical reconstruction that seeks to uphold the principles of law and justice. About typical environmental concerns, this reconstruction raises fundamental questions. For conventional or mainstream environmental ethicists, public opinion, discussion, debate and criticism of their reasons for preserving the intrinsic value of nature are insignificant. Monistic environmen-

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[1] Environmental ethics and philosophy are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably. But they have subtle differences. Environmental ethics focuses specifically on the moral principles and values that guide how human beings interact with the environment. It is concerned with what is right or wrong in our treatment of the natural world. Environmental philosophy, on the other hand, is a broader term encompassing a range of environmental philosophical enquiries. It includes not only ethical but also metaphysical, epistemological, and aesthetic aspects of humanity's relationship with nature. In this paper I will use them interchangeably only as moral principles and values that guide human interactions with the environment, although I recognize the slight difference between them.

talism seems designed to avoid such problematic political discourse (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

Environmental pragmatism lends itself to context-sensitive assessment of environmental values and to public participation and democratic engagement in developing ethical norms. Depending on the context, pragmatists view knowledge and values as temporary and subject to revision (Hourdequin, 2015:243). Furthermore, environmental pragmatism is a practical way of reconstructing or reorienting a conventional and theoretical approach to environmental philosophy. Although still a philosophical endeavor, environmental pragmatism anticipates a move away from theoretical debates about the fundamental authenticity of environmental practices and policies (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

In contrast to the metaphysical approaches that dominate contemporary environmental ethics, and the never-ending debates about what and who have intrinsic value, pragmatics supports an inter-temporal and normative logic of inquiry. If we see the pursuit of sustainability as a communal effort to understand and sustain a learning process, establishing objective truth involves more than aligning one's goals and policies with those of the outside world. It involves understanding and projecting a kind of transformation of one's own subjective consciousness. In this way, environmental philosophy shifts its primary attention from moral theory to epistemological questions of justification, methods of inquiry and, more generally, possibilities for their improvement (Norton, 1999:456).

In his essay "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?", Richard Sylvan, largely inspired by environmental concerns, posed a new question. This environmental ethic would render us more sensitive to the needs and values of the non-human natural world. Disputes have broken out over various theories that recognize the value and moral position not only of the human individual, but also of animals, of non-sentient natural beings, of ecosystems, and of the planet itself. Philosophers often attempted to develop a monistic theory capable of encompassing all of our moral obligations in the early stages of environmental ethics. Also, the legal scholar Christopher Stone has observed: that in their quest for a monistic theory, environmental philosophers became mired in theoretical discussions that distracted them from addressing actual policy issues (Edelglass, 2006:9).

The pioneers of pragmatism could not have imagined the environmental problems we face today. However key insights of environmental philosophy can be found in their work. Both pragmatists and many contemporary environmental philosophers share the observation that the human realm is embedded in each point of the natural realm, that each inescapably affects the other in unforeseen ways, and that values arise in the ongoing transaction between humans and the natural world (Parker, 1996:21).

This paper consists of six parts. The first provides a brief historical development of philosophical pragmatism. The link between philosophical pragmatism and environmental pragmatism is discussed in part two. In part three and four, moral monism and moral pluralism will briefly be discussed respectively in the context of environmental ethics. In part five, I will carefully analyses Lars Samuelsson's article "Environmental pragmatism and environmental philosophy: a bad marriage" and counterargue to make my point and show how environmental pragmatism should still be considered a robust environmental ethic. In the last part I will give a general conclusion.

Historical Development of Philosophical Pragmatism: An Overview

Etymologically, pragmatism is 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, 1907:21).

Pragmatism is a distinctly American phenomenon. The Metaphysical Club began as an ad hoc group at Cambridge in January 1872. It included thinkers like William James, Charles Peirce, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose philosophy later came to be known as pragmatism. Still later, and from entirely different sources, John Dewey was drawn to this philosophy, and he eventually became the archetypal pragmatist as that doctrine came to be understood by the end of the 1940s (Biesenthal, 2014; Ryder, 2004).

In America in the early 1920s, pragmatism predominated as a philosophy; it was a movement that opposed idealism and has had a subtle impact on many academic subjects, including law, education, political and social theory, religion, and the arts. Pragmatism is best understood as a conventional 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, 1981:5), whereas Dewey sees Francis Bacon as having pioneered a pragmatic understanding of knowledge (Dewey, 1920:28). The second problem that obfuscates the historical development of pragmatism is the fact that pragmatism is a theory that maintains that criteria of practical usefulness determine the validity and meaning of reasoning (Thayer, 1981:5).

Even though a great deal of ambiguity and confusion about certain more specific formative conditions of pragmatism exist, there are some unifying themes in classical philosophical pragmatism including, inter alia, (a) attempts to discard human knowledge by referring to a unique set of foundational beliefs that underpin all others. Both individual beliefs and general techniques of investigation, according to pragmatism, should be assessed by their consequences, by their utility in attaining human aims, and (b) they reject corresponding conceptions of truth, which argue that a genuine belief or statement represents the world as it truly is; (c) they argue against philosophical frameworks that treat the world as complete or resistant to the consequences of choice. Finally, (d) pragmatists also tend to have humanistic attitudes on morals and values, rejecting both nihilistic viewpoints that discard any moral judgment as based on illusion and viewpoints that situate moral and other evaluative realities outside of the ordinary world of human striving and well-being (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:2-3).

Pragmatism was developed and expressed in large part by individual thinkers like Peirce, James, and Dewey. Each of them uniquely formed his own entire ideology, even though they all contributed significantly to the formation and direction of the philosophy. Following his studies in psychology, James adopted pragmatism and carried on his radical empiricism and pluralist philosophy, whereas Peirce, influenced by Kant and Schelling, developed objective idealism. Philosophical naturalism, is a well-articulated concept of Dewey's evolving pragmatism. Simply put, pragmatism is a philosophy initially articulated by Charles Peirce in the 1870s, reestablished as a theory of truth in 1898 by William James, and further developed, widened, and promoted by John Dewey and F.C.S. Schiller (Thayer, 1981:3-5).

Peirce's major works, "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", both published in the Popular Science Monthly in 1877 and 1878 respectively, deal with the relationships between doubt, inquiry, belief and action. According to Peirce, inquiry always begins with uncertainty. Doubt motivates inquiry, which 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 and other pragmatists' philosophies. Peirce claimed that science is the most efficient way to dispel uncertainty and form good habits of action (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:3). – EDDIG!!

William James furthered the theory of pragmatism in his 1907 book titled *Pragmatism*, which is the most widely read of all pragmatists' writings. Before he started calling himself a pragmatist, his views in his books adhered to those of Peirce. According to James, pragmatism began as a technique of addressing binary philosophical disagreements such as one versus many, fated versus free, and the material versus spiritual. If not decided pragmatically, such conceptions are controversially unending, and, to make pragmatic decisions, we must understand each thought by tracing its distinct practical repercussions; that is, when a disagreement develops between an idea seen as a binary opposition, we must ask one critical question: What difference 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. When a debate is serious, we should be able to demonstrate some practical difference that must result from one side or the other being correct (James, 1907:21).

Proposing an illusionary distinction between mind and substance, thinking and object, theoretical and practical, Dewey pursued the philosophical tradition in *Experience and Nature* (1925), arguably his most influential work. Dewey argued for his naturalistic theory of mind and knowledge. Due to dualisms, which cause pseudo-issues and make it difficult to communicate between realms that shouldn't have been placed against one another in the first place, the philosophical tradition is loaded with problems. A separation between the flawless and the imperfect, the permanent and the changing, and the relational and the self-possessed, which was established by the ancient Greeks, serves as the foundation for these dualisms (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:6).

The dualism that dominated Western philosophy gave rise to pragmatic thought. René Descartes, a French philosopher, proposed a separation of the mind and body and held that knowledge existed apart from the knower. Pragmatists view philosophical concepts like positivism against postmodernism or theory against practice as linguistic games and are hence disinterested in dualistic debates over them. In contrast, pragmatics are more interested in the practical application, integration, and importance of these philosophical ideas than in their ultimate meaning. Pragmatism rejects the idea of ultimate truth, arguing that all knowledge, opinions, and scientific theories are temporary. Truth only endures for as long as a notion offers meaningful, useful solutions; knowledge is never distinct from the knower (Biesenthal, 2014:3-4). Furthermore, Biesenthal notes that pragmatism is an approach that bridges the dualism divide by emphasizing the problem-solving inquiry process. The conceptualizations of meaning interpretation and truth interpretation are the foundation of this integrated philosophical investigation (Ibid).

Although the fundamental idea of pragmatism—a problem-solving strategy based on practical knowledge—has remained constant, the pragmatic method has been applied to various professions since its origin in the late nineteenth century. As a result, it allows various theoretical perspectives, some of which are contradictory. Because of this internal dispute, it is impossible to articulate a singular definition of pragmatism (Ibid:8). The purpose of this study, however, is not to discuss mainstream pragmatism in depth but rather to focus on its conceptual basis and how it affects environmental pragmatists. Let us now turn to how philosophical and environmental pragmatism are linked.

The Connection Between Philosophical and Environmental Pragmatism

As previously mentioned, the theoretical underpinnings of environmental pragmatism are derived from philo-

sophical pragmatism, an earlier movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the contributions of American philosophers like Peirce, James, and Dewey (Hourdequin, 2015; Loman, 2020). Also, Pragmatists disagree with the foundationalist objective of establishing a stable and unalterable framework for ethics and epistemology, holding that the veracity of a hypothesis should be assessed in relation to experience. Frequently, their views are pluralistic (Parker, 1996:25).

While there are differences amongst environmental pragmatists regarding their views on non-anthropocentrism, the intrinsic value of nature, and adherence to American pragmatism, what unites them all is their support for moral heterogeneity in the approach to environmental ethics. The necessary consensus won't be hampered by theoretical incompatibility. For example, the sentience criterion or the respect teleological center of life criterion can both be used to justify the morality of animals. They both seek to address the morality of animals, despite their theoretical differences (Campos & Vaz, 2021:4).

Therefore, acknowledging moral diversity, downplaying the importance of theoretical arguments, and realizing that concentrating on practical issues allows us to get to a political consensus more quickly are the three essential pillars of environmental pragmatism. In general, environmental pragmatism emphasizes the importance of firsthand experiences while rejecting the idea of ultimate knowledge or metaphysics. Furthermore, environmental pragmatists reject of the duplication of dualism or dichotomies since they think it hinders the development of fruitful dialogues. Examples include individualism opposed to holism, anthropocentrism versus non-anthropocentrism, and intrinsic value of nature against its utilitarian value (Ibid: 4-5). In line with this, Light and Katz argued that which side of individualism/holism, anthropocentrism/non-anthropocentrism, instrumental/intrinsic value, and pluralism/monism is correct doesn't seem to be relevant to decide. It is generally agreed upon

that one would be better off investing time in the quest for a single hypothesis that could explain everything else (Light & Katz, 1996:2).

Environmental pragmatists argue that it is fatalistic to assert that the only effective method to address environmental issues is to steer a total cultural paradigm shift that fundamentally alters human value systems. The main aim of environmental pragmatists is not to persuade skeptics that natural systems or sentient beings have values; instead, they place more emphasis on creating a democratic environment for adaptive decision-making, which of course includes the examination of ultimate principles. In other words, they place greater emphasis than do monists on finding ameliorative solutions to conflicts and on reaching practical, ecologically responsible judgments. Environmental pragmatists foster a democratic atmosphere for adaptive decision making without taking a side in the fundamental values dispute that has characterized environmental ethics since the 1970s (Fesmire, 2022:1).

Environmental pragmatists contend that without transcendental criteria, a priori deductions that are removed from the investigation, and unassured judgments, we may intelligently handle issues and guide ourselves toward realistic goals. As a result, they are moral naturalists. They also fervently support various values that cannot be distilled down to a single final value; therefore, they do not advocate for the highest moral principle, value, standard, legislation, or notion. In addition, environmental pragmatism clearly denies the mainstream environmental attempts of a sole justifiable model with which we may align ourselves. Indeed, a monistic point of view is not rejected but is rather remodeled as an instrument to open an inquiry in doing so compositing for (Ibid:2).

The argument between monists and pluralists has been particularly significant in the field of environmental ethics. Many academics connected the state of the environment to destructive environmental activities and to conventional moral and philosophical frameworks that

appeared to support these activities in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the growing body of evidence supporting environmental degradation at the time (Ibid:9). Due to the pluralistic nature of environmental pragmatism, it could be beneficial to discuss and examine moral monism and pluralism. This paper will examine them both below.

Moral Monism

There can only be one legitimate and correct theory of morality, according to the monists. One of the driving forces behind moral monism is the fear of the alternative — that there will be no single, coherent ethical theory. They fear that ethical relativism will take its place. The other options are to give up trying to create a rational ethics or to accept a single ethical system (Desjardins, 2013:256). It follows that moral monism means believing that there is a single, fundamental moral principle that should guide how we behave in all circumstances. This suggests that in the context of environmental ethics, we should give priority to one overriding value or principle in environmental decision-making. For example, a moral monist would argue that protecting biodiversity is the most important priority and that all other considerations need to be subordinated.

Monistic environmental ethicists believe that a single moral philosophy or theory of values is both necessary and sufficient to provide a basis for our expanded duties and obligations to the environment. Because they are suspicious of competing viewpoints, they assert that there can only be one legitimate and correct moral theory. The implication is that a single ethical framework must embrace the wide range of diverse moral concerns that holism embraces, and that all humans, other animals, living things, ecosystems, species, and perhaps even the earth itself, are within the realm of concern (Chatterjee, 2017:32).

The relationship of moral theories to moral principles is one way of classifying them. For example, because they

are both based on higher moral principles, utilitarianism and natural law theory share a formal structure. In utilitarianism, all moral considerations must be derived from the principle of utility. These theories are monistic because they are based on an overarching moral principle that ensures unity and coherence (Edelglass, 2006:9).

Both anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism are included in monistic views. Anthropocentrism deals with the main locus of value. Whereas biocentrism holds that all forms of life are important in and of themselves, anthropocentrism holds that value is primarily created by or for humans. Ecocentrism emphasises the importance of the whole ecological system, including natural processes, interactions and the non-living components of organisms. Whether value is attached to individual things or whether value must be considered collectively is a point of contention in this discussion. The pragmatist might ask whether we should be expected to pledge allegiance to one of these flags and ignore the others, since authentic values develop at each level of focus (Parker, 1996:32).

Turning Enlightenment thought inside out, the pragmatists proposed reforms of epistemology and metaphysics. No less revolutionary are the implications of pragmatic thought about value. A theory of value that emphasizes the aesthetic dimension, sees ethics as a process of continuous mediation of conflict in an ever-changing world, and lays the groundwork for social and political change is produced by a central emphasis on experience and an experimental approach to establishing our knowledge and practices (Ibid:25).

Pragmatists believe that all values are the result of experience. The ethical question of what is good ultimately boils down to the particular question of what is good in the interaction of an organism with its environment. Of course, the inquiry goes beyond the subjective feelings of the individual. It simply recognizes them as the only viable place of birth. The first question of value is not what we should desire, but what each person ultimately desires and why. There are many complex answers. They

are not entirely contained within a classification such as the utilitarian calculus of pain and pleasure (Ibid:25-26).

A cornerstone of pragmatic ethics is the idea that the rightness of an action is essentially system-dependent. Value arises in an ever-evolving, infinitely complex system of beings in situations. Because many ethically challenging situations mirror one another so closely, the Enlightenment goal of a universally valid ethical theory may at first seem acceptable. But a pragmatist is interested in similarity and consistency as well as in distinguishing and changing. As the world changes and human ideas and behavior evolve, there will inevitably be new kinds of ethically challenging situations. In order to deal with them, we must develop new frameworks for the determination of what is appropriate (Ibid:26).

Parker argues that the main problem with intrinsic value is that there can be no authentic environmental ethics as long as the non-human world is seen as a pool of resources with a purely instrumental value. The non-human universe must provide more than benefits for it to have moral significance. It must be beneficial in itself (Ibid:33).

However, a community of scholars has rarely been in complete agreement about the right direction for progress in the field. According to the environmental pragmatists, the failure of this unifying vision to influence practical policy ought to give pause for thought, and they conclude that environmental ethics needs to embrace some new positions and reassess the direction of the field. First, the gap between acceptable approaches to environmental ethics and applicable and acceptable environmental policy needs to be bridged. Secondly, other possible sources and foundations of moral environmentalism need to be explored (Katz & Light, 1996:3).

Monistic environmental ethics has been called into question for a variety of reasons. For example, it oversimplifies complex ethical dilemmas through its reduction to a single value, such as the intrinsic value of nature. Moreover, since its inception, moral monism has made little

contribution to environmental policy. In the same way, environmental ethicists have not been able to provide valuable practical assistance by offering concrete management directions on the multi-faceted and controversial topics of environmental planning, management and administration. Additionally, narrowing and limiting of the range of issues explored in environmental ethics is another inherent and practical effect of the monistic argument. As a result, the monistic perspective tends to be disadvantageous for environmental ethicists when it comes to environmental policy disputes. (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

In order to adapt to the changing demands of the environment, many of today's environmental philosophers have abandoned their commitment to a single environmental philosophy. Many contemporary theorists combine different environmental ideologies rather than seeking a single overarching environmental philosophy. Environmental pragmatists argue that we should set aside our disagreements and take comfort in the inclusion of a variety of useful benefits, such as environmental preservation, as long as the theory appears to be designed to improve the environment. For environmental pragmatists, understanding the relationship between theory and practice is crucial (Williams, 2019:5).

Furthermore, by rejecting the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive, pragmatism resolves this conundrum. The existence of a being, whether human or non-human, is defined by its relations to other things in a framework of meaningful connections. Consequently, everything good is instrumentally and intrinsically important. We can distinguish between two kinds of value. However, nothing can be instrumentally useful without also having intrinsic value. He adds, that understanding that we are connected to our environment and that it is connected to us is the essence of pragmatic thinking about the environment (Parker, 1996: 34-35). Moral pluralism comes into the picture here because moral monism has not really been able to deal with moral problems in an ever-changing world.

Moral Pluralism

Moral pluralism is the point of view that claims there is no single, all-encompassing moral theory or principle that can be applied appropriately in every morally challenging situation. Pragmatism recognizes that there are real distinctions in moral situations. This is because there are so many different kinds of elements and possible connections between them (Parker, 1996:31). Therefore, Pluralists have the view that there is no single monistic theory that can encompass the whole moral realm with all its complexities. But we do have a theory that gives true principles for particular kinds of moral conduct, intentions, or situations. Moreover, moral pluralism is an appropriate and necessary response to many moral problems in our lives, rather than a form of relativism (Edelglass, 2006:9).

Pluralism is an alternative to 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. Instead, the claim of moral pluralists is that there are many moral truths that cannot be reduced to a single principle. According to monists, this position is tantamount to relativism (O'Neill et al., 2008:74).

Andrew Light, Bryan Norton, and Anthony Weston - three eminent environmental ethicists —proposed moral pluralism in environmental ethics, a theory that supports an environmental philosophy that can be implemented in real-world environmental regulation. Moral pluralists, who typically identify themselves as environmental pragmatists, claim that there is no single, all-encompassing ultimate principle that addresses all aspects of environmental conduct. However, they maintain that these separate entities have different moral obligations on different grounds. Rather than rejecting a theory outright and embracing monism, pluralists and environmental pragmatists, for instance, carefully evaluate whether moral principles apply to a given scenario when competing theories, like animal rights and ecocentrism, produce inconsistent outcomes (Edelglass, 2006:9-10).

Brennan (1992) offered two different views of moral pluralism either to make difficult choices or to take complex actions when faced with a particular set of circumstances. Consequently, several valuable activities are involved in the evaluation of each circumstance. There is no single lens through which to view a situation with a particular set of ideas, principles, or frameworks in the second type of pluralism he described. Kelly also divides pluralists into two groups: radicals and moderates. The radical pluralist maintains that at least two, but usually many more, values are incommensurable. To put it another way, two measures are not comparable if the comparison is meaningless, like body temperature and intelligence. According to the moderate pluralist: All values are comparable but not reducible (Kelly, 2014:112).

Pluralism is a tool used by pragmatists to denounce the core ideas that ethical theorists and philosophers may hold to be the highest ideals. Pluralism is in a far better position than monism in relation to theories that arise only from the recognition of a particular theory because numerous hypotheses offer important and crucial ecological issues. Since the environment is constantly changing, pluralism is also essential from a pragmatic point of view. An increasing number of scientists and philosophers are arguing in favour of the acceptance of ecological interventions that provide answers for a world in which human beings have lost control due to the overwhelming amount of demands that need to be met (Williams, 2019:9).

Rather than being based on theoretical ideas, moral environmental pluralism is based on a pragmatist philosophy that derives moral principles from negotiated solutions to real-world management challenges. They provide guidelines and language for presenting solutions to environmental dilemmas. Environmental pluralism aids environmental decision-making by helping to identify the values and trade-offs that are being negotiated

(Hull, 2007:2). In other words, a theory of morals that is able to serve as a keystone species of morals, organizing all moral criteria into a hierarchical structure from which logical and consistent conclusions can be drawn. Monism can best be defined as the pursuit of a "golden rule" that is derived from some fundamental truth and that reasonable people accept as the solution to the resolution of vexing problems and environmental dilemmas. Opponents of monism argue that it is both wise and essential to believe in and practice pluralism, since no unifying system exists and is unlikely to be created (Ibid:1-2).

According to pluralists, a singular ethical theory is not possible because of the variety of scenarios in which we find ourselves, and our myriad ethical connections with both humans and nature require a variety of methods to satisfy our moral obligations. For pluralists, no one ethical theory can be made appealing to all people to build support for real environmental change. They recognize the possibility that more than one hypothesis is acceptable and appropriate. The argument over moral pluralism among environmental philosophers has heated up in recent years owing to the vast diversity in policies concerning the environment (Chatterjee, 2017:32).

Pragmatists are supportive of value pluralism — the idea that there are different legitimate values — and tend to reject hierarchical perspectives in which a single value can justify all the others. This is partly because of pragmatists' basic view of values as something we create through the process of valuation (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Value pluralism holds that the universe contains numerous fundamental, irreducible, intrinsically valuable features. Because they capture evidence of value more easily, pluralist theories of value offer significant advantages over existing monistic theories. Superficially, there is much to be valued: people and art, food and kindness, flowers and physics, autonomy and enjoyment. Some of these are considered to be ends in themselves. If they all have intrinsic value, the monist must show that each

of them possesses a unique attribute that determines its value (Kelly, 2014:112).

In contrast to the seemingly never-ending intrinsic value debates, one of environmental pragmatism's main aims is to make environmental ethics more applicable and political. The challenge to intrinsic value theories from pragmatism is twofold. First, in their a priori attempts to identify fundamental sources of value, they see these theories as flawed. The pragmatic idea that values are diverse, situational and derived from lived experience conflicts with such aims. Furthermore, environmental pragmatists fear that a theory-first strategy would never be implemented in real life (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Pragmatists for the environment argue that we should start by looking at how people value plants, animals and the natural world, rather than focusing on a single set of fundamental values. Values have less to do with a solid foundation than with an intricate, interconnected web in which values in one part of the web support values in others (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Environmental pragmatism sees moral monism as dangerous and problematic because it seeks to exclude or marginalize different points of view and condense them into a single master narrative. In contrast, environmental pluralism argues that it is difficult to impose a single concept as an overarching and structuring framework. This is because the world is infinitely complex, fluid and negotiated. There will be legitimate differences of opinion among reasonable decision-makers who come from different communities of practice. In addition, moral environmental pluralism holds that there are a variety of competing, overlapping, self-consistent frameworks for distinguishing between right and wrong, and between good and bad. No one framework is superior in all situations, and no one hierarchy subsumes the others (Hull, 2007:2-3).

Environmental ethics is able to shed new light on existing issues if moral pluralism is accepted as a philosoph-

ical point of view. It is problematic to see non-anthropocentric ethics critiquing the Western human-centered tradition as seeking to replace one theory with another. Instead, the study of non-anthropocentric ethics must be pursued in order to make our moral discourse more sophisticated. It must help us to understand more aspects of our daily lives. For example, utilitarianism and its rivals should not be abandoned, but rather seen as part of the moral life. From this perspective, Andrew argues, environmental ethics is more an appreciation of the more sophisticated direction ethics has taken than a contest for a particular moral viewpoint (Brennan, 1992:30).

There are many who disagree with environmental pragmatism, even though it is supported by many scholars. Loman (2020) and Samuelson (2010) are among those who argue against environmental pragmatism. Loman claims that the tenets of environmental pragmatism contradict each other. Norton, for example, defines sustainability as a set of behaviors (an institution, a policy, or a management practice) that persists over time only if the constraints faced by a given generation are not reduced for succeeding generations. Thus, Loman concluded that sustainability seemed to have a firm foundation, even if environmental pragmatism did not. However, Loman is wrong in his criticism of Norton's definition of sustainability because there is a big difference between beliefs and guiding principles. Norton describes sustainability as one of the useful concepts that can improve institutional, policy, and management practices, not as the only fundamental principle.

Some scholars are also critical of moral pluralism, arguing that it reduces all ethics to rhetoric while encouraging relativism and skepticism. What is right and wrong, good and evil, is determined by personal taste and class preferences. This argument claims that pluralism allows eloquent, knowledgeable villains to influence discussions to justify whatever conclusions they wish, whatever ethical norms they find persuasive (Hull, 2007:2). Hence, such a critique of pluralism seems unworkable and perhaps

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 (ibid:3).

However, for the purpose of this work, 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, 2010:405). In what follows, I will argue against his main arguments in order to make my point. I will then go on to show how environmental pragmatism is a valid environmental philosophy.

How Environmental Pragmatism Considered a Sound Environmental Philosophy

Samuelsson argues that pragmatic positions that lead environmental philosophers away from theoretical debate are not proper philosophical debates at all. Philosophy is, among other things, an effort to gain clarity about the problems that matter to us (Ibid).

Given the variety of viewpoints, establishing a single definition of environmental pragmatism is a challenging task. Thus, it is best understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of approaches in the field, all of which are believed to have something vital in common — prioritize practice over theory — that is, they should shift away from theoretical debates about nature's intrinsic

value and towards more practical ones concerning environmental policy and decision-making. The genesis of this viewpoint is grounded on the belief that theoretical arguments are problematic for the development of environmental policy because they make mainstream environmental ethics incapable of influencing environmental decision-making and policy formation, and thus fail to contribute to the task of solving environmental problems. As a result, as stated by Light and Katz, we should seek to develop acceptable solutions to environmental concerns as rapidly as possible (Ibid:406).

This new direction in environmental philosophy goes beyond theory to call for a comprehensive exploration of the practical advantages of moral plurality. This plurality is divided 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. According to Samuelsson, both types of moral plurality are not unique to environmental pragmatism since, depending on how incompatible they are defined, both types of pluralism may be found in conventional, non-pragmatist environmental ethical perspectives. This is because many environmental ethicists contend there are several grounds for moral judgment. Furthermore, people who hold competing ethical theories can work together to achieve comparable goals—in fact, most environmental ethicists, despite subscribing to opposing theories, can be seen working together to attain multiple common goals related to the environment (Ibid:407-408).

Furthermore, Samuelsson contends that philosophy, in its broadest sense, is an endeavor to elucidate the difficulties that confound us. Therefore, the role of environmental philosophy is to shed light on perplexing environmental issues. However, instead of seeking explanations for problematic topics, environmental pragmatism advises us to ignore them. As a result, Samuelsson makes the audacious argument that environmental prag-

matism is not a valid philosophical viewpoint at all. Even while seeking clarity on confusing matters should be one of the bare minimums of a philosophical stance, a philosophy that urges us to do otherwise is not philosophical. Thus, philosophers should not allow pragmatic concerns to drive their choices of investigative themes because as philosophers, they should ask and endeavor to find solutions to philosophical issues that have sparked their interest—that puzzle them—regardless of the consequences (Ibid:408-409).

Since philosophy is concerned with complex problems such as free choice, the explanation for avoiding philosophical issues like free will is non-philosophical. According to Samuelsson, some people believe that disputing the notion of free will would endanger morality. However, he claims that even if this argument were true, philosophers should ignore it and continue to examine and develop the concept of free will. Similarly, if we had a compelling reason to avoid discussing intrinsic value, it would be a non-philosophical justification. Moreover, the question of whether nature has intrinsic value is philosophically interesting, and there is a good reason to pursue it even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists. They will simply have to face the challenge of overcoming these obstacles.

He goes on to explain that philosophy is primarily theoretical and that fields of philosophy such as epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language have little direct practical importance. They may continue their intellectual studies without first establishing their practical utility. If this is the case, environmental philosophers who are interested in the possibility of inherent value in nature should be allowed to carry out investigations without first demonstrating its practical usefulness (Ibid:410).

The fundamental notion is that if one is an environmental philosopher, one's primary purpose is to save nature. Indeed, given the urgency of environmental issues, environmental philosophy may be viewed as a special case. People with critical skills, such as astrophysicists,

psychologists, and linguists, who do not have the overriding purpose of conserving nature, must also be allowed to study environmental philosophy (Ibid: 410-411).

Moreover, from the standpoint of an environmental pragmatist, two questions stand out: (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? Both concerns are better suited for empirical sciences such as ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology (Ibid: 411).

Environmental pragmatists are worried that theoretical arguments in environmental philosophy inhibit policy progress. However, Samuelsson perceives that the tension is greatly exaggerated for two reasons: (1) it overstates the practical importance of environmental philosophy and (2) it underestimates the practical importance of investigating issues of intrinsic value in nature (Ibid:412).

The overall objective of finding practical responses to environmental problems now, as environmental pragmatists assert, is undoubtedly a worthy undertaking, but it should not be the overarching purpose of environmental philosophy in general. The question of whether nature has intrinsic value is not incompatible with the issue of finding effective solutions to environmental concerns. On the contrary, such issues are often linked.

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 are the imperatives on which we may expect many environmentalists from various groups philosophical and otherwise to agree: The bounds and content of environmental philosophy and political theory will be determined by appropriate environmental praxis (Ibid:414).

It may appear evident that there are certain fundamental environmental measures that are desirable and should be supported. However, this fact does not justify these practices in and of itself. It is the responsibility of philosophers to offer such reasoning if they believe these policies are correct. In addition, we should not decide that such a claim is true beforehand and then build the most plausible framework for making it appear correct or convince decision-makers and others that it is correct. If anything, that appears to be dogmatism! Most importantly, it is profoundly anti-philosophical.

Indeed, I agree with Samuelsson on his claims — that the issues of environmental philosophy should include more fields such as astrophysicists, psychologists, and linguists because people in these fields have critical skills to evaluate environmental problems. Also, environmental ethics issues concern the empirical sciences — ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology. Of course, environmental ethics from the very beginning is multidisciplinary. Even though environmental ethics categorized as sub-fields of philosophy in the 1970's those who involved in addressing environmental problems are from different backgrounds. For instance, Rachel Carson who wrote very influential book entitled *Silent Spring* was a biologist. Also, a historian, Lynn White wrote a very important article titled "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis".

However, Samuelsson compelling argument that the issue of theoretical debate and intrinsic value is crucial and that we should continue discussing them, even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists, is flawed. Because it is critical to grasp what environmental pragmatists mean when they say we should shift from theory to practice. This notion does not imply that the theory is insignificant in the sense that we should dismiss every theoretical debate entirely. On the contrary, they claim that theoretical debates hinder the ability of the environmental movement to forge agreement on basic policy imperatives (Light and Katz, 1996:1). Samuelson rejected the environmental pragmatist position entirely because it advises us to move away from seeking clarity on puzzling problems, which is a minimal requirement in phil-

osophical positions. However, the very premise of environmental pragmatism is clear enough, i.e. the puzzling environmental problems have been identified and clarified by mainstream 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 should we 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, and 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 no one needs 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. Rather 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.

Moreover, environmental pragmatists disagree with the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive. A being's existence, whether human or non-human, is defined by its relationship to other components within a framework of significant interactions.

In a nutshell, Samuelsson's compelling argument that the issue of theoretical debate and intrinsic value is cru-

cial and that we should continue discussing them, even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists, is, however, flawed. Because it does not cohere 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 naturally follows from the notion's use and application. As a result, Samuelsson's argument on environmental pragmatism has been erroneously interpreted and requires correction.

Conclusion

As the preceding discussion has shown, 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. Pragmatism, founded on the notion that ideas, programs, and proposals should be helpful, workable, and practical, was a dominant school of thought in the United States until the 1930s. Accordingly, environmental pragmatism is rooted in philosophical pragmatism, which rejects many traditional philosophical questions because they are not genuine problems. Environmental pragmatism seeks to tackle mainstream environmental problems using the model of philosophical pragmatism.

The concept of centrism is at the heart of traditional environmental ethics. In other words, it emphasizes a particular component of nature. For example, anthropocentric environmental ethics overemphasizes humans, whereas non-anthropocentrism overemphasizes individual organisms, living beings, and ecosystems. **This is a distorted view of environmental concepts**. Conventional environmental ethics have helped in some way to address environmental problems such as population growth, overconsumption, deforestation, and pollution.

But such concerns tell us why we are in a crisis, not how to get out of it. **Therefore, environmental pragmatism has proposed an alternative view:** the question of environmental ethics should be addressed by making legitimate connections between different webs of life, rather than focusing on one particular area of life. **Pragmatists also emphasize practical policies that can be derived from multiple moral principles, rather than arguing for a single, always correct, indisputable metaphysics of morality: ecocentrism versus anthropocentrism, biocentrism versus sentientism, deep ecology versus social ecology, pluralism versus monism, intrinsic value versus instrumental value.**

According to environmental pragmatism, **conventional environmental ethics failed** because the discipline became bogged down in theoretical argument. However, it is important to note that environmental pragmatists did not reject theoretical debate altogether; rather, they clearly argue that it cannot alleviate current environmental problems. What those opposed to environmental pragmatism, such as Samuelsson, fail to understand is that environmental pragmatism implicitly accepts the importance of theoretical debates in mainstream environmental ethics. It is the discussions and debates in mainstream environmental ethics that have helped them to understand the serious environmental crisis. Such a crisis requires a practical solution if it is to be resolved. However, their disagreement with traditional environmental ethicists is that the environmental problems they have identified cannot be solved by endless theoretical discussions. **Rather, the solution must come in the form of practical engagement.**

In sum, pragmatist environmental ethics rejects the dualism of conventional environmental ethics and embraces the spirit of American pragmatism and practicality. Because it veers from the philosophic debate and embraces concrete policy implementation instead, it presents a sound and robust approach to tackling thorny environmental and ecological issues.

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