

## New Theory in Environmental Ethics: Truth Centricism or Right Oriented Environmental Ethics

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**Abstract:** The theory of “truth centricism in environmental ethics” is a new theory that discusses the human needs and protection of life and nature. This theory holds that all beings have a right in the system of existence. So, the attitude and consequences of human morality and behavior with their environment and other beings must be oriented according to the type and proportion of the right position of each of them and the position of human himself. Numerous theories have been proposed in the field of environmental ethics; however, each has its shortcomings and has provoked much criticism about itself. Along these theories, a new theory has been described which, from the theorist's point of view, is a holistic view that encompasses the scope of moral consideration of all universes and creations, including living and non-living. Also, its holistic look is realistic and practical. This theory was proposed in 2014 and in 2020 it received a lot of attention. In this article, this theory is explained and developed so that it can be exposed to the judgment and critical view of experts in order to become more comprehensive.

**Keywords:** Environmental ethics opinions, New theory, Truth centric environmental ethics



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### Introduction

*The role of ethics and culture in preserving the environment*

The relationship between culture and the environment is important in many ways because it is the impact of our environment that affects our culture. Our environment takes the form of our culture and vice versa. Climate and natural resources affect human individual and social experiences and values in different ways.

The third millennium AD is the emergence of environmental problems and its growing trend. The man is considered as an influential factor and victim of this crisis (Lockwood, 1999).

Overcoming environmental crisis is believed to depend on the reform of human teachings and changes in his attitudes, insights, and knowledge. (Huckle, 1983). The view that emerged two or three centuries ago about the environment, nature, and man is the basis of the current environmental crisis because it changed the mentality and cognition of human beings and finally human behavior. The basis of this way of thinking is that there is a complete separation between matter and meaning. Experience shows that the spread of this way of thinking

is the main cause of the environmental crisis in today's world (Teymur, 1982).

Criticizing the existing views on sustainable development, Shah Vali et al. (2020) concluded that in addition to the significant progress in the world and the establishment of international treaties, conventions and symposia on sustainability are not intended to preserve the environment and human survival and have a merely technical and material look. So far, it has not responded to the issues of development and sustainability. They suggest that achieving long-term sustainability horizons and their dimensions requires a deeper perspective and beyond purely technical issues and secular science (Moezzi et al., 2020).

Today, the world is on the brink of an environmental precipice, and the environment is threatened by human because technological growth has given humans the power to destroy the environment on a larger scale, even on the global scale (Bourdeau, 2004).

Wilson (1999) believes that the genetic evolution of human beings has certainly been influenced by the kind of choices that come from within the culture.

## 1. Relations of the science and art of ethics

Ethics itself is a kind of science, just as philosophy is a kind of science. In our culture, when we want to refer to ethics, we mean the science of ethics. Moreover, the application of ethics, both in the individual and in the social sphere requires a kind of art. The science of ethics as it is, and in the case of man, ethics is influenced by the philosophy of ethics.

According to Frankena's definition (1973), "ethics is a branch of philosophy that is philosophical thinking about ethics, moral issues, and moral precepts." It is a kind of empirical, descriptive, historical, or scientific research. The aim is to describe or explain the phenomenon of ethics or to obtain a theory of human nature that contains ethical issues. (Frankena, 1973).

Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy (Franz-Josef, 2015) that involves "systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong behavior" (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020). The field of ethics, along with aesthetics, concerns matters of value, and thus comprises the branch of philosophy called axiology (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, 2021).

The term *Bioethics* was coined by Fritz Jahr (1926) in an article entitled "bioethical imperative about the use of animals and plants in scientific research (in Sass & Martin, 2007). In 1971, the American biochemist Van Rensselaer Potter used the term to describe the relationship between the biosphere and the human population. Potter's work laid the basis for global ethics, a discipline centered around the link between biology, ecology, medicine, and human values (Lolas, 2008; Goldim, 2009).

## 2. Environmental ethics

**What is Environmental ethics?** It is a discipline or branch of ethics that discusses the moral relationship between man and the world around him (Cunningham & Mary, 2012).

Environmental ethics arises from the philosophy of ethics. Hailwood (2015) suggests that it is better to think of much of the interesting work environmental philosophy as a kind of critical philosophy.

Withgott and Marcum (2008) claim that Environmental ethics is the application of ethical standards in the relationship between human and non-human beings. They say that it is difficult to use because it depends on one's moral standards. It depends on one's morality although we have expanded our moral attention. Also, we extend it to nature, communities, and animals, and even the whole ecosystem (Withgott & Marcum, 2008).

**Why we should develop environmental ethics?** "Many environmental issues, including endangered species protection, sustainable resource management, genetically modified crop use, greenhouse gas mitigation, population growth, and chemical contamination, are as much ethical issues as they are economic or legal issues. It is,

therefore, crucial to evaluate the policies and practices regarding them in terms of what is right and good, in addition to what is efficient or expedient" (Palmer et al., 2014).

## 3. The theories of environmental ethics

Non-Western cultures often have broader moral domains. But there are three main perspectives in Western ethics including Anthropocentrism claims that only humans have rights, Biocentrism says that certain living things also have value, and Ecocentrism declare that whole ecological systems have value (Withgott et al., 2008). Environmental ethics is in many ways an argument about the place of humans in nature.

### 3.1 Anthropocentric environmental ethics

Anthropocentrism believes that only human beings have a direct intrinsic moral value. Some people think that environmental policies should be evaluated solely based on their impact on humans (see Baxter, 1974; Norton, 1988). When Lynn (1967) introduced the term "anthropocentric" and linked it to a belief that humans had a right or even a mandate to dominate the earth, he established a fundamental argument in environmental ethics.

### 3.2 Zoocentrism environmental ethics

Zoocentrists allow for the inclusion of various nonhuman animals. Zoocentrism is an ethic that centers on animal rights. In this moral theory, we are confronted with a view that considers not only humans but also other animals - including all animals in the field in question - to be morally important and considerable.

Callicott (1980) provided a significant counterpoint to Zoocentric animal liberation ethics. He believes that preserving the good of the whole may well require that individuals be killed or removed from the land (Callicott, 1980).

### 3.3 Biocentrism environmental ethics

Biocentrists enlarge the circle to all individual living beings—plants and animals—and out of necessity. The range of living organisms is much wider than that of humans and other non-human animals (Attfield, 1983, Goodpaster, 1978 and Taylor, 1986). Biocentrism originates in a deep critique of anthropocentrism and its perceived inability to help us comprehend how we ought to interact with and value what is not human (Michael & Ryan, 2015). Biocentrism, as a kind of non-anthropocentrism, holds that anthropocentrism is inadequate for the preservation and protection of nonhuman living things. Albert (1936) is considered by many to be the founding ancestor of biocentrism (see Schweitzer 1936), and inspired others, such as Rachel Carson who dedicated *Silent Spring* (Carson, 2002) to him. Paul Taylor expanded Schweitzer's "reverence for life" (see Taylor 2011) and has been the standard-bearer of biocentrism. He rejects any hierarchal distinctions among living beings, declaring that all should be accorded unconditional respect. Goodpaster (1978)

presents a challenge to Taylor's non-hierarchical stance, stating that it is impossible to live if all living beings are equal in moral significance. This problem of ethical overload prompted others to offer solutions to a crowded moral universe (Michael & Ryan, 2015).

Attfeld (1998), believes in biocentrism and consequentialism. He proposes "trusteeship as a credible and morally sound view of responsibility for future generations". He offers a consequentialist argument based on the precautionary principle that "prudence is required to reduce the risk for future generations" (Michael and Ryan, 2015).

### **3.4 Ecocentrism environmental ethics**

Ecocentrists expand the circle to include ecological collectives (i.e., species, populations, biotic communities, etc.). (Michael & Ryan, 2015)

Ecological totalitarianism considers two types of beings to be morally important and considerable; the biosphere as a whole and the large ecosystems that make up this biosphere. The animals, including humans, as well as the plants, rocks, molecules, etc., that make up these large ecosystems are not morally significant; They are only relevant to the extent that they help to protect this important whole to which they belong.

### **3.5 Ecocentrism and deep ecology**

Ecocentrism extends moral consideration to include "soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" p. 239 (see Leopold 1987, cited under Foundational Texts from Science). In comparing ecocentrism from biocentrism, at ecocentrism theory, species, populations, and ecosystems are morally relevant and part of the moral community.

Callicott(1980) examines a range of issues from environmental activism to ecological metaphysics in agriculture through considering ecocentrism. Hunt (1980) critiques arguments in Goodpaster (1978, cited under Biocentrism) and in Feinberg (1974, cited under Zoocentrism) that "mere things" must be excluded from moral consideration because they lack interests.

### **3.6 Deep ecology**

A specific line of ecocentric inquiry was first articulated by Naess (see Naess, 1972), and later expanded in Devall and Sessions (2001) and Fox (1995). Naess identified that technological or most policy solutions are "shallow" and are unable of addressing the larger question of how to encourage change on a fundamental level. He believes that "these changes must be based on Self-Realization or the understanding that humans are deeply embedded within, and inseparable from, the world." (Michael et al., 2015). Naess's theory try to explain the significance of self-realization. One aspect of the critique of deep ecology theory is that focusing on an individual and self-realization may lead to anthropocentrism.

In the discussions on deficiency in current theories of environmental ethics, Elliot (1992) acknowledges that

none of these theories are comprehensive and complete and that they have ambiguities and contradictions that become more apparent when they enter the realm of action. So none of these theories can provide appropriate moral policies that are clear enough (Elliot, 1992).

## **4. Truth-centrism environmental ethics**

### **Definition of the Truth-centered environmental ethics**

Truth-centrism or right-oriented theory means that: everything (living and nonliving) in the universe as well as human has its own right. The human in its relation with any creatures must know and keeps the right of related creatures. All living and nonliving creatures as well as human life needs to be given appreciation and must be cared for and conserved if human could have access and could have control over them. As human has limited control over creatures such as the sun, moon, etc. The truth- centric Environmental ethics theory is new. This theory holds that all beings have a right in the system of existence. Therefore, the attitude and consequences of human morality and behavior with their environment and other beings must be according to the type and ratio of this right and the position of each of them and the position of human himself.

Numerous theories have been proposed in the field of environmental ethics, but each has its shortcomings and has provoked much criticism about itself. Along these theories, a new theory has been described which, from the theorist's point of view, is a holistic theory that encompasses the scope of moral consideration of all universes and creations, including living and non-living. Also, its holistic look is realistic and practical. This theory was proposed in 2014 in the first national conference on environmental education, culture, and environmental ethics by the Scientific Association of Environmental Education and Sustainable Development and was published in the second national conference of environmental science and engineering in the winter of 2020. In this article, this theory is explained and developed, which has been exposed to the judgment and critical view of experts in order to be more comprehensive, practical and deeper.

The new theory of Truth-centrism or right-centric environmental ethics considers the truth at the center and axis of the universe. To know the right of every object and being, we must explore enough and know the necessary knowledge. For example, about the theory of deep ecology environmental ethics, we should know and ask what is deep ecology? What does shallow ecology mean? How to distinguish deep from shallow? Isn't it better to ask what the truth is? and who has right instead of asking what deep ecology is? In the new theory of Truth-centrism environmental ethics, we must first know and ask, what is the truth? In fact, all of our knowledge is manifested in knowing the concept of right from the wrong? What is the right of every being and its relation to the rights of other beings? If our view and our attitude is, right and based on the criteria of truth, our perception,

and action in dealing with that being or phenomenon is correct and otherwise, it is false. The theory of Truth-centrism environmental ethics states that every object and being in the universe, whether living or non-living, whether human or non-human, has a right for itself and human has a duty concerning other objects and beings, to know their rights and keep these rights. Recognize it and act on it. Now, for these righteous deeds to be done correctly, human beings must acquire and learn enough knowledge in each specific case. To act based on morality and the observance of the rights of other beings, otherwise, his action can lead to environmental destruction. In this theory, there is another new concept about the role of human. Human is not at the center of the universe.

As Dale (2008) explained, morality is a human construct that emerges in a world controlled by natural selection (Dale, 2008). However, Wilson, 2014, and many Western thinkers claim that we are the result of Darwinian natural selection. Wilson believes that although “the human epoch began in biological evolution and passed into pre-, then recorded, history is now more than ever before in our hands. He yet alarmed that, we are about to abandon natural selection by redesigning biology and human nature as we wish them.

In this aspect of view, another new issue of Truth-centrism theory is that human is a two-dimensional being who is both the result of natural selection and the result of supernatural choice. When he acts according to the theory of Darwinians natural selection, his behavior can be animal behavior in the human context or outside of it; it may be a kind of animal behavior. When he acts according to natural and moral laws that are against his immediate interests (a kind of supernatural choice), his behavior or morals is human behavior, which can be contrary to the theory of natural selection purposed by Darwin, and is based on the theory of supernatural selection second character of human nature.

### 5. Conclusion

Today, Western thinkers pay less attention to moral sermons or philosophical charters and believe that we should refer to the current knowledge in each case in dealing with nature and development. For example, Rolston, 2012 by presenting case studies such as climate change and sustainability, encourages us to become “ecological citizens” who are respectful and caring toward the natural world (Rolston, Holmes, III, 2012).

This sentence itself expresses a kind of moral philosophical view. These are concepts of goodness that can only be in the form of philosophy, viewpoint, and ethics. Man inevitably has to adjust his worldview and perspective in the form of a holistic philosophical perspective. That philosophy is: the truth centrism or right-oriented philosophy of environmental ethics. So the premise is that in his thinking and action, he asks unequivocally and impartially what is right?

On the application of ecological knowledge and that, we should refer to the current knowledge in each case in

dealing with nature and development, and as Rolston (2012) says in relation to climate change studies and development, that we should “become ecological citizens’ who are respectful and caring towards the natural world. In this case, the philosophy of truth-based ethics says that we must in any of our views on nature and society to discern what is truth? We must inevitably learn the current knowledge of ecology and development, because without the knowledge and awareness it is not possible to distinguish right from wrong.

Devall, Bill, and George Sessions (2001) declare that there is no sustained boundary between the self and the environment; if we harm nature, we are also harming ourselves.

Warwick (1995) declares that how the connection between ecology and spiritual awareness can establish an ecophilosophy informed by insights provided by psychology.

In this article, the theory of Truth-centrism in environmental ethics was briefly defined. The elaboration of this theory and its differences and distinctions with other theories need a more complete explanation, which will be provided in more detail by considering the feedback of other thinkers in the future. The subject of this theory is open and eagerly welcomes criticism from experts in the field of philosophy of ethics.

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### Conflict of view

For this article, there is no conflict of view.

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