# The Futures of Environmental Ethics

*A comparative analysis of bio- and eco-ethics.*

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# Abstract

What has environmental ethics done? This field, where combinations of analysis and praxis come together to make sense of the human-nature moral relationship, has done much for theory-building. It has confronted the premise that humans are the center of the moral world and has introduced alternative frameworks for valuing nature such as deep ecology and ecofeminism, among others. Yet, it has also been faulted for being more of a philosophical exercise in value clarification than a practical field, it has had a limited relationship to policy and resource management, and has been accused of neglecting empirical methods of inquiry. If we think we should mitigate environmental crisis, and we think ethics can inform ethical environmental action, it is crucial that we get a clearer understanding of current states of the field. This thesis uses bioethics – a field with a notable amount of public and political influence on national and global scales – as an analytical starting point to better understand what factors may be contributing to the relative obscurity and underuse of eco-ethics outside of philosophy. It then explores a potential future for environmental ethics through the creation of at least two "spheres" of practice. This approach is loosely based around bioethics' presence in the "spheres" of academia, the clinic, and in policy, where each sphere warrants different aims, methods and scopes of practice. This first sphere remains largely an academic enterprise focused mainly on theory building, and the second sphere relates more explicitly to "the field" via direct interaction with communities, policymakers and other stakeholders. Under this structure, eco-ethics can continue its important theoretical work but also expand into a less internalised, abstracted academic endeavour to an ethic which integrates itself in more embodied, case-based work. In this way, the future of eco-ethics need not be a total abandonment of the project of establishing non-anthropocentric valuing, but rather a diversification of methods and value based around cases uncovered directly in the field.

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To my partner, Mathew: boy am I glad to share this life with you.

*Pentru bunicul Mircea, mama, şi tata. Cu piciorul drept înainte*.

# Table of Contents

# 1. Introduction

What has environmental ethics done for those outside of philosophy in the fifty-odd years since its beginning? This field, where combinations of analysis and application come together under the banner of understanding humanity's moral relationship with the environment, has indeed done a lot for theory-building. Perhaps the field's most radical contribution is its confrontation of the premise that humans are the center of the moral universe, a premise which had been assumed in Western moral philosophy (Matthews 2018). It has introduced and formalised alternative frameworks for valuing nature into the academic lexicon – frameworks such as deep ecology and ecofeminism, to name a few. Insofar as eco-ethics has "sharpened our grasp of many issues and problems" through theorizing, it has indeed been important (Bruner and Oelschlaeger 1994, 383).[1]

Yet, eco-ethics has accomplished few of its goals, at least in terms of stimulating widespread pro-environmental behaviour. Michael Bruner and Max Oelschlaeger put it this way: "The growth of environmental ethics as an academic discipline has not been accompanied by any cultural movement towards sustainability" (1994, 337). Environmental ethics has been faulted for being more of a philosophical exercise in value clarification than a practical ethic (Minteer 2012; Light 2002; Norton 1991), it has had a relatively non-existent relationship with policy and resource management (Brown 2009), and has been accused of neglecting empirical methods of inquiry (Minteer 2012; Norton 1991). Political philosopher David Schmidtz reflects that "environmental philosophers spend a lot of time discussing what we call environmental justice, but we never (to my knowledge) discuss environmental conflict resolution" (2017, 521).

However, we should be sympathetic to eco-ethic's cause: interpreting, communicating, and establishing normative frameworks for interacting with nature – in a time where that is critically needed. We are a world on the brink of environmental disaster: oceans acidifying, flora and fauna disappearing, and entire countries suffering from increasingly unpredictable weather patterns which

[1] I use eco-ethics and environmental ethics interchangeably.

disproportionately affect the most vulnerable, both human and non-human (IPCC 2019). A "planetary boundaries" analysis shows that humans are actively destabilizing major bio-systems, accelerating biodiversity loss, interfering with the nitrogen cycle, and impacting climate change overall (Rockström et al. 2009). This analysis, among multiple others, points to a new age of human dominance affecting global, fundamental systems change aptly deemed the Anthropocene (see Crutzen 2005).

However, framing problems and solutions of environmental destruction only in terms of its scientific or technical components is highly limiting. To echo philosopher Robert Frodeman: "the relationship between scientific fact and decision-making is far from linear" (2004, 8). The science has pointed to a phenomenon in which we are, to lesser or greater degrees, implicated. Structuring and re-creating political and cultural paradigms to mitigate the phenomenon is a complex task beyond the descriptive force of science alone. Indeed, "rather than being a question of predictive science, the climate change debate is fundamentally a debate over meanings and values – about what kind of world we want to live in" (Ibid., 7).

If we wish to mitigate the crisis ushered in by the Anthropocene, and we think ethics can spur or inform action, or at least communicate or interpret courses of action, it is crucial that we get a better understanding of the current state of the field of environmental ethics. In other words, it is worth exploring the relationship between environmental ethics and effective environmental practice. How is environmental ethics guiding not only the average citizen, but also institutions (governments, the private sector, and so on) that have the regulatory and systemic power to control what actually happens *to* nature?

Indeed, the field of ethics not only intends to explore morality, but also has a deeply practical element to it by providing *methods* for normative action through a set of standards, guides, or processes (see Arras 2010). These methods range from appealing to traditional forms of moral reasoning (teleological, deontological, etc.) which attempt at "applying" ethics to the real world, to *mid-level* methods such as *principlism* that combine abstract theory with more contextual approaches, to strictly case-base, bottom-up or *particularist* methods which take the individual or the

context as a starting point for ethical deliberation and do not necessarily attempt at creating a generalizable ethic.

The methods that an applied ethic employs makes a difference to how practical the ethic ends up being in matters such as conflict resolution or policy management; a highly theoretical, abstracted ethical theory can be much more difficult to incorporate in policy than mid-level theory, for example. As such, I believe, we should not only be paying attention to what environmental ethics has done in terms of establishing theoretical value, but rather, what has the field done for environmental problem solving – how has the field helped resolve environmental conflicts, practically speaking? Viewed in this way, eco-ethics' influence is more limited. *Why is this the case?*

One reason offered for eco-ethics' relative underuse is its hyper-focus on ontological and epistemological clarification about the natural world – on establishing the right way to value nature, the right way to relate to nature – instead of direct engagement with more political issues (see Light 2002). Mainstream environmental ethics purports that the primary job of the moral philosopher is to offer intellectual aid through sound moral reasoning; the ethicist provides the rational basis for recalibrating our values, which would then translate to pro-environmental behaviour (see Callicott 1989). In short: with the establishment of better values, we establish better behaviour. Is the job of the eco-philosopher only tied to setting up the right theory for moral re-orientation? This method alone, I argue, is insufficient, as evidenced by the relative lack of change in wide-scale pro-environmental behaviour amongst the general public. Yet, eco-ethics continues to champion value-clarification above direct political engagement: "The true test of an environmental ethic… is not whether it contributed to a management ethic, or set of policies, but simply whether it is right" (Light 2002, 105).[2] This assertion is commonplace within environmental philosophy (Minteer 2012; Norton 1991).

A lack of practical problem solving has not been the case for another branch of applied ethics, *bioethics*. Though bioethics' focus is arguably narrower – placing humans at the moral center – both fields ultimately analyze relationships between

[2] It is important to note that Light is reiterating eco-philosopher Katz's thinking here, and not his own.

ourselves and nature.[3] The fields are similar in other ways too: they were established around the same time (1960-70), they involve similar actors, and they use many of the same philosophical frameworks (utilitarianism, deontology, etc.) in grounding their most fundamental theories. Yet despite all this, there is a major difference between these comparable fields. Where bioethics has seemingly appeared suddenly and flourished publicly (Engelhardt 2012), becoming commonplace in politics and life-science research, environmental ethics has not.

What bioethics can offer to eco-ethics is proof that a direct relationship with institutions and politics is possible. In what follows I will argue that it is 1) its participation in political and social settings as well as 2) its array of methodological approaches that has allowed bioethics to make an impact. By "impact", I do not mean to imply that bioethics has endorsed a specific set of moral principles that then have been widely taken up because of its existence; rather, "impact" is taken to mean that bioethicists are actively used for their analytic and interpretive skill. In other words, bioethics has shown us that ethics need not be tethered to internal discourses on value clarification, but that ethics can have political and legal implications. In this way, "ethical studies may fairly be called political" (Bruner and Oelschlaeger 1994, 378). By extension, I purport that eco-ethics *should* "get us somewhere" and that "somewhere" relies on forging relationships to institutions if eco-ethicists are to engender pro-environmental behaviour.[4]

Indeed, there are enough similarities between bioethics and eco-ethics to warrant comparing several aspects including their respective backgrounds and motivations, their scopes and methods of practice, as well as their overall societal impact. In principle, the relative success of bioethics in the global socio-political sphere can provide a springboard for understanding where eco-ethics stands today, as well as where it could be, or what it could look like, in the future. The aim of the thesis then, is to examine and compare bio and eco-ethics, and make a pragmatic argument for an eco-ethics that is more directly interactive. The final goal is to envision a future of

[3] Though environmental ethics first emerged from bioethics, the two fields have separated, and bioethics maintains a narrower focus, with particular attention to clinical and biomedical settings and research (Düwell 2013; Gaines and Juengst 2008). Though, there *is* some crossover in terms of topics and literatures between the two. Ex: researchers testing on animals may consult both bioethics and eco-ethics literature.

[4] In *Rethinking Deep Ecology*, Nina Witoszek's opening statement includes a reflection on whether Arne Næss' deep ecology movement has "got us anywhere worth getting" (1995).

eco-ethics that, while still attentive to the theoretical issues, facilitates more direct relationships between non-philosophers, other disciplines (such as law, economics, social and environmental sciences) and institutional structures.

## 1.1. Methodology

This thesis is a pragmatically-oriented theoretical exploration of two branches of applied ethics. It is an exploration of the philosophical backgrounds, motivations, scopes of practice and methods within bioethics and environmental ethics, and how they translate their theories into practice. This work is based on the content analysis of a selection of seminal texts and other important literatures within both of these ethics. The texts were selected from the secular, western philosophical canon, as this is the context which dominates the global conversation in both ethics (Scher and Kozlowka 2018; Düwell 2013).[5]

The thesis' primary mode of analysis is found in comparing the two branches of ethics from their backgrounds, to influence, to methods. I use a twofold understanding of influence: it can be seen academically, in terms of knowledge building, but also seen in terms of how the fields are supported or enabled through other mechanisms such as policy. Indicators of influence can include metrics (peer review, publications, etc.), citations outside of philosophy (interaction with other groups) as well as narrative descriptions of influence in politics (in policy, in governmental committees, etc.). I focus on the latter indicator, as this thesis is qualitative in nature. I recognize that measuring the fields in this way may risk devaluing their work by emphasizing a certain outcome, but they are the best options available to getting a sense of *to what extent* and *how* both ethics are used within institutions. Moreover, my point in examining both ethics is not about attacking or undermining specific values – anthropocentric or otherwise – or whether they are ontologically true or false, but rather examining how they are implemented or interacted with by non-philosophers.

[5] Though the West – particularly white, European-derived understandings – dominates its discourse, bio and eco-ethics have distinct intellectual traditions and varied discourses around the world. The last few years especially have shown an increased interest in forwarding these different knowledge streams in global ethics literatures and practices, but there is still a long way to go (Myser 2018).

I compare bioethics and environmental ethics because they are both similar in many ways but diverge, among other points, at the level of impact on policy and institutions at large. A qualitative comparative analysis acts like a tool, a mirror that draws attention to similarities and differences more clearly. Though comparative analyses are often used to construct explanatory theories, they are also used for drawing "concepts according to which phenomena can be classified and arranged" (Raivola 1985, 363). I offer bioethics as an exploratory mirror towards understanding what a more impactful eco-ethics *might* look like, if it were to incorporate particular practices.

Due to the broadness of the subjects, the thesis employs a wide-reaching approach, or "big-picture" mapping of bio- and eco-ethical landscapes rather than employing a more a case-based approach. In other words, I will be engaging in *metaphilosophical* reflection on the purported aims of both eco- and bioethics, as well as its relationship to other disciplines and practice. To this end, my metaphilosophical framework is *pragmatic*, which I will unpack further in the next section.

Importantly, the thesis does not aim at making environmental ethics *like* bioethics – the fields diverge for a reason: they tend to different subject matters and have different motivations. Moreover, each field is so complex and evolving that it is not possible to give fixed solutions. Instead, the thesis pays particular attention to what the success of the bioethical model can offer to its applied ethics' counterpart, suggesting a *broad* strategy for future eco-ethics practice.

### 1.1.1. A pragmatic approach

The following is an overview of how the project intends to use philosophical pragmatism, and *environmental* pragmatism in particular. Colloquially, pragmatism is often taken to mean "results above all", where any moral rule or practice may be bypassed for an end goal. This is an approach that is highly simplistic and makes ethics a problem of convenience – and not the one I wish to take on. Pragmatism, in an otherwise heterogeneous discourse, can be thought of as a philosophical theory but also approach which relates truth, beliefs and meaning in this way: there is no

immutable way of ascertaining a belief and all beliefs require justification by looking to experience (Minteer 2012).

The process of knowledge-seeking, or inquiry, is embedded and articulated relationally through an ever-changing world. The impermanence of worldly conditions means our beliefs are also mutable; what is true is therefore contextually bound. Uncovering the truth about the world is not about mirroring some external reality, but rather about, on a Jamesian reading, what has been largely agreed upon or what "works" (see James in Goodman 1995 [1907]). In this way, we do not just look at the world as spectators, but as creators of truth – scientists of our own experience. Our embodiment and our relations create the frameworks for how we understand, or interpret the world – which means nothing is knowable with absolutely certainty.

If all beliefs require looking to the world for justification, then forming a philosophical belief is *itself* an experiential endeavour, and the role of theorizing is to act as a tool to make sense of the world rather than one that purely models, or attempts at modeling, an "objective" reality. The same process applies to ethics, where pragmatism takes ethics "out of the ethereal realm of the absolute and the a priori and is thoroughly naturalized" (Arras 2017, 102). What works, therefore, emerges experimentally from a sea of experience, and therefore is both fallible and changeable.[6] Having this sort of openness towards experimentation and change means looking at value as it exists in context, and extending tolerance to worldviews unlike our own. A salient example of the pragmatist method is found in the teacher who is experimenting with what works, or does not work, within the classroom. What works in the classroom is not pre-determined, not imposed on from above, but rather determined internally to the situation at hand, as the process of experiencing unfolds (see Dewey 1986 [1938]).

If pragmatism is meta-philosophy that begins at ground level, *environmental* pragmatism is motivated by the moral impetus to construct a moral practical philosophy relating to pro-environmental behaviour. Think of environmental

[6] This has opened up pragmatism to the criticism of it being anti-philosophy (Callahan 2010). To that, several philosophers have shot back that pragmatism is not an "anything goes" mentality – and that there are reasons to select one course of action over another, even if we may not be sure about it ontologically. See section 3.4.1 for a defense of pragmatism along these lines.

pragmatism as a "strategy", one that may take on different forms – the field is, after all, highly diverse and has no unitarian thinker or "master canon" (Minteer 2012).[7] Rather, the approach is centered around "bridging gaps between environmental theorists, policy analysts, activists, and the public" through "investigation into the overlapping normative basis of specific environmental organization and movements, for the purposes of providing grounds for the convergence of activists on policy choices" (Light and Katz 1996, 5).

This pragmatism, then, aims at facilitating decision-making within normative contexts. The way to do this may mean different things depending on the pragmatist. For some, it means assuming pluralism and paying special attention to how context facilitates different environmental relationships, and which normative relationships manifest a particularly robust environmentalism (see Parker 1996). For others, it means maximizing the normative probability of convergence ("unity") on practical environmental solutions despite varying theoretical starting points (see Norton 1991), and for another group it is about finding a philosophy which "matters" to us, which puts our experiences at the forefront of philosophical inquiry – after all, why study something we have to divorce ourselves from (see Minteer 2012). I draw particularly upon this latter pragmatism, especially Minteer's conceptualization of what he calls a "third way" of approaching eco-ethics: a way which accommodates both anthropocentric *and* non-anthropocentric viewpoints, the latter of which are typically dismissed or side-stepped by most pragmatist philosophy (Minteer 2009; 2012).

Minteer stresses that purely instrumental (anthropocentric) approaches "do not exhaust the value discussion" – that there is substantial work that non-anthropocentric approaches can do towards limiting our impact in the Anthropocene, but that we must not ignore the anthropocentric traditions either (2012, 58). Minteer's point, and mine, is that a truly pluralist ethic requires incorporating and embracing the usefulness of both instrumentalist and non-instrumentalist ways of valuing.

[7] There are several schools of pragmatism, from the earliest forms shaped by the works of William James and John Dewey, to the neo-pragmatism of Hilary Putnam, Jürgen Habermas and Richard Rorty.

In addition to that, an environmental ethicist must work not as a spectator but as an active participant, encountering various environmental problems and working with them *in situ*. I expand on the possibilities of this point in the final chapter, but for now: Think of the ethicist like a teacher working in the classroom who limits abstraction and instead relies on an iterative process of learning. On this model, the ethicist can go into its own version of the "classroom", to learn about what may work. Classroom, here, can mean different things: it can mean working with environmental managers, conservationists, politicians, community leaders, and the public at large. Indeed, eco-ethicists do not have to only engage in "philosophical debates that are of interests mostly to other philosophers" but they can also "find a place for [themselves] in these broader discussions" (Light 2002, 107).

As a final note, I want to delineate how I intend to use pragmatism. This thesis is not *about* pragmatism and will not be purporting that the practicing eco-ethicists become philosophical pragmatist as such – though I do argue that pragmatic elements, or tendencies, are necessary if environmental ethics is to make an impact: tendencies like attention to place, experience, and experimentalism. Rather, I intend to use pragmatism as the orientation which underpins the whole work; it is the reasoning that drives the argument that philosophy should be linked to the "real-world" in the first place. Where pragmatism is most used, however, will be the final chapter, in which I will offer a more direct, but broad, pragmatic "strategy" for what the future of environmental ethics should look like.

### 1.1.2. Frameworks

This thesis draws particularly on the framework and theories of "field philosophy" (see Frodeman et al 2012). A field philosopher works relationally, with the pragmatic aim of facilitating more direct intervention:

> As a term of art, field philosophy is modeled on the idea of a field science, as it is practiced in ecology, geology, anthropology, and other fields… In philosophy, too, field research provides novel insights that bounce philosophy out of the intellectual ruts that can be notched when philosophers lose sight of

> how theory connects with real-world problems (Brister and Frodeman 2020, 6)

Thinking about philosophy out in the field can 1) link the academic discipline of philosophy to the public domain but also 2) tie philosophy to institutions and to politics. In this way, field philosophy also draws from another framework: practical philosophy. The point, for the practical/field philosopher, is that groundwork inevitably changes how ethics gets applied; that top-down ethics and deductive application of principles often leave something to be desired.

This also means that though the philosopher has expertise insofar as they provide valid or sound moral arguments, a critical aspect of their work is not in necessarily finding the "right" answer, after all, "because morality is for everyone, one needn't be a philosopher to understand its requirements" (Engelhardt and Pritchard 2013, 161). Instead, the philosopher can help establish *a process* where moral dilemmas are at least better understood – and, in some practical sense, *practiced*. Paradoxically, in order to *practice* philosophy one cannot remain in the academy; it must intersect with law, government, politics, moral psychology, and other disciplines. Not only that, at least some part of applied philosophy needs to connect itself to institutions and politics – at least, if it wants to do something other than provide knowledge for knowledge's sake. Institutions include the media, schools, universities, and corporations, among other groups. The point is that institutions and politics/policies have a significant grasp on the way we live our lives, and are often the middlemen for what we can and cannot do.

Keeping the element of the "field" in mind, I will explore: How do bio- and eco-ethics interact with the academy, institutions and the public through policy? What are the various factors or conditions – both internal to the field, but also externally determined – that may have shaped each field's relationship to governance and institutions? What methods make up these fields? How do these methods serve to disseminate both ethics from abstract things to fields that may be "practical"? What assumptions are couched within these methods, and do they warrant updating?

Finally, I will be using Atwood Gaines and Eric Juengst's (2008) anthropological study of cultural bioethics through various "roles" and Adrian Viens and Peter

Singer's (2009) delineation of "spheres" within bioethical practice as a launching point for analysis in chapter 2: "What have bio and eco-ethics done?". I draw upon their typologies of "roles" and "spheres" to make sense of bioethics' social function, but I also use their understandings of these roles as a framework for the mission, posture, and potential direction of *eco-ethics* as well.

## 1.2. Overview

The thesis is divided into four primary chapters following this introduction: 2) "What have eco and bio-ethics done?", 3) "How have eco and bio-ethics done things?", 4) "Why might it be harder for eco-ethics to do things?" and finally, 5) "What should eco-ethics do?". The second and third will generally follow the same structure: exposition, a comparative analysis of both ethics, and an argumentative conclusion or main takeaways based on findings within the comparison. The fourth chapter will offer an analysis of the particular difficulties in facilitating large-scale pro-environmental behavior – of scaling up environmental ethics to meet global challenges. The takeaways of chapters 2 and 3, combined with the nuanced understanding of what eco-ethics is up against from the 4th chapter, will underscore the main premises for the argument I present in the final chapter "What should environmental ethics do?".

The second chapter explores the background (primarily exposition), motivations, and scopes of practice of both ethics through the analytical lens of *roles* in "The making of a bio or eco-ethicist" and *location* in "Where have bio and eco-ethics done things". The chapter will culminate in a comparative analysis. The chapter argues that the socio-cultural and political conditions of the US, where both ethics "originated" readily set up the bioethicist to take on the role of moral "expert", alongside several other roles, while offering no equivalent role for the eco-ethicist. While bioethicists operate within several *spheres* – in academia, in the clinic, and in policy – eco-ethicists are more limited. Where bioethical spheres such as medical settings have incorporated ethical dimensions in problem solving, environmental issues are often addressed technically or scientifically, making the role of the eco-ethicist seemingly superfluous. A primary takeaway of this chapter is that

environmental ethics does not have to remain tethered to academia. Like bioethics, it can branch out and create more explicit relationships with *in situ*, or situated, work. I argue that this is actually better for both the field and non-philosophers, as it allows the philosopher to bring attention to the ethical dimensions of nature management and policymaking, while also allowing stakeholders to co-produce ethical knowledge.

This leads into the third chapter: "How has ethics done things". I will first identify and describe a selection of common methods in bioethics and environmental ethics. In bioethics, these are: principlism, casuistry and narrative ethics. I show that, given the variety of mainstream methods within bioethics, ranging from high-level theory-based approaches to highly contextual approaches that do not aim at generalisation, the field has moved away from a purely monistic philosophical endeavour that attempts at capturing morality under one schema. I argue that this lends itself to creating a more pragmatic ethic – one that is experimental, and more open to fallibility. I then show how mainstream eco-ethics operates typically under monistic schemas built around the notion of de-centering humans as the locus of value. Their method is to get individuals to apply a master principle or set of master principles that would ensure the "right" relationship with nature based in non-anthropocentric tenets. I will show that the monistic method fails on theoretical and practical grounds. I purport that eco-ethics expand beyond necessary non-anthropocentrism to include a wide sphere of pluralist, environmental values and case-based approaches.

In chapter 4, I lay out the problematics that pose a particular challenge to the primary aim of eco-ethics – that is, the aim of establishing or informing positive environmental behavior. These problems include the hyper-complexity of environmental problems which evoke a series of temporal-spatial biases, as well as a number of moral-psychological hurdles which shape our ability to respond effectively at both individual and systemic levels. I will also critique the systemic reliance on *economism*, which translates environmental problems into monetary terms while effectively ignoring other forms of value; I will purport that this is indeed also a great barrier to environmental progress, but that mainstream eco-ethical strategies to tackle this reliance have been faulty. These problematics will factor into any future strategy eco-ethics should take on.

In the final chapter, I explore a potential future for environmental ethics. First, I briefly explain what eco-ethics can take away from its bioethical counterpart: mainly, bioethics' rather pragmatic characteristics of being attentive to place, to experience, to social practice. I then propose a *sphered* approach to delineating environmental tasks. This approach is loosely based around bioethics' presence in the spheres of academia, the clinic and in policy, where each sphere warrants different aims, methods and scopes of practice. This sphered framework is based around the takeaways of the previous chapters. This first sphere remains largely an academic enterprise focused mainly on rational theory building, and the second sphere relates to understanding the political and institutional dimensions of environmental problems, and the third more explicitly to the field in the form of direct interaction with communities, and other "environmental workers".[8] Under this structure, eco-ethics can continue its important theoretical work but also expand into a less internalised, abstracted academic endeavour, and into an ethic which integrates itself in more embodied, or situated, case-based work. In this way, the future of eco-ethics need not be a total abandonment of the project of establishing non-anthropocentric valuing, but rather a diversification of methods and values based around cases uncovered directly in "the field". I end the thesis with the impression of an increasing interest in the normative aspects of environmental problems, thus offering a tempered yet hopeful vision for the futures of environmental ethics.

[8] This is my catch-all term for those who have the ability to change the outcome of an environmental problem. An example is the conservation manager, but also it can be policy makers or local community leaders. (There will inevitably be overlap between the fields).

# 2. What have bio- and eco-ethics done?

The first part of this chapter tells the "origin stories" of bio- and eco-ethics. A substantial overview of the histories of both ethics will give a good sense of *how* and *why* each branch of applied ethics came about – what socio-political conditions shaped, and continue to shape, the fields. Seeing the fields in their historical contexts can offer glimpses into the social and intellectual conditions of their flourishing. Note that these origin stories are mainly focused on the United States, as this is the country typically credited with "institutionalising" the fields into academic areas (Evans 2011; Brennan and Lo 2015).

In the second part, I expand on the "why" and "what" of both fields in a section titled "The making of a bio and eco-ethicist". This section is largely meta-philosophical, laying out the aims of each applied ethic, and the extent of their practice (what counts as a bioethical problem, what counts as eco-ethical). I will show how these scopes of practice and contextual aspects define what "roles" bio and eco-ethicists take on. I will finish the chapter off with a section titled "Where have bio and eco-ethics done things?", where I describe and analyse both fields' relationships to academia and institutions.

By using the analytical lenses of *roles* and *place*, to understand motivations, aims and approaches of bio- and eco-ethics, the chapter offers two main takeaways: First, that the socio-historical conditions which brought about the field made the bioethicists' *role* in health care more recognizable. These roles for the bioethicist include being a moral expert, a counsellor, a futurist, a traditionalist, and more. In eco-ethics' case, roles are more limited, and not as explicit.

Second, that *place* or location plays an integral role in the shaping of not only what gets considered an eco-ethical or bioethical issue, but how that issue gets addressed. In bioethics' case, I identify three spheres of practice, or places where bioethics gets used: academia, in public policy and in the clinic (Singer and Viens 2009, 1).[9] Eco-

[9] "Clinic" is a catch-all term for medical institutions like research centers, hospitals, laboratories and actual clinics; any place where medicine or research gets practiced.

ethics' place is in academia and between other ethicists; its concepts rely on a "trickle-down" method of dispersion – someone, somewhere reading their work – instead of direct relationships to institutions or government.

As a whole, this chapter will set us up for better understanding the methodologies in each field, which will be discussed in chapter 3: "How bio and eco-ethics do things". Ultimately, it will provide a basis for the final chapter's assertion that eco-ethics must expand both the range of its practice to include philosophising in the field, and the methods of its practice (as I will show in the following chapter) if it is to make a substantial impact on pro-environmental behaviour.

## 2.1. The origin stories of bioethics

Attempts at codifying morality to deal with the problem of being human – our often faulty biology and inevitable death – have existed for centuries.[10] However, most bioethical scholarship concentrates on the period after World War II, and at its onset, centered around the US and Europe. The focus on this era is not entirely misplaced, especially against the backdrop of the medical horrors of the Holocaust. The world watched as post-war accounts of medical and research programs subjecting people to illness, disfigurement and torture to further scientific aims came to light.[11] There is an impression that the focus of bioethical scholarship came out of a "lurching disasterism" (McWhirter 2012, 331).

However, some scholars point out that these horrors had limited North American media coverage and relatively little impact, at least initially, on the day to day operations of physicians. As such, some authors have stated that attributing bioethics' start to WWII – at least in the US – is myopic (Fox and Swazey 2008). Nevertheless, this experimentation did force medical and legal communities to revaluate the ways in which research on humans is produced, creating certain

[10] *The Hippocratic Oath* of Ancient Greece is an example of an ancient "ethical code" – though there is plenty of evidence to show that the oath was, in fact, not common to "mainstream" Greek culture (Gaines and Juengst 2008).
[11] There are many accounts detailing the extent of Nazi experimentation. To illustrate: the Nuremberg Tribunal, tasked with trying war criminals, accused 23 people of war crimes, 20 of which were doctors (Lopes 2014).

proclamations with a specific regard towards avoiding history repeating itself: the global *Nuremburg Code* (1947) in the wake of Nazi experimentation, and later, the *Declaration of Helsinki* (1964, updated in 2013) to name a few.

This revaluation became especially pertinent as research that had once been inconceivable, let alone practically possible, had emerged – from cloning and genetic engineering to artificial organs and human/animal chimeras. The "side effects" of science had become impossible to ignore (Evans 2011). What was once thought of as a life with a predictable beginning (birth), middle (aging), and end (death), shaped by uncontrollable forces of nature was turned on its head, the nature of "human nature" now ambiguous. For some, this was a slippery slope: What are the consequences of toying with our little-understood genetic coding? Would the meanings of our lives change if we allowed, for instance, artificial insemination? Are designer babies morally permissible? For others, new technology made possible a life of health and happiness never seen before: "The 'direction' of evolution, both biological and cultural, is the 'scientific' foundation upon which to re-establish our system of ethics and to rest 'our most cherished hopes'" (Kaye in Evans 2011, 6).

The interplay between culture and biology indeed shaped bourgeoning bioethical discussion – and not only because of punctuating scandals. "The contributions of social, political and economic factors to the interpretation of ethical guidelines are less obvious than that of novel situations, but they are equally important" (McWhirter 2012, 334). In other words: disaster alone did not propel bioethics into existence, but rather served as a catalyst within an already changing social, political and economic sphere.

By the 20th century Europe and North America had undergone two significant shifts in medical practice: the regulation of medicine and the introduction of public health as a concept (McWhirter 2012). [12] In order to ensure civil support and validate their work, medical professionals began to use "ethics speak", using normative statements through which the public could better understand its practices. In this way, the public became part of the "in group", privy to the process of medicine and its normative aspects, even if they did not see ethics as a set of theories or principles as the

[12] Previous to this medicine had been more about observation and palliative care than based on empiricism or a scientific process (Scher and Kozlowska 2018).

"experts" did. Moreover, these normative statements were largely extractions of already existing public opinion, making it even easier to obtain public support. That is, concepts of autonomy, or justice, and the like where already present in the religious and cultural underpinnings of the country, and thus were easier to draw upon when formulating an ethical discourse (Evans 2011).

Including public opinion in professional matters meant a wider array of voices finally began to get heard, meaning alternate ways of not only thinking but *being* were now more possible (McWhirter 2008; Evans 2011; Scher and Kozlowska 2018). Post-war America underwent a paradigmatic battle of *what* could be said and *who* could say it. Those who controlled public narrative as heads of universities, journalists, religious leaders, and government officials saw a (relative) heterogenization, and were no longer unquestioned agents of power, and what was once a relatively homogenous (protestant) social ethic had begun to change.

While it is true that US-Americans had long been distrustful of "the establishment" (the government) (Evans 2012), by the late 60s this distrust seeped into other fields of expertise – and notably, targeted physicians. This criticism was not without cause, which brings us back to the element of disaster and scandal that foreshadows post-hoc ethical reflection: since WWII multiple scandals involving clinicians and their research subjects came to light, underscoring that doctors are not always harbingers of goodness nor are they entities forwarding a morally "neutral" science (Lopes 2014). Cases like *Salgo* (1957) and *The Tuskegee Syphilis study* (1932-1972), among many others, underscored a need to revaluate US-American paternalism and its relationship to patient care (Scher and Kozlowska 2018).

The Salgo case centered on a patient paralyzed after a poorly executed aortography.[13] The patient argued that clinicians were not only negligent but also had failed to disclose potential complications that would have made a difference in choosing to undergo the procedure. As a result, the court ruled that *informed consent* was required by law; clinicians needed to inform patients of all their medical options before proceeding with treatment. This shift, among several other regulatory ones,

[13] A diagnosis test where x-ray contrast agent is injected into the aorta through a catheter.

provided patients legal legitimacy in asserting their rights, shifting the medical paradigm towards rights-centered care.

The Tuskegee study, cited as one of the most shocking research scandals in US history (Lopes 2014), left black male patients untreated for 40 years to observe the undisturbed progression of syphilis. Is it morally permissible to have lied to patients for 40 years, even for the sake of scientific "progress"; How did racism factor in to leaving patients untreated; Did researchers cause needless suffering to their patients, particularly considering effective treatment for syphilis was readily available? Questions like these, once exclusive to medical professionals, increasingly came into public and legal discourse, prompting the writing of the government sanctioned *Belmont Report* (1979) on the ethics of clinical research studies.

It would seem that medical professionals alone were no longer to be implicitly trusted in delivering ethical care, in knowing "the right thing to do", and therefore required a placeholder to come in and deliver normative conclusions on behalf of the people. Who better than a distinct entity, a "bioethicist" to do so? Indeed, by the late 60s bioethics institutionalized, opening *The Hastings Center* in '69 followed by the *Kennedy Institute of Ethics* at Georgetown University. These centers "filled the gap" between professional health care and "the public's need to address the problem that emerged as modern medicine extended its scientific and clinical powers" (Scher and Kozlowska 2018, 32). Within these centers the first iteration of intellectual boundaries in the field would be set, including bioethics' aims and motivations, methods and standards, legitimized particularly through the *Hastings Center Report* (Callahan 1971).

The consolidation of bioethics took place against the backdrop of social (and moral) revolution – from the civil rights movement spearheaded by iconic figures like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X, to women's rights and environmental movements, the invention of the birth control pill and Roe v Wade,[14] to re-examining definitions of family as a social unit made up of husband and wife, to the devastation of the Vietnam War. "On the part of many, there was a passionate commitment to a

[14] The landmark decision (1973) ruled that abortion is a constitutional right in the US.

new, progressive, post-traditional, social-democratic, *moral vision*" (Engelhardt, 2012, 9; emphasis mine).

In the wake of war, John Rawls wrote the hugely influential *A Theory of Justice* (1971). The book combined moral and political philosophy to paint a picture of moral progress in America. This was particularly relevant to the bioethical mission because it was a comprehensive philosophical attempt at linking ethics to politics, bridging a gap between abstract theory and practice that bioethics could draw a normative framework from (Scher and Kozlowska 2018). The book was praised as well as criticized, particularly as academic philosophers came to realize that establishing an all-encompassing moral theory to act upon is difficult and for many, ontologically impossible (Scher and Kozlowska 2018; Arras 2010).

For some bioethicists at major institutes, this led to a shift in intellectual focus towards better understanding the relationship between "is" (descriptive) and "ought" (normative). Was bioethics to be a strictly top-down ethic or was would it be better approached using bottom-up, contextual methods? From there bioethics expanded to the international level with the founding of the *International Association of Bioethics* (1991). Shortly thereafter came the *World Congress of Bioethics* (1992); its 15th conference was held digitally in June 2020.

As I will show later in the chapter, bioethics continues to expand; the field is a well-established presence with institutes around the world and a steady stream of new publications. With this globalization comes a renewed focus on the nature of bioethics and its function in society, particularly within different intersections of class, race, gender and novel scientific development.[15]

[15] Though there have been upsides to bioethics' "comfort with institutionalized medicine and its occupation with procedures, rules, rights, and legal frameworks", there are also important downsides to consider, especially as it relates to bioethics as a globalising entity (Chattopadhyay and De Vries 2008, 4). Namely, bioethics has espoused a western framework for morality in the form of methods and literatures. It is hard to speculate as to what this means for bioethics moving forward and how the field can continue to capacity build, in terms of expanding and exchanging bioethical knowledge between governments, NGOs, international organizations, as well as localized movements while also avoiding imperialist legacies.

## 2.2. The origin stories of eco-ethics

Environmental ethics can be understood as having come out of a combination of environmental and intellectual movements of the 60s/70s alongside a looming environmental crisis (Hens and Susanne 1998) – though strands of environmentalism, shaped by distinct ethical purviews, existed long before that. Indeed, Brenner reflects on how environmentalism, or broad ideologies concerning the treatment of nature, "began essentially as a moral commitment and, in many aspects, has retained this ethical force" (1996, 129). This early strand was bolstered by a moral rhetoric emphasizing a new ethic towards nature based primarily on the romanticist notions of aesthetic wonder (Ibid.). For example, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1836) and Henry David Thoreau (1863) wrote about the land being a temple in addition to being a resource – "a source for beauty, as well as bounty" (Brenner 1996, 129).

Eastern literatures and transcendental philosophy, which would influence both early and later eco-philosophies while also having distinct philosophical traditions in and of themselves, went one step further, stressing the importance of non-exploitative, empathetic, and imaginative relationships with nature. John Muir would base his campaign on the preservation of US wilderness on these sources, establishing the *Sierra Club*[16] (in 1892) and laying the foundation for the preservation of parks through what would later be known as the National Parks system. Muir's environmentalism was based on a *preservation* ethic, where nature should be protected or "preserved" as it is, free from human intervention (Brenner 1996). Following Muir, Gifford Pinchot set up a *conservation* ethic. Unlike Muir's, Pinchot's ethic was largely utilitarian, envisioning nature as a resource for humans to use efficiently (see Callicott 1990). Being "good" to nature meant conserving it such that it serves the most people over the longest time. These writings also influenced early 20th century environmental literature in the US, including forester Aldo Leopold's hugely popular *A Sand County Almanac* (1949), wherein he famously pushes for a new imagining of the land, or "land ethic".

[16] The Sierra Club is "the most enduring and influential grassroots environmental organization in the US" (Sierra Club 2020).

These works would re-emerge in the 60s, alongside new scientific evidence and a body of popular and academic literature warning of a looming environmental crisis, reinvigorating the question: *How should we relate to nature?* Rachel Carson's widely read *Silent Spring* (1962) opened the world's eyes to the detrimental effects of synthetic pesticides like DDT, particularly on bird populations; Paul and Anne Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1968) posited how increasing population would eventually lead to ecological collapse.

That same year NASA released *Earthrise*, a photograph taken of the Earth as seen from the Moon. For environmentalists and for many others, this picture marked a turning point in public perceptions of planetary fragility, with nothing around us Earthlings but "the suffocating void" (Macleish in Moran 2018). "To see the Earth as it truly is, small and blue and beautiful in that eternal silence where it floats, is to see ourselves as riders on the Earth together, brothers on that bright loveliness in the eternal cold" (Ibid.) In this way – and similar to bioethics – the threat of environment crises would lend itself to shaping new political and moral paradigms, one that attempts at facing an uncertain future. Then, April 22nd, 1970, on the heels of the anti-war protest movement, 20 million Americans took to the streets to march for a cleaner environment on what would be known as the first *Earth Day.*[17]

In the legal sphere, Christopher Stone pointedly asked: *Should trees have standing?* He argued that if non-human entities like corporations are given legal standing – or legal rights – then so should natural things like trees and rivers. This was important because giving non-human entities legal standing provided a route towards a legally binding obligation towards nature (or at least, parts of nature). The *Sierra Club v. Morton* case took this notion to court, where it was ruled that trees "can be named plaintiffs, as long as a named individual plaintiff satisfies the legal standards for standing" (Binder 2012, 148).

The growing profile of the environmental movement culminated in significant legislative changes for the US including: new waste disposal and land management laws, NEPA, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act, as well as in the formation of distinct legal advocacy groups like the Natural

[17] This year (2020) marked the 50th anniversary of Earth day.

Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund, etc. (Britton-Purdy 2016).[18] Despite the inception of all these other groups, a government panel or advocacy group *specifically* on environmental ethics was absent. Despite the relative interest in creating legal protections for nature, the ethical dimensions of environmental action were largely sidestepped by government regulators in the US until fairly recently (Brown 2010). Moreover, unlike with bioethics, a clearly delineated profession stepping in to "fill" the moral void created by clinicians, there would be no environmental ethicist coming in with distinct motivations, methods and standards to work closely with environmental groups. This is something we will come back to frequently and will play a large part in why I will ultimately suggest an expansion of the aims of eco-ethics.

Despite this lack of institutional presence, prompted by a growing concern over the state of the planet, some philosophical discussion was made public when Lynn White Jr. and Garrett Hardin published "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" (1967) and "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968), respectively, in the widely-read *Science* magazine. White's work attempted to provide a historical explanation for how the US had arrived at a state of ecological disrepair. He argued that teachings in Judeo-Christianity modeled a hierarchical relationship to nature based in domination, reflected through modern science and technology, inevitably ending in the misuse of nature. His conclusion urged a conceptual revisioning of relationships to nature, from "superiority" to respect. White's work marked an intellectual turning point – not to mention provoked a significant academic response from theologians – from framing solutions in terms of outward "technified" strategies, to more introspective, people-centered ones (Kawall 2017). While White focused on moral rehabilitation, Hardin's essay examined the relationship between ecology and collective action, warning of inevitable population growth regardless of long-term consequence as long as people think that there is more to gain by using resources or having children than by not.[19]

[18] The relationship between eco-ethics as a bourgeoning scholarly field and these legal milestones in environmental achievement are murky. See section 2.5.2 on the relationship between ethics and activism.

[19] Despite Hardin's status as scientist and environmentalist, his work – particularly evident in the focus on population control – was couched in blatantly anti-immigrant, white-nationalist motivations. "My position is that this idea of a multiethnic society is a disaster" (https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/garrett-hardin).

By the 70s, eco-ethics was still not taken seriously in intellectual circuits as more than just a special interest group within bioethics. "Areas such as animal ethics or eco-ethics (that is, environmental ethics) were considered by many to be almost arbitrary digressions, or at best as fields of discussion, sometimes interesting, that fascinated a very limited group of fans" (Agazzi 2019, 1).[20] However, the philosophical discussion had grown enough to warrant establishing the first conference on the relationship between philosophy and environment. The conference took place at the University of Georgia in 1971 and was attended by a large number of academic philosophers. This time-frame became especially meaningful, because while previous ethics framed topics in terms of human needs and human valuing, a new thought-line took shape: *Is our current ethic right for talking about environmental issues?*

Soon after, Australian philosopher Richard Sylvan and American philosopher Holmes Rolston III would address this question with their essays "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic" (1973) and "Is There an Ecological Ethic?" (1975), respectively, where *anthropocentrism,* or the "assumed moral superiority of humans", emerged as a clear theme.[21] The goal of environmental ethics, as they saw it, was to 1) challenge this assumed superiority while 2) establishing rational arguments for valuing nonhumans (Brennan and Lo 2015).

Since then, eco-ethics has focused its efforts on establishing a basis for non-anthropocentric re-positioning, insisting on a necessary moral reconfiguration towards more inclusive moral understandings towards nature (see Callicott 1995). In other words, eco-philosophical thought went full force into answering the question posed above: Whether our anthropocentric ethic was right for relating to the environment, and has dedicated itself to pursuing alternative, non-anthropocentric ethics.

In 1978, the field saw the establishment of its first academic journal, *Environmental Ethics*. After that came several edited collections including Elliot and Gare's *Environmental Philosophy* and Rolston's *Philosophy Gone Wild*, as well as

[20] A distinction should be made between academic environmental ethics and the environmental morality present in countries all over the world.
[21] Rolston's essay was published in *Ethics*, a "widely read and respected journal in the analytic philosophical genre" (Kawall 2017, 14).

textbooks like *Environmental Ethics* and *The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book* by Des Jardin and Vandeveer & Pierce, respectively. Suddenly the question was no longer simply about preservation or conservation but rather: *What is nature morally worth?*

The US discussion was heavily entwined with those coming up in Australia as well as Norway (Brennan and Lo 2015). These countries would shape distinct theories for the how the natural world can be valued. In Norway, philosopher and climber Arne Næss would develop his practical and influential *deep ecology* platform on the claim that people are inseparable from nature. His position was kept purposely open and changeable – some would it call vague and utopic (see Luke 2002) – and is rooted in a marriage of ethics and action, a process he called *ecosophy* (Hens and Susanne 1998). In Australia, Sylvan and Val Plumwood would formulate "deep green theory", along the lines of opposing the "chauvinism" of humankind. Later, in 1997, the International Association for Environmental Philosophy was formed.

Beginning in the 90s, the formation of eco-feminism and environmental pragmatism as approaches to environmental philosophy, however, and the renewed interest in philosophical theories like virtue theory suggests that eco-ethics is slowly diversifying (Kawall 2017). As Gardiner and Thompson remark: there is a "positive sense of the increasing attention being paid to justice and other political values" (2017, 3). However, though the field is showing tendencies towards pluralism, it is still constrained by the traditional "reason" serving philosophical analysis – it is still mainly concerned with a unitarian quest for truth under non-anthropocentric frameworks (Hens and Susanne 1998; Minteer 2012). There is some reason to hope for a more public-facing ethic, but that hope needs to be buttressed against working towards a pluralist ethic, and an environmental ethic that moves beyond the confines of philosophy and forms relationship with other disciplines and institutions.[22] What this thesis aims to do is show why this is needed and furthermore, what an embedded relationship between environmental philosophy and the public might look like.

[22] For an account of what this pluralist ethic could look like see the final chapter: "What can eco-ethics do?".

## 2.3. The making of a bio- or eco-ethicist

In laying out the histories of both fields up until the present, I hope to offer insight into the conditions which have led to their establishment, as well as their motivations. The point of this next exercise is to lay out the scopes of practice of the bio- and eco-ethicist through the various *roles* they take on, and how these roles motivate or impact their relationship with the public as well as with institutions. These can include the role of ethicist as *expert*, *counsellor*, *futurist*, *whistleblower*, and *advocate*, to be defined later. First, I examine bioethics and eco-ethics through the lens of various *spheres,* as the role, or function, of the ethicist is marked by location and not just by activity (Chambers 2000). Then, I compare the two ethics using role analysis based on the typology (expert, counsellor, etc.) laid out above.

I reason that bioethicists have assumed certain roles – particularly that of expert and counsellor – which give them a more direct relationship to government and institutions, and thus more direct access to and influence over the decision-making bodies that affect legal and institutional change, whereas eco-ethicists have not. These roles, in turn, have been shaped not only by a set of socio-historical conditions but also by the practical realities of spheres and locations (the limits of certain context) in which each ethic practices. This section will prime us for section 2.4: "Where have bio and eco-ethicists done things", which will expand on the concept of place and will ultimately contribute to my assertion that eco-ethics must widen its scope of practice to include *in situ* work thereby diversifying its roles in order to become a more practice-able ethic that facilitates pro-environmental behaviour.[23]

### What makes a bioethicist?

Bioethics, sometimes synonymously referred to as biomedical ethics, is the "ethical consideration of health professionals and researchers as applied within health-care delivery, health policy, and biological and medical research" (McWhirter 2012, 330). This relatively opaque and medically-inclined description is championed through highly influential texts such as Beauchamp and Childress' *Principles of Biomedical*

[23] I am aware that this may mean eco-ethics might have to sacrifice some of its philosophical "integrity". I confront this potentiality in the final chapter.

*Ethics* (1979). Another more expansive definition includes not only medicine but also all of (human) life science (Scher and Kozlowska 2018). This means that bioethics is: biomedical, clinical, research, or health-care oriented – but it also can be scaled to public health, administrative ethics (how health systems function) and even professional ethics (what is the role of the medical doctor or lawyer) (Holm and Williams-Jones 2006). Therefore, who gets to apply bioethics as "action-guiding ethical concepts" (Dunn & Ives 2009, 93) is a vast category including medical practitioners, researchers, scientists, lawmakers, policy-makers, and so on.

It may help to get a sense of who is "doing" bioethics if we think of the disciplines in terms of three main but non-exhaustive "spheres": bioethicists can work in the clinical sphere, in the policy-making sphere, as well as in academia (Arras 2010). A bioethicist in the clinic is focused on context and ethical decision-making alongside the fate of the individuals involved (patient, family, hospital staff, etc.); the bioethicist in policy-making takes on more wide-scale, i.e. systemic issues (consider the assisted suicide debates); and the academic bioethicist has the task of the "theoretical pursuit of truth" – determining the theories of the field (Ibid., 2), which gives them the freedom of being relatively removed from the individual or the system and its accompanying legal, technical or bureaucratic constraints.

These roles inform and shape one another – the clinical bioethics might realize that a top-down application of a novel theory might *not* work for her in the clinic, for example. Bioethics is also, therefore, cognizant of the fact that it does not work in a vacuum, and that the conditions of the clinic might mean a theory may not work – so it will try something else. In other words, there no unilateral agreement upon "the *character* or the substance of the services offered" (Engelhardt 2012, 2; emphasis mine). The field's content, its methods, its principles, is diverse, and informed – if not philosophically but at least practically – by the setting in which it is practiced.

I stress that the relationship to theory, scope of practice and motivations of the bioethicist look different depending on where they find themselves located. As Flynn points out: "for the academic bioethicist and her students, it does not matter if you end the seminar more confused than when you started it" (2020, 3). This, of course, would not be very helpful in moments of ethical problem solving like in the clinic. Under the "sphered" understanding of what bioethicists do, however, it would seem

that they are tasked with redirecting "knowledge" towards "action"; that knowledge is constructed differently depending on where the bioethicist "lives" – whether in academia, in the clinic, or in politics. In this way, it would seem that bioethics relates to thinking about and *acting* out ethics in various ways (Scher and Kozlowska 2018). Thus, acting/doing are integral goals. As I will later argue, the relationship ethics has with the clinical, as well as with other disciplines, underscore the bioethicist' ability to help solve ethical problems, or resolve ethical conflicts as they come up. This emphasizes the point that bioethics is not only clarificatory in terms of high-level theorizing but also *action-oriented* with various in-situ approaches.

### What makes an eco-ethicist?

If ethics is a "reasoned account of how people should live their lives" (Wenz 2001, 2), then environmental ethics seems to narrow that scope to how people should live their lives in relation to the environment.[24] Eco-ethics places the natural world within humanity's 'moral purview' (Hens and Susanne 1998), where nature meets a threshold status that makes it "count", morally speaking, and consequently "we may not treat it just in any way we please" (Warren 2000, 3). In this way, eco-ethics is interested in understanding not only which objects are valuable and why but also how conceptions of value in nature shape people's obligations, duties, or attitudes towards it (Palmer 2014). Indeed, the field is heavily rooted in discussion of value – Clare Palmer considers the question of what has value the "heart" of eco-ethics (2014, 422).

Many eco-ethicists look to uncover ethical "truths", where "*reason* precedes politics and policy" (Callicott in de Shalit 2017, 554). This means discovering and/or defining so-called facts about value and moral status. This is the case because eco-ethics is *prescriptive*, aiming to tell us what to do, regardless of current states of affairs. Consider the statement that "people should reduce the ecological impacts of their lifestyles. This claim could be true, even if lifestyles are currently unsustainable and future change is unlikely" (Palmer 2014, 420). I believe this aim, so central to environmental ethics, is a worthy pursuit – conceptual analysis and the ontological

[24] "Environment" can mean *objective natural systems* where impacts are shared relationally and felt on varying local, global and temporal scales (Attfield 2014). These systems are not only "wild", but can be placed in urban contexts as well.

foundations of our moral epistemologies are important to lay out. In this pursuit, the eco-ethicist can find kinship with the bioethicist in academia. By virtue of the demands of the academic context, to bring up Flynn again, it is permitted to leave the seminar room confused (2010). This is because the goals of academic philosophy generally revolve around truth-finding, and not as much around practical problem solving. Given the strong theoretical pursuit of "right" way of valuing, which I will lay out in chapter 3, eco-ethics' sphere can be presently defined around the academy.

However, there is another dimension of eco-ethical work that needs to be expanded upon – eco ethics in terms of its *change-making* capacity, beyond theory delineation alone (de Shalit 2017). This work belongs within the scope of eco-ethics: as Light points out, eco-ethics directly came out of the *need* for environmental betterment in the first place, and an intuition that philosophy could perhaps contribute directly to that betterment (Light 2002). He goes on to say that there are several literatures expanding on ideas within humanism, communitarianism (see de Shalit 2017), ecofeminism (see Davion 2001) which present a direct challenge to the general "rejection of anthropocentrism and its commitment to holism" that defines the field as a starting point for an environmental ethic. These alternative positions, of which environmental pragmatism is included, attempt at moving "beyond the more abstract questions of the metaethical debates" (Light 2002, 235).

In addition to being clarificatory, eco-ethics has responded to a necessity of crisis mitigation in order to identify and confront pertinent issues that arise from humans interacting with nature with both anthropocentric *and* non-anthropocentric dimensions, including matters of justice, sustainability and climate change (Attfield 2014). This is a point that I will continuously come back to. Building on the necessity of solving environmental problems or resolving moral conflicts means incorporating the empirical work of various disciplines – similar to how bioethics has integrated more empirical dimensions, especially in recent years (Churchill 1999). However, what is noticeably missing, and made clearer in light of bioethics' various "spheres" is that the role of the eco-ethicist is more limited, remaining within the bounds of academia. Talking about spheres for the eco-ethicist provided little clarification beyond signalling that eco-ethics in mainly an academic pursuit. Sure, the eco-ethicist may involve themselves with activism, but they often understand that

work as fundamentally different and separate from where eco-ethics operates. In other words, it is difficult to think of a clinical equivalent for eco-ethicists. Why have they not made their way into non-academic spaces, like the bioethicists has? What roles do eco-ethicists take on in the public domain, then? Where else is the eco-ethicist situated? These questions will be examined below.

### 2.3.1. Comparing the roles of bio and eco-ethicists

First, I will examine the roles of the bioethicist, particularly that of the moral *expert* and *counsellor*, but also that of the *advocate* and *whistleblower*, and briefly, the *traditionalist*. After, I examine the role of the eco-ethicist primarily as *whistleblower*, *advocate* and *futurist*. A primary role of the bioethicists is to aid in the moral dimension of choice-making, to serve as consulting specialists or moral *experts* to people within the biomedical field. The moral expert is analogous to any other expert in a field – like how a physicist is an expert in understanding the physical laws of the universe. The expertise in question is a skillset the philosopher has that makes them particularly good at conceptual analysis and relating these concepts to moral problems.[25] In the clinical world, the ethicist-expert would go in and either perform conceptual analysis or use any number of philosophical methods to come up with, ideally, a "solution" to a moral problem. The role, or rather need, of the expert is shaped by the narrative that medicine was missing something, ethically speaking, and that those best equipped to fill in the gaps were ethical experts (Scher and Kozlowska 2018). On this viewing, bioethics can be seen as a field that comes in and provides their critical analytical skill to clinicians, on matters most concerning to clinicians, which is something we will look further into in the next section.

Not only were bioethicists providing their expertise to doctors, researchers, and other clinicians, but some also played the role of an ombudsman working on the patient's behalf, with their interests in mind. In this way, the bioethicist takes on the role of the *advocate* (Gaines and Juengst 2008). We can see this through the work of bioethicists as champions for concepts like patient autonomy, justice, and other human rights issues. In this way, the bioethicist is not a morally neutral figure –

[25] Giving the philosopher the role of moral "expert" is highly contentious (see Weinberg et al 2001). Let us assume, however, as we do with other fields, that there is at least an *element* of expertise to their work. Even if the expert does not, or even cannot, find the right answers, they still are able to point us in a direction using the best tools available.

though some claim that they should be (see Parker 2019). Though the bioethicist's primary function is philosophical clarification through analytical work, their arguments can also be taken up through activism. In some cases, creating a hybrid role of ethicist-as-activist, in other cases going far enough to signal ethicist as *whistleblower,* who works as an overseer that ensures the potential horrors of an unchecked, even-progressing life-science field is kept in check. The impact of the advocate and whistleblower, however, are seen in conjunction with the social and political work of consumer and patient rights groups. As some see it: "Bioethics has always aimed to be practical, to make a difference to practice and policy, particularly when standing with those who are marginalised" (Dawson et al. 2018, 485).

Another role that the bioethicist has taken up is that of the *counsellor*. Jonsen sees this position as coming out of the highly variable normative discourses surrounding technological use and scientific advancement (1998). Bioethicists, therefore, are used to offering advice and provide various tools for decision making – and nothing (ideally) more powerful than that. Wherein the expert comes with moral authority, the counsellor lays the cards out on the table as a moral facilitator or mediator and lets the moral participants (stakeholders in the moral problem) arrive at their own conclusions. Viewed this way, bioethics is not just an analytic tool but also a psychological aid, evoking a sense of satisfaction after all relevant points are discussed.

The role of applied ethicist or counsellor is one that is suited to maintain a close normative presence in policy but especially in clinical settings. These roles do not necessitate thinking about the future (at least, insofar as it does not affect the issue at hand), nor does the work of the expert and counsellor require envisioning a brave new world and all the moral and practical uncertainties that come with it. When seen as counsellor or an expert, the bioethicist instead focuses on working closely with the clinician, and within medicine more generally.

There is also a view that sees bioethics as non-emergent, but reflective of a long history of medical ethics – a child of it, wherein ethicists are *custodians* or keepers of moral traditions or truths that are then re-calibrated for context. This view presupposes a moral continuity between what has existed for millennia in terms of medical ethics till today. The view gives the field the authoritarian spirit of a unified

ethic – the sort of common-morality foundationalism that Beauchamp and Childress refer to in the mid-level principlism they develop. Even if we disagree with mid-level principlism (and view it instead as a normatively imperialist quasi-guide), those within the clinical setting speak in terms of rules and in this way, a curated moral guide based on principles (such as the "respect autonomy") may be helpful (Andre 2003). [26] In this way, principlism and some forms of casuistry, as I will show, are taken with a grain of salt – but nevertheless, are taken, despite what Callahan sees as a "lively awareness" of "problems and liabilities" (1999, 278) including the fact that moral continuity, especially between cultural groups throughout millennia has not been the case (Gaines and Juengst 2008).

Like the bioethicist, the eco-ethicist takes on multiple roles, but especially that of *whistleblower, advocate* but also a *forecaster of the future* – less-so the role of an expert or counsellor. The first three roles relate to the focus of the eco-ethicist on future-thinking, prevention as well as on reimagining paradigms as a forecaster for the necessity of moral change. These roles diagnose the problem of ecological collapse as one that begins and ends with values.

The roles of the whistleblower and the advocate are also seen in conjunction with advocacy, particularly with advocacy on behalf of the environment, but also on behalf of communities within. Take Carson's *Silent Spring*: though she was not an ethicist and was not espousing ethical expertise, her work provoked an alternate way of approaching environmental care; it advocated-for and acted as a witness to environmental injustices that were taking place. The work of the eco-ethicist is often swept up in and connected to the work of the environmental activist, where the role of the ethicist is to provide the foundational principles or theories with which the activist would forward their work. Næss and Sessions' deep ecology platform indicates this connection: "Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes" (1984).

Environmental ethicists are also forecasters for the future. The ethical scope, or purview in the field looks towards the past, the present but also future in terms of

[26] See section 3.2 for more.

inter and intra-generational effects of our relationship with nature. Indeed, the matter of what do to about future peoples and nature seems particularly relevant to the eco-ethical enterprise, especially since detrimental behaviour to the environmental may be felt on extremely lengthy timescales – like climate change, for example. What, then, are our moral responsibilities towards future people and nonhuman animals, and how does it relate to sustaining nature not just as a resource but perhaps for other reasons? These are questions the forecaster attempts to answer, using their analytical skill but also their imagination. In this way, the futurist is anticipatory. Though it is important to have someone that can relate our environmental impacts to future moral states as a moral motivator for behavioural change, it is inherently difficult to work with a futurist framework. This is for several reasons, both practical and theoretical. Like how institutions and political systems privy solutions that work in short timescales, or how the hyper-complex nature of many systemic environmental problems create a "fragmentation of agency" that makes it difficult to assign who is harmed, who has harmed, and what the harms are (see Gardiner 2006; Jamieson 2009).[27] The fact that eco-ethical problems hold these complexities does not mean that the eco-ethicist should give up the role of futurist in favour of more immediately "solvable" problems (in the sense of temporally and spatially close problems). It does mean that eco-ethicists need to figure out ways in which they can tap into other roles that might facilitate work within environmental policy-making and the like.

Though there is a clear link between advocacy, futurism and whistleblowing amongst eco-ethical practitioners, finding the eco-ethical expert or counsellor in the public sphere is much rarer. The field's lack of expertise, as mentioned before, is not about how it views itself or whether eco-ethicists are capable of providing an "expert" analysis, but rather about its relationship *to other professions*. Bioethicists have been *made* experts or counsellors by the clinical world and the people in it, but eco-ethics has no discernible presence in any "sphere" outside of academia, and thus remain experts largely to other environmental philosophers.[28] The creation of the clinical ethicist is based at least in part on the perceived moral void of the medical industrial complex. Problems of health care, or doctor-patient relationships, and more are

[27] I come back to these critical points in the fourth chapter.
[28] It is unclear whether environmental ethicists even consider themselves as experts. The field's centering of top-down, monistic theories would imply that at least some do. Those who take up more "bottom-up" or particularist approaches would probably see themselves more like counsellors.

viewed as ethical in addition to being technical, and the solutions are therefore expressed through both dimensions. Though the problems might be ethical in environmental management or care and therefore require an element of moral analysis in formulating solutions, both problems and solutions are often not perceived ethically and are instead seen as a problem requiring solely technical solutions. Take the bioethicist coming in to consult on the end-life-care of an elderly patient; the same consultation practice would likely not take place for euthanizing an elderly animal or a 300-year-old oak tree. What would happen to the 300-year-old tree had an environmental ethicist been invited to consult with forestry management? To be clear: I am not saying that a technified perception is sufficient to solve our environmental problems, nor am saying that a tree and a person are morally analogous. What I am saying, however, is that critical ethical dimensions would be made more explicit if the eco-ethicist worked more akin to the bioethics: with environmentalists, with policy makers, and with the gatekeepers that shape public regulation.

So linked is this relationship between the clinic and ethics that many bioethicists are also clinicians themselves, and institutions often look for those with dual experience and a "depth of experience of sitting with families in distress" says bioethicist Tia Powell, adding "… the person most likely to be hired is a person with a broad range of skills including comfort in clinical areas as well as some formal training in bioethics" (in Colwell 2016). The role for the bioethicists, then, is made even more explicit as the "expert" coming into an established profession like medicine all the while merging alongside it – not so for the environmental ethicist. Where were the expert eco-ethicists on government-mandated environmental panels *solely* dedicated to the ethical dimensions of the human-nature interaction? To put it in crude economic terms: the bioethicist filled a need where there was demand: Bioethicists "increasingly perform in the public eye, testifying before congressional and state legislative committees and playing prominent roles in educational programs for both professionals and the public" (Churchill 1999, 254). The medical field and the public saw some sort of ethical gap that could be filled by bioethics – whether bioethicists could actually fill that gap is another question. These gaps are fewer for eco-ethicists. Philosophers discussing environmental issues, like Peter Singer and Arne Næss, appeared largely in the public domain for either their controversial views or as

figureheads in a social-philosophical movement. What will it take to get the public and institutions to see, if not the eco-ethicist *as* counsellor or expert, at least the value-dimensions of environmental decision-making?

## 2.4. Where have bio and eco-ethics done things?

Having laid out the distinct roles of the bio and eco-ethicist, this section focuses on establishing where both fields practice, or "do" ethics. In this way, I am laying out where the "influence" or impact of each field is most strongly felt. I center my analysis around two main loci: academia and government. This is because 1) both ethics come out of and are centered on academia and 2) concepts from both ethics have been taken up by governments in various forms (policies, committees, consultancies, etc.). I will identify these forms and show that, generally bioethics has stronger ties to government and other institutions, and that it practices ethics more often *in situ* – in medical contexts – than eco-ethics.

This analysis is important because I purport that if philosophy is to really help the planet it must get "coupled" to action and "theorized as part of a conscious attempt at institutionalization" (Frodeman 2020, 1). That is, the relationship between philosophy and institutions is not irrelevant; academia, public and private organizations and government all play a role in legitimizing and forwarding ethics.[29] Though I do not claim environmental ethics should follow a similar path to bioethics, I do purport that eco-ethics must find ways to widen its scope of practice and directly connect to those working *with* the environment, similarly to how those in bioethics work *with* the clinic.

This task is admittedly difficult because, among other reasons, 1) there is no clear way to measure the presence and influence of something as abstract as philosophy and 2) philosophers have largely avoided "tracking" the impacts of their insights (how would they?) (see Frodeman et al 2012), and have argued that to do philosophy is an end in itself with no obligation to matters of difference making (see Russell

[29] The process of constructing this ethic should be democratic. That is – the government should not singularily decide what this ethic looks like.

2016 [1912]). Nevertheless, philosophy *is* in important frameworks which guide social policy; they have played a role in conceptualizing human rights discourse, in guiding choice-making in risk assessments, and in creating new concepts in gender and race theory (Brister and Frodeman 2020). Given the importance of making ethics explicit in environmental decision making, it is critical to get a sense of where environmental ethics is and moreover, where it should be, which will be the main contribution of this thesis.

### 2.4.1. Bioethics

#### In the clinic

The place most distinctly related to the practice of bioethics is *the clinic* (including hospitals, care-centers, clinics, etc.). This is also where you will find much of the in situ bioethical work. The majority of large hospitals in the US have an on-staff bioethicist (Gavin 2020). The clinic, I argue, is a critical institution for the creation, the evolution and the endurance of bioethics. Bioethics is highly medically-centered, and the clinical bioethicist is in close contact with the clinician or the researcher. Indeed, "ethical considerations are integral to the formulation and practice of biological and medical research" (McWhirter 2012, 329). This relationship is evident at the level of bioethical literature, where the delivery and structure of the case is described in a "clinical" manner. Literature is couched in a "clinical gaze", from the way it signals the patient by their initials, age and sex, to the use of impartial first person – in an evaluation that, many argue, is indeed very partial (Andre 2003).

Chambers relates how mainstream reporting is seen through the eyes of the physician, where the ethicist does "not tell the patient's story, nor do they tell… the ethicist's story; instead they tell the physician's story" (1996, 27). This feature reveals the place of medicine – and the decision-making power of the clinician – as the center of bioethics, at least in the clinical sphere. This essentialism can act as a double edged sword: though it puts the bioethicists squarely within the medical world and thus close to various ethical problems, it also means that the medical "machine" potentially "co-opts social science insights into biomedical paradigms, turning dialogical interaction into a biomedical monologue" (Gaines and Juengst 2008, 311).

Indeed, bioethicists often talk of moving, or "migrating" from the academy into a sphere that is largely taken up by medical practitioners – doctors, nurses and the like. There is a prominent narrative that reveals how academic philosophers come to see themselves as ethicists proper when they enter the health care sphere – exemplified via "inside/outside" metaphors used by practitioners in describing their career moves (Chambers 2000). Indeed, Ramsey points to the relevance of empirical research and data driven by medicine and health to shape his work, as well as the importance of being *in situ*: "to be located in the middle of a medical school faculty – not on its periphery – and to begin some serious study of the moral issues in medical research and practice" (1970, xix).

Take this important reflection offered by nurse and bioethicist Grady:

> A nurse on a busy oncology unit in 2002 is concerned about the aggressiveness of care being given to a particular patient with terminal cancer. The nurse knows the patient well and knows the patient is reluctant to say anything that might disappoint her doctor or her spouse…The bioethicist *helps to facilitate* discussions with the team, the patient, and her family and to discuss the goals of care… Although the attending physician makes changes to the treatment plan based on the patient's wishes, the option of hospice is not discussed… Fast forward to 2012; a busy oncology nurse wants to help her patient with advanced cancer to articulate her concerns and reluctance to continue aggressive treatment. The nurse tells the attending physician that she plans to call for a bioethics consultation. The oncologist agrees and together they organize a meeting including members of the team and the patient and her family *to discuss the goals of care and the patient's wishes and preferences, and to decide together on a course of action*… Now it is 2021; oncology patients are most often treated in Patient Centered Medical Homes, where the continuity of care is managed by a multidisciplinary team of providers that includes an embedded and credentialed clinical bioethicist. Soon after the patient's cancer is diagnosed, *a multidisciplinary meeting is held with the patient's health care team*, the patient, and her family to discuss treatment options and establish goals of care. They plan to *meet as a group every 4–6 weeks to revisit or refine the goals*... When treatment options seem more aggressive than she wants, and her cancer continues to advance, the patient seamlessly moves into hospice care, fully *supported* by her team (2013, 9; emphasis mine).

It is worth quoting Grady in full because she offers a salient snapshot of the past, present and future of bioethical care. The point is not to necessarily advocate for her vision, but rather reveal the interdisciplinarity and co-evolution of bioethics

alongside clinical and research settings in particular. I use this case to illuminate the relationship many bioethicists have to medicine, and how that relationship has changed over time, and will continue to change as methods in ethics consults transform, informed by law, policy studies, empirical work,[30] international and governmental guidelines, and the like. Moreover, Grady's reflection is centered on where the impact of bioethics is directly felt: the medical sphere. In other words, bioethics has reached outside of the academic context and into that of the professional and public spheres, where "the public sphere" is not the idealized normative concept used in sociology but rather literally means the public. Bioethics, at least outside of academia, is used *with* people.

### In academia

Bioethics has a strong presence in universities across North America and Europe, both at undergraduate and graduate levels, and an increasing presence in other parts of the world. Programs are not standardized, resulting in a variable education that can center around more philosophical or analytical aspects (with the mindset of continuing in academic ethics research) or more practical aspects aimed towards clinical work. Courses are also a necessary component of health professionalization in many health care settings: at least "basic instruction" of the bioethics "has been viewed as an important component of medical education for more than three decades" (Cook et al. 2019, 1). In fact, many practicing bioethicists come out of the clinical world, and many degrees or certifications are obtained as a supplement to another career within medical practice or research (Klugman 2008).

In other words, practicing bioethicists are often *also* doctors, nurses, medical specialists, lawyers, and the like. As stated by Churchill: "… An interest in "empirical bioethics" has attracted scholars from medicine and the social sciences who previously were not engaged in this effort" (1999, 253). There is enough multi-disciplinary engagement to produce around 400-500 yearly articles on average (Sandin 2016). Much of this literature is written between bioethicists and other disciplines within medicine and scientific research.

[30] This empiricism does not have to be positivist but can be more constructivist when it comes to social knowledge: "the constructivist claim that empirical data can only ever offer a contingent and partial account of aspects of our participants' lives is now well established" (Dunn and Ives 2009, 93).

### In governance

From government mandated commissions like the US' The National Commission for the Protection of Human Subject of Biomedical and Behavioral Research (1974-78), to ethics advisory boards at national or federal levels such as the US' Department of Health, Education and Welfare, bioethics is present in political decision-making, and are tied to medical and institutional practice. The process of institutionalizing bioethics does not begin and end in North America – across the pond multiple bioethical centers, committees, and advisory boards have formed for the purpose of training, education, counselling and even authoritative decision-making. The World Health Organization lists several member centers in its Global Network of Collaborating Centres for Bioethics including: Programme of Bioethics at the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias (Argentina); Centre for Human Bioethics (Australia); ICMR Bioethics Unit, National Centre for Disease Informatics and Research (India); Asian Institute for Bioethics and Health Law (South Korea); Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture (Pakistan), among others.

Bioethical institutes are not institutionally nor conceptually homogenous; countries have taken up their own distinct bioethical practice, with their preferred methods and conceptual foci. The Chinese Society of Medical Ethics (1988) incorporates Chinese thought into bioethical deliberation; The Organization of Islamic Conferences Fiqh Academy (OIC-IFA) deliberates subjects in ethics and Islamic law and is made up of representatives from 57 member states; The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) which created the *Foro Latino Americano de Comités de Ética en Investigación en Salud* (FLACEIS, Latin American Forum of Health Research Ethics Committees) alongside various training programs in ethics – all serve to underscore an active engagement with issues in bioethics (Global Network of WHO Collaborating Centres of Bioethics 2020).

Commissions exist at local and national levels, and have varying degrees of authority. UNESCO even offers a how-to guide for setting up a bioethical committee, identifying several types of committees including policy-making committees (PMAs), health-professional association committees (HPAs), health care committees (HECs), and research ethics committees (RECs). Committees and organizations provide several uses: there are those whose job is to present background information, those who provide advice, and those who actively shape the

course and outcomes of how research gets done (think the ethics advisory boards for how research is conducted). The diversity between these committees show a diverse scope of practice in bioethics: in informing policy, professional practice, health care and research itself.

There are also treaties which weave bioethics into practice such as the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of Human Beings of 1997 (the Oviedo Convention). This treaty is a legally binding document signed by 34 states and ratified by 28 of them. It lays out principles of biomedical research, with particular attention to more abstracted concepts "designed to preserve human dignity, rights and freedoms" but also definitions of informed consent, privacy, and the handling of organs and tissues (The Council of Europe, Treaty No. 164).

Finally, the relationship between the law and bioethics, at least in North America, runs especially deep, characterized be a "tremendous overlap" (Wolf 1994, 396). Scholars have argued that health law itself directs bioethics and its scope of practice (see Annas 1988), but also that bioethics has had a direct impact on the way law is constructed; "when legal academicians teach courses in this field [health law], they consider grounding in ethical theory central to an understanding of the subject" (Capron and Michel 1993). Critically, this paints a picture of a field that is engaged with by those with decision-making power in institutional settings.

### 2.4.2. Eco-ethics

#### In academia

Initially, environmental ethics struggled with being taken seriously as a philosophical field within academia (Palmer in Frodeman 2007). Indeed, Callicott reflects that the field was considered "something of a pariah" (1999, 1). In the last 30 years, however, environmental ethics have seen a growth and acceptance in academia as a philosophy *qua* philosophy (Jamieson in Frodeman 2007). There are courses in eco-ethics or environmental philosophy offered through philosophy departments at major universities throughout the world; several anthropologies or seminal textbooks which outline the field; and multiple peer-reviewed journals dedicated to environmental ethics issues including *Environmental Ethics*, *Environmental Values* and *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, producing about 130 articles between them

yearly (Sandin 2015). This knowledge, however, is highly siloed as environmental ethicists rarely venture outside of academia (Ibid.). In other words, literature is made and read by other philosophers with relatively little outside interaction – something illuminated further in the following section.

This does not mean that eco-ethical concepts have not made their way to other disciplines at all, or that eco-ethics does not interact with other fields in any way. Eco-ethics has interacted with concepts from social science such as Bookchin's theory of social ecology, and eco-ethical concepts – particularly holist conceptualisations that take entire systems as starting points for ethical deliberation – have also been integral to the formation of conservation biology (Callicott 1996).[31] Other key examples include Singer's argument against *speciesism* in *Animal Liberation,* which had a powerful influence on the animal liberation movement (Düwell 2013). Singer argued for the minimization of suffering across all experiencing beings, particularly related to industrialized animal farming. Regan's deontological "subject of a life" approach has also been an influential tool for the protection of animals in research (Düwell 2013).

These ideas, however, have generally followed the "trickle-down" approach wherein philosophers do their jobs qua philosophers and eventually ideas get taken up by other disciplines, institutions, or persons (Frodeman and Brister 2020). Eco-ethics offers a set of aspirational or ideal models for valuing, particularly for how the Western world can rethink its most fundamental ethical practices. The mainstream eco-ethicist does not think themselves less of an environmental advocate for remaining in the academy; their advocacy is related to the formulation of the normative bases for valuing nature (Callicott 1996). In other words: the philosopher typically stays within philosophy, while the direct interaction between problem solving and decision making get taken up by, for example, the environmental activist. This results in eco-ethics "not living up to its promise as a field of philosophy attempting to help resolve environmental problems. It is instead evolving mostly as a field of intramural philosophical debate" (Light 2002, 436).

[31] See section 3.4 for more on *holism* and other key positions in eco-ethics.

### In policy

The intersection between environmental ethicists and political actors is not a busy one. As environmental lawyer and policy-expert Brown professes: "Environmental ethics literature is almost never read by policy makers and infrequently considered in day-to-day decisions making about pressing environmental issues" (2010, 215). In other words, the trickle-down approach rarely makes its way into political settings. Thus, when it comes to actually making decisions in the context of environmental management, solutions are framed in terms of more technical procedures: "environmental decisions are driven more by science, technology and economics than by social and ethical considerations" (Hens and Susanne 1998, 116). This does not mean that scientific or economic solutions are themselves value-free. Rather, that the content of environmental *philosophy,* as a scholarly field, and the value judgements and ethical arguments espoused by it, are not featured in structuring environmental action.

Furthermore, though there is recognition that "analysis contained in the literature of moral and political philosophy can contribute to resolving ethical questions that are raised by climate change" (Kolstad et al. 2014), *explicit* reference to mainstream environmental ethics literature in institutions and policy is slim, with a few exceptions. For instance, The IPCC, charged with the task of offering government comprehensive scientific information about climate change for policy-making purposes, identifies "wellbeing, justice, fairness and rights" as normative areas of interest, but admits that though ethics is a critical informer of climate solutions, "ethics has received less attention than economics" (Ibid.).

Environmental concepts that do make their way into policy discussion do so by way of their relationship to social issues, such as principles of social justice and equity. These have factored in to important environmental documents and agreements such as the World Commissions' *Our Common Future* (1987). The recent *Declaration of Ethical Principles in relation to Climate Change* (2017), encourages the application of principles such as: the "prevention of harm", "the precautionary approach", "equity and justice", "sustainable development", "solidarity", and "scientific knowledge and integrity in decision-making". These concepts, however, are typically

framed in terms of the instrumental use of nature to humans and future generations as opposed to the non-instrumental or non-anthropocentric value of nature. Indeed, the *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* begins with the proclamation that "Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development" (1992). Ensuring "that humans in their treatment of nature do not violate the rights of other living things to be left alone and to flourish" or that the stability of an ecosystem is maintained for its own sake, is seldom considered (Stenmark 2002, 140). The principles within policy typically fall under the heading of "socio-environmental" approaches, and incorporate theory from not only environmental philosophy but social ecology, environmental justice, eco-feminism, and eco-Marxism.

This fact is not meant to insinuate that non-instrumental principles should not make their way into practice – it is only meant to show that the most dominant schemas in environmental ethics are not used by policy makers. I posit why this might be the case in section 5.2.2.

### In activism

Where environmental ethics has indeed been most visible is in its relationship to activism. Activism by definition looks to bring about change at the societal level. The focus on change, confrontation and anticipation are part of what inform the whistle-blower, the advocate and the futurist conceptualisation of the eco-ethicist. Since the 60s activism of all forms, from coalitions of suburban moms to later initiatives led by Sea Shepherd, have been attempting to invite or even provoke change. These environmental movements are ethically diverse – as in, they are underpinned by a range of values both instrumental and non-instrumental.

Approaches such as deep ecology and other holist paradigms from social ecology to the metaphysics of Spinoza and Heraclitus, to Taoism and Buddhism, have bolstered political activism across national lines (see Sessions 1981). Additionally, site-defense groups that oppose invasive infrastructural changes to the land (such as dams) also cite holist principles as a rationale for action. In other words, from formal large-scale activist groups to localized grassroots initiatives, the link between environmental philosophy and activism is undoubtable (see Scarce 1990; Manes 1990).

In all their variable moral underpinnings, these groups have generally agreed on the following: 1) That humans have and do engage in behaviour which is detrimental to the long-term health of the planet and 2) that humans should engage in better or different behaviour to save the planet (Falkner 2012). That is, it is not just holist motivations that prompted robust environmental action. Many movements sprung up as direct responses to ecological concerns affecting communities. The more influential movements came out of communities with political sway like middle-class white communities which were informed, in turn, not by eco-ethics but by public awareness campaigns on TV and media (Andrews 1999). They not only confronted problems of air pollution, access to clean water, pesticide usage, but also identified the destruction of wilderness as a moral violation. Thus, while the link between the scholarly work of environmental ethicists is clear in many paradigm cases, it is also important to note the relationship between environmental activism and values based on models already present within communities.

### 2.4.3. Comparing the loci of bio and eco-ethics

How do the conceptual analyses and the theories of the bioethicist and the eco-ethicist end up where they are? Moreover, how do they go from being an academic pursuit to that which gets used in decision-making? The primary model is the "trickle-down" method, where both fields build or produce theories and arguments that then trickle down to those that actually practice (clinicians and environmentalists, respectively) and those that shape political decisions (regulatory bodies, etc.) (Frodeman and Brister 2020). This model has been used by both bio and eco-ethicists, not to mention philosophy more generally. However, the key difference between the two fields is that, in addition to theory building within the academy, bioethicists have more of a direct relationship with clinics and research centers *as* bioethicists. Environmental ethicists do not have these close institutional ties, relying instead on the trickle-down model.

The relevance of place, of bioethics being situated in and tied to several locations, shapes bioethicists' scope of practice, motivations, and *how* they practice (methods). Indeed, "bioethics is as much a discipline *defined by place* as it is by activity" (Chambers 2000, 23, emphasis mine). The bioethicist practices alongside the

clinician or research and with the patient or subject, serving as an expert or counsellor for both.

The place that ethicists locate themselves in, and the roles they take up, are mutually constructing; the clinical ethicist's identity and role formation is constructed as the they work within that context. Clinical bioethicist Andre remarks that the clinic is such a salient feature of her identity that she does not consider herself primarily a philosopher, and that she does not know of any bioethicist "outside of philosophy" who does (2003, 33). Rather, she sees bioethics – at least the kind she does – as a separate entity altogether, that interacts with philosophy as physics interacts with engineering; though the latter needs the former to function, engineers design and build. In other words, the division within the spheres "nourish" one another with "distinct, if overlapping, purposes and methods" (Andre 2003, 34).

For the clinical bioethicist especially, the boundaries for what is deemed problematic with technology or medicine are often set by researchers and clinicians, in virtue of their technical knowledge. This means that they also, though not always, determine what was in the immediate purview of bioethics: "interests of burning interest to physicians and scientists – typically issues that appear to threaten their professional freedom and their (culturally valued) independence—acquire high priority for the field" (Gaines and Juengst 2008, 310). Examples of this include human embryo research and the nature of the doctor-patient relationship. On this view, the bioethicist acts "as essentially a service field" wherein they have "no independent intellectual agenda of their own" (Ibid., 310). This does not mean that other more system or holistic life-science issues in bioethics such as animal rights and overpopulation are ignored entirely, but rather left to the margins. This is a feature that differentiates the bioethics of the clinic from eco-ethics more generally, which is highly focused on systems issues, and cannot really afford to leave them to the margins.

Those following the field-service model "engaged the term bioethics to identify the study of the benefits and harms of human action on the physical and emotional health and well-being of humans and animals. They proposed bioethics *in order to link moral reflection and the practice of medicine*" (Harvey 2012, 39; emphasis mine). In doing so, bioethicists forged a relationship with clinical and research institutions

throughout the US. “As a condition of its acceptance, bioethics has taken up residence in the belly of the medical whale; although thinking of itself as still autonomous, the bioethical enterprise has developed a complex and symbiotic relationship with this host organism” (Rosenberg in Gaines and Juengst 2008, 312).

A feature of this service-model is that it centers work around the individual. Though bioethicists are involved with large networks of interconnected people, actual ethical problem solving in clinics is practiced at the individual level; here it becomes less about trickle-down modeling and more about *direct* relationships with clinicians, patients, or other relevant subjects (Dwyer 2009). It also is practically easier to relay bioethical concepts to the individual when they are about the individual in the first place, concepts like respect for autonomy, dignity, and the like.

This is a major difference between the work of the bioethicist and that of the environmental ethicist, the latter of which has no clear workspace outside of academia. To be clear, the individual does not disappear in eco-ethics: after all, the trickle-down model leaves it up to the individual to interpret, absorb and then update their worldviews accordingly. The difference is that though the ethical work is supposed to get translated *through* the person, the environmental ethicist does not work *with* the person in the same way the clinical bioethicist does.

A reason for this is that eco-ethics is a field of inquiry which deliberately expands the moral purview beyond the individual to include non-human subjects, groups, and even entire systems. This focus on systems makes it more difficult for the eco-ethicist to take on the direct role of the moral expert or the moral counsellor – who are they counselling, and where? Moreover, the environmental ethics model challenges the traditional normative model of ethics, and at times is openly antagonistic towards it (Minteer 2012). As Minteer points out, one reason for not only academic philosophy’s resistance to eco-ethics but also institutional resistance, is that it foundationalises non-anthropocentrism in an academic and public space that primarily uses anthropocentric conceptualisations (2012). In other words, eco-ethics does not leave space for the full spectrum of moral valuing and purports the primacy of moral re-orientation, a problematic I will unpack in the following chapters.

## 2.5. Summary

This chapter began with a historical retelling of the fields of bioethics and environmental ethics. Bioethics came out of a nexus of socio-political-historical factors, such as the retrospective reflection on the horrors of war, the reshaping of boundaries and roles in medical practice and its relationship to the patient and the rapid social and cultural movements that created even greater inclusions of public in reflection and discourse on ethics, among others. Though environmental ethics did not face the same level of institutional and bureaucratic supports as bioethics, it did carve a small place out in academia in light of new intellectual currents and the strong environmental movement of the 60s and 70s. For these bourgeoning eco-ethicists, the new task was to confront the "despotic" history of philosophical thought and reconfigure it for a better future.

The second part of the chapter explored the many roles and locations of the bioethicist and the eco-ethicist, concluding that bioethics is an interdisciplinary field with multiple actors interacting in different disciplines, along with multiple epistemological approaches and methods for "application". Critically, we established that "what most distinguishes bioethics from, say, academic philosophy is its relationship to the lived world" (Andre 2003, 92). Bioethics, I argued, participates in a wider bureaucratic and institutional network, having fairly successfully bridged the interdisciplinary gap and created pockets of influence in medicine and health-policy acting in various roles including that of an *expert, counsellor, whistleblower, advocate*, among other roles. The field has expanded beyond the walls of academia, having produced a steady stream of literature which is read and interacted with in varying disciplines, further strengthening conversation across disciplinary gaps, but also have a strong personal presence in clinical settings (in situ bioethicists). Environmental ethics, though certainly better positioned than it once was in terms of academic acceptance, remains largely in an academic silo, limited to philosophy departments, and as a scholarly field it is not so concerned with matters of public interest, conceived of as shared or collective interests (Minteer 2012).

# 3. How have bio- and eco-ethics done things?

This chapter will examine how bio- and eco-ethics relates theory to practice through the exploration of the concrete methods each field uses, or how bio and eco-ethicists approach moral problem-solving. [32] Applied philosophy is, after all, a hybrid endeavour – part conceptualisation, part application.[33] If we are to make sense of our role as philosophers "applying" ethics, then it is necessary to understand how each field navigates the relationship between making arguments and putting those arguments into practice. The chapter will follow a general structure of critically canvasing the methods within both branches of applied ethics, confronting what "works" about them and what does not from a pragmatic point of view, culminating in a comparative analysis that forwards the rejection of monist philosophy.

I will show that there is wide range of how theory relates to practice in bioethics: from highly-abstracted, *monistic* schemas, to *mid-level* theory, to localized, *particularist* approaches.[34] In eco-ethics, the methodological focus is mainly on theories of value; these theories are often monistic (Minteer 2012). Eco-ethicists assert that the "right" kind of monistic theory is constructed through non-anthropocentric tenets which posit the non-instrumental valuing of nature (Light 2002). This right kind of monistic theory or principle would not only justify the sort of relationship we should have to the environment but also would direct our actions. A smaller subset of eco-ethicists eschew monistic theories, claiming that pluralist theories and principles which include a range of ethical relationships (both non-anthropocentric and anthropocentric) are the best way to make sense of the breadth of value in nature, as well as the contextual realities which shape environmental relationships (Minteer 2012; Light 2002). From a practical perspective, a pluralist

[32] The theories discussed in this chapter are not exhaustive.
[33] It is no longer the case that applied ethics means "direct" application or implementation of theory. Instead, "application" is taken to mean using a *range* of philosophical methods (casuistry, phenomenology, conceptual analysis, etc.) to make sense of moral problems (Beauchamp 2007). Understood this way, the rules or norms in application can be more cognizant of context and do not always aim at generalisability.
[34] Monistic theory is a deductivist model of ethics (such as teleological approaches or deduction from master principles, for example). I will describe mid-level and particularist approaches as they come up in the following section.

ethic offers a way to make sense of environmental problems in terms of the interests of the community – and allows for solutions to those harms emerge from within those communities (see Brennan 1992).

The takeaway of this chapter is that eco-ethics' focus on monistic theory building and necessary non-anthropocentrism has actually detracted from environmental problem-solving, a point I will argue on both theoretical and practical grounds. As such, if we are to prompt pro-environmental behaviour, we must turn towards a pluralist ethical schema to make sense of moral problems. By comparing eco-ethics' monism to bioethics' relatively diversified methodologies, we are able to get a sense of what a diverse set of methods can do for an applied ethic, and that the monist project should be abandoned.

## 3.1. How bioethicists "do" bioethics: mid-level theories and particularism

Bioethics relies on principlism, casuistry, and narrative ethics, among other methodologies. I focus on these methods because they are among the most widely used in clinical ethics and in policy, particularly principlism (Düwell 2012). I will first describe these approaches in terms of two categories: mid-level theorizing and particularist approaches. Then, in section 3.2, "What works about methods in bioethics", I will show that these methods have been shaped by each other, as well as the clinical and political spheres, to become mutually complimentary; they have grown to reflect a set of skillsets that bioethicists looking to aid in moral problems should share. In this way, the large methodological toolbox within bioethics has made it a more practice-able ethic. It also shows that bioethics has undergone a *pragmatic* turn in two parts, first by shifting from deductive theory towards mid-level principlism, then towards the modern inclusion of more case-based methods – with a focus on the clinic and empirical methods (see Wolf 1994).

### 3.1.1. Mid-level theorizing: principlism

Mid-level theory is a limited form of theory that looks to context to build itself up, which then allows it to either guide ethical decision-making or provide explanatory power in asserting the rightness or wrongness of an action. *Principlism* is a method within mid-level theory that forwards the "skilled and artful deployment of mid-level norms (whatever their source) in the context of practical ethical problems" (Arras 2009, 21). This model reduces, or contains, values to certain prima facie principles or "rules", which operate as obligations shared between people. Though not the first or only to propose such a concept, Beauchamp and Childress' *The Principles of Biomedical Ethics* (1978) is still considered a foremost authority on matters of principlism. They argued that problems in bioethics were reducible to violations of four principles: respect for *autonomy*, *non-maleficence, beneficence*, and *justice*. McCarthy defines these, respectively, as "respect the views, choices and actions of others; avoid causing harm; act for the benefit of others; treat people fairly" (2003, 66).

Beauchamp and Childress acknowledge that justification for the four principles could not be offered through blind intuition nor by pure deduction from other moral theories. The authors appeal to a "common morality", a concept they have changed over time. More recently, they define it as an everyday familiarity of certain morals amongst *all* peoples: "the set of norms that all morally serious persons share" which includes those of different cultural backgrounds (Beauchamp and Childress 2019 [1978], 3). Common morality principlism is authoritative on the basis that it holds historical oomph, having been legitimized and reflected in practice over the course of history – historically bound, but *non-relativist*, precisely because the principles are "universally" shared (Arras 2009, 13).[35] Baier likens the construction of these principles to constructing a mosaic, where principlism starts from the ground and builds upwards so that a foundation of sorts is erected – this foundation being the principles themselves (1985).

They reason that applying these principles should occur under a Rawlsian "reflective equilibrium", where they are used within concrete cases *alongside* other norms,

[35] This is a contentious factor we will unpack in section

rules, background theories, etc. in a "coherent" way: "coherence for the purposes of ethical theory and evaluation is the *holistic* embodiment of theoretical virtues, the characteristics one expects of any good theory" (Beauchamp and Childress 2019 [1978], 221, emphasis mine). This is a key element of their principlism, as it asserts that there should be careful consideration towards avoiding conflict between norms.

We may understand how principlism is used by examining the case of the Forgetful Mourner in the *Hastings Center Report's* (1995). The case features Mrs. C, an elderly woman in a care facility with severe short-term memory loss. Mrs. C's son, Tony, has recently died, a fact which she often forgets. Nevertheless, she consistently asks about him – going through the agony of loss each time she relearns of Tony's passing, to whom she was very close. The staff is conflicted: lie to Mrs. C, or tell her the truth and cause her severe emotional pain? Finally, Ms F, a staff member, proposes that Mrs. C wear the dress she had on at her son's funeral. She stops asking about Tony, though she continues to speak about him to staff and residents alike. A principlist begins their analysis with the norms or principles that seem to be applicable such as "respect for autonomy". They might argue that lying is bad because it denies the rights of Mrs. C to know the truth about someone who was important to her, which violates her ability to be fully autonomous.

### 3.1.2. Particularist approaches: Casuistry and narrative ethics

Though mid-level theories are indeed prevalent, alternatives methods to applying ethics are also prevalent: "A bioethical mainstream strives towards the establishment of a basis for bioethics that should emancipate it from moral-philosophical debates on principles" (Düwell 2013, 32). Enter *particularism*, a strategy for action that begins and ends with context, where moral judgement does not rely on principles but instead on elements arising out of particular situations.[36] Both *casuistry* and *narrative ethics* fall within more particularist approaches.

[36] Not all particularists are alike; some reject the existence of principles, some reject a certain type of principle (principles as guides but not principles as standards or vice versa), some reject limiting principles to a finite set (Ridge and McKeever 2016).

Casuistry is a heuristic approach to doing ethics that recycles logic from paradigmatic cases, creating a "taxonomy" for ethical reasoning. The casuist process of taxonomizing begins by gathering all relevant information about the case at hand, and then comparing other similar cases. By comparing relevant substantive information between cases with "clear cut" moral conclusions, the observer gets a sense of where morally relevant features converge in practice. We can, for instance, assess a problem of informed consent against another case with similar features, particularly cases in which the observer is struck by a paradigmatic sense of something being "wrong" – like the Tuskegee study, for example.[37] In this way we may also compare our Forgetful Mourner to other cases featuring, for example, dementia and reliving loss. We may find that similar overlapping understandings of how to better understand what makes the mourner's situation morally difficult that may reframe how the clinicians approach loss. Perhaps a norm like "lying is bad" is considered bad *at first glance*, and then weighed against other options for its permissibility such that it may be "not that bad" or "permissible" in cases like the Mourner's. Depending on features of the case, lying may turn out to be a positive or net *good*: it may reduce harm done to the Mourner having to relive the loss of her son.

What makes these cases paradigmatic is not that there is theoretical convergence on rightness or wrongness, but *practical* convergence – there is a sense of real-world moral "consensus". We may look to that information to reinforce our inclinations towards certain judgements. It is not theory that guides action within a case, but rather *practical* intuition, or as Arras puts it: "moral certitude (or our best approximation thereof) is to be found in so-called paradigm cases, where our intuitions are most strongly reinforced" (2010, 7).

Narrative ethics takes the unique individual as the critical starting point for moral decision making. It maintains that one cannot make an ethical decision without the explicit understanding of the life-stories of those effected. This, of course, involves 1) individually tailored, iterative approaches rather than foundational norms or principles, 2) courses of action that "fit with the individual life story or stories of the patient" and 3) a process that does not aim to uncover a philosophical unity of

[37] This is a simplified overview of the authors' procedure offered in *The Abuse of Casuistry* (1988).

beliefs, but rather is about a "dialogue" and an exploration of individual as well as shared meanings – between the nexus of patients, doctors, subjects, researchers, staff members, ethicists, and all else involved in ethics (McCarthy 2003, 67).

This method is not as fixed or clear as casuistry or principlism, its focus on telling stories centers human experience. This method can be used as a necessary supplement to principlism or other theories (see Charon 1994) or, on a stronger vision, pushes past universalism or rationalist ethics in favour of a historical or cultural approach, where no single view can offer final justificatory power in an ethical calculus (see MacIntyre 1981). It is usually used in the clinical setting.

This approach is not "anything goes": narrative is set against a backdrop of other evidence. This evidence will not only help to confirm a reported story (some beliefs about ourselves do not tell the whole picture, after all) but is based in the notion that identity is constructed relationally, and as such should be judged relationally: "I cannot seriously view myself as someone who can teach health care ethics unless some other folk see me that way too" writes McCarthy (2003, 68). In other words, the story we tell have to be judged against the backdrop of how we have actually lived our lives.

Coming back to the *Hastings Center* case reported earlier about the Forgetful Mourner: A narrativist would say that to consider the abstract principle as the path towards administering ethical care is ill-conceived and clearly leads to needless suffering in Mrs. C's case. Ms F's imaginative action came out of a desire to communicate or support Mrs. C *as a person*, and not in reference, at least by itself, to a principle. Ms F's act is one which has considered Tony significance to Mrs. C's story about herself, her identity – and as such, deemed it important to tell her the truth (Yang-Lewis and Moody 1995).

The narrativist tends to believe that not much can be gathered in the way of ethical truths or generalizations beyond that which is interpreted in the interaction. Moreover, the narrativist maintains they are not a morally neutral arbiter, but rather have stepped into a *relational* space with their own moral interpretations, and should be willing to "empathize" in a non-traditional way by acknowledging that another

person's pain or joy can never be fully understood (in the "step into their shoes" sense), but nevertheless can be "heard", or listened to (McCarthy 2003).

## 3.2. What works about methods in bioethics?

This section aims to show two things: 1) why each method is ultimately successful at providing assistance for decision-making in situ for *historical* and *practical* reasons and 2) that bioethics – at least within the political and clinical spheres – draws upon several of these methods when confronted with moral problems; it does not adhere to a single method or principle, and that it works better for doing so. Practicing bioethicists have forgone ideal theory for both theoretical and practical reasons, in favour of "incompletely theorized agreements" (Sunstein 1995, 36) – in favour of mid-level approaches, particularist approaches, or more often than not, a methodological hodgepodge. Moreover, the bioethicist "tend to envision their role as one of helping society and the various professions clarify and assess the values *embedded* in various social practices" (Arras 2002, 41; emphasis mine). In this way, the bioethicist, especially the clinical one but also those working in politics, can be characterized as pragmatic – they may not be philosophical pragmatists, but their embedded and empirically-oriented practice holds striking pragmatic elements which have made the field more impactful (Ibid., 36). The point of bioethics is to aid in the business of thinking through bioethical problems using these methods, each of which have their own benefits and limitations, whereas the point of eco-ethics remains to set-up and forward the "right" way to value nature.

### Why principlism, casuistry and narrative ethics work

Principlism, casuistry, and narrative ethics "work". First, I will say what I mean by this. These methods "work", not in that they are theoretically faultless, but rather that they have been taken up outside of academia and are used within clinical and political spheres to actually help work out moral problems – they are *impactful*. I will start with explaining the success of principlism before talking about why casuistry and narrative ethics work, as principlism is the most dominant method in the field. Indeed, many bioethical committees and written reports are based around principlist notions in particular (Düwell 2013). Principlism is "heard on hospital rounds, read in

prestigious medical journals, and found in policy reports" (Andre 2003, 142). Why is this the case?[38]

The usefulness of bioethical principlism can be understood independently of metaphysics – independently of a *universal* common morality, at least – but instead in virtue of already existing similarities and theoretical commitments between bioethicists, policy makers, clinicians and researchers in the US, where principlism first gartered prominence (Engelhardt 1991). On this view, the method is able to provide moral standards (autonomy as morally authoritative) or at least moral guidance (autonomy as a moral rule-of-thumb) because of a normative "overlap" between cultures or groups (Turner 2004).[39]

Seen this way, the historical presence of certain philosophical ideas – Kant's "autonomy" and Mill's "beneficence", etc. – are reduced to principlist notions, which are then legitimized and incorporated into government and judiciary bodies. These bodies then serve to perpetuate their persistence. Even Beauchamp and Childress point out that they are attempting to uncover and reiterate on a morality that already "exists" and use that to explain the right course of action, rather than to retrofit a method under a banner of what we should "ideally" do (Beauchamp 2003).

Though we may criticize the legitimacy of a universal common morality, and though we should continue to question the moral obligations it sets up, we can nevertheless see *how* it has become so powerful: it provides post hoc justificatory power and is simple to use institutionally – because it taps into a moral intuition that already overlaps between communities. It is worth quoting Evans in full:

> The rise of principlism and the profession of bioethics was not because of its inherent excellence, but was rather the result of the rise of the government official as the jurisdiction-giver in the research bioethics and public policy bioethics task-spaces. In the health-care ethics consultation task-space, common morality principlism later became dominant because it had the legitimacy of being endorsed by the government in research bioethics, it

[38] Perhaps understanding the paradigmatic appeal of principlism in bioethics can help us see where principlism in eco-ethics fails, as we will discuss in sections 3.4.
[39] Turner calls these groups "clusters of moral traditions" that indeed overlap but can often diverge (2004, 202).

> articulated with US law (critical for hospital administrators), it was easy to learn for the very part-time bioethicists who conducted health-care ethics consultation in small hospitals across the nation, and it fit well with the bureaucratic authority used in health-care institutions. (2011, 48)

Constructing *The Belmont Report* (1979), for example, largely relied on mid-level principlist notions, and was asked to be written in a style that avoided the more abstracted formulation of academic philosophy (Evans 2011). The Report gave lawmakers referential gusto; a once confusing ethical milieu could be traced back to three principles: respect for person, beneficence and justice. Acquiring written consent was no longer about avoiding a lawsuit, but rather about "respect for the person". The report now guides the United States Department of Health and Human Services' regulations on protecting humans; it is used as a reference in institutional review boards, and any proposal regarding research on humans in the US. All this is to say: the role of the public domain in carving a place out for an ethical method should not be underestimated, as it indeed helped turn the principlist instrument into the "intellectual killer app", a method so useful it engrains the value of a field, to use Sandin's (2015, 278) term, it is today.

Of course, as touched on already, principlism has its limitations – the foremost being that any ethic can be reducible to 4 universalizable standards. The following is a good summation of some of those gaps:

> 1) Abstract rules developed ex ante cannot cover every particular contingency that may arise in the future. 2) What is good unconditionally (haplôs) may not necessarily be good for me (or good for this or that person or people). 3) Abstract rules, sound as they may be in general, turn out sometimes to be inapplicable in particular cases… 4) abstract rules cannot also determine the rules of their own application… We cannot remove the deliberating agent from ethics and polics, reducing polikê [political philosophy] to passive application of universal principles to particular circumstances. (Abizadeh 2002, 270)

Both casuistry and narrative ethics were fashioned out of a need to confront the gaps found in foundationalising ethics. From the casuist point of view, applied ethics'

relationship to practical matters makes it different from purely theoretical fields such as theoretical physics, and thus ethics requires different methodological constraints than a purely theoretical field would (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988). Ethics as praxis versus ethics as theory are characterized differently: praxis admits to uncertainty, while theory is ruled by axioms and deductive definitions. Deductive theory then, goes from rule (or principle) to application to outcome, wherein a method like casuistry goes from cases to conclusions that can be understood as *revisable* principles.

Casuistry, for example, is cognizant of *embeddedness*, that the "situation under which actual moral problems have to be decided must still be defined in terms of their 'circumstances'" (Jonsen and Toulmin 1988, 247). Applied ethics, then, is drawn out of experience; the reason-giving power of ethics is born out of a practical wisdom in the Aristotelian sense rather than a "scientific" knowledge. This notion of "practical wisdom" or *phronesis* purports that ethical action is not to be determined by abstract rules but instead by judgements in particular circumstances – a feature that even principlists like Beauchamp and Childress grew to agree with as their principlist formulation changed and evolved (see Beauchamp 2003).

Both casuistry and narrative ethics take *experience* as the starting point for ethical deliberation, and do not necessitate universality in their theorizing, making them particularly suited to the pragmatist's endeavour of philosophizing from the ground-up.[40] Starting from the ground up means going straight to the source, the person, to ask the questions that concern them about ethics in the first place, accommodating a pluralist body of answers: "ethics begins with practical questions about what to do or how to be" which starts with how we *are* (Halpern 2014, 25).

Rather pragmatically, then, the usefulness of bioethical methods can once again be understood in terms of *where it is used*. Once bioethics moved out of the academic sphere and into the clinical and political spheres, it was confronted with the reality of being unable to pick one singular or master method for solving moral problems. As Arras points out, in practice methods have "blurred significantly" and are considered

[40] On a pedagogical note: bioethical casuistry is well suited to medical and legal settings that already operate in the tradition of describing, identify issues, and comparing them with other cases (Düwell 2013).

to be "mutually complimentary, non-exclusive modes of moral inquiry for doing ethics in the public domain" (2010, 12). I will now argue that these blurred lines have actually made the field into a more practical applied ethic, by serving to provide not just ethicists but also non-philosophers dealing with moral problems with a well-rounded set of skills.

### Why bioethics is better for diversifying its methods

While the academic philosopher might find contradictions in mixing and matching methods, the ethicist in situ, and sometimes even the clinician, draw from several methodological sources. Each methodology aligns with a skillset that moral problem-solving in context requires. The reality of ethical problem solving requiring multiple, complimenting methods is something that eco-ethics should account for, as we will discuss later.

To illustrate: how do ethics get applied in end of life-care, where a hospital and family members are faced with assisted suicide? A team of clinicians would formulate their questions not just around the legislative standards in place but also principlist notions, paradigmatic cases, and narrative conceptualizations. They would presumably ask: By "pulling the plug" am I doing something fundamentally of benefit *to the patient*? Or am I doing something fundamentally harmful? Am I violating *this patients'* autonomy? How do I relate the values *this patient* holds to the values of their family? Is letting *this patient* die consistent with what they would want out of the arch, or story, of their lives? What other cases can I look to support or reinforce my intuitions? And so on – the point I am stressing is the presence and prevalence of the patient, of their family, of the context as a whole in making a decision. "However different and conflicting principlist and narrative theories appear to be, they point to important ethical skills that health professionals should have" (McCarthy 2003, 70).

To go back to the "roles" theorized in the previous chapter, these skills include the explanatory skill of an expert and the interpretive skill of a counsellor. These are aptitudes that ethicists have *developed* and have ostensibly helped bring out in other people (clinicians, etc.). McCarthy's commentary about what actually gets done in the clinical sphere – explication but also interpretation – is reflected in a large methodological toolbox, between principlism, narrative ethics, casuistry but also

other approaches. Indeed, a rather pragmatic commonality linking these methods are that they are constructed through the academy *and* the clinic and have been reconstructed according to contextual work – even principlism has reworked and revised itself according to new information exchanged between the academy and the clinic (Arras 2009). They are practical insofar as they are supposed to interpret (the narrativist or casuist) or explain (the principlist) moral phenomenon in life-sciences. Unlike monist theory, they allow for some wiggle room in terms of theoretical soundness, where they do not necessarily have to be "correct" – it could be that we are wrong about the common morality that underpins principlism, for example – to be methodologically easy to apply.

## 3.3. How eco-ethicists "do" eco-ethics: the pull of monism

We will now turn our attention from bioethical methods to eco-ethical. The first chapter observed that the history of eco-ethics is one of opposition to the human-centered valuing that contributed, in their eco-ethicists' view, to the destruction of nature, and how early voices in the field echoed Routley's (1973) call for a new, an *environmental*, ethic. That legacy lives on, says Minteer: "the primary philosophical task for most mainstream environmental philosophers remains largely unchanged: the articulation of a new nature-centered or non-anthropocentric worldview and an alternative set of moral principles able to account directly for the good of nonhumans and the natural world as a whole" (2009, 4).

Or as Klaver puts it: "Environmental philosophy is invitational: it invites thinking into life as well as life into thinking" (in Frodeman 2007, 128). The way she sees it, eco-ethics is about building mutual connections, or relationships, to the natural world through new thought-processes. In this way, environmental ethics includes the goal of actually moving people into a new environmentally conscious paradigm. The mainstream logic is that moral reconditioning would provide a rationally persuasive enough foundation to do so. Their methods for doing this involve the necessary adoption certain principles, a method considered to be *monistic* (see Minteer et al. 2004).

This section begins by describing the meta-ethical and normative focus that motivates the field and informs its methodology. It then counters this focus from a pragmatist lens, drawing particularly from a Nortian humanist tradition (1984) to argue that the monist method fails on both theoretical and practical grounds. Analysis will then reveal a tendency for eco-ethicists to "eat their own", where theoretical infighting and high levels of abstraction lead to a mainstream eco-ethics that is anti-pluralist and anti-collaborative. I suggest that the solution for this need not be an abandonment of non-anthropocentrism itself, but an abandonment of *requiring* non-anthropocentrism, in favour of a more pluralist, experimental field of ethics.

### 3.3.1. The non-anthropocentrist's thesis

Let us begin with a primer on meta-ethics because it is central to the work of eco-ethicists: If meta-ethics establishes the "truth" of some moral claim, then there might be certain normative implications for how to behave or how to feel. In this way, meta-ethics may be domain shaping, letting humans know what can even be regarded as an ethical problem in the first place – including matters of nature and the environment (McShane 2017).

Meta-ethical discussions regarding eco-ethics center around perceptions of *value* – of what is a "real" moral good, which "is at least partly determined by our opinions about their truth value" (Ibid., 140). Though there is much disagreement as to what metaphysical and epistemological basis construct each position, there is nevertheless an overlap of broad meta-ethical claims. Namely, that:

> 1) There are moral goods independent of human valuing.
>
> 2) Human morality is not independent of the natural world but rather a continuation of it.
>
> 3) Human morality can be wrong in some way or based in bad assumptions. (Ibid., 141)

These positions are further teased out along the lines of non-anthropocentric or anthropocentric approaches. Non-anthropocentrism can be defined inversely to anthropocentrism. That is, the latter "is the view that the nonhuman world has value only because, and insofar as, it directly or indirectly serves human interests" whereas

the former is "the view it *isn't* the case that the nonhuman world has value only because, and insofar as, it directly or indirectly serves human interest" (McShane 2007, 170). In other words, the non-anthropocentric/anthropocentric divide can be determined along the lines of use to humans: humans as the creators of value (anthropocentric) *or* humans as cohabiters in a world of value (non-anthropocentric). Note that these definitions do not rely on *intrinsic* valuing – though non-anthropocentrism rejects humans as the center of the moral world, it "leaves it open whether the centre should be something else" or nothing (2007, 171).

Many eco-ethicists *do*, however, take having an environmental ethic to mean valuing nature intrinsically, a conceptualisation with at least three understandings (see O'Neill 1992). One prominent understanding simply sees intrinsic valuing *as* non-instrumental valuing: "The well-being of a non-human life on Earth has value in itself. This value is independent of any instrumental usefulness for limited human purposes" (Næss in O'Neill 1992). For an in-depth discussion on intrinsic valuing see O'Neill (1992), here we will concern ourselves with criticisms of it from the pragmatist's viewpoint, but will bypass its metaphysical implications.

### Should you be a non-anthropocentrist?

The ethos of environmental ethics involves not only finding the ontological "truth" but also the "decentering" of humans as the ultimate arbiters of goods – including moral ones. The claim is that there are practical consequences to moving humans out of the center of morality, as moral considerations on the environment largely depend on how we see ourselves in relation to it (McShane 2017), a non-anthropocentric thesis that is largely speculative and argued for in a priori terms (Brennan and Lo 2015). Nevertheless, as Katz explains it, for many environmental philosophers:

> The real solution to problems in environmental policy lies in a specific transformation of values – the transcendence of human-based system of ethics and the development of an "ecological ethic"… Policies that ensure the preservation of planetary biodiversity must express values derived from a nonanthropocentric moral system, a normative theory of justice that is "ecological" i.e. a theory not based merely on human goods and interests. (1997, 166)

These theories are largely expressed through monistic framings such as a master principle or theory. "Nonanthropocentric theorists have historically focused on the identification and justification of one or more general moral principles as the primary philosophical task in the field (and as the foundation for policy choice)" (Minter et al. 2004, 132). In this way, the field is set up to uncover moral truths, and to attempt at convincing us of those truths.

In the process of decentering, eco-ethics has established several theories of value including biocentrism, holism, as well as approaches rooted in different applications of more traditional teleological or deontological reasoning. Biocentrism is a view that prescribes moral status to living things (see Taylor 1986). Most literature tends to fault blanket egalitarian approaches to assigning moral worth based solely on the condition of being alive – rather, these positions purport that certain features of life (psychological processes, self-awareness, social capacities, etc.) accord different treatment; life exists on a continuum of moral status (Palmer 2014). While biocentrism ascribes value to distinct, life-holding individuals, holist positions extend moral status to supra-individual groups, such as species or even entire ecosystems – these positions can be viewed as eco-centric, or ethics centered around ecologies or communities (see Callicott 1989). Another popular view is that there is intrinsic value to *naturalness* or *wildness* – where natural spaces should exist free or somehow untainted by humans (Preston 2003; Palmer 2014). Within all of these views, there is disagreement on 1) the kinds of thing that are morally concerning in the first place and 2) the degree or scale of differences between morally worthy things and how that effects treatment (on what grounds is a panda worth more than a sea turtle? A human more than a great ape? How may we express those difference in how we treat them?).[41] Though the degree and scale of moral differences may range, the link between non-anthropocentrists is the *necessary* non-instrumental valuation of nature.

[41] This disagreement can be understood in terms of "weak" or "strong" non-anthropocentrism. If a position advocates for equal moral standing amongst all members (biocentrism) or, if the rightness of an action is measured in terms of how it may affect a natural system (ecocentrism), the position is strongly non-anthropocentric. Think Taylor's *categorical* rejection of human superiority to living things (plants included) (1986). A weaker non-anthropocentrism still accords non-instrumental value to nonhuman things, but nevertheless maintains that there is some reason to value humans more; therefore, in a decision-making procedure, under some circumstances, the needs of humankind would outweigh that of nonhuman-kind.

Without it, humanity risks coming to the right decision for the wrong reason, which might mean coming to the wrong decision eventually.

If the success of eco-ethics was measured in terms of rational assessments for repositioning oneself, then certainly it would be successful given the prevalence of eco-ethicists in giving humanity alternative reasons for valuing the environment (Matthews 2019). Despite all the available ethical theories, wide scale behavioral change has been limited – why is this the case? I have already shown that eco-ethicists have a sparse relationship with those outside of philosophy and how that has created few possibilities for interaction between the eco-philosophical and political spheres. However, another pressing issue is the methodological limits of the mainstream monist eco-philosopher, a charged levied against eco-ethicist by a number of pragmatist and humanist thinkers which we will draw from in the following section (see Norton 1984; Light 2002).

### 3.3.2. Is anthropocentrism to blame?

The problem, as seen by pragmatists, is not about the potential ontological faults of non-anthropocentrism (whether intrinsic value actually exists or not). The problem is that non-anthropocentricism assumes that instrumentalist values are *necessarily* detrimental, that any human interest lacks the depth of "really" caring about the environment – hence the "shallow" versus "deep" characterization of instrumentalism versus non-instrumentalism, respectively (see Næss 1973). What pragmatist theorists like Norton (1984) and Minteer (2012) have done is show that we *can* refer to the vast spectrum of values we hold – both non-anthropocentric and anthropocentric – to justify or guide pro-environmental behavior. Moreover, that *we are better for doing so*.

This section provides an alternative to the monism of non-anthropocentrism via Norton's pragmatic theory of "weak anthropocentrism" (1984). Though not the first to argue from an anthropocentric position, Norton's ethic is particularly nuanced as it teases out that there are different types of instrumental values which can offer different ways of relating to nature. Instrumentalist values can range from crude economic benefits of environmental use, to medicinal/human health usages, to the

more abstract or unquantifiable approaches like the aesthetic appeal of nature, or the "enlightened" approaches of seeing nature as "transformative". This latter approach goes further than purely resource-based instrumentalism, and can shape educational, spiritual or aesthetic needs. Are we to believe, then, that all of these instrumentalist positions are destined to eventually produce poor environmental relationships?

The point, ultimately, is that forging pro-environmental behaviour need not involve non-instrumental valuing or intrinsic notions. After all, in order for any value-need to be realized – aesthetic, instrumental, or otherwise – the land *must* be sustained in the long-term, an understanding that a weak anthropocentrist and a non-anthropocentrist would both already have. In other words, non-anthropocentric valuing is *unnecessary* to achieving a robust environmental ethic. There is "a case for *ideals of human behaviour* extolling harmony with nature" (Afeissa 2008, 53, emphasis mine).

Moreover, allowing for a weak anthropocentrism better accommodates the rich pluralism of liberal societies, which is an asset in the way of achieving compromise in political negotiations and settings where cooperation is required (Norton 1984). This does not mean that any preference with respect to the environment "works". Weak anthropocentrism requires preferences that are "considered", meaning preferences that will face review and critique, rather than *purely* attitudinal preferences as per "strong" anthropocentric positions that prioritize economic or cost-benefit evaluations alone (Norton 1984, 135).

> This approach is neither monistic – it posits no single moral principle determining morality in all subsystems – nor aggregative – it does not sum results across systems. It is hierarchical – it applies to each moral problem local and regional context shaping that problem. This approach integrates man into the ecological system – it avoids isolationism by recognizing that human cultures have since time immemorial, shaped their context. Also it avoids atomism, and tries for a broader integration of social values, including wilderness values. (Norton 1991, 240)

There is yet another aspect of the non-anthropocentric thesis that pragmatists find worth unpacking. That is, the assumption that theoretical differences will cause practical or political difference. Non-instrumentalists like Steverson exemplify this

logic, purporting that, for example, an anthropocentric wildlife manager would not necessarily protect an individual species unless it endangered the wellbeing of the overall ecosystem, whilst a non-anthropocentrist would (1995). Callicott offers a similar line of reasoning: "If all environmental values are anthropocentric and instrumental, then they have to compete head-to-head with the economic values derived from converting rain forests to pulp, savannahs to cattle pasture, and so on" (1995, 22).

While this line of reasoning appears intuitive, it relies on speculative and a priori argumentation and has little in the way of empirical support (Brennan and Lo 2015).[42] Furthermore, there is no a priori reason to reject the possibility that different theoretical assumptions can actually *converge* (see Norton 1991). In other words, despite self-proclaimed value differences between environmentalists, there can be general consensus at the level of policy itself. The mere conceptual assumption that it does not amounts to a form of "empirical evasion" (Minteer and Manning 2000, 51). Though conceptual and logical analysis is important, it is also critical to get a sense of the soundness of divergence or convergence *in the real world* (2000, 51). In fact, when Minteer and Manning set up their own experiment on the relationship between values and environmental policy, their findings concluded that both instrumental and non-instrumentalist positions supported similar policy. Even if we are to assume their findings are not generalizable, the authors have nevertheless shown that the convergence model is "empirically valid for the understanding of the integration of ethical pluralism at the level of sound environmental policy" (2000, 56).

We may rightly assume that there will not be convergence on all political matters – this seems fairly obvious to say. In the context of politics, convergence is an optimistic pursuit for any policy, let alone ones as complex as involving environmental issues. What Norton offers and what empirical data supports, is the potential for theoretical compromise at the political level. In this way, convergence is actually about facilitating policy convergence, and not actually about theoretical

[42] Brennan and Lo point out that the non-anthropocentric argument is often underscored by an unsupported but critical assumption. They call this the *psycho-behavioural thesis of non-anthropocentrism*. Those who espouse this view believe that intrinsic valuing will actually lead to better behaviour, and that inversely, those who do not hold non-instrumentalist positions tend to behave poorly. This is a fundamentally psychological position, and the sort of assumption that deserves *experimental* attention – it is an empirical question, and one that is seldom studied (Brennan and Lo 2015).

convergence. As such, eco-philosophy's hyper-focus on re-fitting values towards non-instrumentalism have limited meaningful political convergence to a specific subset of principles or master principles, and have potentially stalled political convergence entirely until values have been changed. I say "meaningful" convergence because even if the mainstream eco-ethicist concedes that political convergence occurs, they will still point out that this convergence might as well be a house of cards – doomed to topple over without the solid foundation of intrinsic valuing.

Finally, it would seem that the binaries of "anthropocentric" and "non-anthropocentric" are more about analytical construction then they are actual representations of people. That is, the average person's value system is a hodgepodge between the two, usually not reducible to one or the other: "Grand dichotomies… thrive only in ivory towers; when held up against the real world, they do not fit, and are tumbled about and scratched. Underneath, one usually finds a continuum with an oversimplification superimposed" (Norton 1991, preface). Indeed, another finding in Minteer and Manning's study was that individuals presented with a wide range of value positions. As such, convergence between persons is seldom reducible to one reason, let alone the "right" one. Moreover, this view says something fundamental about our meta-beliefs: *that conflicting ethics can still function in the same ethical realm* (Light and Katz 1996). This convergence actually goes beyond pluralism in the sense of the existence of varied ethics, but taps into meta-theoretical pluralism, which as Light and Katz put it: "involves an openness to the plausibility of divergent ethical theories working together in a single moral enterprise" (1996, 4).

It is not enough to espouse moral change towards non-instrumentalism on large scales as the foundational basis for environmental change. We should strongly consider the power of weak anthropocentrism in having widespread appeal, especially for "the formation of better environmental policies or on the project of engendering public support for them" (Light 2002, 436). This project, in turn, requires a turn towards *pluralism*, a framework which can draw on a vast array of relationships to nature where conflicting beliefs can still work together.

## 3.4. Why we should abandon monism

This section will assert the viability of pluralism, present the limits of monistic ethics in more detail, and looks towards the future of environmental ethics to ask "What can environmental ethics do?" for environmental problem-solving. I argue that monism fails both theoretically but especially, politically. First, its faulty theoretical basis relies on speculative, "externalist" assumptions, which I will define later. Second, and most relevant to wide-scale environmental problem solving: that bypassing or bulldozing over human-centered valuing is at best imprudent and at worst "political suicide" (Light 2002, 439).

### Reiterating pluralism

To reiterate, pluralism is a schema that uses multiple types of value as a starting point for ethical practice. It asserts that monistic theories or sets of principles do not sufficiently cover or account for the particularities of every context. Further, it makes the point that humans draw from different principles and approaches when solving moral problems, and that this does not make them irrational.

"If we can be objective and rational in adjudicating the competing claims of aesthetics and economics, then we can be equally objective and rational, within the moral enterprise itself, when faced with competing claims" (Brennan 1992, 22). This is also the assertion that Norton makes when claiming that "dichotomies" of non-anthropocentric or anthropocentric exist only on paper – that ethical problem-solving draws from a spectrum of schemas (1995). Indeed, "the business of living decently involves many kinds of principles and various sorts of responsibilities" (Brennan 1992, 22).

This point is made apparent in my earlier description of the clinical bioethicist drawing from multiple principles and approaches; there is no singular method for tending to a patient at their end-of-life. The skillset of the bioethicist requires a range of skillsets brought on by taking on a plethora of roles, some of which have conflicting theoretical commitments that are nevertheless put aside for the sake of practice. By this metric, the path we should follow is one that can tap into the range of value that *can* help foster pro-environmental behaviour, and that can provide a wider basis for justifying or guiding environmental policy.

### Monism as theoretically faulty

Necessary non-anthropocentrism relies on a speculative "externalized" rationalism where motivations proceed from an argument.[43] For many eco-ethicists, there is commonplace sense that ethics can "exert a palpable influence on behavior" (Callicott and Hayden 1994, 5). However, recent work in moral psychology places doubt on the typical philosophical model that sees moral judgement and accompanying behavior as linearly derived from reason (see Haidt 2001; Batavia et al. 2020). Moreover, even if it is the case that a justifiable monistic theory does exist, it does not follow that people will change their mind or behave in accordance to it. As Light puts it "we can easily image that humans who had recognized the valid justification of non-anthropocentric natural value would still feel the reasonable tug of competing claims to protect human welfare" (2002, 438). This, of course, does not mean that ethicists should throw up their hands and give up on argumentation. It does, however, mean that ethicists should not be reliant on theory alone to provoke pro-environmental behavior.

To illustrate this point, I offer an example as presented by Minteer that breaks down the problematic monism of necessary non-anthropocentrism (2012). This example concerned the relationship between the people of Chitwan Valley, Nepal, and the animals who also called the valley home. In the 60s, the Valley saw significant human population growth – an uptake which put the health of the Valley's already endangered tiger and rhino population severely at risk. As a response to this, the government set up a protected zone, a safe haven for the animals, that later turned into a national park. Despite this, the park faced "continuing pressures" as its surrounding citizens ignored regulations continued to use the park's resources.

Under non-anthropocentrist Rolston's evaluation, regulators must continue their conservationist missions, informed by a non-instrumentalist understanding of the animal's value: "If I did not believe (contra Minteer) that tigers have intrinsic value… If I thought the values of tigers were only those that this of that culture chooses to assign to them, or not, I would not be making such efforts to protect them" (Rolston in Minteer 2012, 69). However, it is unclear why protecting the tigers under an anthropocentric evaluation would necessarily fail, nor why the animals'

[43] Externalism is the view that ethics are not an expression of mere feeling or attitude; that there are objective grounds to follow an ethic.

interests should necessarily beat the locals' interests. There is a spectrum of reasons for protecting the tigers based in the Nepali's relationship to them: from their interest in a healthy ecosystem, to their aesthetic appreciation, to the Nepali's own non-instrumental understandings of the relations between people and animals. The point, both for myself and Minteer, is that it is not enough to "simply decide to put tigers first" (2012, 70). What, then, are we to do with the human interests at stake? It is critical to look to the context to see what it is that decides whether Nepali's *get* to put tigers first. Once we do this, the nature of the Nepali's volatile relationship to the endangered species become clearer: that citizens felt that authorities tended more to the livelihoods of the animals than they did to that of its people, and that a denial of input in conservationist planning amounted to erasure.

Indeed, even if people hold the "right" values (characterized for the sake of argument as non-instrumental) they may act in variable ways, especially given systemic constraints that lead one to prioritize, or rank, certain values over others (Schmidtz 2017). The complex relations between politics, cultural and economics determine set boundaries on how values get expressed. In other words, social conditions have a significant role to play in delineating moral realities, as ultimately "ethics are embedded within a complex sociocultural sphere, which both conditions and constrains patterns of though, feeling and behavior (Batavia et al. 2020, 329). If we are to look to communities themselves, the ethicist may find that "… many people aren't even in a position to think about these issues" – whether one should adjust their values and why – "as daily survival is a problem. Hence, proclamations such as those in the most recent version of the Earth Charter, stating ideas such that we are all responsible for the future of our planet, and that we all belong to our human family are hopeless and useless" (Davion in Frodeman 2007, 149).

Therefore, the question should not be about setting up necessary non-anthropocentrism but rather looking towards the contexts in which people value: what role have institutions and other power structures, social movements, in constructing how we prioritize? Indeed, "our question should be, under what conditions do people with their values and their priorities act in environmentally sound ways?" (Schmidtz 2017, 521). This distinction between values and priorities

offers a useful lens towards understanding why it is that fundamental conflicts arise between those that report having the same values.

### Monism as political faulty

From the perspective of putting environmental issues at the political table, insisting on re-valuing nature in non-anthropocentric terms leaves the environmental ethicists with a very narrow political audience (Light 2002). This is mainly because human considerations play the central role in political decision making. Granted, mainstream ethicists would see their contribution, even if it is an off-putting one, as the "right" one. I have already argued that "right" action does not necessarily follow from "right" reason. As Light aptly puts it: a "nonanthropocentric form of ethics has limited appeal… even if it were true that this literature provides the best reasons for why nature has value" (2002, 436).

This need not mean that ethicists necessarily conform to or agree with how the system (economic and institutions) is currently structured. Environmental philosophy and especially the environmental movement should continue to question the "legitimacy of political institutions dealing with the relationship between modern society and nature" (Lash et al. 1998, 7). On the heels of Carson, Næss, and now Thunberg, millions of school age children around the world and their supporters, there has been a palpable "shake-up" in what good governance related to environmental practice means. This is something that warrants pursuing, but it would seem faulty to assume everyone participating in that shake-up need be non-anthropocentrists. Deriving political considerations from a singular set of principles or theories, "may be, in its own way, just as simplistic as the attempt to reduce all values to monetary ones" (Brennan 2009, 29). This is an argument I will get back to in the proceeding sections.

## 3.5. Comparing how bio and eco-ethics do things

I have established that methods in bioethics draw heavily on a spectrum of methods, including mid-level theorizing but also particularist approaches, whereas in eco-ethics, methods typically revolve around establishing monistic principles centered on

determining the "right" way to value nature: non-anthropocentrically. The results of environmental ethics' required shift from instrumental valuations of nature to non-instrumental ones have relied on a set of master principles built upon a "metaphysical" foundation; "this kind of argument attempts to draw the "proper" ethical conclusions from a specific metaphysical view of the universe" (Katz 1988, 20).[44]

I will now compare the methods using my earlier characterization of bioethical methods as practical, malleable according to contextual factors, and more or less accepting of pluralism. Does the same evaluation apply to eco-ethics? When addressing the practicality of principled approaches in eco-ethics, we do find some practical elements. For example, eco-ethical principles help explain a moral phenomenon to the person (ex: I should participate in pro-environmental activities that prevent acid rain *because* it maintains the biotic health and stability of this natural community). We could justify our assertions about what to do in virtue of these principles – even if they are technically "wrong" in the objectivist sense. They also may provide a guide for action, like a heuristic device.

However, there is an added point that eco-ethicists are trying to make: that it is not just about providing principles but finding the *right* principles to adhere to. Under monism, acknowledging the reality (or at least normative reality) of *non-instrumentalist* positions is required to guarantee consistently pro-environmental behavior. Westra exemplifies this logic: "Even reaching a right decision on wrong principles may not be sufficient if the principles are such that they would permit a morally bad decision on another occasion" (1997, 93). In other words, decision making should come out of, or be derived from, the correct "set" of ethical beliefs otherwise we risk making the "wrong" decisions. There seems to be an assumption that behavior on policy will diverge without non-anthropocentrism, despite the speculative and a priori nature of this assumption, which has largely been unstudied (see Brennan and Lo 2015).

[44] Not all principles are strictly non-anthropocentric. Leopold's "land ethic" is a famous example of this: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" ([1949] 1970, page).

Which brings us to the largest difference between the bioethical methods described in this thesis and eco-ethical ones: contextual malleability and acceptance of pluralism. The mainstream monistic value-schemas of environmental ethics are supposed to apply over a wide scope and cover the breadth of subjects, both human and non-human. The focus of the literature, then, has been on deciding which schema is best: holist, biocentric, etc. Establishing this is complicated by the vast theoretical incompatibilities between instrumental and non-instrumental positions, but also between theories *within* those respective approaches (Lecaros and López 2018). Consider the long-standing difficulty of reconciling principles within animal rights ethics, which place worth on individual species, versus a more holist ethic which will readily sacrifice the life of an animal or even a species to allow for the maintenance of a whole ecosystem. Some environmental philosophers have proposed that a solution to this problem is setting up a mid-level principlism where principles work in coherence with one another and are compatible with pluralist axioms – both non-anthropocentric and anthropocentric valuing (see Lecaros and López 2018).[45] This Rawlsian coherence appeals more to pluralist sensibilities; it is in fact built around accommodating them, as we saw in Beauchamps and Childress' mid-level construct.

Yet, bioethics also suffers from issues of incompatibility, so why is eco-ethics the applied ethic that suffers the brunt of underuse? In part it has been because bioethicists have had the benefit of a moral "head-start" – more institutional receptibility due to the powerful overlap between its principles and of historical-cultural traditions that favour concepts like autonomy and justice. Another key reason, and one that eco-ethics can potentially do something about, is the fact that eco-ethics only indirectly includes itself in matters of practical problem solving – its focus, especially unlike the clinical sphere of bioethics, is not on cases. Rather, it is focused on theoretical debates, over terminology, over the right way of valuing, perhaps to the point of dogma (Varner 1998). While in the earlier days of the field this focus this may have been justified – there are, after all, legitimate reasons to

[45] Lecaros and López, for example, present a three-tiered system that operates in a nested fashion, starting with the "framework" principle of "responsibility for caring for vulnerable beings" as an outline to cohere to, as environmental ethics is concerned about vulnerabilities at all levels (generational, inter and intra species), but also provide justification through an appeal to common morality (2018). They then move to derivative principles such as "the principles of intragenerational and intergenerational justice" among others, and on the final tier operate using prima facie duties based on commonly used socio-environmental principles, including the "precautionary principle", among others.

question the anthropocentric paradigm we live in – it no longer seems sufficient to rely on the reason-giving of a singular schema in changing people's minds. How may eco-ethicists take on a more expansive schema that directly account for the full extent of human valuing? How may practitioners create new roles, build new skillsets, such that the field no longer relies on trickle-down ethics and necessary non-anthropocentrism?

I assert that eco-ethics should be forwarding methods that accommodate a number of value positions, and thereby do not necessitate a total moral re-orientation of the non-anthropocentric variety in order to support pro-environmental behavior. In other words, the foremost method in eco-ethics' toolbox should be those that allow for a pluralist account of valuing.

## 3.6. Summary

This chapter presented a selection of mainstream methods used in bioethics including mid-level principlism, casuistry and narrative ethics. All of these methods stress the role of context in shaping bioethical practice, whether that is through the wide moral equilibrium of mid-level principlism, the practical wisdom of casuistry, or the role of personhood in narrative ethics. I also stressed that each method offers a different, necessary skillset to the bioethical practitioner – the explanatory power of midlevel theorist, the interpretive skill of the particularist – that then gets used at the practical level. In this way, we can find *practical* compatibility between these methods.

I then turned my attention to eco-ethics, categorizing the field as a largely monistic endeavor. I described how and why mainstream eco-ethicists seek to establish theories of value that provide us with the "best" ways of developing pro-environmental behavior. Anthropocentric approaches, on the other hand, are "equated with forms of valuation that easily, or even necessarily, led to nature's destruction" (Light 2002, 429). I question the viability of the monistic method on theoretical and practical grounds, and offer a turn towards pluralist valuing on the basis that it better accounts for and takes up the full range of human valuing.

# 4. Why might it be harder for eco-ethics to do things?

In a reflection on the possibilities of the field, Frodeman asks the reader if a global climate change environmental ethic is "even possible". He posits that "Maybe ethics has temporal-scale limits?" (2007, 120). It might seem strange to ask this question: is an ethic possible? Given that the task of this thesis is, in part, to reconsider the future of the field, it is indeed an important question to consider. After all, it seems that it has been harder for eco-ethics to do things. Again, I bring up the relative disparity between the (now globalizing) normative frameworks in bioethics and the limited use of eco-ethics. Therefore, before any coherent future of the field can be envisioned, we must consider the challenges that the field faces in terms of the construction and adoption of normative frameworks.

There a several theories positing why it has been difficult for environmental ethics to engender large-scale pro-environmental behaviour. Analyses range from the philosophical, to the psychological, to the sociological. I focus on three main hurdles in this chapter: 1) The hyper-complex nature of environmental issues which involve geographical and temporal constraints (Jameison 2009; Gardiner 2006), 2) the limitations and imperfections of human behaviour (Markowitz and Shariff 2012; Haidt and Graham 2007) and 3) the systemic constraints which favour *economistic* valuing which has proven detrimental to the environment (Brown 2009).[46]

My answer, in short, is that a globalized, pluralist ethical paradigm is possible, but that the field of eco-ethics' current strategies for taking on these factors have been highly limiting. This chapter will examine these factors.[47] It will end by asserting that eco-ethics must reframe its conventional strategy if it is to indeed meet these aforementioned challenges.

[46] I use economism instead of anthropocentism to describe the state of hegemonic practices because I am faulting a specific philosophical position as such (economism itself) and not anthropocentrism more generally.
[47] I focus this chapter on the hurdles faced by eco-ethics and not those faced by bioethics, as this thesis is ultimately unpacking why eco-ethics is absent from the public domain.

# 4.1. Characterizing a hyper-complex problem

One significant problem faced by eco-ethicists lies in the fundamental nature of environmental problems: their hyper-complexity. Take the issue of climate change, where an entanglement of factors creates what political and environmental philosopher Stephen Gardiner calls a "perfect moral storm" of three types – a global storm, an intergenerational storm and a theoretical storm (2006, 398). First, the global storm manifests as a scattering of cause and effect over vast geographies. The intergenerational storm underscores how the negative effects of greenhouse gases (GHGs) are realized only after significant periods of time. These conceptualisations tease out that climate change itself cannot be linked to singular actor, making impact virtually untraceable and invisible, creating a "fragmentation of agency" that manifests into chaos (Ibid., 404).

This fragmentation is then contended with in a theoretical storm: Who do we charge to take responsibility for past regressions and future action? How do we manage environmental problems that are yet unknown? How do we maintain global livelihoods equitably and fairly? Gardiner's characterization shows how establishing an ideal ethic for how to relate to nature, let alone how to manage it in the political sense, is enormously difficult in virtue of the sheer volume of actors and temporalities involved. It highlights the spatial-temporal bias which underscores environmental issues.

Dale Jameison offers another way to conceptualise the philosophical problems caused by this bias using "paradigmatic cases" (2009). A paradigmatic case is a case that clearly constitutes a moral problem. Like, for example, Jack purposely stealing Jill's bike. There is a harm that can be identified, certain features about that harm (like intentionality), a harmed entity, and a harmer.[48] The process of identifying *large*-scale environmental problems as paradigmatic, however, are not as obvious. Harmers are spread over a much larger group, and the nature of the harm is uncertain, and constantly in flux. This is much more akin to Jack and other random

[48] Causing someone harm is not the only reason to think of something as morally concerning, but "that some such connection exists has been a very influential, if not universally shared, view in modern moral philosophy" (Jameison 2009, 437).

people triggering "a chain of events that causes a large number of future people who will live in another part of the world from ever having bikes" (Ibid., 436).

It is why watching someone hit their dog appears as a clear moral violation, while consuming an animal that was raised in deplorable conditions might be less morally urgent. It may also explain why bioethical problems hold more philosophical weight. A paradigmatic case in the field is the Tuskegee study discussed in the first chapter. We can identify a harmer (researchers), those harmed (black men), and in which ways: the reduction of human subjects into objects, the intentional deception on a long-term scale, the physical harms that could have been avoided, etc.

## 4.2. Psychology and eco-betterment

The nature of the hyper-complex problem marked by differences in paradigmatic perception can also be understood through a psychological lens. Indeed, moral psychologists Ezra Markowitz and Azim Shariff report that the spacio-temporal bias is the basis for why large-scale problems do not compute as a moral imperative, as a "wrong that demands to be righted" (2012, 243). The environmental crisis is too abstract to make sense of; as a phenomenon, it is often understood more cognitively-rationally, failing to trigger the emotional responses which are necessary to make something imperative. On this view, pro-environmental behaviour is not triggered by reason or rationality, at least not in and of itself, but rather through a nexus of complex and interconnected factors such as emotion and intuition (see Haidt 2001).[49] This does not bode well for the eco-ethicists' primarily reason-giving approach to moral re-orientation.

The fragmented agency means that environmental problems are categorized "unintentional" – as in, no one aimed to destroy the environment, its destruction is more of a side effect from another aim. The human psyche, however, is wired towards reacting to the intentional; "understanding climate change as an unintentional phenomenon with no single villain may decrease motivation to right past wrongs, and perceiving no human role in the phenomenon at all, as many US

[49] "Intuition" as related to a gut feeling, as an immediately generated moral judgement.

citizens do, is likely to depress moral judgements even further" (Markowitz and Shariff 2012, 244). Perhaps this is why we can see the immediately confronting nature of many bioethical problems: they are usually about an individual engaging in intentional relations – problems like end-of-life care, or abortion.

Furthermore, the temporal bias makes climate change a problem of faraway places, as evolutionary psychology tells the story of a human tendency to care for what is only within our immediate surrounding (see De Martino et al. 2006). This phenomenon posits that short-term and small-group thinking helped facilitate survival and reproduction in an otherwise dangerous world. This presents a bleak picture of wide-scale moral change, as a narrow emotional attention span is incompatible with solution to an environmental crisis characterized by the distant and the unseen. These problems are compounded by climate rhetoric's tendency to provoke feelings of guilt and other negative emotions, which actually can serve to trigger negative behaviour and an avoidance of pro-environmental action (Markowitz and Shariff 2012).

Finally, there is the problem of "moral tribalism" (Markowitz and Shariff 2012, 244). The moral values typically associated with climate rhetoric usually fall along liberal partisan lines, focused largely on "harm" and "fairness". The prevailing rhetoric leaves out typically "conservative" values, which are framed in terms of "loyalty, authority, respect, and purity/sanctity". This framing serves to alienate those within a climate "out-group" wherein values do not align or resonate with their own (see Haidt and Graham 2007).

## 4.3. Institutional inadequacy

In addition to temporal and spatial diffusion, as well as fragmented agency and the psychological conundrums that come with it, there is the problem that Gardiner categorizes as "institutional inadequacy" (2006, 404). Institutions and global economic practices do not, as a whole, align with the tenets espoused by the field of environmental ethics – be it weak anthropocentrism *or* non-anthropocentrism. Instead, they identify with *strongly* anthropocentric conceptualisations.

Economics, in particular, is guided by utilitarian evaluations of nature that amount to cost versus benefit. This philosophical position can be understood as *economism*, or "the reduction of all social relations to market logic" (Norgaard 2015) – a position that has proven to be detrimental to the environment. The philosophy of equating value to gross domestic product has certain implications. For one, it means that the current capitalist enterprise and nature become linked through the latter's ability to function as a mere resource towards monetary gain. The more that resource gets taken up, the better in terms of profit – why would you protect something that is only understood as a means to profit? Norton says as much: "Once sand dollars are economic resources, their value is counted in nickels" (1991, 629).

One of the things that makes this dominant structure particularly hard to confront is the historical presentation of key aspects, like economics itself, as value-neutral. Over time, the pull of this neutrality makes us view capitalism as something objective and *inevitable* when it is not (see Hauseman and McPherson 1993). Within this seemingly neutral framework, governments seek "solutions", technical and scientific, which suffer from the same neutrality bias. Frodeman roots these perceptions in the cultural stronghold of positivist thinking, which assumes that "scientific prediction can lift us out of the subjectivity of partisan politics" (2006, 11). Environmental problems and their subsequent solutions thus remain tethered to the same industrialised system that caused environmental destruction in the first place.

As a product of this technified neutrality, environmental problems which have multiple normative dimensions and implications get translated and restructured to adhere to the dominant "economic language" which becomes a political standard (Brown 1987, 336). "The ethical basis for the final decision" of nature as economics "is never exposed, and other viable approaches are completely ignored" (Ibid., 337). The process of seeing solutions through an economic lens is so ingrained that it becomes second nature: "Especially in the West, we have lived with a deep-seated belief that life will get better, that one should hope for abundance, and work toward obtaining it" (Rolston in Frodeman 2007, 141).

There are other practical implications that are not only a function of economics, but a function of the general structures of our political systems and institutions. For

example, there is the fact that regulatory settings require fast action in spite of a lack of available scientific information, often to the detriment of sound environmental decision-making. These decisions are problematized in a simple binary: does this action hurt the environment or not? This places the burden of proof on environmental scientists to assess potential ecological impact amidst a myriad of unpredictable factors. Indeed, "the absence of proof of harm is often treated by both policy makers and scientists as the basis for concluding that no harm will result" (Brown 2009, 217). In other words, the default is to assume an action will not hurt nature until proven otherwise because of lack of funding and time constraints, and the pull of the potential economic benefit of the project at hand. Consider the case of mapping out groundwater flows in a mining project:

> As it costs more than $10000 to drill a well that identifies the stratagraphic setting of a project, a step necessary to determine groundwater flow direction, and since many wells may be necessary to reach high levels of confidence about a site's geology in places where the geology is varied, decision makers are often forced to limit the number of wells to that which is economically reasonable (Ibid., 218).

Imagine, however, treating a medical case with the same binary – especially one within the clinic. Those paradigmatic moral cases that confront the clinician are treated with caution, in part because of the potential repercussions for the practitioner, but also because we are less willing to take chances where individual humans are evidently at risk. Perhaps this is a function of the spatial-temporal bias: direct or immediate harm is more morally obvious than harm which may be directed towards an ecosystem. Regardless, the medical case would not be treated with purely economic evaluations.

Resource management and environmental protections also require a global collectivity which clashes against the sovereign nation state-model. The variable agendas of the nation-state means that supra-national institutions find it nearly impossible to impose binding environmental agendas – especially when they are at odds with market forces and private corporate interests that benefit from subpar environmental practice. These forces and interests play a significant role in defining the management strategies of the state itself. This, coupled with the temporal-spatial

biases, results in a divergence of opinions on tricky issues such as how to distribute emission shares in a way that is fair for developing nations, while also acknowledging the historical benefit of industrialization on developed countries (Besio and Pronzini 2014).

What I hope to achieve through this indictment of the current state of politics is something, I believe, all environmental ethicists would agree with: a push for change. Economism currently reflects a very small subset of the way in which people actually value, and yet it dominates high level structures. By presenting itself as an inevitable entity, it serves to obscure alternative possibilities. In this way, eco-ethics' diagnosis of economism as faulty and detrimental to the environment is correct. Where the field goes wrong is in its current strategy for overcoming this economism, which involves taking one way of valuing (economism) and replacing it with another way (usually monistic). In this final chapter I will point out where this linear strategy goes wrong, and what eco-ethics might do instead.

# 5. What can eco-ethics do?

Given all of the complexities mentioned, and what can eco-ethics do to make an impact? To answer this question, I need to tackle the nature of change and change-making – as eco-ethics is attempting systemic change, at philosophical and practical levels. Mainstream environmental philosophy operates using a linear model of change-making that wants to "leap-frog" from one value system directly to another (Weston 1992, 326). Empirical models indicate that social change-making occurs non-linearly in an interwoven nexus of interacting mechanisms (see Batavia et al. 2020). Some of these mechanisms are abstract (like ideas), and others are more concrete, like political institutions and the rule of law. As Anthony Weston puts it: "Simple, mechanical, one-way linkages between clearly demarcated "causes" and "effects" do not characterize cultural phenomena… Causation is complex, interdependent, and evolving systems with multiple feedback loops" (1992, 327).

The dominant global system is currently "anthropocentrized", where institutions heavily embody anthropocentric paradigms (Ibid., 321) – this echoes the characterization I have made in the previous chapter. Under this holistic model of change-making, where cause and effect are interdependent, we can assume that a shift from the anthropocentrized (at the individual and systemic level) to something else (whatever that might be) will be slow and effortful. Even if many people adhere to a non-instrumental philosophy, getting entire political mechanisms to also adhere to that will take much time and incremental work.[50]

Moreover, it might be that the field of environmental ethics is facing additional setbacks from *not* thinking holistically in the first place. The typical eco-ethical model of causation is linear: from new (non-anthropocentric) values, to new (better) behaviour. If change occurs holistically, then *environmental ethics cannot go on merely asserting a new value system and expecting change to occur*. To do ethics holistically is to not deny the reason-giving power of an ethical argument as such, but to assume that if ethics are to make a difference, they cannot rely on reason alone. If

[50] There are some cases where it would seem catastrophe can also induce systems change. A salient example of this are the structural reformations (like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) that took place to ensure the protection of human rights after WWII.

environmental ethics is to truly engage society in pro-environmental behaviour, it will have to review its reliance on this linear model of change, and then take a closer look at how to relate to the complexities which define the way we study the environment.

One way to take on this complexity is to consider the challenges eco-ethics faces from the perspective of two frames: *internal* and *external*. External factors are those which I have identified: from scientific uncertainty of environmental problems, to the psychological and political realities. Internal factors include how eco-ethics relates to institutions, whether *it* works towards building coalitions with non-philosophers who can determine the course of an environmental problem whether through direct management or regulation.

This latter frame assumes the pragmatic position I have argued so thus far: that eco-ethics should make connections with the non-philosopher in order to directly involve the field in problem solving and contextual work, and that these connections should be made within a pluralist framework for valuing, as monism is theoretically and political limiting. This internal reconstruction may allow for a different relationship to external challenges – one that is no longer based around strict linear cause-and-effect. Also, the upshot of this framing is that eco-ethics has more control over these internal problems, and that it can get insights about this restructuring from bioethics. In this final chapter, I offer a very broad proposal for what this an internalised restructuring might actually look like using a key aspect of the bioethical model: its "sphered" approach which differentiates between the academy, the clinic and policy.

## 5.1. What can eco-ethics learn from bioethics?

At the start of this thesis I made it clear that my purpose was not to redesign environmental ethics to look like bioethics. This remains true. Each field's motivation, scopes of practice, and the nature of the challenges they face differ. Eco-ethics is concerned with the human but also the non-human, ranging from an individual to a whole system. Bioethics is concerned primarily with the individual. Most notably, bioethics does not face the temporal-spatial bias that looms over eco-ethics. All of these differences culminate in the field's taking up different

philosophical approaches to meet their respective challenges. Bioethics' approaches are already constructed in the dominant philosophical form (anthropocentric) and use familiar ethical concepts (autonomy, justice, etc.). Eco-ethics normative frameworks often go against the grain by looking towards removing humans from the center of value. While I fault eco-ethics for *necessitating* moral re-orientation for its theoretical and political limitations, I do *not* believe it should eliminate non-instrumental conceptualisations of valuing, nor do I believe it should stop theorizing and move-on to "practical" matters. That would amount to throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

What eco-ethics can do, however, is adopt the more pragmatic characterisations of the bioethical field, which I sketched out in chapter 3 such as: its attention to place, to experience, to social practice. By explicitly considering these things, eco-ethics may be able to get a better understanding of how its methods work in the real-world. Also, by collaborating with non-philosophers and with different disciplines, eco-ethics can take on the more direct role of a moral counsellor or even expert, alongside their roles as whistleblowers, advocates and futurists – and they can use their philosophical methods without having to rely only on trickle-down ethics.

Indeed, while bioethics never stopped theorizing in the academy, it also paid close attention to "policy-making and democratic consensus" (Arras 2002, 29). Bioethicists work in situ, updating their practice through real-world experience. Susan Wolf echoes this point, reflecting that there is increasing attentiveness to empiricism in bioethics, including studies on "informed consent, the use of do not resuscitate (DNR) orders, other decisions about forgoing life-sustaining treatment, the use of advance directives, and surrogate decision making for incompetent patients" (1994, 403). Even bioethical principlism – a method that sees itself as offering objective standards for deliberation which would not be categorized as philosophically pragmatic – has embraced experimentalism: "If pragmatists believe that moral principles are both action-guiding and the products of continual refinement in the crucible of concrete cases, then Beauchamp and Childress are pragmatists" (Arras 2002, 48).

Of course, this tendency towards incorporating experimentalism and allowing for fallibility does not mean bioethics is faultless. Wolf admonishes the field for its need

to be taken seriously "in the world of medicine" at the expense of genuine self-criticism (1994, 402). Moreover, just because bioethicists tend towards empiricism does not mean that they are always revising their methodological assumptions – or even whether those methods are working as intended. Consider how institutional review boards charged with protecting patients by way of informed consent forms do not always examine "whether genuine informed consent was *actually* obtained in the clinic" (Arras 2002, 43, emphasis mine). Practices such as these run the risk of turning bioethics into a checklist rather than a field that offers authentic moral reflection (Andre 2003). All in all, however, the pragmatic tendencies of bioethics to experiment and pay more attention to context has allowed it to be incorporated into real-world settings. If eco-ethics is to have more of an impact, it can benefit from taking on these tendencies towards experimentalism as well. I do not have a clear idea of what this will actually look like in terms of exact strategies or typologies, as possibilities are numerous. As Weston reasons, ethics "has hitherto paid so little attention to the cultural constitution of values that we have no such typology" (1992, 337). I offer some preliminary speculations in the following section.

## 5.2. Moving from theory to practice

I have shown that in bioethics, high level theorizing is used more sparingly compared to particularist methods such as casuistry and narrative ethics, or mid-level principlism. Moreover, I have shown that these methods are used in practice to aid in the process of decision-making. Furthermore, these methods are updated and revised in an experimental way – they are built like mosaics, piece by piece, and from the ground, up (Baier 1994).

In eco-ethics, theory-building is largely the focus; these theories attempt at establishing the sort of relationship we should have with nature. This practice is not insignificant – for illuminating and making clear value concepts, we owe much to the field. However, these theories usually push a monistic schema for valuing. I have already pointed out the practical and theoretical problematics with necessitating *one* way of valuing. The problem is that in the hyper-focus on theory, the practice of actually making sense of ethics within real-world contexts in largely ignored:

> … Much of the work in environmental ethics to date has been committed to the often vocal discussion of antipodal conceptual issues—intrinsic versus instrumental value, anthropocentrism versus biocentrism, monism versus pluralism, and so on. The consequence of this discussion, many observers note, has been the field's conspicuous silence regarding concrete solutions to real world environmental dilemmas (Minteer and Manning 1999, 192).

A consequence of this is the continued schism between those who purport ethics should be contextualized, or at least based in a more "integrated connection between human culture and the natural world" (Minteer and Manning 1999, 192), and those in the field who maintain the importance shifting human-nature relations towards non-anthropocentric valuing. The back and forth between pragmatists and non-anthropocentrists may serve to create an echo chamber.[51] Is there a future for eco-ethics that can meet the needs of the theorist while also turning towards the field? What is next in terms of a future path for environmental ethics?

My suggestion for a path forward for eco-ethics is twofold: in order to meaningfully link environmental ethics to practice, the field requires refocusing some of its efforts towards working with institutions and non-philosophers. In doing so, they might actually get at the heart of how environmental ethical dilemmas are contended with. This move is not untenable. Recall chapter 3: Bioethical principlism was also charged with failing to "bridge the gap between the ethical thinking of philosophers and the clinical thinking of physicians" (Arras 2002, 31-32), and went on to construct a more context-oriented model of clinical ethics. This can be done by establishing "spheres" of practice for the eco-ethicist, where the academic model which focuses on theory building can be supplemented by a sphere with a more pragmatic orientation.

In other words, a revision of content is not needed. Insofar as non-instrumentalist values provide explanatory force for a subset of people, they are indeed important. However, changes in the *scope* and *form* of eco-ethics, through the incorporation of more contextual, revisionist approaches, are needed if eco-ethics is to make an impact on a wide scale. As McShane points out:

[51] An irony which is not lost on me.

> "Instead of rigging the definitions in our favor, environmental ethicists should be talking about what the world is like, why it is so good, and why we ought to be working hard to nurture and respect that goodness… In practical ethics, then, we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that our metaethics can do the work of substantive normative arguments (nor, in fact, *that our substantive normative arguments can do the work of political negotiating and democratic deliberating*)" (2017, 147; emphasis mine).

### 5.2.1. The appeal of a "sphered" eco-ethics

My suggested change in scope and form is loosely modelled off of the bioethical "spheres" of practice identified in chapter 2, where philosophical labour is performed in different ways according to context. That is, I suggest eco-ethics take on its own "sphered" approach to practice. This model is not meant to be copied, but rather used as proof of concept. The upshot of this approach is that it allows the field of eco-ethics to incorporate the primacy of place in understanding moral frameworks, in turn confronting the charge that the field is "too abstract" in its theorizing. These spheres are fluid enough to include cross-over while still being delineated enough to suggest a main focus.

The suggestion to break down environmental ethics by its primary foci is not new. Joel Kassiola has suggested sectioning off eco-ethics in two parts: the first part would provide rational evaluation of environmental values, and the second would contend with the practical implementation of such values (2003). Though both parts are influenced through empirical inquiry, the former is a distinctly normative task, while the latter is better executed through forum or debate: "… empirical consideration constitutes merely a portion of the work of environmental ethicists. They form the application or implementation phase of the necessary prior normative thinking and assessment, reasoned debate and ethical and political decision-making" (2003, 503). Bill Throop follows up with a similar suggestion: namely, that eco-ethics can split off into separate branches with their own respective standards and goals (in Frodeman 2007, 148). A subset of environmental philosophers can remain within academia contending with the "intellectual puzzles" or more theory-focused work, wherein their audience would also remain largely academic, while another set

of philosophers can turn their attention to directly engaging non-philosophers. Finally, Frodeman suggests a "policy turn" to supplement academic environmental ethics, wherein a second, "topical" branch would investigate how philosophy may integrate with specifically with the work of policy makers, public science agencies and scientists more generally as a "philosophy of environmental policy" or "science policy" (2004, 8).

My suggestion is fairly similar, and again, draws upon bioethics. One sphere can be centred on the academy. Another can be focused on law and public policy, concerning the relationship between regulatory practice and institutions. The last can be a more democratized practical sphere that works with environmental care workers – the clinical equivalent for eco-ethicists. The question that this latter sphere would focus on is how it can improve environmental care. Of course, this enviro-"clinic" is much more fragmented and less easily discernible that traditional medical or research settings, and involves an even wider, complex spectrum of ethical evaluations (as we identified in the previous chapter). This would have to be kept in mind when formulating specific strategies within the sphere itself – and between it and other spheres.

The eco-ethicist can step in as a counsellor or expert to tease out the various ways of valuing – not as an ethicist espousing their own views, but rather one that *experiments*. The primary work of the in-situ eco-ethicist, then, would be to "observe that people come to value nature in particular ways, and understand the ways in which people come to value nature in the way they do can serve as a useful basis for considering how both individuals and communities might approach environmental problems" (Pearson 2014, 347).

What is a necessary feature of the sphere that goes out into the real-world? An *interdisciplinary* orientation: an aim towards building bridges with other fields, particularly those directly involved in the care, maintenance, or management of nature – a connection that is at present largely absent. Take Norton's experience as a philosopher associated with the Environmental Protection Agency. The agency, on Norton's account, desired conceptual analysis but felt that "the categories and concepts of traditional "metaphysical" approaches to environmental value" did not "provide them with useful guidance in policy decision making" (in Frodeman 2007,

134). Indeed, constructing normative frameworks for environmental decision-making is seldom explored, as Minteer and James Collins point out (2005). They purport that a framework with a "special focus on the design and conduct of ecological field and laboratory experiments" could be very helpful to people like biodiversity managers or ecologists (Ibid., 1804).

These alliances do not mean that cases require an on staff eco-ethicist as expert or as consultant.[52] However, given the prevalence of normative dimensions in environmental decision-making, it seems reasonable to suggest that at least an introductory knowledge of eco-ethics be required for disciplines which directly affect the environment. The feasibility of mandating eco-ethical education on large-scales is questionable, at least in the present day conditions; however, eco-ethics *can* work on facilitating more interdisciplinarity. This would mean working with various cases and contexts in a process of philosophical fieldwork. This could also mean forming alliances with other academic departments such as environmental, animal, marine, and forestry studies but also social and political science and economics – liaisons we already see are possible when looking at the relation between bioethicists and the clinical world.

Imagine what the direct meeting of eco-ethics and economics, for example, could achieve – perhaps very little, or perhaps it would open up economic structures to a wider range of values. Again, given the incremental nature of change I do not pretend that this meeting will amount to economist leap-frogging from one paradigm to another en masse. However, given the discipline's profound impact on how public policy is structured, it is worth making that connection. Economist are regularly called upon to consult on matters of what should be done about a policy – which means economists are offering normative frameworks for action which have an impact on nature. The standard economic morality is that which has perpetuated a neoliberal growth paradigm. It could be, that the aforementioned ignorance to alternative normative frameworks in economics is "partially a result of their [economists] narrow disciplinary training" (Ehrlich 2009, 426) – thus a meeting of eco-ethics and economics is not irrelevant. If we are to truly come to a socio-

[52] Though Wallerstein et al. go as far as calling for an educational mandate on the inclusion of not only eco-ethics but social sciences more generally (1996).

economic structure which is more cognizant of the plurality of values we hold, we must supplement the typically narrow economic education with knowledges from other fields, including environmental ethics.

Furthermore, this knowledge does not have to be a one-way relationship. To rip yet another page out of the book of bioethics, eco-ethicists could engage in more dual-career training. This would allow for more exposure to the technical or empirical dimensions of environmental work while also incorporating more normative or analytical dimensions – the latter of which have been missing from many environmental fields. In other words, scientists and eco-ethicists can learn from one another in a co-production of knowledge.

## Constructing "spheres" of practice for eco-ethicists

So far, I have made the case for a pragmatic coalition-building through the institutional presence of eco-ethicists in varied departments and in the field, as well as the exchange of normative evaluations through interdisciplinary literatures and collaborations as a possible path towards a more impactful eco-ethics. Let us assume I have convinced you that doing this by way of a sphered approach is a good thing. Let us also set aside the academic sphere, as there is already a good understanding of what an academic philosophers' work is motivated by – knowledge for knowledge's sake. The question now is what specific strategy should these in situ spheres, these field philosophers working with non-philosophers and institutions, take on? I already forwarded a general strategy of being attentive to place, experience, and social practice. It might be helpful to consider what the field ethicist will *not* be, at least to temper some expectations.

The field ethicist is not promising the delivery of truth – they are not going to give the conservation manager or the politician the Right Answer. They are certainly not going to right all the wrongs of policy. This is something eco-ethicists can learn from early bioethicists, who came into the clinic expecting to fill what was seen as a moral void in medicine, as a "necessary means of overcoming the biases and ethical shortcomings" (Scher and Kozlowska 2018, 14). Many of these eager ethicists later discovered that their own "education was about to begin" (Ibid., 15). These bioethicists learned that doing philosophical work outside of the academy meant

revisiting how others "thought about their ethical responsibilities and about the ethical problems that arose in the course of their work" (Ibid., 15).

At the same time, the policy maker or public might rightly ask: well, if eco-ethicists do not have the right answers, why bother considering them experts or even counsellors (but also futurists, whistle-blowers, etc.) – why give them any institutionalised credence at all? My answer, perhaps unsatisfactorily, is that the eco-ethicist can offer a specific set of skills or methodologies that can lend itself to critical thinking, to facilitating moral discourse. As Callard puts it: philosophers are "masters of think*ing*, but, given the extent of disagreement, most of us must be utterly inept at *having thought*" (2019). The making of the bioethical or eco-ethical expert is more about a *process,* less about the right answers – they are not philosopher-kings. Thinking of ethics as engaging in a process does not mean that normative decision-making criteria should be forgone. After all, environmentalists and policy-makers ultimately need recommendations on *what to do*. My point is that, to use a Deweyan approach, figuring out what to do within the environmental "classroom" is not pre-determined, not imposed on from above, but rather determined internally to the situation at hand, as the process of experiencing unfolds (Dewey 1986 [1938]).

What I propose, along the lines of Light (2002), Minteer (2012), Frodeman (2006), and others, is a moral process that starts from the ground, up. Examples of ground-up methods include casuistry and narrative ethics, but there is room for principlism within this approach as well – at least a reflexive principlism that engages in contextual refinement. Again, the field philosopher is focused on bridging the gap between moral theory in the academy and what actually happens in practice – which relies more on empirical experimentation and less on pure theoretical abstraction. They should aim to assess the problems faced by those in practice. In this way, "philosophy becomes a type of fieldwork or practice engaged with the world rather than only a matter of discourse, making its home in the laboratory and the board room as well as in the classroom and scholar's study" (Frodeman 2006, 9)

Of course, any values-criteria is not a fool-proof or infallible method for solving problems – I have already pointed out how practitioners may reduce a decision-making tool like informed consent to a simple checklist. Nevertheless, it is better that

we have informed consent tools than to have nothing at all. There is no prima facie reason why a similar, revisable tool could not also be used in eco-ethics.

Ultimately, there is no simple answer to what problem solving will effectively look like in environmental ethics, especially within a pluralist understanding of the field. To consider the vast spectrum of values in creating policy takes a lot of work. "But life is complicated, and we will not make progress in tackling the grave difficulties we face unless we learn to avoid shallow thinking and simple solutions" (Brennan 1992, 23).

### 5.2.2. Potential problems and their refutations

Admittedly, dividing the field into spheres of practice comes with some objections. I will be addressing two particularly worrisome ones. The first is the charge that splitting into an "academic" group and more "practical" groups amounts to forgoing some sort of philosophical rigour and depth with respect to the more "practical" group, and therefore attacks the integrity of the field as a whole. The second charge is perhaps more worrisome: if the root of effective environmental practice is indeed about moral re-orientation and as such, valuing, then splitting philosophical labour means one group forgoes or effectively puts that aside.

Regarding the first problem: If rigour amounts to a priori conceptualisations, abstracted thought experiments and theoretical rigidity, I will bite the bullet and admit to a potential loss of rigour for introducing a more practice-oriented sphere. Nevertheless, this is worth the pragmatic end of forwarding a more impactful field of applied ethics. Here, I will point out that academic bioethics also charged its more "practical" branch with lacking rigour – so much so that the American Association of Bioethics (AAB) was formed (Andre 2003). The existence of the clinical sphere did not stop academic ethics from theorizing, nor, I believe, did it diminish the value of it as a philosophical field.

I will also point out that to see philosophy in this narrow way is a product of a modern conceptualisation of what philosophy should be. As Frodeman and Adam Briggle point out in their New York Times article "When Philosophy Lost Its Way", until the late 19$^{th}$ century philosophy was largely removed from clearly defined disciplinary lines (2016). Though philosophy had changed its practices over the

course of ancient to medieval times, it nevertheless maintained an ongoing effort "directed toward the goal of the good life" (Ibid.) in addition to the acquisition of truth. "But this unity shattered under the weight of increasing specialization by the turn of the 20th century" (Ibid.). Alongside the enlightenment came the specialization of subjects that had previously bled into one another – out of natural philosophy came natural science and out of moral philosophy came social sciences. Not only was knowledge being produced, but producing knowledge the "right" way according to disciplinary lines required certain approaches, such as the scientific method of the natural sciences. In order for philosophy to go on, it had to reconstruct itself under the rules of the academic enterprise within a theoretical agenda. Philosophy went from being a relatively heterogeneous practice, where thinkers could be more than just philosophers but were often multi-disciplined, to being *P*hilosophers. What this academic structure served to achieve was to make philosophy turn within itself, creating a vacuum or thought bubble exchange namely between other philosophers (see MacIntyre 1985) – a thought bubble the pragmatist wishes to avoid.

To be clear: this analysis is not a blanket indictment of philosophy. The freedom afforded by the bounds of the university have indeed given philosophy a special status that other disciplines do not have: the ability to ask questions for the sake of asking questions ad infinitum, even if the answer is not guaranteed. However, this does not necessitate that *all* philosophy must stay within the boundaries of thought experiments, counter-examples, and analytical correctness. Even if philosophy sticks to its aim at getting at The Truth, there is no reason to reject the instrumental value of a field philosophy that is aimed at practical application. A field philosophy, one that gives non-philosophers a chance to actually meaningfully participate in philosophiz*ing* with others, is indeed worthwhile. The clinical bioethicist shows us as much, especially in their re-embracing of multi-disciplinary, experimental approaches.

Moreover, using the same standards to evaluate both traditional academic work and more practice-oriented philosophy is inappropriate. After all, we would not evaluate quantitative work by the criteria of qualitative research because they are indeed *different*. In situ eco-ethics operates in a different context and with different stakeholders than traditional "philosophy as the pursuit of Truth" would allow. As

such, given the varied aims and objectives, skillsets, and knowledges between the eco-philosopher in the academy and that in the field, each group requires a *separate* set of evaluative criteria, or a different set of markers for assessing whether its practice is a "good" one.

Andre illustrates this point through the lens of the clinical bioethicist: Consultations, IRB membership, and interacting with clinicians, among other things, "demanded new knowledge (not of philosophy but of health care), drew upon new skills (especially interactional), and served different purposes (improving hospital policy, preventing the abuse of human subjects in research, relieving conflict over the care of a patient). I had joined a new field" (2003, 27). In other words: variable settings require variable knowledges and skillsets; thus, the bioethicist in the clinic is functionally different from that of the academy – even if their work does overlap. Field settings like the clinic also require doing work which incorporates relevant factors to an ethical problem that cannot be ignored in real-world settings, such as what the legal status might be, what national consensus might look like, etc. By logical extension the same could be said about the field philosopher in environmental contexts: they would have to uncover and then work with the aspects created by in situ conditions.

In addition to the different requirements of being "on the ground" dealing with specific environmental cases, eco-ethicists in the policy arena must also be willing to restructure their approaches in light of how political institutions work. This is not to say that eco-ethicists should stop providing critical analysis for the sake of adhering to a political structure. However, they should realize that in order to get a seat at the table, they need to find some compromise between Truth – which within pragmatist purviews is less of a fundamental problem to begin with – and making a difference in the political arena.

Indeed, the goals of the academy (and philosophy in particular) often do not align with goals of political and legal institutions – yet this latter force cannot be ignored in the effort to make lasting environmental impact. "When philosophers become more or less direct participants in the policy-making process and so are no longer academics just hoping that an occasional policymaker might read their scholarly journal articles, this scholarly virtue of the unconstrained search for the truth comes

under a variety of related pressures" (Brock 1987, 787). To be a political participant is to compromise on philosophical purity.

Brock illustrates this in his own experience as a philosopher on the US's President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine (1987) tasked with advising on ethical issues in biomedicine. The issue at hand concerned making a moral distinction between "killing" and "allowing to die" in cases requiring life-sustaining treatment. Where Brock saw no philosophical or conceptual distinction between the two, he shared in the conclusion that "pulling the plug" was nevertheless morally permissible. However, those making the political decisions did see a moral difference – they believed that "killing was far more seriously wrong than allowing to die".

If Brock were to purport that "allowing" a patient to die still amounted to "killing" them – as his analytical analysis would have urged him to do in the pursuit of philosophical rigour – the views of the policy-makers could have changed, potentially jeopardizing the political outcome of passing physician-assisted suicide legislation, on which both sets of people actually converged (1987, 788-789). "Philosophers, one could argue, earn a living by envisioning a more perfect world. But although there may be some point in an environmental ethic that is mainly an exercise in envisioning ideals, environmental conflict resolution is an exercise in the art of compromise" (Schmidtz 2017, 520).

In regard to the second charge that dividing efforts will distract from the project of restructuring moral values: First, I do not see why the partitioning of tasks between spheres will necessarily lead to the detriment or downfall of necessary non-instrumentalism. The study of ethics is not a zero-sum game. Second, I have already argued in section 3.5 that the assertion that non-anthropocentrism is needed for consistent pro-environmental behaviour is an empirical one which has yet to have been thoroughly studied – thus it is largely speculative and relies on intuition (Brennan and Lo 2015). To adhere to this claim speculatively leaves eco-ethics beholden to advancing a theoretical position that at worst is actively stifling pluralistic collaboration. Of course, if it *is* the case that non-anthropocentrism is better for us, in the sense that it is correlated with long-term pro-environmental behaviour, we may only find out by examining the real-world in the first place.

### 5.2.3. Final reflections

I hope, thus far, I have managed to do at least two things: convince you of an expansion of the typical bounds of environmental philosophy, but also more generally, to present the practice of philosophy not just as subject but as process. By engaging with others in a process of philosophizing, we take seriously the social nature of our being. We take on the position that we are whole persons engaging in experimental relations rather than the rigid formulations of rationalist dualism. The pragmatic approach asserts that "philosophy" does not have to amount to a priori contemplation. This also means that philosophy need not be an isolated endeavor, as a philosopher is not uniquely equipped to understand philosophical concepts.

I wish to end this thesis with a tempered optimism towards the future of environmental ethics, and towards environmental betterment more generally. A hopeful sign is that institutions and the public are increasingly acknowledging the explicitly normative dimensions of environmental problems – and are, moreover, becoming more willing to take on the study of those dimensions. Another sign, however, is that more and more philosophers actually going out into the field. Frodeman, whose work has served as a buttress for many of the field-oriented ideas espoused in this text, has assembled a team of philosophers to work with the US Geological Survey on issues relating to water. This work was an example of successful field philosophy: normative frameworks developed by this group were subsequently used in a strategy for management of the Great Lakes (see Frodeman 2010). Philosopher Paul Thompson has offered insights into the normative dimensions of gene editing in agriculture that have challenged industry practice, his writings are often referred to in US agricultural policy (see Browne et al. 1992). Some environmental groups have focused an entire pedagogy on the importance of learning and experiencing the outdoors – whether in urban parks or in wilderness settings, in a process that relates normative frameworks to the experience of nature under a maxim of "where you are is who you are" (see Heidinger 2018). As the field slowly re-orients itself to allow for a wider variety of philosophical practice, examples like this can provide guidance on nurturing further in-situ work, where the theories of the academy can be adapted to real-world concerns with an eye towards difference-making.

# 6. Summary

*Alice: "Would you tell me, please, which way to go from here?"*
*Cheshire Cat: "That depends a good deal on where you want to get to."*
Lewis Carroll

The main objective of this thesis was to forward the pragmatic argument that environmental ethics should take a political and public turn, such that it can bridge the gap between philosophy and environmental problem solving. This proposal is premised on the claim that environmental ethics has not succeeded at its main aim of evoking wide scale environmental betterment, despite offering substantive normative positions for valuing nature. Another field of applied ethics, bioethics, however, *has* seen more successes: it is increasingly present in institutions, in hospital settings, and within political processes across the globe. I presented this difference in influence as a comparative puzzle: if one field of applied ethics is visible, why is the other field facing relative obscurity outside of academic circles? By comparing and contrasting eco-ethics to a similar (but not identical) field, bioethics, I hoped to tease out key differences which may factor in to manifesting a public turn.

By comparing not only what both fields of ethics have done, historically, but also where they have done it, I presented the relevance of *place* in shaping the practice of bio- and eco-ethics. Where bioethics is present in at least three spheres – the academy, the clinic and in intuitions – eco-ethics' range of practice is largely restricted to within the academy. This means that bioethicists are working not just on theory-building, but also collaborating closely with clinicians and other relevant stakeholders such as lawyers and policy-makers, to make sense of contextual problems facing those stakeholders. This primacy of context, in turn, has conditioned bioethical practice towards more inherently pragmatic ends, and has allowed the bioethicist to wear many hats: as a moral expert which creates decision-making frameworks for ethical practice, as a counsellor which offers moral interpretation and advice, among other roles – all the while using a variety of methods for application, from mid-level to particularist. Though certainly not perfect, the field's attention to place, to experience and to social practice has given it a more palpable connection to non-philosophers.

A consequence of eco-ethics' rather singular place in academia is a reliance on a trickle-down method, where the focus is on theory-construction that eventually will tickle-down to the general public through the natural process of public discourse. I have noted that the theoretical work that philosophers do to illuminate or make sense of our relationships to nature is necessary for "practical" problem solving to occur at all. However, eco-ethics' nearly singular focus on value-clarification, especially that which champions a rather monistic, foundational ethics, or the "right" way of valuing, is limited. This is not because it espouses the wrong principles as such – though it very well might be. Instead, it is limited in its assumption that the reason-giving power of theory alone is enough to provoke change. For one, right theory does not necessarily translate to right conduct. Moreover, pro-environmental behavior modification requires accounting for a nexus of factors which interact in an interdependent feedback-loop. Factor in the added complexity of environmental issues, fraught with temporal-spatial biases and human limitations, and this makes creating any normative framework even more of a challenge. A turn towards pluralism, therefore, which already assumes that there is no singular set of right principles, is preferable. It offers the eco-ethicist access to the "full spectrum of human valuing", drawing on the range of existing human values – both instrumental and non-instrumental – that can underscore a better relationship to the environment.

This more pluralist approach, however, cannot remained only tied to the academy if it is to be an engaged, participatory ethic. Here, the bioethical model has offered some insights: its sphered practice changes the aims of the philosophical work. Where the eco-ethicists in the academy can focus largely on continued theory building, those of the policy-oriented and field-oriented spheres can focus on gaining knowledge of the explicit relationships between the field, its stakeholders, and normativity. These relationships can facilitate the role of eco-ethicist as expert and as counsellor, where they can engage with public and private projects, disciplines, and non-philosophers. They do this not as all-knowing seers, but rather as facilitators of moral discourse who are engaging in an evolving process.

Of course, any report of the state of the field must account for the selective pressures it faces, which is what I aimed to lay out in chapter 4. These pressures, ranging from the psychological, to the spatial-temporal, to the political, culminate to form

formidable barriers, many of which the field of bioethics does not face – but these pressures are not insurmountable. What in situ work offers the field of eco-ethics is the direct link the to the worlds outside of academia– no longer relying solely on the trickle-down method. Though I do not know, exactly, what it takes for an environmental problem to overcome these barriers, I also do not think that the problem can rely on the reason-giving power of moral blueprints alone. If eco-ethics is to make a direct impact, it can no longer rely on merely envisioning a more harmonious blueprint for society. These blueprints, varied and multifaceted as they are, are not enough. "Blueprints do not in themselves, as it turns out, bring about change, any more than philosophical arguments do" (Mathews 2019). By delineating between spheres of eco-ethics, we do not forgo the blueprints, but also focus on the experiential, real-world aspects of environmental problems that may serve to contextualize and inform those blueprints, offering the possibility of not just a singular future for environmental ethics, but many.

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