

# What are Environmental Ethics?

Environmental ethics is a branch of ethics that studies the relation of human beings and the environment and how ethics play a role in this. Environmental ethics believe that humans are a part of society as well as other living creatures, which includes plants and animals. These items are a very important part of the world and are considered to be a functional part of human life.

Therefore, it is essential that every human being respected and honor this and use morals and ethics when dealing with these creatures.

***“In environmental philosophy, environmental ethics is an established field of practical philosophy “which reconstructs the essential types of argumentation that can be made for protecting natural entities and the sustainable use of natural resources.” The main competing paradigms are anthropocentrism, physiocentrism (called ecocentrism as well), and theocentrism.***

***Environmental ethics exerts influence on a large range of disciplines including environmental law, environmental sociology, ecotheology, ecological economics, ecology and environmental geography.”***

**Global warming, global climate change, deforestation, pollution, resource degradation, the threat of extinction** are few of the issues from which our planet is suffering. Environmental ethics are a key feature of environmental studies that establishes the relationship between humans and the earth. With environmental ethics, you can ensure that you are doing your part to keep the environment safe and protected.

**Every time that a tree is cut down to make a home or other resources are used, we are using natural resources that are becoming more and more sparse to find. It is essential that you do your part to keep the environment protected and free from danger. It is not as difficult to do as you may think so long as you’re willing to make a few simple and easy changes.**

With the rapid increase in the world’s population, the consumption of natural resources has increased several times. This has degraded our planet’s ability to provide the services we humans need. The consumption of resources is going at a faster rate than they can naturally replenish.

Environmental ethics builds on scientific understanding by bringing human values, moral principles, and improved decision making into conversation with science. It was [Earth Day](#) in 1970 that helped to develop environmental ethics in the US, and soon thereafter, the same ethics were developed in other countries, including Canada and North America. This is important because the ethics of the [environment are of major concern these days](#).

## What Causes Environmental Pollution?

The acts of humans lead to environmental pollution. The stronger demand for resources is also a factor that contributes to the problem as we all need food and shelter. When these things are so desired and need the natural balance of the environment is disturbed. Engineering developments are resulting in resource depletion and environmental destruction.

**There are several environmental issues that have created havoc on our environment and human life. If ignored today, these ill effects are sure to curb human existence in the near future.**

**The major environmental issues include Pollution, Overpopulation, Industrial and Household Waste, Acid Rain, Climate change, Ozone Layer Depletion, Urban Sprawl, Genetic Engineering, Deforestation and Global Warming. These environmental issues have taken a toll on our environment and we've already started seeing some disastrous effects in the form of the effect of health on humans, rise in sea level, depletion of non-renewable resources, melting of glaciers, extinction of species, polluted landfills, toxic dust, decreasing soil fertility, rise in air and water pollution and many more.**

**Human beings are considered to be the most intelligent species living on earth. This could be why it is the only species on earth that has civilized itself over the decades to a large extent. Today, human beings boast as being superior to all other animals, but what is the use of such great intelligence when environment ethics are not followed?**

**Cutting down trees is something that many humans do for their own benefit without any concern for the animals, which are dependent on trees for survival. Using fossil fuels erratically, industrialization, pollution, disturbing ecological balance, all these are attributable to human activities.**

Just because we are in possession of all of these natural resources does not mean that we can use those resources in any manner in which we choose without keeping anything for future generations.

## Environmental Ethics and Environmental Philosophy

Environmental ethics has produced around environmental philosophy. Many scientists have taken up the belief of the philosophical aspect of environmental hazards, thus giving rise to environmental ethics. Currently, environmental ethics has become a major concern for mankind.

**The industrialization has given way to pollution and ecological imbalance. If an industry is causing such problems, it is not only the duty of that industry**

but all the human beings to make up for the losses. But how long an artificial and restored environment will be able to sustain? Will it be able to take the place of natural resources? Environmentalists are trying to find answers to these difficult questions, and all these together are termed as environmental ethics.

It is the responsibility of all to ensure that environmental ethics are being met. It is somewhat difficult to make adjustments that are necessary to ensure that you are following all environmental ethics.

Ethics plays an **important role in our society today**, and environmental ethics and business ethics must be considered. This has become more prevalent in today's society.

Both oil and coal are bad, but not only for the environment, but for all living creatures, including **plants and animals**. Both are highly toxic in their natural raw state. They **pollute the air and ground and water**, and whether or not they are helping to create these natural disasters should be irrelevant. They are both finite and will not last forever, and the sooner we rid ourselves of the need for these two demons, the better.

While **oil and coal** companies continue to promote their products, and the best yet is clean coal, which is an unethical definition of something that just isn't possible, their ethics come into question, especially environmental ethics. Most of the world's ills are derived from both of these, with **oil spills**, mining accidents, fires, and now climate change and global warming.

Ensure that you are doing your part and following all environmental ethics that are out there.

## **Environmental Ethics and Its Principles**

There are several approaches or principles to determine how we are to value our environment. It is such a huge field, and it is so vast that it is difficult for one principle to cover all the ground. Many theories have emerged over the years, and each one has stressed on various principles of environmental ethics. The list below states all the principles that have been predominantly found in those theories.

### **1. Anthropocentrism**

It suggests that human beings are the most important beings. All other living beings are but accessories that would assist in their survival. Now, there are two further divisions of **anthropocentrism**. They are weak anthropocentrism and strong anthropocentrism.

While weak anthropocentrism believes that human beings are the centre because it is only through their perspective that environmental situations can be interpreted.

Strong anthropocentrism, however, believes that human beings are at the centre because they rightfully deserve to be there. Peter Vardy made this distinction.

## 2. Non-Anthropocentrism

As opposed to anthropocentrism, non-anthropocentrism, this principle gives value to every object, every animal in nature. It is a principle that believes in everything that sustains itself in nature.

## 3. Psychocentrism

Psychocentrism is the principle that believes that human beings hold more value in the environment since their mental capacities are better developed and far more complex than any other element in the environment.

## 4. Biocentrism

It is a term that holds not only an ecological but also a political value. It is a philosophy that imparts importance to all living beings. In terms of environmental ethics, biocentrism is the principle that ensures the proper balance of ecology on the planet.

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## 5. Holism

The term holism had been coined by Jan Smuts in his book called *Holism and Evolution* (1926). Holism considers environment systems as a whole rather than being individual parts of something. It considers these environment systems to be valuable.

## 6. Resourcism

The principle of resourcism says that nature is considered to be valuable only because it has resources to provide with. Thus, nature ought to be exploited.

## 7. Speciesism

The principle of speciesism justifies the superiority of the human race. Thus, it also justifies the exploitation and maltreatment of animals by humankind.

## 8. Moral Considerability

This, too, is an important principle of environmental ethics. Intrinsic value is added to every being, which makes us consider being moral. **Moral considerability** towards a being means that we agree that all our interactions whatsoever with the being is bound by moral laws.

## 9. Instrumental Value

The **instrumental value** is the value imparted to a being as long as it can serve us with resources.

## 10. Intrinsic Value

**Intrinsic value** is the value attached to a being just for itself and not only for its resourcefulness.

## 11. Aesthetic Value

**Aesthetic value** is imparted to a being by virtue of its looks or its beauty.

## 12. Animal Liberation or Animal Rights

As is evident from its name, **animal liberation or rights** try to secure animal life and ensure their welfare by enforcing certain laws.

## 13. Animal Welfare

It ensures that the animals are treated well and humanely.

## Types of Environmental Ethics

With the emergence of several theories, several environmental ethics have emerged. While some protect human beings, others protect plants, animals and other elements of nature. The types include:

- **Social ecology**, which is the study of human beings and their relation to their environment.
- **Deep ecology** promotes that all beings have an intrinsic value.
- **Ecofeminism** is a branch of feminism that helps us look at earth as a woman so that we can respect it in a better way.

## **Poison Dart Frog**

The poison dart frog is found mainly in South America, but can also be found in certain parts of Central America. It eats termites, flies, ants and crickets. It can lay eggs in the water and reproduce in just about 12 days.

## **Red Eyed Tree Frog**

The red eyed tree frog is actually found in Central America, but it can also be found in the northern parts of South America. It is carnivorous, and it usually eats insects like crickets, but sometimes will eat other types of frogs. They are found in the lowland rainforests, and like to stay near the streams and ponds.

## **Blue Morpho Butterfly**

The Blue Morpho butterfly is found in Central and South America, and can also be found in some parts of Mexico. It usually eats fruit that has started to rot or ferment. They live up high in the canopy of the tropical rainforest, and they also grow to be about 5-6 inches wide. They are beautiful.

## **Leafcutter Ant**

The leafcutter ant is found in the Southern United States, but can also be found in parts of Central and South America. They will usually eat leaves, grass and other plant matter- including fungus. They are found in nests in the rainforest and are mostly in the tropical environments.

## **Queen Alexandras Birdwing Butterfly**

The Queen Alexandras Birdwing butterfly is found in the tropical rainforests of New Guinea. They eat a toxic plant known as the *Aristolochia schelcteri*. This is actually the plant in which these butterflies hatch. They also can feed on the liquid nectar that is found in various types of flowers in the rainforest. They will usually get to be very big, even up to 12 inches in width.

## **Great Hornbill**

The Great Hornbill can be found in certain parts of Asia, and they will usually eat insects, lizards, fruits and sometimes small mammals. They are birds that help to garden the rainforest and help to ensure that the plants are spread throughout the environment so that they can continue to grow and flourish.

## **Harpy Eagle**

The Harpy Eagle is an eagle that is found in the rainforests in Central and South America. They eat sloths and several other types of small mammals. They are found in the large areas of rainforest that have clearings, because it is easier for them to stalk their prey.

## **Toucan**

Toucans are generally found in tropical and sub-tropical rainforests of Central and South America. Toucans can grow to be about 33 – 65 centimeters in height and live in holes of hollow trees. They normally eat small fruits and rarely insects.

## **Bengal Tiger**

Bengal tigers can also be found in the rainforest. They eat mainly antelopes, monkeys, and sometimes even elephants. They like to stalk their prey in the rainforest, and they get to be very large- up to 600 pounds or more!

Other Mammals that you may find in the tropical rainforests may include:

- Capybara
- Common Chimpanzee
- Gorilla
- Jaguar
- Lar Gibbon
- Lemur
- Okapi
- Orangutan
- Siamang
- Spider Monkey

Some of the reptiles that you find in the tropical rainforest include:

- Anaconda
- Black Caiman
- Boa Constrictor
- Gaboon Viper
- Reticulated Python

You will find the following aquatic animals in the rainforest as well:

- Manatee
- Piranha

## **Piranha**

Piranha are found in rivers and streams of rainforest of South America. Piranha generally eat smaller fish and can reach up to 1 ft in length. They reproduce by laying groups of eggs in rivers and lakes.

## **Anaconda**

The Anaconda is mostly found in Amazon river basin but can also be found in other parts of South America. Anacondas can reach over 37 feet in length. They swim in rivers and lakes of South America and live near the water. Anaconda generally live on rodents, fish, birds, caiman, turtles and even larger mammals.

## **Gorilla**

Gorillas live in the tropical forests of West Central Africa. They mostly eat leaves, fruit and bark. Gorillas live in the forests and mountains of Central Africa, sometimes at very high altitudes.

## **Jaguar**

Jaguar aka Panthera is found in Central and South America. Jaguars can be found in rainforests, deserts and grasslands. They eat variety of animals including turtles, deer and reptiles.

## **Python**

Python are generally found near water including ponds or lakes. The length of Python can range from 15-25 feet making it the longest snake and reptile in the world.

There really are a lot of different species found in the rainforests of central and South America. It is really important for you to understand that the majority of these species are not found in other parts of the world, which is why it is so important that we are able to preserve the natural rainforests in the world. If we don't, then many of these species will actually become extinct- and that is never a good thing.

As you can see, most of these animals can be found in your local zoological parks, but in the wild you just don't see them around your local town. It is because they don't belong there naturally. When they are taken out of their natural habitat, you have to be careful to ensure that they get everything that they need- which is why they need specialized zoologists to care for them when they have been taken from the wild.

