

## The Formation of the Way of Rolston Environmental Philosophy

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### Abstract

Today, Rolston is a prestigious representative in the field of western environmental philosophy. His thought of environmental philosophy is rich in content and have profound contemporary value, this article starting from clarifying Rolston's thought Process, then the author cards the whole process of Rolston's thought from beginning to mature, and then to practice, in order to achieve the Rolston himself and the ideas of natural value fully grasp.

**Key words:** Rolston; Wilderness; Value; Practice

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### INTRODUCTION

**Philosophy toward the wilderness is only based on the wealth and depth of experience for nature can we think about the philosophy in which we live about the natural.** Rolston It will combine the nature closer to that participation and reflection from Sense and Sensibility, romantic experience and profound criticism, nature and spirit together, Only the His pre-fresh works- *Farewell, Washington County* (1968), *Meditation Precambrian Contact the Front* (1971), *Suolitude Lake: Wilderness individual* (1975), *Natural and Human Emotion* (1979), *Pulsatilla Flower* (1979). In these articles, they reflect

the author's experience more. The text in the form of the story narrative events and experiences more, and describe relationship about The person which lives in a specific natural environment with this environment. In the "rue anemone" article, the author says: rue anemone dare bloom when people are tired of winter that has not completely subsided to help us celebrate the flowering plants. "Flower" is easily linked to our values, because this biological phenomenon has become a metaphor, which Symbol the life in all mental, intellectual, cultural and even spiritual level Strive toward some goal. It is these experiences in the wilderness that Urge Rolston to think: We should follow the natural in what sense? And our human should Present what kind of attitude to the lives in the nature? Western tradition of philosophical study of nature and understand of nature in order to transform nature, and let nature service to humans. However, in addition to the objects for Human transformation and use about the nature, can we just to enjoy nature, love nature and go study the natural way of it? Should we put the nature on an equal footing with the man to give its moral care of it?

There is a collection of essays on environmental studies- "ecological conscience" - deeply attracted Rolston, its novelty lies in the name of the Proceedings of the first, the seemingly strange binding of "ecological" and "conscience" triggers a further thought of Rolston, who thus thought ethics "on a deeper meaning, and its ethics rules by the recent formation of the life sciences, namely the resurrection of naturalistic ethics. Rolston claimed that philosophy following the epistemology shift, language shift and cultural shift, now with the "wilderness" to. Philosophy have turned to the wilderness, which is based on the observers make serious reflection on the relationship between humans and the planet's ecosystems. Philosophy turning to wilderness is to break the traditional framework of ethics which is based on human standpoint, people's needs and feelings for a long time, in fact, this

is both a deepening ecological crisis response in the field of philosophy, but also It is a re-examine to the person in the nature and a new understanding of the wilderness, but also philosophy and wilderness from departing to a hope of reconciliation, it is a way of thinking the relationship between human beings and nature of expression and identification process. (Bao & Xia, 2011)

## 1. THE ACADEMIC START: QUESTIONING THE EXISTENCE AND PROOFING ITS VALUE RATIONALITY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Rolston on the “Naturalistic Fallacy” Dispelling.

Naturalistic fallacy is a philosophical proposition which is proposed from a book first, published in 1903, “Ethics Principles”, created by a famous British philosopher Edward Moore. The philosophical concept is described in such an erroneous view that believes that a sufficient number of facts and truth can answer all ethical issues. The core of Naturalistic fallacy is the logical contradiction between fact and value, environmental ethics blurred the boundaries, so been criticized, and in trouble. Likewise, Rolston in writing “the existence of ecological ethics” is also not escape the blame from a distress message:

If we admit that a popular category of philosophy, namely descriptive laws and normative Rules Sectional, then the border between science and ethics law is clear. Law using a declarative mood belongs to a natural science and history in the field; and the law is always contain the imperative tone, it belongs to ethics range. Obtained from the former to the latter by what route (if there is such a route you) do? It can be said that moral philosophy is the toughest problems. He will be accused of committing the naturalistic fallacy if who want to go along this route: It must not necessarily be introduced to what evaluative statements by a group statement of facts. (Rolston, 2000, p.6)

Environmental science express what the fact is, Ethics

stipulates how should do, but what the environmental ethics are?

Rolston tells people that ecological laws not only dominate the nature, but also unify the entire human society, by generalization between the basic principles of ecology and ecological laws. Which thus completes the ecological conversion of the moral law, and is witty and clever to avoid and Resolute the “naturalistic fallacy. For example, he said, health laws are amoral nature, but for each of us to work. We are constrained by health laws, but we also have some choices: We can apply these rules to promote our health, but also can ignore or violate these laws to make our health be compromised. So, ecology theory as applied science, it describes the balanced law about Earth’s ecosystems, these laws are objective, which can’t be transferred by the people’s will, We humans as a species on Earth, naturally restricted by these objective laws, Similarly, we can choose to comply with these laws, according to laws, to promote sustainable development of natural and human society, it can also ignore the existence of these laws, whatever they want, damaging the natural environment, deforestation, exploit, do whatever they want, disrupting the balance of the ecosystem, Finally, endangering the survival of humanity itself.

From the above examples we can see that the prior health laws have to have a such as the moral obligation of “You should not hurt yourself,” at the same, the laws of ecology must have a moral obligation of “we should protect the environment”. The laws of science tell us: If we want to achieve a desired objective Purpose, then we have to know how to proceed. The laws of science looks as a conditional clause, but when these science contain some moral principles that bound people to achieve a purpose. At this time it has a moral science. By the laws of nature, we can derive a proximate moral obligations from this moral principle. We can outline this idea in the following form:

**Table 1**  
**The Path of Digestion on the “Naturalistic Fallacy” of Rolston**

Technical obligations	Ecological laws	Conditions premise
We should maintain the ecological balance by recognizing the laws of ecology, and protecting the environment	The ecosystem maintaining the life must be kept steady in the range of a certain carrying capacity, or it will be destroyed	If we are willing to protect human life
Proximate moral obligation	Ecological laws	Moral obligation premise
We should maintain the ecological balance by recognizing the laws of ecology, and protecting the environment	The ecosystem maintaining the life must be kept steady in the range of a certain carrying capacity, or it will be destroyed	We should work together to protect human life

We can see that Rolston found a reasonable transition path of “yes” to “should” to deconstruct the “naturalistic fallacy”, he does not simply equate “facts” to a “value.” And among “Yes” and “should” would have no absolute, unbridgeable gap, if we try to turn the region into facts proposition and value proposition Simply mechanical, we will repeat the mistakes of dualism. The facts proposition

is the basis of the value proposition, or that the “‘fact’ is the source of ‘should’ to produce and exist.” The value judgments what we make are based on the facts of the basis of knowledge of this, “because the decision reaching to the ethics and values, to smart choice, to way it should be, is the result of ‘yes’, after the fact, the truth, the reality of discovery.” (Li, 2009)

## 2. THE IDEOLOGICAL CORE: THE PRESENTING OF THE VALUE OF NATURE

Today, scholars think the key interpretation of Rolston environmental philosophy is “natural value”, this argument is reasonable, because the core of his theory is “objective natural intrinsic value theory.” The value theory of nature as an environment philosophy to argue the ethical relationship between man and nature is an important way of the subject. For the philosopher of environment, its establishment makes the ethical relationship between man and nature be recognized, and it is the theoretical Premise of the formation of the discipline of philosophy of the environment.

### 2.1 Value Striking to Wilderness

The relationship that between man and nature is one of the his basic relationship between human society, which is human exposure and study Firstly. From the man on the nature of absolute obedience to the enhancement of human consciousness, human gradually get rid of the control of nature and then began to control nature. This is the progress of human society, but also it stays potential problems for the development of human society. The balance between human demand and supply of nature is broken, then people become the standard to judge everything, but followed by environmental and ecological issues taking the human from the peak trough, a series of pessimism begin to spread, but also it urge the humans to look at their own demand beginning, and make the research subject from people turning to natural, then it takes out they have same subjective position between natural and man, it puts forward the theory of natural value, that open up a new perspective to re-examine the relationship between people and nature for us.

Rolston raised the value of wilderness steering, where the “wild” includes the whole natural of the ecosystem, which is the root of all values including human values, and which is constant development of evolution.

“Wilderness” is a self-organizing ecosystems, which is the habitat of that have the right for their survival and prosperity of existence, and is the source of natural value, which itself has a wealth of meaning, its “limited nature implies infinity, materialist Contains spirituality, naturalness implies freedom. “Recalling the history of human nature, “wilderness is the first part of our heritage, our great ancestors, it provides the ultimate in contact experience for our existence” (Rolston, 1986, p.121). While humans and human culture are the result of natural selection, or the highest value, but only in their own origins of humanity can people understand the ultimate meaning of existence. Human experience is producing in contact with nature and in its appreciation, but “this enjoying activities capturing and expressing the value have existed before man appeared, and play a role in the

wilderness, humanity is just inherited this value only, now.” Environmental ethics are not only “the ethics of our roots (no resources), but also the ethics of our neighbors and other forms of life.” (Rolston, 1988, p.31) So Rolston requires that Philosophy must sight meditation into the wilderness, and puts the important proposition of “philosophy toward the wilderness”, he tries to rebuild the relationship between man and wilderness from a philosophical attempt an ethical point of view.

### 2.2 The Connotation Essence of the Value of Nature

The concept of “Natural value” has been used widely before the discipline of environmental ethics appeared, in people’s traditional sense, the natural value refers to the nature of the usefulness, of that the feature of nature to meet human needs and purposes. The discipline of environmental ethics offers a new explanation for the natural values of meaning from a new perspective, Rolston’s “value of nature” is given to enrich the connotation of “natural value”. He create a new type of natural value theory from ecological holism, the unity of subjective and objective of natural value, hierarchy and intrinsic value, tool value and the model system of ecological value in three aspects of natural value, which become the dominant genre in the Western Environment Ethics Thoughts.

In the book of “Environmental Ethics”, Rolston states explicitly: “The most helpful and the basic vocabulary of a guiding role is valued for studying environmental Ethics. We just derive the obligation from the value.” (Rolston, 2000) The value is the basic vocabulary of Rolston’s environmental philosophy, but also the starting point of his theory. Because environmental philosophy derived the rights and obligations of mankind enjoyed from the value. Therefore, only making affirmative answer and demonstration for the question of the value of the natural, the presence of this discipline just has legitimacy.

#### 2.2.1 The Objectivity of Natural Value

Rolston believes that human beings can experience a variety of values carried by nature, but the value is not a product of subjective conjecture. Value does not exist in a void beyond the natural, the natural world is the carrier of value, the value conceive from the natural; it is objective, nature itself exit value before human bring the concept of value. He even equals the natural value with the objective property of natural objects, and understands the value contained in the natural world as the property of something; the objective value of the natural is an intrinsic value which does not depend on the purpose of another person, Rolston discussed this intrinsic value at the individual level and the overall level. At the individual level, the organic matter of the nature is the living body of self-maintaining, self-growth and self-regeneration, it guards some things making its own, that is to say, it is struggling to maintain the “good” of its

species. So, it's birth, growth and demise are not for the purpose of otherness. At the overall level, natural systems are valuable in itself, it can create things which include all of life. Thus, while the value has more subjective factors from reviewers, but "the judge of the natural values were also not entirely out of nothing created these values, because there are some real nature providing critical support for these values" (Ibid., p.121). Although the form of value is subjective, but the evaluation of the content is objective.

### 2.2.2 The essence of the Nature of Value Is the Creativity

The so-called creativity is the process and characteristics that the new things and new features continue to produce. The creativity endow the value of nature in Prescriptive quality. Value is the natural objects of those who has creative property, Rolston had explicitly pointed out: "The creativity of natural systems is the mother of the value, all creatures of nature is valuable only if they are to achieve a natural creative sense, ..... where exists the places of spontaneous creation, there is valuable." (Ma, 2009, p.73) these properties make natural objects of value not only try to adapt to the environment to seek their own survival and development, and each of them are interdependent, competing with each other and co-evolution, so that makes the complexity and creativity of nature itself increase, and makes life towards the direction of diversification and refinement evolution. Creativity is the inherent property of evolutionary ecosystem.

## 2.3 The Classification and Hierarchy of the Natural Value

### 2.3.1 Natural Value Is Unified With Intrinsic Value, Instrumental Value and the Value of the System

Rolston believes that ecosystems are unit of inclusive value existing. He outlined three types values of ecosystem: intrinsic value, instrumental value and system value.

The discussion of the intrinsic value and instrumental value of nature has been the debated focus of non-anthropocentric and Anthropocentric of environmental philosophical field. The so-called intrinsic value refers to nature without human interference in the case presented by the meaning and function, and related to instrumental value. The intrinsic value is reflected in the nature of supporting or bear-erring all life. Rolston define intrinsic value in this way:

Nature's intrinsic value is the inherent value of some natural scene, which is no reference to the human. Loons are going to continue to sing, whether or not people is listening to it. Although the loons are not a person, but also itself is a subject of the nature." (Rolston III, 1986, pp.110-111)

Rolston advocate to determine the intrinsic value from the contact of species subject and surrounding environment, and oppose to look the intrinsic value as "since the decision" of individuals of a species. Because

"there is no one body, nor any object existing alone." The so-called instrumental value is the value that assesses the nature of the meaning of the relationship between nature and human. Instrumental value widely exists in nature, which fully demonstrates the relationship between naturally occurring substance. Natural organism always evaluates other things from an instrumental perspective. Instrumental value and the intrinsic value intertwining together exists in natural ecosystems objectively. We can find evidence from Kant to the distinguishing of intrinsic value and instrumental value of Rolston. Kant said in a book, "moral metaphysics principle,": "Your action, should put your own personal humanity, and other personal Humanity, in a field considered as the goal equally all times, we can not just do forever mean." (Kant, 1986, p.81) Intrinsic value of nature can be said that it's the result of the view applied to nature of "people are the goal" of Kant .

In the ecosystem, the organism both judges other organisms and the Earth's resources from the perspective of instrumental using, but also judge some things from the perspective of the internal: Their bodies, their form of life. Therefore, instrumental value and intrinsic value both objectively present in the ecosystem. Ecosystem makes all kinds of value contesting in their arms, it has thus become more beautiful. For its contribution to the community, instrumental value and intrinsic value are equally matched. Ecosystem is a network organization in which the node of intrinsic value and the network of value are intertwined. (Beranitte, 1999)

Thus,

in the ecosystem level, the human facing is no longer instrumental value, although it has the property of instrumental value as a source of life; the facing is not intrinsic value, too, even though it has to guard some complete forms of life for its own reasons, we actually have touched to a third term needed-System Value - to describe things.

System value is referred to the creativity and the creative process of the overall ecosystem, that ecosystem has properties that keep creating a natural value. System value is not equal to the sum of the portion of the value, it is a process of some systems fulling creativity.

This important value, as old as, has not fully concentrate on the individual body; it permeates in the entire eco-system. The system value is a process fulling creativity, the product of this process is the intrinsic value which is woven into the relationship of tool using. (Rolston, 1988, p.225)

Rolston also further analyzes the relationship between the intrinsic value of individual natural objects and the instrumental value of the biological community. From the aspect of the intrinsic value, the human values is highest, top to bottom, the higher animals, lower animals, plants and microbes; for the instrumental value of the biological community, the value of non-biological maximum is biggest, later followed by plants, No feeling animals, feeling animals, people. The individual Value of creatures will gradually exceed the value of the community with the improvement of biological autonomy; but to people, individual value sometimes even exceeds and replaces the

collective value. However, the eco-system that creates all things is still “the universe’s most valuable phenomenon,” people only is the most valuable works produced by the system; the higher intrinsic value that people has can not be the grounds that excludes the other beings outside the “moral club”, nor the accordance of taking his interests priority in other beings’ interests. “Whether the micro or macro perspective, the beauty, integrity and stability of ecosystems are important factors to judge the human behavior in the right.”

### 2.3.2 Fourteen Kinds of Value Hosted by Nature

Rolston said: No matter how many people’s subjective factors have been added in the process of building, there are some first things that exist in this process. Although these things are not a sufficient condition for constituting value, but it is a necessary condition. According to the function of the natural values, Rolston summed up fourteen values carried by nature: economic value, the value of life supporting, entertainment value, scientific value, aesthetic value, the value of life, the value of diversity and unity, the value of stability and spontaneity, dialectical (contradictions and struggles) value, the value of religious symbols, the value of making gene diverse, historical value, cultural symbolic value, the value of creating character. And he attempts to strip out the different qualities contained by the natural value of naturalistic of the natural value of humanism.

From the above of the functional classification of Rolston to value, we can see that he sums up the objective value carried by nature with the devout love of nature and the position of standing the natural values, Even this classification is no clear rationale, but we have to admit: The value is reflected in the natural things, although it odds a layer of subjective factors from reviewers, but its intrinsic value and the objective nature will not change.

## 3. THE PRACTICE DIMENSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

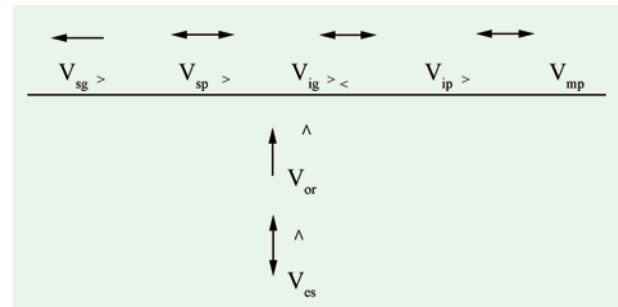
Rolston broke through the traditional scientific fact and value dichotomy theory, and created the theory of natural value, which provides an important theoretical basis for establishing the environment ethics of respecting life and protecting nature. But Rolston was not rigidly adhered to the theoretical arguments and preaching, he

not only clarified the basic attitude and obligations of people to nature from the philosophical level, and also applied the theory of environmental ethics systematically to the spheres of policy decision-making, business activities and personal life, and discussed the specific ways of the Environmental Ethics in conjunction with each other in real life. (Rolston, 2000, p.255)

### 3.1 Environmental Ethics and Government Decision

In today’s society, to make sure the environment is protected, the only environmental ethics is not enough,

we know that the law is the moral minimum, we can’t deviate the specification of government legal provisions to guarantee the protection of people to nature has been effectively implemented. Therefore, the government decision-making has become an important part of environmental philosophy that can be applied. To penetrate the environmental philosophy better into the government’s political decision, and to promote the impartiality of environmental decisions, Rolston constructed the model of value theory of environmental policy. As follows:



**Figure 1**  
**The Model of Value Theory of Environmental Policy of Rolston**

In this model, Rolston divided the value into seven levels from individual dimension and the social dimension of the value, the human dimension and non-human dimensions, individual dimension and the system dimension. Among them, the five values of the horizontal line above start from the value of humanistic point, it applies to all political decision making of environmental protection. The two values of the line below reflect the value of the common concern of naturalism, the scope of this value concern which is limited among the decisions, that mainly used in the protecting of remaining wilderness areas, endangered species and ecological areas that is difficult to recover. In the above model diagram, we can see that the value of ecosystem is the highest value than other value.

### 3.2 Environmental Ethics and Business Ethics

Rolston argued that environmental philosophy must permeate into business decisions and convert to business ethics, and thus form an objective constraint mechanism of guiding role. Enterprises are the main business activities, thus which we discussed here mainly was the ethic of corporate behavior.

Rolston believes that we should integrate the principles of corporate ethics value of humanism and naturalism together in the business decisions and corporate behavior. The aim of insisting on the humanistic standards is to increase people’s interests and corporate performance; but business must take into account the contradictions and balance of the economic efficiency of enterprises and the ecological

benefit of mankind when they are in the pursuit of the people's interests and corporate profits, now, they need the direction of the naturalistic values. Companies should view nature as a community of life, it is followed by an article available.

### 3.3 Environmental Ethics and Personal Activities

The government, enterprises, in front of speaking, are the collective of an abstract sense, but they are also the myriad of individuals, environmental ethics should be practiced in reality, the nature is inseparable from the efforts of each individual of reality.

First, the human is "amphibious" existence perching in nature and culture. Each organism in nature is growing up in confrontation with nature, in order to survive, we adapt to nature, to conquer nature; however, no matter what height the human civilization develop, we can not forget one's ancestors, because the Aboriginal identity of us in earth never changes, the nature is the basis of lies that we create all the material and spiritual civilization.

Whether it is from a biological point of view or the material needs of view, there isn't someone's life without a world fulling resources and without ecosystem. From the perspective of philosophy and ethics, if people can not go beyond its own limitations for evaluating things, the human life does not nearly as can and should reach the realm. People only in their environment but can not get out of its environment to get free, unless it can always follow nature, otherwise it will lose a lot of exquisite value of nature. The humanity will not know who he is, of where. (Rolston, 1988, p.338)

Yes ah! no matter what extent the civilization develop, people can not go beyond the natural biological basis and prerequisite for their survival and development.

Second, humans are moral watchdogs of the Earth's ecosystems. Human beings are the species evolved to the top in the Earth's ecosystem, but that does not mean that we can go beyond the value of the Earth's ecosystems to rule and enslave other species, we are not the owner of the other beings on the planet, The so-called superiority that we humans enjoy more than other species should not become the privileges that human pleases. Logically, at the pinnacle of human evolution should produce a more holistic concept, we should clearly see the values and beauty of other species outside and under human in this system, the humans should produce a sense of responsibility to protect the natural world, as with the capabilities beyond other species. On Earth, only humans can pass their rationality, morality and world

view, to evaluate the skills, achievements, life and the value of non-human existence objectively. And this is a senior value that deserves to be appreciated especially, which is a subjective ability of evaluating objective, this capability should be achieved, it is not only a privilege but also a responsibility, because concomitant freedom and responsibility, we have much sense freedom on how they should bear the responsibility.

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## CONCLUSION

Environmental philosophy should not be merely theoretical discovery, argument description, lay obligations and develop guidelines-even though these are also necessary. Unrealistic argument is still some kind of argument, but the ethics divorced from the reality are nothing. Accordingly, Rolston cleverly deconstructs the binary opposition between facts and values, and actively puts theory to practice, so that the environment plays a role in the practice of philosophical thought is extremely valuable. He not only provides a theoretical basis for contemporary green movement, but also for specific social affairs also has a workable practical significance.

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