Cotillion: 
Introduction to Ecopragmatics

It's the world's gone crazy cotillion
The ladies are dancin' alone
Side men all want to be front men
And the front men all want to go home.

It's the World Gone Crazy (Cotillion)
Waylon Jennings and Shel Silverstein

The World's Gone Crazy Environmental Cotillion

Few would disagree that when it comes to contemporary environmental issues it’s as though “the world has gone crazy!” If environmental political discourse, policymaking and planning can in any way be compared to participating in a cotillion ball where couples dance together, take new partners, learn new steps and moves, and cooperate with the instructions of a “caller” who directs the dance, then we can only conclude – based upon the current state of environmental affairs – that we have forgotten how to dance together and can’t even agree on the tune. At a time when the nation and the world are facing a staggering array of major environmental challenges - climate change, dwindling supplies of freshwater, depleted fisheries, desertification, overpopulation, disease, and hunger - to name but a few – our leaders are deadlocked, our political discourse is at a standstill, our citizens are confused, the quality of our public discourse appears to be hopelessly balkanized and our people and planet are suffering.

In the midst of this crisis environmental philosophers and ethicists practice their art within the confines of the academy largely isolated and insulated from the demands and vicissitudes of the world around them. Arguably the product of their efforts ought to be contributing to the resolution of environmental problems. Unfortunately they are largely impotent in their capacity to influence the public policy debate for the simple reason that their presence is not significantly felt in the public square given their preference to practice their professions within the university and its environs. Insulated as they are within the culture of the university they largely write their philosophies for themselves and others who share their views and publish their work in a range of journals sympathetic to their perspectives knowing that the editorial polices of these journals are influenced by like-minded academics. The product of their habits and proclivities is intellectual balkanization, intolerance for ideas that differ from their own, indifference to hostility for those who would criticize their ideas
or present alternative perspectives and – most importantly – irrelevance of their ideas relative to the public discourse that occurs beyond the gates of their academies and beyond earshot of their windows and doors. These issues: balkanization, polarization, politicization, insularity, the stultification of scholarship across philosophical lines, intolerance of intellectual discourse, bias and a growing irrelevancy to the environmental policy process in the world beyond the academy have been discussed or criticized in one way or another by many scholars and commentators (Wimberley, 2012; Zygmunt, 2006; Bookchin, 2005; Guha, 2005; Rosebraugh, 2004; Zimmerman, 2003; Keulartz, 1999; Clark, 1996, Fox 1989).

Criticizing these cloistered environmental philosophers and their ideological kin, however, can prove hazardous. In some cases, daring to disagree with a particular environmental philosophy can result in the offender being labeled “anti-environmental” (Jacques, Dunlap & Freeman, 2008) or finding oneself accused of engaging in “brownlash”- “a deliberate misstatement of scientific findings designed to support an anti-environmental world view and political agenda” (Ehrlich & Ehrlich, 1998, p. 13). In still other cases holding opinions at odds with “established” environmental thought can result in vilification and efforts to have the offending party fired or censured.

The most recent and disturbing example of this were the efforts to have Danish associate professor Bjorn Lomborg fired following the release of his book The Skeptical Environmentalist (2001). Following publication of the book – whose content did not question the reality of anthropocentric global warming but rather questioned the utility of the steps that were being proposed to deal with it – Lomborg was attacked from all quarters in the environmental movement and was eventually censured by the Danish Committee on Scientific Dishonesty for publishing content that was "clearly contrary to the standards of good scientific practice." Lomborg was later cleared of these charges following a backlash of protest from scientists and academics worldwide (Houlder & MacCarthy, 2003).

Louisiana State University (LSU) coastal scientist Ivor van Heerden found himself in similar circumstances following the Hurricane Katrina disaster. As chairman of the state’s independent Team Louisiana Investigation, van Heerden criticized the U.S. Corps of Engineers for poorly engineering the levees designed to protect New Orleans. Louisiana State University terminated him as a research professor in May 2010 following the publication of his comments regarding the New Orleans levee system. Dr. van Heerden is currently litigating his dismissal claiming LSU punished him for being the whistle blower who exposed the
failures of the U.S. Corps of Engineers in designing and maintaining the New Orleans levee system (Scheifstein, 2009).

However, those who have investigated the van Heerden firing more closely attribute his termination to "classic campus politics: jealousies, rivalries and professional disputes," professor van Heerden’s sometimes abrasive personality, and the threat he posed to future federal funding for wetlands research – much of it through the Corps of Engineers (Sisco, 2009). The politically “correct” position for van Heerden to have assumed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina was to go along with the dominant narrative of the time portraying Katrina as a “storm-of-the-century” type phenomena, likely attributed to global warming – as Vice President Al Gore reiterated in his award winning film An Inconvenient Truth (Guggenheim, 2006) – and to focus upon the failure of the Bush administration and FEMA to adequately respond to the disaster rather than delving into failures associated with the construction of the levees by the U.S. Corps of Engineers that was the most substantial contributor the catastrophe. Focusing upon the issue of levee engineering shifted the prevailing narrative away from an environmentally unpopular President while threatening pending Corps of Engineering research funding earmarked for LSU.

Academic jealousy, political correctness and intolerance are but one of a number of issues endemic to the environmental movement in part because there are so many environmental philosophies and camps whose adherents are drawn from among a broad array of professional backgrounds. Dealing with these diverse interests is inherently difficult precisely because of their diverse and often divergent interests. The common theme among most – but not all - groups is their corporate failure to exert significant influence upon the environmental policy scene. In other words – employing the "dance" metaphor we began this introduction with - they have either not been invited to the dance or for one reason or another have chosen not to participate. Regardless of "why" or "whether" they have chosen to participate or not, their absence from the environmental policy dance means they are irrelevant to the activities that will occur therein. Failure to participate in the “dance” of environmental policy implies an unwillingness to associate or work with others who bring different ideas and values regarding how the dance should proceed, what tunes will be played, who will lead and who will follow, what pace the dance will assume and who will leave the dance with whom.

Consequently, when environmental philosophers, ethicists and others choose to excuse themselves from interacting with people from a variety of backgrounds and imbued with a variety of ideas about the
relationship of humans to the environment, they unilaterally cede the floor to those who will choose to participate, call the tune, lead, follow, maneuver, doe-see-doe, dance and leave with either old or new partners – it’s their choice since they have chosen to “dance.” Wallflowers forgo these opportunities. Even so, among the many philosophical camps that could be dancing two stand out: deep ecology and conservationism.

Deep Ecology, Environmental Activism and Radicalism

Deep ecologists are the most influential school of environmental thought today particularly in terms of their relative impact upon academics, administrators, students, and, indirectly (by virtue of their activism and radicalism), policymakers (Luke, 2002). The typical deep ecologist assumes an eco-centric outlook toward nature and humanity and acquires an anti-anthropocentric perspective regarding human involvement in the environment. As a result, deep ecologists risk being construed as misanthropic - regarding humans as an ecological problem best solved by segregating them to the greatest degree possible from nature (Bookchin, 1987; Sessions, 1995).

Deep ecologists take pride in differentiating their values from those of other environmental schools, and sometimes their zeal to protect the environment can be interpreted as intolerance or arrogance particularly when ensconced within the more radical enclaves of the deep ecology movement (Zimmerman & Taylor, 2005; Taylor, 1997). Unlike the “light-green” or “shallow ecologists,” who principally confine themselves to ameliorating existing environmental problems, deep ecologists see themselves as acting proactively and preventively orienting their efforts toward the entire planet rather than toward people alone (Naess, 1973; Orton, 2006; Clark, 1996). They also embrace a philosophy - reinforced by a platform of shared beliefs – that effectively politicizes adherents (Sessions, 1995).

Deep ecologists are particularly committed to pursuing an ethic that is eco-centric - not anthropocentric. Thus they tend to bestow their deepest condemnation upon those they perceive as blatantly anthropocentric in their environmental views and actions – i.e. those believing in the legitimacy of humans living in the natural world and utilizing its resources to achieve their own sustenance, happiness and security. To the purveyors of deep green ecology those who don’t share their eco-centric, politically and economically revisionist values run the risk of being considered unenlightened, uninformed, retrograde, demeaning to the sanctity of mother earth and a threat to people and the planet. Therefore in the minds of deep ecologists eco-centrism represents enlightened thought while anthropocentrism is regarded as comparatively unenlightened,
primitive, offensive and even dangerous (Steiner, 2010; Stead, 2010; Williamson, 2007; O’Hara, 1999, White, 1967).

Deep ecologists are a diverse group and their ideas are arguably the most influential of all the environmental philosophies. However they are unsympathetic regarding existing human culture, economy and government. As a consequence their discontent has in part informed the values of environmental activists and radicals (Sussman, 2012; Taylor, 2008; Cramer, 1998).

Radical environmental thinkers and writers, as exemplified by the work of Erick Jensen, Aric McBay and Lierre Keith (Jensen, McBay & Keith, 2011) are anarchistic, seeking to replace the current political and economic system with a new (though ill-defined) alternative that is friendlier to the environment and more prescriptive of human initiative, discretion and freedom. Consequently, their philosophy tends to be misanthropic and antagonistic toward all other environmental philosophies and often conflicts with current law and civic values and practices. Adherents of this philosophy principally see themselves as activists and revolutionaries and the coterie of devotees with whom they interact largely share their radical and insular perspective.

Most notable among the radical environmentalists are those associated with Greenpeace, the Animal Liberation Front, Sea Shepherd and the Ruckus Society to name but a few. Sadly, it is not uncommon to hear calls for violence from among the environmental radical community. For instance, eco-journalist and activists Steve Zwick recently published an article on Forbes online in which said the following regarding climate change skeptics:

“We know who the active denialists are – not the people who buy the lies, mind you, but the people who create the lies. Let’s start keeping track of them now, and when the famines come, let’s make them pay. Let’s let their houses burn. Let’s swap their safe land for submerged islands. Let’s force them to bear the cost of rising food prices. They broke the climate. Why should the rest of us have to pay for it?” (Zwick, 2012)

Similarly, Finnish environmental activist Pentti Linkola, in Extinguish Humans, Save the World, translated into English as Can Life Prevail? (2009) reflects upon the ecological state of the planet by observing that:

“The crippling human cover spread over the layer of the Earth must forcibly be made lighter: breathing holes must be punctured in this blanket and the ecological footprint of man brushed away. Forms of
boastful consumption must be violently crushed, the natality of the species violently controlled and the number of those already born violently reduced - by any means necessary” (Linkola, 2009, p. 170)

While not all deep ecologists are as radical as these, their values and those of other similar groups place them at odds with those who deal with business and economic organizations, corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) – particularly in the areas of energy, agriculture, forestry, chemicals, mining, and finance. Moreover, they tend to project a stereotype of environmentalists and environmentalism that is both and extreme and off-putting to those in other philosophical camps as well as to the general public. Among those they particularly find themselves at odds with are the conservationists – those with comparatively anthropocentric values dedicated to employing human ingenuity and technology to manage and maintain a wide array of natural resources and habitats upon which humans depend.

**Conservationism**

Within the academy those dedicated to a “conservation” ethic can principally (though not exclusively) be found within schools of agriculture, forestry and mining, as well as among those employed in schools of engineering, business and architecture. Conservationism also includes chemists, biologists, physicists, lawyers, business people and other professionals who assume a stewardship and resource management perspective regarding their work regardless of whether they labor within or beyond the walls of the academy. These scientists and professionals, representing a vast array of disciplines, apply their conservationist values in their work on behalf of farmers, miners, foresters, corporations, governments and communities.

Conservationists address a wide range of problems to include genetically engineering crops to resist drought, disease-prevention, pest control, and cropland irrigation. They are also involved in energy conservation, energy development of all kinds, and technology innovation. Meanwhile other conservation professionals manage our forests, farms, fisheries, wetlands and recreational and drinking water resources. As a group, conservationists follow in the footsteps of an illustrious line of forbearers to include Theodore Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold and George Perkins Marsh. However, regardless of where they work, conservation-minded professionals seek to help people live better utilizing fewer natural resources so as to insure that a comparable set of resources will be indefinitely available to their descendants.

At the heart of the conservationist’s beliefs is optimism relative to human adaptability and ingenuity, the richness, diversity and resilience of nature and the capacity of humans to wisely manage and utilize natural
resources for human benefit while indefinitely sustaining resources for future generations. Therefore conservationists are blatantly anthropocentric – person-oriented - meaning that they are most comfortable with the idea of humans living in nature and utilizing its resources – providing they do so for the benefit of the many and not just the few and that they utilize natural resources in such a way that they will also be available to future generations of citizens.

Conservationists found outside of academic environmental or ecological studies programs readily collaborate with agricultural, business, and corporate interests. Situated as they are within the university and the community, conservationists have comparatively little interaction with their intellectual kin committed to deep-ecology, eco-feminism, environmental radicalism, environmental aestheticism or the like. In so doing, they bear no hostility toward other environmentalist camps – indeed they may be largely indifferent to their divergent values. Thus the distance they maintain from members of the environmentalist community is principally motivated by what they do and with whom they collaborate and engage in business – not ideology.

Generally speaking the values of conservationists are more applied and utilitarian than is the case for the bulk of their “environmentalist” colleagues (Haider & Jax, 2007). Therefore, they find little common ground or common cause among academic and activist environmentalists, preferring instead to collaborate with agriculture, energy, and corporate interests that contribute to their conservationist interests and initiatives. This collaboration inevitably results in their being criticized and vilified by environmental activists and radicals (Hassoun, 2011; O’Hara, 2007; Hoffman & Sandelands, 2005). The net effect is that conservationists like virtually every environmentally oriented profession or discipline within the academy and beyond tend to talk among themselves, contributing in their own unique way to the balkanization of environmental philosophy, ethics and values.

Sadly, once philosophical camps become balkanized and distrustful or disdainful of those with divergent environmental interests communication, dialogue and growth ceases and entropy and decay sets in producing stalemate. This, we believe, is the current state of environmental philosophy and ethics in the academy. Intellectual efforts have become insular and self-serving. Cross-pollination of ideas has ceased – except for those occurring within any particular philosophical camp. Moreover, too often students are being educated to be activists, radicals or revolutionaries rather than for collaboration, dialogue, consensus seeking, compromise and change. The net effect of all these forces is that environmental philosophy has rendered itself
irrelevant to the pressing environmental issues of the world and has done so during a period in which public support for environmentalism and environmentalists is tepid at best.

**Public Equivocality: The American Environmental Values Survey (AEVS)**

Returning to the “dance” metaphor, it’s worth noting that academics are not the only parties absenting themselves from the cotillion. Citizens are also sitting the dance out and a number of recent surveys and polls provide insight regarding why. One of the most important contemporary surveys to document the public’s environmental opinions is the 2005 American Environmental Values Survey (AEVS) (Gunns, 2006). This comprehensive 240-item survey was distributed to some 4,000 people and completed by approximately 1,500 respondents. The survey yielded many interesting results, but among findings reported, those most salient to our discussion are the respondents top 11 ranked priorities to include (1) “Americans’ environmental concerns are divergent and polarized,” (3) “Issue complexity has paralyzed many Americans,” (7) “Competing priorities effect all groups of Americans,” (8) “There are three major environmental issue groupings (pollution, planetary threat; human ecology) among Americans,” (10) “Environmental responsibility is getting more personal,” and (11) “Environmentalism and Environmentalists have an image problem.”

It is not surprising to learn that Americans are polarized in their environmental concerns. The personal values of citizens are bifurcated, perceiving the natural environment as either a place for recreation, hunting, hiking or camping or alternately seeing it as wilderness. Understandably, those perceiving nature as wilderness favor keeping humans out of nature whereas those perceiving nature in more utilitarian terms favor human use of nature.

The respondents’ polarized environmental worldviews likely contribute to their equally polarized perceptions of environmentalists and environmentalism. Accordingly the survey’s findings classify the interests of environmentalists and environmentalism as falling into one of three issue clusters:

1. “Destruction of the Planet: A concern for the destruction of natural and wilderness areas, food chains, rainforests, ozone, and extinction of endangered species. These issues are conceptual and global; most Americans cannot relate to them. These issues are most effective for use with well-educated, successful, and self-confident segments of the American public.”

2. “Polluted Resources: A concern for polluted resources (water, air, soil), pesticides in food, nuclear waste disposal, and toxic waste. These are more visible, easier to understand, and more accepted
issues among most Americans. (One barrier: some groups believe pollution problems have been solved.) Focusing on polluted resources is most effective in messaging to lower-income, less educated and self-confident Americans.”

3. “Human Ecology: A concern for uniquely human challenges such as traffic congestion, population growth, noise pollution, and urban sprawl. All Americans relate to these issues” (Gunns, 2006, p. 12). Respondents reported that they were also overwhelmed by the complexity of environmental issues presented to them on a daily basis by the media. Indeed, this high degree of complexity led the authors of the AEVS to conclude that:

“Most Americans are not fully aware of our current environmental challenges because such awareness requires a high level of knowledge about environmental issues, a strong understanding of how the environment relates to the economy, and a long-range perspective. Inability to comprehend the issues and visualize future benefits prevents people from acting.” “Given this lack of understanding, to expect most Americans to change their standard of living today for environmental benefits tomorrow is not realistic” (Gunns, 2006, p. 10).

This particular finding is somewhat chilling in its implication because it implies that since the public is seemingly incapable of understanding and responding to environmental problems and issues that perhaps this responsibility should fall to those who are knowledgeable and motivated to act. In such a scenario individual freedom and autonomy may be at risk.

Predictably the perceived complexity of environmental issues is paralleled by priorities that compete with environmental concerns to include:

1. “Financial Woes (I have trouble making ends meet)
2. Religious Values (I try to follow Jesus’ model)
3. Modernity (environmentalism is old solutions to old problems, repeating mistakes)
4. Personal Safety (I worry about myself or a family becoming a victim of crime)
5. No Good Taxes (I think taxes never solve any problems)
6. Education Imperative (using tax dollars fund education will better the economy)
7. Political Futility (why worry about political issues, I can’t do anything anyway)
8. Cynicism (politicians and ‘the system’ are controlled by special interest groups)” (Gunns, 2006, p.
These findings illustrate the value-pluralism with which the average citizen must cope. These multiple value concerns stand in stark contrast to the comparatively narrower and near monolithic values of academic environmentalists who have the luxury to focus upon environmental values virtually to the exclusion of all other concerns or policy issues. The disparity between the array of values academics and citizens concern themselves with on a daily basis may explain to some extent why environmental philosophy has been more at home in the academy than in the public square. Similarly, it may explain why so many citizens choose to be “wallflowers” rather than dance with environmentalism and environmentalists.

Yet another reason academic environmentalists choose to stay clear of the public arena pertains to environmentalism and environmentalists “public-image problem.” Noting that as of 2006 only 44% of Americans were willing to identify themselves as environmentalists, AEVS researchers observed that “many Americans view the environmental movement as traditional, dated, and somewhat out of touch with current society” (Gunns, 2006, p. 14), which in part they attribute to popular images of environmentalists as “eco-terrorists,” “soy and granola” advocates, “partisan liberals,” and “regulators” imposing high costs and taxes upon citizens. In short, the public does not find environmentalists or their movement particularly appealing. Results from the survey suggest that what was once a broad-based public environmental movement has been transformed into a personal agenda and concern. These findings, coupled with the fact that people are overwhelmed prioritizing “earth-oriented” issues, may explain why so “few American embrace personal responsibility for the environment” (Gunns, 2006, p. 13).

National Surveys and Polls: More Environmental Tepidity

The picture portrayed in the AEVS is not encouraging for those committed to the environmental movement. Given AEVS findings public engagement regarding environmental issues seems tepid at best. Regrettably, the AEVS findings have been ratified by a series of reputable public polls conducted since 2006 that in aggregate portend a future policy environment in which the public’s investment in environmentalists and environmentalism is at best equivocal. It would seem that when it comes to environmental issues – nobody wants to dance.

Consider these finding from recent public polls, beginning with results from a 2009 ABC News/Washington Post Poll (PollingReport.com, 2012) which asked “How much do you trust the things that
scientists say about the environment: completely, a lot, a moderate amount, a little, or not at all?” In responding to this question, 59% of respondents indicated that they “generally trust” environmental scientists while 41% registered little to no trust. However, when responses are considered as a whole 71% of respondents register “moderate” to “no” trust while only 29% registered “complete” trust. Their findings imply that the public harbors reservations regarding the degree to which they trust the reports and opinions of so-called environmental experts.

Many polls ask adults how they feel about environmental issues, but one group whose values regarding the environment are often disregarded are America’s school-aged youth. Their omission is somewhat surprising given the significant federally funded support annually allocated for environmental education in secondary schools – some $5.6 to $7.8 million appropriated annually through the National Environmental Education Act of 1990 alone (Bearden, 2002). According to an analysis of data derived from the Monitoring the Future Survey (MTFS) – a survey annually administered to high school students since 1976 – interest in the environment and conservation peaked in the 1990’s and has been steadily declining since (Wray-Lake, Flannigan & Osgood, 2008). Penn State researchers sampled trend data between 1976 and 2005 drawing upon a sample size of almost 100,000 student responses. Their results confirmed a “precipitous decline in high school senior’s reports of conservation behaviors across the three decades of 1976-2005.” In analyzing a four-item conservation behavior scale incorporated into the MTF survey, they documented a decrease in average scores over the study period in excess of 3.5 standard deviations – suggesting that between 1976 and 2005 students had become increasingly unwilling to engage in even basic conservation habits like turning off lights, lowering the thermostat, recycling and the like (Wray-Lake, Flannigan & Osgood, 2008, p. 12).

These results suggest that young people have been gradually drifting away from engaging in basic environmental and conservation habits, implying their interest in environmental issues is also waning. Findings like these from among the nation’s youth incline one to wonder whether adults are also turning their backs on environmentalism and conservation, “tuning out” to environmentalism and becoming less inclined to identify themselves as “environmentalists.”

A series of questions included in an ABC/Planet Green/Stanford University poll between 1980 and 2008 (PollingReport.com, 2012) shed light on this speculation by asking respondents “Do you consider
yourself be an environmentalist?" When this question was first posed 76% of respondents answered in the affirmative and 20% responded in the negative and 4% were undecided. In 1995 63% of respondents self-identified as environmentalists, 35% indicated they were not environmentalists and 2% were undecided. By 1999 respondents were almost equally likely to identify themselves as environmentalist or as not (50% environmentalists, 48% not environmentalists and 2% undecided). However, in 2000 the ratio of responses reversed and for the first time the majority of respondents identified themselves as not being environmentalists at 52% while 47% self-identified themselves as environmentalists (1% undecided). Finally by 2008 58% claimed to not be environmentalists, 41% claimed they were and 1% was unsure. The trends regarding this question are illustrated in Figure 1.

*Insert Figure 1 Here*

Obviously since 1989 there has been a steady decline in the percentage of people self-identifying as environmentalists. As illustrated, this is not a recent change of heart among the respondents but rather a steady trend that has been long in the making.

A 2010 Gallup poll (Dunlap, 2010) posed a similar question asking respondents “Thinking specifically about the environmental movement, do you think of yourself as -- an active participant in the environmental movement, sympathetic towards the movement, but not active, neutral, or unsympathetic towards the environmental movement?” This is likewise a question Gallup has been asking annually since April of 2000. Figure 2 reflects the patterns of response to this question over the decade.

*Insert Figure 2 Here*

According to the poll’s findings over the course of a decade there has been a 10% decrease in the percentage of respondents indicating they were active and sympathetic towards the environmental movement (71% in 2000 versus 61% in 2010). Comparatively there has been a smaller 5% increase in the number of persons identifying themselves as unsympathetic toward the environmental movement (5% in 2000 and 10% in 2010), and another 5% uptick among those who identify themselves as neutral on the issue (23% in 2000 and 28% in 2010). Respondents were also asked in the same poll the degree to which they believed the environmental movement by and large had done more good than harm or more harm than good. Figure 3 illustrates the response trend between 2000 and 2010.

*Insert Figure 3 Here*
Once again over the period of a decade the percentage of respondents believing that the environmental movement has done more good than harm slipped by 13% (from 75% to 62%) while the percentage who believe it has done more harm than good increased 15% (from 21% to 36%).

In reviewing the findings from the ABC and Gallup polls there is no denying that the currency of the environmental movement and the willingness of citizens to identify with that movement has declined over a decade or more. For all the reasons reflected in the 2006 AEVS poll and others yet unknown, the data inarguably suggest that Americans are generally ambivalent and disengaged from the environmental movement. Moreover, as if further proof were needed of the sad state of environmental issues and concerns among the general public, a 2012 CBS News provides more evidence yet. The 2012 CBS poll (PollReport.com, 2012) asked respondents what issues they believed were of the greatest priority and environmental issues didn’t make the top-ten list. In point of fact environmental concerns have not made it to the top-10 priority issue list in CBS polls for at least the last 5 years.

So, if Americans are not principally interested in the environment, then what are they most concerned about? The answer to the question is “economics.” Figure 4 Illustrates the findings of a Gallup poll conducted between 1984 and 2010 asking respondents to prioritize environmental protection versus economic growth.

While there has been a great deal of fluctuation in the relationship between these two variables there is a clear pattern emerging that variability between environmental protection and economic development began to narrow around 2000, when 70% of respondents prioritized environmental protection over economic growth (23%) with 2% undecided. By 2009 this trend reversed itself for the first time with economic growth outstripping environmental protection 51% to 42% with 7% undecided, and by 2010 that gap had widened to 53% favoring economic growth versus 38% favoring environmental protection with 9% undecided. By 2011 that gap had widened still further with 54% prioritizing economic growth and 36% prioritizing environmental protection with no undecided respondents (Jones, 2011). Obviously Americans are increasingly prioritizing economics over environment and doing so with a progressively growing degree of confidence. One can only assume that if the current international economic malaise continues that the prioritization of economic considerations over environmental ones can only be expected to continue well into the future.
In considering the trends documented in the various polls and surveys conducted by a variety of reputable polling organizations a clear pattern emerges. As economic growth remains sluggish and uncertain, an increasing percentage of Americans indicate that economic concerns trump environmental ones. Meanwhile sympathy, confidence and activism in the environmental movement declined as has the willingness of citizens to self-identify as environmentalists. Confidence has also waned among citizens regarding the credibility of environmental scientists, even as public perception has grown that the environmental movement is doing more harm than good. Moreover, these trends are occurring against the backdrop of growing number of citizens who increasingly find environmental issues too complex to cope with and cite a plethora of competing issues more germane to their daily lives than environmental ones. This is the larger context within which the balkanization of environmental philosophy and ethics has occurred. All signs indicate that if environmentalism is the name of the dance, it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a dance partner.

**Dancing Together to a Tune of Our Own Making**

The introduction to this book playfully began with lyrics to Waylon Jennings’ tune “It’s a World Gone Crazy (Cotillion)” which is his social commentary upon how as a society we can’t seem to cooperate or get along together. Jennings illustrates our plight in his mirthful tune by imagining a gaggle of men and women trying to dance together in a complex step requiring cooperation, taking turns, learning new moves, holding hands and following directions. The sad truth is that when it comes to the environment and a whole host of other pressing policy issues we simply “can’t dance together” and in fact, “can’t even agree to a tune.” To a truly frightening degree, the whole nation has entered into a policy gridlock in which civil conversation and discourse has all but disappeared (Laird, 2012).

There’s no denying the harsh reality we all find ourselves in – “we can’t dance together!” We increasingly find ourselves Balkanized within various environmental schools of thought while the public distrusts, misunderstands, dislikes and often wonders who we are and what we are about. As if that is not cause enough for concern, we additionally find ourselves and our philosophical work increasingly marginalized by a thorny and recalcitrant set of economic problems that neither go away nor get any better. Clearly, if we are going to move beyond our current malaise and be about the business of cooperatively addressing the myriad environmental, economic, political and social issues confronting us, we simply must “agree on a tune and learn to dance together” – regardless of whether we like it or not.
To that end we present for your consideration *Ecopragmatics*. The story behind the title of this book is a bit unusual but we believe worth understanding. Those familiar with Edward Wimberley’s work know he is also a clergyman practicing for almost 30 years. While he was in seminary it was a rite of passage for every student to study Karl Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* — all 14 volumes. Admittedly we did not read all 14 volumes but we read much of it and uniformly came away as impressed by the story behind the *Dogmatics* as they were with its remarkable content.

Barth’s *Dogmatics* began as a series of sermons in 1947 delivered in the ruins of Bonn University following the destruction of the German homeland during the totalitarian regime of the Nazis and Adolf Hitler. Barth gave these sermons without benefit of written notes, in part because following the war paper was scarce. In fact the Nazis purposefully destroyed millions of books while millions more burned under the rain of bombs and artillery shells thereby robbing Germans of much of their cultural and intellectual heritage. When Barth began his *Dogmatics* Germany was rebuilding and his intent was to help the German church reunite, reorganize and reorient in the wake of the holocaust by delivering sermons designed to reacquaint the church with its doctoral foundations — foundations lost during the war. In effect Barth’s mission was to help the church reclaim its core values.

Reclamation, reunification, reorganization, reorientation and rediscovering core values: these are the themes Barth addressed in his *Dogmatics* and they are the very ones that environmentalists and conservationists must consider given the magnitude and the severity of the innumerable environmental challenges before us. At this juncture environmental philosophy needs to step out of the academy, into the world and sell its wares to the public. In many ways environmental philosophy and ethics needs to begin wholly anew both within and outside of the academy.

While difficult, this is not a completely unique conundrum for philosophers. In fact, when William James penned his first works he did so principally because other philosophical schools had become esoteric and isolated from the practice of philosophy and ethics in the world most people live and die in. His lectures on *Pragmatism* like Barth’s sermons were purposefully delivered to a broad audience rather than narrowly directed toward his academic colleagues. Like Barth he held out the promise of regular people being empowered to creatively think through their own moral, philosophical and ethical dilemmas without resorting to a professional clergyman, philosopher or ethicist for guidance. Barth’s message to the German church seeking
to rebuild itself was – “you can do it.” James’s message to regular people who attended his lectures was – “you can do it,” and the message we environmental philosophers, ethicists, academics, activists and conservationists need to be communicating to the public is that when it comes to the very thorniest of our environmental problems – “we can do it.”

The answer to the question we have not wanted to ask is summed up in the verb “do.” Rather than “writing,” “lecturing,” “judging,” “advocating,” “demonstrating,” or “pontificating” about environmental philosophy and ethics perhaps it’s time we actually rolled up our sleeves to “do” environmental philosophy ethics in the public policy square and not just within the confines of the academy. The time is ripe for thoughtful academics and professionals from a wide range of disciplines to be about the business of articulating environmental philosophy and ethics within the context of real people struggling with real and very complex environmental and social issues.

**Ecopragmatics: Can-Do**

*Ecopragmatics* is an action-oriented approach to doing environmental philosophy in the public arena founded upon the premise that everyone practices environmental philosophy in one form or another and that it is both possible and necessary to philosophically engage people in an honest mutual, tolerant and practical dialogue to preserve and promote the interests of people and the larger environment. Consequently, this is a "can-do" book designed to provide a reasoned and pluralistic approach to thinking about environmental issues from the philosophical perspective of William James (James, 1900, 1903, 1907, 1909, 1911 & 1912). In so doing, we present a framework that doesn’t create new ideas and information as much as it draws upon proven approaches to pragmatic problem-solving that have been around for quite a while but which have been developed and implemented largely beyond the realm of the environmental philosopher and ethicist and well beyond the experience of most environmental professionals, advocates and activists.

The book begins with the psychological pragmatics of William James (James 1904, 1912), exploring his ideas regarding pragmatism as method versus philosophy. In so doing we present a conceptual framework – a process we call “imagineering” - adapted from James’s work providing a practical and useful template for considering environmental problems and issues. We also discuss the importance of recognizing that ecopragmatics necessarily involves embracing pluralism in every form (particularly as it applies to competing
values, ethics and philosophies that must be engaged rather than ignored, bypassed or defeated). Likewise, we emphasize the degree to which values are constantly changing and undergoing transformation.

We follow this introductory chapter with a case study designed to exemplify the imagineering process we presented in chapter one. In so doing, we chose a case study with both current and future saliency – the transition away from using coal to power electrical generation and the migration toward natural gas power plants. We introduce the reader to the case of Craig, Colorado and the impact that discontinuing the use of coal-fired power generation is having upon the municipality and the region. We employ this case study to illustrate how a Jamesian philosophical orientation can be employed to interpret and analyze complex environmental policy issues such as the one confronting Colorado and the nation as electric power generation migrates away from coal and moves toward natural gas and nuclear power.

Since ecopragmatics unavoidably assumes the perspective of human beings living within the world, we introduce the reader to the concept of “necessary anthropocentrism” in chapter three. Therein we assert that humans are biologically, psychologically, socially and ecologically constrained to ultimately perceive the world around them in terms of human perceptions, thoughts, values, and culture (Wimberley, 2009). We also build upon James's distinction between internal intervening factors (biases, values, philosophies etc.) and consequential action by introducing the work of Ken Wilber (Wilber, 1997). We do so in recognition that his influence is increasingly being incorporated into the field of environmental philosophy (Esbjörn-Hargens & Zimmerman, 2009).

Wilber has distinguished himself by developing an ecological approach called “integral theory” in which he differentiates between “exteriority” - the objective (external) characteristics of individuals (e.g. behavioral features) and collectives (e.g. social characteristics) – and “interiority” - subjective individual (e.g. intentionality) and collective (e.g. cultural) characteristics (Wilber, 1997). This distinction proves useful when considering what individuals do versus what they feel and believe regarding environmental issues. It also contributes to an understanding of how communities collectively manifest themselves externally, socially and organizationally versus how they express interiority in terms culture and convention.

The fourth chapter will illustrate the concepts of interiority and exteriority as applied to the case of the depletion of the Floridan Aquifer in North Central Florida (SRWMD, 2011). This aquifer serves as the principal source of drinking water in Florida. It has been steadily diminished for decades by the dramatic growth of the
state’s population as well as by increased agricultural and industrial use. We will employ this case study to illustrate the process of stakeholder identification in environmental policy analysis and to tentatively explain how the actions of each stakeholder in the state’s groundwater dispute (their exteriorities) are informed by their underlying values, biases and philosophies (their interiorities). As in the instance of the Craig, Colorado coal dispute, this groundwater case also illustrates how environmental issues so quickly reach an impasse in which it would appear that no feasible resolution is available. Hopefully throughout the course of this book, the reader will learn skills approaches that may prove useful in moving beyond Balkanization and none of those skills is more important than learning how to identify and thoroughly empathize with key environmental stakeholders.

Chapter five is devoted to putting environmental issues and stakeholders within contexts that lend themselves to problem resolutions and the realization of common ground and common cause. To this end we provide an analytic perspective known as “framing.” Framing has been employed for a long time in management, and policy circles, having been most prominently introduced in the clinical and social sciences to provide context for issues, ideas and cases (Goffman, 1974; Bandler & Grinder, 1982; Langs, 1995; Casement, 2002). In truth, framing issues is nothing less than operationalizing one’s cosmology or worldview in the interest of explicitly expressing and describing implied values and perspectives (Wimberley, 2009). In modern context, to employ Ken Wilber’s language and imagery, framing is the process of exteriorizing interiority and rendering the implicit explicit.

Framing is largely consistent with the concept of “gestalt” – a German word meaning “shape” - popularized in psychology during the sixties and seventies by Fritz Perls and attributable in the early twentieth century by philosophers Edmund Husserl, Franz Brentano and Carl Stumpf (Bowman & Brownell, 2009; Perls, 1969; Husserl & Weiler, 1919 Brentano, 1917; Stumpf, 1924). Of these writers, Carl Stumpf was a friend of William James who in Principles of Psychology described Stumpf as,

“the most philosophical and profound of all writers; and I owe him much. His studies in the field of descriptive psychology and phenomenology (known as the science of phenomena), for example, are of particular interest to current research in the fields of philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences” (James, 1890, p. 911).

When considering issues associated with framing policy issues emphasis will also be placed upon consideration of bias – especially within the context of long-term seeming intractable policy dilemmas.
Academics of every variety like to think of themselves as unbiased but inevitably everyone is – especially academics. We in the academy like to believe that we engage in critical thought suspended from bias and are open to new ideas since these are the very expectations they perennially demand of their students. Inevitably, however, all of us within the academy engage in bias that must be consistently accounted for in all of their academic endeavors and certainly throughout their exploration of room after room along the corridors of their academic careers. James’s pragmatic approach recognizes the presence of bias in all human interaction and ideas and seeks to account for this bias whenever consideration is made to trade in "old" ideas and values for "new" ones. In developing James’s method we include a subjective accounting for bias by wedding this concern to some of Ken Wilber’s ideas regarding “interiority.”

Within the fifth chapter we employ the framing approach introduced by Donald Schon and Martin Rein (1994). These policy analysts developed their pragmatic approach to conceptualizing issues in an effort to deal with very complex public policy controversies, and we were drawn to their work precisely because they were dealing with issue complexity that frankly characterizes virtually every contemporary environmental challenge. Furthermore, we found ourselves drawn to their work because of the ease with which it could be incorporated into William James’s pragmatic method.

Shon and Rein (1994) approach complex issues by developing a narrative or story incorporating the most relevant features of the issue to explain how it became a policy issue and suggesting what needs to happen to resolve it. The authors call this “naming and framing” beginning with the selection of key events and characteristics of the issue that they refer to as the “things” of the story and subsequently placing these “things” within themes or metaphorical contexts of the story. For instance, the particulars of a complex case involving groundwater pollution might be metaphorically construed as a disease process, thereby suggesting the need for discovering the causal agent or agents and implementing a cure. Alternately, conceptualizing the case as a criminal offense may entail gathering evidence, identifying a perpetrator, determining the accused offender’s intent and pursuing indictment, prosecution, judicial review, criminal penalty and/or the imposition of civil judgments and restitution.

Framing, or the process of providing context to an issue or problem is well illustrated by the groundwater case example in chapter four. Frames can serve both to describe the problem at hand and suggest solutions. Nevertheless, this approach is tentative and flexible such that policy issues and problems
may be framed and reframed as necessary, especially when any given framing metaphor fails to capture the essence of the situation or fails to lend itself to identifying a solution or solutions. This approach to conceptualizing issues will be incorporated into a revised pragmatic method built upon the foundation of William James’s ideas and approach.

Chapter six provides yet another case study designed to exemplify how framing a policy issue from the perspective of several stakeholders can provide an opportunity to discover where impasses between competing parties exist and where common ground or novel solutions may be forthcoming. For this demonstration we will use a case study involving forest management and logging. This case study will look at the decline of the logging industry in the Minnesota northlands and sort out the environmental, regulatory and economic forces that have resulted in a dramatic loss of jobs since 2006 (Associated Press, 2012; Robertson, 2008). It will particularly address the role that environmental groups and organizations have played in reducing the volume of logging within the state. This particular case is quite useful not only because it addresses a long term issue – namely management of the nation’s forest lands while protecting fragile ecosystems and habitats – it also provides a multifaceted issue that can be framed economically, politically, bureaucratically, environmentally, socially and culturally – since this case occurs within the famed logging country of the legendary fictional hero Paul Bunyan.

Chapter seven is devoted to decision-making approaches that are largely consistent with William James’s philosophy. At the heart James’s pragmatic method (James, 1904) is decision-making as individuals are continually in the process of observing, reading, listening and considering ideas and values; thereafter comparing what they have read, heard or observed to what they know or reasonably know to be true. It’s as if people accumulate this vast repository of knowledge and information within themselves (“old-stock”) and when exposed to new ideas or information (“new-stock”) they automatically compare what they see or hear to what they know and value, and on the basis of these constant comparisons either reject, accept or partially accept or reject the new “new-stock” information.

This process has been widely discussed over the years by a plethora of policy makers specializing in decision theory. Of the many decision theorists who have approached their scholarship in the spirit of pragmatism none has been more influential than renowned Nobel laureate Herbert Simon. Simon is best known for his “satisficing” approach to decision-making in which he suggests that in most instances when a
decision is to be made that an individual or a group will begin their deliberation by considering their current state of affairs and then imagining a superior state of affairs they would like to realize (Simon, 1957). Once stakeholders have identified their desired state they proceed to search for alternatives to help them achieve their anticipated end. They search for options and in each case compare the option in relationship to their current situation and desired outcome, continuing to do so in a stepwise fashion until they arrive at an option that satisfies the greatest majority of their ideal outcome’s characteristics and at that point they adopt this alternative. This effort Simon calls “satisficing” – i.e. forgoing the perfect outcome to realize the most functional and achievable outcome available given projected needs, time, value and cost considerations.

This satisficing approach (forgoing the ideal to realize the achievable and satisfying) will be applied to the James pragmatic methodology and will be augmented to a degree by the “mixed-scanning” decision-making model of Amitai Etzioni (1967), who additionally discriminates between decision-making approaches used to address both routine and comparatively important issues. Simon and Etzioni’s approaches will be included in a revised version of James’s methodology as “satisficing” approaches to pragmatic environmental deliberation.

The eighth chapter presents a fourth case study to illustrate how decision-making is realized in resolving environmental issues. The topic for this case study tackles another energy-related issue – namely, “fracking” underground rock formations to gain access to natural gas resources. In this case the reader is invited to consider the controversies surrounding the natural gas industry in Pennsylvania with the intent of understanding the complex decision-making processed employed by those who favor “fracking” – fracturing bedrock to release trapped natural gas – as well as the decision-making approaches used by regulators and opponents to “fracking” (Bozzo, 2012; CNBC, 2012). The case study focuses upon how the controversies and issues associated with “fracking” play out in the small Northeast Pennsylvania community of Dimmock - exploring who stands to win and lose in this environmental controversy as groundwater resources become polluted with released methane gas (Bertrand, 2012). Having developed a pragmatic decision-making tool for considering environmental issues we will consider a policy approach that is best suited to engaging individuals and stakeholders at the community level.

Chapter nine explores this approach, known as "communitarianism" that is designed to bring policy disputes as close to the community as possible and to create an environment where to the greatest extent
possible policy problems are resolved locally, informally and without recourse to legislative, executive or judicial decisions or actions. This community-centered approach, most notably championed by the late Nobel laureate, Elinor Ostrom (2001), is we think best illustrated again in the work of Amitai Etzioni (a sociologist as well as a decision theorist) who describes “communitarian” approaches to public policy. According to Etzioni: (Etzioni, 2003, p. 224)

“Communitarianism is a social philosophy that maintains that society should articulate what is good—that such articulations are both needed and legitimate. Communitarianism is often contrasted with classical liberalism, a philosophical position that holds each individual should formulate the good on his or her own. Communitarians examine the ways shared conceptions of the good (values) are formed, transmitted, justified, and enforced. Hence their interest in communities (and moral dialogues within them), historically transmitted values and mores, and the societal units that transmit and enforce values such the family, schools, and voluntary associations (social clubs, churches, and so forth), which are all parts of communities.”

Based upon this definition Etzioni believes that to the greatest extent policy issues should be resolved locally and informally whenever possible and that the needs of the individual of necessity must be balanced by the needs of the community. Etzioni’s model is grounded in what he refers to as the “new golden rule” which asserts “Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy to live a full life” (Etzioni, 1997 p. xviii).

Etzioni’s approach is consistent with Ostrom’s work and is well grounded in the history of communitarian thought as exemplified by the work of its founder, Alasdair MacIntyre (1988). Furthermore, in the interest of extending the communitarian perspective to future generations we will also introduce the reader to the work of the communitarian ecologist Avner DeShalit (1995). The contributions of all these communitarian-oriented thinkers will be discussed in greater length later in the book.

Chapter ten presents a case study devoted to communitarianism. This case involves the Endangered Species Act and pertains to the conflict between an endangered freshwater fish – the Delta Smelt – and farming in California’s central valley region (Stack, 2007; Cohen, 2009; Sullivan, 2009). EPA’s protection of this diminutive fish has contributed to restricting farming in the San Joaquin Valley and eliminated the irrigation of farmland that otherwise could have been utilized in agriculture. This controversy that began in 2007 continues
with litigation in the federal courts thereby rendering uncertain the future of agricultural production in the central valley (Middleton, 2012). This case study will be analyzed throughout the course of this ongoing controversy to identify ways in which communitarian options for issue resolution might be pursued. However, before illustrating how all these pragmatic approaches can be applied to the consideration of policy issues we dedicate a few pages to addressing issues of bias, absolutism, receptivity and critical thinking into modeling ecopragmatics. Time spent considering these perennially thorny issue is essential to the process of achieving a worthwhile and effective outcome to environmental issue analysis. Fortunately for this author, James devoted considerable thought to these issues (James, 1904, 1912) and many of those considerations will be integrated into the revised James method that we will fully unpack in the final chapter.

*Principles of Ecopragmatics*

Throughout *Ecopragmatics* we introduce the reader to a conceptual model designed to add depth, nuance and dimension to James’s original method built around what he simply refers to as “only an attitude of orientation.” we go into James’s ideas and approach in greater depth later in the book. At this point, however, we would like to briefly share some principles promoting pragmatic thought and analysis derived from James’s work.

In *Pragmatism* James describes his method in the following manner:

“A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstraction and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action, and towards power. That means the empiricist temper regnant, and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality and the pretense of finality in truth” (James, 1907, p. 36).

Consequently for James, pragmatism essentially involves:

“The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, ‘categories,’ supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts” (James, 1907, p. 32).

For James, pragmatic philosophy transpired in the public square among people representing pluralistic values and interests. Arguably the best metaphorical description of where pragmatic interaction occurred was provided by an admirer of his work, Giovanni Papini, who compared it to “a corridor in a hotel” from which
“innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next someone on his knees praying for faith; in a third a chemist investigating a body’s properties. ... They all own the corridor, and must pass through it” (James, 1907, p. 32).

James continues to address the manner in which we formulate theories to explain what we know and learn as well as how we employ information. He observes that:

“Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest. We don't lie back upon them, we move forward, and, on occasion, make nature over again by their aid. Pragmatism unstiffens all our theories, limbers them up and sets each one at work” (James, 1907, p.37).

While theory-building – a task we approach through “framing” - is key to James's method, before we can develop theories to explain the world around us and to inform our subsequent thoughts and actions James reminds us that we must reconcile what we know or believe to be true with new ideas and information that comes our way. James provides a guide for how he conceives of this process of idea comparison, noting that:

“The process here is always the same. The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets a new experience that puts them to a strain. Somebody contradicts them; or in a reflective moment he discovers that they contradict each other; or he hears of facts with which they are incompatible; or desires arise in him, which they cease to satisfy. The result is an inward trouble to which his mind till then had been a stranger, and from which he seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions. He saves as much of it as he can, for in this matter of belief we are all extreme conservatives. So he tries to change first this opinion, and then that (for they resist change very variously), until at last some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experience and runs them into one another most felicitously and expeditiously. This new idea is then adopted as the true one. It preserves the older stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leaves possible” (James, 1907, p. 27).

Based upon this template, human beings are constantly engaged in comparing new information and ideas with the stock of existing ideas and values they carry with them as if stuffed in a well-worn suitcase. Consequently, people are perennially in the business of packing and unpacking their interior suitcase as they consider new
ideas and information and compare it to what they already have conveniently packed away. When hearing new information, their natural inclination is to reject it if it doesn’t somehow coincide with the ideas and information they already have safely packed away as “old-stock.”

However, depending upon the degree to which the new idea or information is deemed significant then old ideas and values may be discarded for newer ones (“new-stock”), or alternately some of the characteristics or components of newer ideas and information may be grafted upon what James calls “old stock” – a gardener’s term for a new plant variety introduced into the body of an older plant variety. This metaphor is most useful to the degree that it suggests that new ideas are most easily incorporated into the values of individuals if the “genetic makeup” of the new information bears appreciable resemblance to the older existing stock of values and ideas.

Given this brief summary and illustration of James’s essential approach we have identified five principles of ecopragnatics, the first three of which we will introduce now.

1. **First Principle: “Look away from first things and toward last things.”**
   For James “first things” include principles, categories, supposed necessities, absolutes, biases and abstractions, while “last things” include outcomes, consequences, fruits, products and facts. Adopting this principle entails, to the greatest degree possible, setting aside all barriers that stand in the way of being intellectually receptive to hearing a new idea, allowing yourself to fully understand what is being communicated before critiquing it and to be able to project what you hear into a tentative future where you might consider the outcomes, consequences and experiences that might flow from it. Being able to so understand what you hear, read or see enable you to later make a coherent comparison between this new idea, value or information and compare it to the storehouse of information and values you currently hold to be true – what James calls “old-stock.”

2. **Second Principle: “Be ever-present and available to novelty”**
   Realizing the first principle entails focusing energy and attention upon the case or idea before you and emptying your mind of any other conversation, dialogue or issue that you may also be working on or ruminating about. Give the issue at hand your full attention.

As you attend to the issue at hand allow your intuition to also work and look for indicators of bias or nuance that might cast the information you are receiving into another light. Likewise be aware of the context within which the information you are receiving is occurring, and the context within which you are receiving it. Above all focus upon the degree to which the ideas and information you consider meet James’s criteria of adequacy, concreteness, factual, action-oriented, and empowering. While we avoid using acronyms, these characteristics of ideas are so vital to James’s method that they are worth memorizing: Adequate, Concrete, Factual, Action-Oriented, and Empowering (ACFA-OE).

4. **Fourth Principle**: “Honor the integrity and utility of old-stock values.”

   Ideas, beliefs and values that people incorporate within themselves that inform how they live are time-tested and the product of trial, error and experience. They are, therefore, by definition formative of who people are and how they relate to the world. Consequently recognize and appreciate why old-stock values are cherished and don’t discard them unless and until better ideas, information or values present themselves in a way that is compelling to heart and mind.

5. **Fifth Principle**: “Renew old-stock whenever superior new-stock becomes available.”

   While recognizing the worth of old-stock ideas and values, allow yourself to realize superior values and ideas whenever they present themselves preferring to celebrate the birth of a new idea or opportunity rather than grieve the death of an old-stock value or notion.

**The Final Chapter: Ecopragmatics & Environmental Imagineering**

In the final chapter of the book we demonstrate the ecopragmatics method by inviting the reader to become an "environmental imagineer” and explore a complex case study through the lens of a metaphorical frame (thought experiment). The final case study illustrates every aspect of the imagineering process that is utilized in ecopragmatics. The terms “imagineer” and “imagineering” are derived from the basics of William James’s pragmatic method which – based upon the preceding discussion of his ideas – can most succinctly be expressed in the following fashion:

1. Beliefs become habits serving as rules of action.
2. The meaning of a belief is expressed in the conduct that follows or results from adopting the belief.
3. The conduct derived from a adopting a belief is predicated upon the expected experiential consequences assuming the belief is true.
4. Beliefs are constantly tested, evaluated and updated with new beliefs.

5. New beliefs are only adopted when their anticipated benefit is deemed to be of greater value than those provided by existing beliefs.

6. The comparative valuation of beliefs entails imagining one’s future condition if the beliefs were behaviorally realized.

The idea of Imagineering corresponds to James’s assertion that we comparatively evaluate the consequences flowing from beliefs and ideas by effectively projecting anticipated outcomes into an intermediate future and judging their anticipated “cash-value.” This is process depends upon using one’s imagination prior to taking any action. This is what we call “imagineering.”

Imagineering as a newly coined concept embraces a perspective on human perception with deep roots going back to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) as well as to the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl who captures the essence of imagineering with these words:

“Moving freely within the moment of experience which brings what is present into my intuitional grasp, I can follow up these connexions of the reality which immediately surrounds me. I can shift my standpoint in space and time, look this way and that, turn temporally forwards and backwards; I can provide for myself constantly new and more or less clear and meaningful perceptions and representations, and images also more or less clear, in which I make intuitable to myself whatever can possibly exist really or supposedly in the steadfast order of space and time” (Husserl, 1913, p. 27).

Later, the philosopher Martin Heidegger provides an even clearer description of what we might call imagineering when he observes that,

“Human beings move in the direction of what immediately confronts them, but at the same time they move within the grasping of the content domain, that is, what they have experienced earlier. All cognition has this remarkable double character. δόξα is both. When I have a view of something, I see what I encounter from a particular perspective. This double meaning is not accidental; every view is intrinsically bifurcated in accordance with its essence. With this, the solution to the question in principle has been found” (Heidegger, 1933, p. 198).

Both descriptions – grounded in a phenomenological perspective – portray perception as an interplay between interiority and exteriority where the individual caught up in the process of perceiving, processing and acting...
literally projects (on the basis of their acquired experiences and perspectives) their understanding of what they are actively encountering into the next moment and the next act such that every subsequent act is preceded by a projection of that act via the power of imagination.

Despite the esteemed philosophical foundation for the term, our use emanates from a much more pedestrian source. In the interest of full disclosure, we must admit that we did not coin the term “imagineer.” The most recent personal purveyor of the term was the late Texas poet, romantic and Mayor of Luckenbach Hondo Crouch who emblemized the term to proclaim his profession on his business cards. However as it turns out Hondo appropriated the word, which has been in popular usage since the early 1940s and is the product of the amalgamation of the word “imagination” and “engineering.” Imagineer was first popularized by Alcoa in the 1940’s and has most recently been appropriated by Walt Disney, who created a division branded *Walt Disney Imagineering* (Kovak, 2007; Imagineer, 1998). The term has also been employed over the years by numerous other commercial interests to include *National Carbon Company, Larsen and Toubro*, and Boston University’s *Imagineering Academy* (Imagineering Academy, 2012; Kovak, 2007; Naik, 2007).

We utilize the term *environmental imagineer* to provide a structure and process to James’s pragmatic method - doing so in a fashion consistent with the principles of environmental pragmatism and distinct from the manner in which the term has been employed at Disney, Alcoa etc. We have likely chosen the term for the same reason Hondo Crouch used it – because it elicits an image of someone who can allow their mind to expand, imagine new worlds and ideas, and proceed toward actually realizing these new and different realities without being excessively anchored by the constraints of the world their feet occupy. So with that romantic image in mind we would like to take the reader on a preliminary overview of the thought experiment – “environmental imagineering” - awaiting full development at the conclusion of the book.

The final case study illustrating the entire imagineering process will focus upon the EPA mandate for petroleum refineries to incorporate cellulosic ethanol in gasoline blends – a variety of ethanol that is not commercially available but which gasoline manufacturers are heavily fined for failing to include it in today’s fuels (Angle, 2012). This case will explore the demand for renewable fuels derived from agricultural activities but will do so by highlighting some of the issues associated with corn-based ethanol production that tends to pit fuel costs against the cost of food.
The imagineering process used to analyze this case study is multifold entailing careful initial case analysis, incorporating the five principles of ecopragmatics, framing and re-framing the policy issue under consideration, specifying possible thematic perspectives suggestive of solutions, developing a proposed final solution and following up at a later date to determine the effectiveness of the solution. More specifically, Imagineering involves the following more detailed process.

**First: Carefully Consider the Case:**

Begin by studying the case carefully seeking an understanding of the issues, stakeholders, constraints, processes, bias and opportunities for resolution and compromise. Consider the case’s interiority (values), exteriority (actions), spatiality (such as who else, where else and what else is impacted) and account for the timelines associated with the evolution of the problem at hand as well as time constraints relative to resolving and/or ameliorating the problem. Likewise consider any “old-stock” values or ideas that you bring to the study of the case as well as biases. Also look for “new-stock” opportunities that may influence what you think about the case. Finally seek to understand how each stakeholder conceptualizes the issue and the solutions each seek. Thereafter be prepared to begin the process of metaphorically framing the case.

**Second: Reconsider the Five Principles of Ecopragmatics:**

Before proceeding to framing the case you just reviewed, take a few moments to reconsider the case in terms of the five principles of ecopragmatics derived from James’s pragmatic method. i.e.:

1. **First Principle:** “Look away from first things and toward last things.”
   Don’t let “first things” (principles, categories, supposed necessities, absolutes, biases and abstractions) distract from “last things” (outcomes, consequences, fruits, products and facts).

2. **Second Principle:** “Be ever-present and available to novelty”
   Empty your mind of any other conversation, dialogue or issue that you may also be working on or ruminating about and give the issue at hand your full attention.

3. **Third Principle:** “Engage in thoughtful discrimination”
   Focus upon the degree to which the quality of the ideas and information you consider conform to the criteria of adequacy, concreteness, factual, action-oriented, and empowering (ACFA-OE).

4. **Fourth Principle:** “Honor the integrity and utility of old-stock values.”
Recognize and appreciate old-stock values and don’t discard them unless and until better ideas, information or values present themselves in a way that is compelling to heart and mind.

5. **Fifth Principle:** “Renew old-stock whenever superior new-stock becomes available.”

While recognizing the worth of old-stock ideas and values commit to substituting them with new-stock values whenever superior values and ideas present themselves.

Review the case information anew in terms of each of these five principles *looking for the “last-things”* (outcomes, consequences, fruits, products and facts) of value in the case, *identifying the novel*, unique and different in the case (regardless of whether this novelty is generally positive or negative), *determining the quality of the ideas, values and information* contained in the case (adequacy, concreteness, factual, action-oriented, and empowering - ACFA-OE), *identifying your and the stakeholder’s old-stock values*, and *comparing them to new-stock values, ideas and information* that may lead to a change of mind or heart for you and/or among the stakeholders in the case.

**Third: Frame and If Necessary Re-Frame the Case Employing an Ecological Metaphor:**

Now consider how you might frame this particular case – selecting an appropriate environmental metaphor (eco-centric, eco-feminist, eco-justice, bio-centric, conservationist, free-market / libertarian, socialist, anarchistic, preservationist, aesthetic, chaos-theory, utilitarian, globalist etc.) from among those ecological metaphors provided in the text. If you fail to find a metaphor that helps frame the case then create one of your own. Within your frame include the dimensions of interiority, exteriority, time and space. In so doing, remember that understanding an issue may require reconfiguring it to fit within several frames – each of which suggests different problem formulations, inquiry and outcomes.

**Fourth: Specify the Thematic Perspective on the Problem and Develop a Tentative Conclusion**

After having framed the case identity and the theme or themes emerging from it pinpoint key players, stakeholders, and contributing factors. Then describe the forces that define and drive the case’s theme and suggest possible options, actions or interventions available to solve or ameliorate the problems associated with the case. In so doing keep in mind that achieving the desired ends may require reconsidering the five principles of ecopragmatics and applying them anew to the case.

Thereafter sequentially imagine yourself in the roles of each stakeholder and on the basis of the framing metaphor you have chosen and the analysis and reflection you have engaged in, develop a one
sentence outcome statement for each of the major stakeholders in the case expressing the ideal outcome of the case from that stakeholder’s perspective followed by a second one sentence statement of what the likely outcome is from the stakeholders vantage point, and compose a third sentence describing the worst possible outcome. Upon developing these one-sentence summaries for each stakeholder, identify the stakeholders you most identify and least identify with and compare their responses. Finally after having thoroughly reviewed the worst, ideal and likely outcomes from each stakeholder’s perspective, in two sentences express your own vision of the ideal and likely outcomes to the case. Thereafter describe your perception of the worst possible outcome in yet another sentence.

**Fifth: Develop a Strategy for Pursuing a Resolution to the Case Problem**

Having worked your way through the imagineering process to arrive at a set of possible outcomes – worst, likely and ideal – consider how you might go about implementing a strategy to achieve an acceptable outcome that lies somewhere along the continuum between your ideal and likely outcomes. Utilize a “satisficing” approach to develop your strategy (i.e. prioritizing the best possible outcome given circumstances but short of ideal) and develop your plan to insure a balance between individual and community needs consistent with the communitarian ethic to “Respect and uphold society’s moral order as you would have society respect and uphold your autonomy to live a full life” (Etzioni, 1996 p. xviii).

**Sixth: Review Your Analysis and Conclusions**

Finally upon completing your plan briefly review your work to insure you have completed each portion of the environmental imagineering exercise and assure yourself that in developing your strategic approach you have answered each of the following questions to your satisfaction:

1. How will you and the stakeholders know whether “old-stock” ideas and values are superior or inferior to the “new-stock” ideas and values presenting themselves in the case study?
2. How will you and the stakeholders identify bias (theirs and others) and account for it in their deliberations and those of others?
3. How will you and the stakeholders go about addressing the policy issue at hand within the confines of local communities and regions (i.e. utilizing communitarian approaches)?
4. How will you and the stakeholders know when they have arrived at an acceptable conclusion to the issue at hand?
Hopefully this brief introduction to the strategic principles of ecopragmatics and imagineering will provide a bit more insight into how the themes of pragmatic inquiry and policymaking will be approached in the book. A more complete introduction to imagineering will be presented later in a more complete and structured fashion so as to allow the neophyte imagineer to make notes, take stock of their progress, and complete the thought experiment to its conclusion. We will however, encourage the reader to begin and end the imagineering exercise in one sitting since interrupting the process would necessarily require beginning the process anew. A worksheet will be included to assist the imagineer in completing exercise. We are in hopes that readers will directly proceed to prepare themselves for this capstone exercise by turning the page to the chapters beyond.

**Dewey, Rorty, Minteer and Other Pragmatic Thinkers:**

Before proceeding any further, however, we want to acknowledge at the outset the work of our colleague at Arizona State University, Ben Minteer, for his important contributions to the field of environmental philosophy and ethics with his books *The Landscape of Reform* (2009) and *Refounding Environmental Ethics* (2012). Minteer’s work extends the discussion on environmental pragmatism that began with Bryan G. Norton (1991), Eric Katz and Andrew Light (1996). Certainly one of the central themes throughout all of these books is the perceived lack of influence of environmental philosophies upon policy deliberations.

We particularly share the concerns of these environmental pragmatists regarding the decidedly undemocratic and misanthropic direction nonanthropocentric environmental ethics has taken over the years. Minteer has chosen to create a pragmatic approach to environmental ethics by employing the ideas of John Dewey – particularly in regard to Dewey’s ideas regarding pragmatism and democracy. We will speak to some of his work in this regard later in the book and will compare and contrast some of Dewey’s ideas with those of James and other pragmatist thinkers. However, we hope that the reader will understand our desire to postpone a portion of that discussion in the interest of presenting a fresh look at pragmatism from a James perspective that is initially presented independently of the works of Dewey and Rorty.

As will become clearer as the book progresses, our approach to pragmatism is much more psychological and metaphorical than that used by Minteer and we don’t operate within some of the constraints he addressed regarding criticism of his work by J. Baird Callicott (1999). We will, however, reflect upon Minteer’s ideas about founding and refounding ethics and ethical foundations for democratic process later in
our discussion of social ecology and communitarianism. We hope that the reader will appreciate that communitarianism is in part the means by which our own approach to pragmatism seeks to promote democratic process and value pluralism in addressing pressing environmental problems.

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Figure 1

Do You Consider Yourself to be An Environmentalist?

Percentage


Yes: 76% 73% 78% 63% 50% 52% 41%
No: 20% 24% 19% 35% 48% 47% 58%

Yes  No
Figure 2

Thinking specifically about the environmental movement, do you think of yourself as -- an active participant in the environmental movement, sympathetic towards the movement, but not active, neutral, or unsympathetic towards the environmental movement?

Orientation Toward the Environmental Movement

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Percentage
Figure 3

All things considered, do you think the environmental movement in this nation has done more good than harm, or more harm than good? Would you say it has done definitely more good than harm, probably more good than harm, probably more harm than good, or definitely more harm than good?"
Figure 4

"With which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree?

Protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth.

OR, Economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent."

Environmental Protection Versus Economic Growth, 1984-2010

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