

Welcome to Turning Conscience Into Action, the Earth Charter podcast. Join Mirian Vilela, Earth Charter International Executive Director, in her fascinating conversations with great thinkers, scholars and activists from around the world who are working in the fields of sustainability, ethics, education and social transformation. Our purpose is to generate new insights on how to face current global challenges and inspire informed action.

Welcome everybody and thank you for joining our conversation today.

Our conversation is going to be with Professor Emeritus, Dr. Bob Jickling, who I have the honor of inviting and having a conversation today on his work, his thinking. Thank you so much Bob for joining us today. Thanks Mirian. It's a pleasure to be with you today and of course it's been a pleasure to work with you in the past. It's lovely that we can get together. And I should say that I'm speaking with you from the traditional territory of the Kwan-Lin Dunfours Nation in the Yukon and the Tan Kwa-Cheng Council.

So that's a place that I'm very curious about. So we are more or less in the same line, the vertical line in the world if you look at that way, but certainly you are very much up north and I'm here in the Central America area. So Yukon for me is kind of this mysterious place up north Canada. And would you like to share with us how is it in a little bit about the beauty of the place, but because I know you for some years and I keep thinking of Bob Jickling going canoeing the lakes and hiking the mountains of this very mysterious and beautiful place on earth.

Would you share with us how does that look like and what's your feeling around this? Well Yukon is definitely my home. It's a place I've spent basically more than 40 years living in. I first came up here as a young man in 1979 to run out with bound courses and that gave me an immediate opportunity to see this great landscape, to be on the rivers and in the mountains and working with young people. And I instantly fell in love with the place. I thought this is a place that I could make a home and this is where I could live.

And I haven't been disappointed. I think this is something about the intimacy of this place. When we live here when I first came, I felt an intimacy. I felt this is a place where I could have a relationship. It wasn't hard to find the land here. You can go outside and the land is right there. It's not everything's not paved. So I think as I've grown through my life in this place, I think I've grown ever more to have an extended attachment with the place because the opportunities for intimacy with the rivers and mountains, the wildlife, the more than human world are just so great here.

And I think that's what's held. I think that's one of the things that's really held us here. And there's just the wonder of it all. We can go for a cross country ski and see wolf tracks occasionally or sometimes me. Once even I saw links on our ski trails. There's just this lovely, lovely intimacy. We haven't built borders between our live space and our wild space here. And I think that's that continues to inspire me in my thinking and my writing and underlies a lot of what I do. I'm sure it does.

It must be certainly an easy place to connect with your inner self and with nature. I think so. So Bob, you have worked for so many years in things that of course is of our common

interest and especially years in trying to understand and figure out how to bring environmental ethics into education. Am I right? That's very like something that has triggered your attention and you have many years ahead of me in working in this. So can you share with us your journey on this? What sparked your interest to be willing to dig into this question about environmental ethics into education in terms of how you came interested in this or in how your thinking has evolved over the years?

Well I think that's an interesting and a good question because I actually have a very, there was a very catalytic moment for this. I was pitching in the public school system in the Yukon at a time when the government decided that they wanted to kill a lot of wolves. I think that people were hungering to have more moose and caribou to hunt and in those days wolf was considered a vermin and it was in the way it was. The government frequently would launch large scale wolfgills to try and improve the opportunities for hunting really is what it boiled down to.

I found that a bit disturbing but I also had a whole group of school children in front of me whose parents would not share the same ideas that I had. I realized that this question of values of ethics was a tricky one. This just wasn't a decision about science. There was something else going on here. It was what we valued, what we cared about. But I knew that I couldn't just try to force the children to believe the kinds of things that I believed. I knew that most of their parents would have been supportive of things like wolfgills or at least they wouldn't have thought about them and would therefore not be against them.

I struggled. What do I do here as an educator? I don't want them to necessarily just believe something because I believe it but I want them to at least be able to think about these kinds of questions and to be able to begin to at least have conversations about these kinds of things. I went to our local conservation society. I had a whole bunch of teaching resources and I looked at them and very often at the beginning they said they're going to deal with questions of ethics. But as you went through the books, there was reading, nothing about ethics in the books.

It was all science activities, basically. And so I realized there weren't resources around. There weren't many places that I could go to find any inspiration or any ideas about how to teach ethics. And so that was just about the time I decided to go back to school and study for my PhD. And so that was kind of a catalytic question that I took forward with me. And there was two parts to it, of course. One is the environmental ethics and the other part was basically philosophy of education. And I realized that it just wasn't going to work educationally to try and inculcate a sense of my values.

I could see that that was a disaster waiting to happen and it didn't seem like it was going to be practical, nor did it seem like it's quite the thing I should be doing as a teacher. So I went off with those twin aims to think about education and think about ethics, really, or values, the value question, how does one begin to open up space where you can talk about those things? That's how it got going. And that is interesting because people often think that ethics and values education or has to do with something that it's inculcating or opposing and vertical.

And that doesn't necessarily have to be that way. No, no, ethics is an interesting, interesting word in that it's used in a lot of different ways in our society. Sometimes it's a code of practice. Sometimes it's a rigid way of deciding moral questions. And sometimes it's just a process. It's a process. And from an educational point of view, I think that process, the major part of that process is trying to open space for people to open up space for people can begin to think about these questions and begin to explore them and begin to and begin to find their own way in thinking about these questions.

We can probe, probe and probe. Probe, we can be on that advocate or we can be a devil's advocate. All of the all of those things that we might do are all part of opening and broadening a conversation. So so I think that for me, when I use the term ethics, I like to think of it in that kind of way, trying to open up a little space and try to tease, tease some understanding so to people, provide some challenges so they think a little bit harder, a little deeper, a little more widely. And and and actually to engage as much as possible with practical practical questions of the day and to and even some forms of practice that require a little bit of advocacy.

I certainly agree in like the way you put that in in providing a space to engage in a conversation and reflection of deep thinking, but also that relates with very practical things we deal with in every day in our lives. Now, have your thinking evolved since you how many for how many years have you been dwelling with this question and engaging with this question? And has your thinking evolved over these years?

So I started I started in earnest in 1985 working on working on this. And, you know, it's interesting. Most of us go through maybe it's different now, but certainly when I went through school and began my university work, there are very few people that took very many courses in philosophy or or or ethics, unless unless you were in philosophy departments, there was there was not much space for that sort of thing.

And so so I began at the beginning of those were early days of of ethics and some some of the more formal attempts to extend ethics to include the more than human world to include animals where kind of where it began.

And but very quickly, it became apparent that there was lots of other ways to approach ethics. I think that I ran in early on, I ran ran into deep ecology, philosophers, Arminius in particular. And at the same time, the equal feminist writers were opening up interesting space for conversations. And so it soon became apparent that ethics wasn't limited to kind of this abstract duty based duty bound kind of ethics. We sometimes we sometimes limit ethics to thinking about what our duties are. And as Arminius said once, you know, compliance with duties is often about guilt and and doing what you think you're supposed to be doing.

And he says that's not a very good motivator. And and that's sort of what he was saying underneath all of that, I think, or certainly the way I interpreted it is that he was he was beginning to ask the question, where does our moral impulse come from? And can we have a starting place that doesn't begin with some kind of abstract principle? And so and so for Arminius, it was really a matter of developing relationships with a place, kind of

like what I've done here with in the Yukon, you know, I love that developing a relationship with a place, a sense of place and belonging.

And he talked about that as becoming an extended self. So his self and the place became in some ways, united. And and he talked about this. And then he also said, in juxtaposition to this idea of ethics being duty bound or related duty, he said, can we have, you know, can we actually act on impulses that are joyful? And if we find ourselves alive and embedded in a place that we love, then can we do what we think is the right thing out of a sense of joy rather than duty or love rather than duty? And the eco feminists said some very interesting things that are were so similar. I think there sometimes there was a perceived conflict, but I think there's some more overlap than there was difference there.

But but but he and the feminists were, I think, really turning the whole idea of what counted as ethics upside down and finding a whole different way to begin to think about a starting place for for making ethical decisions. And so so I think my my my thinking quickly evolved to thinking that what we're what we really needed to do here was open up possibilities for breadth, but not to simply try and find a ethical framework that would work for us and stick to it. I think it fits with an educator's idea to I think the as a as a environmental as a system as an educator combined that at that place where they intersects.

It really makes a whole lot of sense to to open up the conversation fairly broadly and I think this these are the kinds of ways that my thinking has evolved. And I think the final piece in that evolution came as we began working on. I know that we haven't mentioned this ethics book yet, but but we are we're about to have an ethics book published myself and a group of other authors. And what it became apparent by the time we started working on on that was that most of the theories and environmental ethics had been developed were were interesting, thought provoking.

They were that all of them were thought provoking and interesting and well thought out by by very bright minds. But theoretically, there wasn't I haven't come across anything that has has this idea of ethics nailed down in a in a way that is beyond question or or that covers everything that needs to be covered. And but yet I've noticed that a lot of that early work still still continues to do work. So I would just just a couple of two, three months ago, there was articles in the newspaper about the British Prime Minister agreeing to pass a law that would acknowledge sentience in animals.

Well, it comes from a very old bit of theorizing and a theory that is not complete for environmental ethics by any means yet yet some of the thinking, some of the ideas, some of the language has been able to do an enormous amount of work. When we find the Prime Minister of Great Britain, just beginning to wonder or being challenged to think about whether whether non humans more than humans actually have moral standing is what that amounts to. You are talking about the importance of words and how does that influence our thinking?

Well, in this case, it was sentience. This idea that animals feel can feel pain. And that's the basis of the Peter Singer's work on animal liberation. So that was written at thinking about mid 1970s. And it was it was kind of a radical idea at the time. And it's not a perfect theory. And there's people that have have adopted that theory and probably done some

harm by not understanding the nuances that Peter Singer himself had in mind. But the bottom line is it's not a perfecting, complete theory. It's not even maybe the best way to go because it is very duty oriented. But still, it's done work is it's gone forward and done work and it's got the work that's all the way up to the Prime Minister of Great Britain recently.

So in other parts of the world, too, have begun to see places and rivers and and other species as as as having moral standing too. So it's not the first time. So so I guess what I want just to wrap up that that piece, I've just come to see that the quest isn't so much as coming up with a perfect theory. But it's the idea of continuing to find ways to do moral work to move the ball down the field if you're a football player, you know, you're you're trying to not be perfect, but try and make things better. And and when we when we take that point of view, then we can draw from more than one place, we can, we can draw sometimes it's language, sometimes it's practices, sometimes it's forward looking, imagine there's lots of things we can draw from from the work that's been the conversations that are out there.

And that would be the last thing I'm thinking that that this offering a breadth of ideas for people to think about is one way to help ethics continue to evolve.

Now, for someone who would be interested in developing an environmental ethics course, and you have had so much experience in that. What do you think works well? What doesn't work that well? When it comes to designing or leading a course on environmental ethics, can we actually teach environmental ethics? And if it's so, how, according to your experience and perspective on this? Well, I think there I think, in response to a question like that, it's a little bit of there's a lot of different aspects to your question. And so I can I can share some things not necessarily in in a given order. But I'll share a range of things that I think are important.

And I think one of the one of the first ones is to find activities that help people become ever more aware of the kind of hidden values that exist in us in a society. I think that if we if we just move through life, without trying to find out what's underneath the kinds of course that we're charting the kinds of directions that society tends to pull us in, if we don't have any tools to look underneath, then it's harder to find the kinds of questions that are important. Like the the wolf question for me so many years ago, people were going along with the flow mostly. It wasn't a question that had been been raised. Is it okay to treat wolves like vermin? And or is it much more appropriate to limit hunting in such a way that you can live within our means?

Is it worth, you know, those are the kind of questions they just just aren't asked. So so I think one of the ways I normally like to start my environmental ethics courses, one of when I've taught them, was to ask people to begin to analyze cultural artifacts, things that you see every day. A great, a great cultural artifact is comes in the form of advertisements and very often some of the very best ones, but not exclusively are people trying to sell automobiles and cars and SUVs. Sometimes some of the things that they they say in these advertisements in order to sell cars is are really quite really, really quite disturbing if you stop for a minute and kind of look at what's going on underneath. So often they're done in a very clever way. And market advertisers, they're clever at what they do.

They know what people respond to. They do they do focus groups and they and they, they, they pitch stuff in ways that they know will work in terms of selling. But it's not the advertisers problem. It's our problem. We don't stop and think and analyze these things. So, so very, for example, in knowing how to ask the right question, that's right, learning environment is a very crucial. So if you so in a there's many automobile advertisements that I've seen where the where nature question is how is nature being treated in these these advertisements. So if you stop and look, there's a there'll be a car in the middle of the middle of a jungle stream. And and right away, you can see that nature is being presented as a as a playground for human consumption.

A cool place is a nice place. Yeah, for humans. It's not not as a place where we should where we should go and tread softly and respect nature. It's a place where we can go and be dominant, we can be in control, we can. It's an adventure for us. It's a it's a resource for humans you for human use. And you don't we those kinds of things just wash over us when we see these ads unless we stop and look for a minute. And, and, you know, sometimes advertisements for tourist destinations are the same sometimes advertisements for real estate or are like that. But we can find these we can find these things throughout our society. And another good place to look is at our curriculum. What's how is how is the relationship between humans and the more than human world treated in a in a curriculum?

And then what's missing in a curriculum? I think, I think what we if we by and large, if we were to examine a wider array of curricula, we'd find that, for example, one of the things that would be missing would be serious concern over over ethics as a process of exploration. And this idea process that we spoke about rather. So I think we find that's missing. But we'd also find lots of other things missing like or are downplayed, such as the kind of emotional sensitive components as well. A lot of that is a lot of that is secondary to things that can be more easily quantified and measured, for example. So the first thing in an ethics class was beginning to look at the assumptions.

You know, one author I've found have once said something to the effect, I'm paraphrasing now, that the real he asks the question, what are the real authorities in a culture? And his answer to that was unquestioned assumptions. So, so that's the first thing is to, I think, begin to look for unquestioned assumptions. And sometimes culture artifacts are a good place to do that.

Sure. It seems that we spend most of our lives taking things for granted, and just walking by and just not raising most fundamental questions of why why things are the way they are. Exactly. Exactly. We think this is good or not good through which lenses and why where does that come from? And so all we're doing here really is bringing these things, bubbling these things to the surface so we can begin to examine them. And then we can decide is this is that is that who I want to be. And so that's one that's one thing. The other thing is that I've always thought that environmental or almost always thought that environmental ethics is more than just an cognitive activity, at least in the way we do in the way that we define cognition these days. We might want to change the idea of what counts as being cognitive.

But for the moment, it's more than simply an abstract cognitive activity. And so it's, it's always been important for me to at least have a little bit of a little bit of field work, field trips. So I'll often go someplace and and if I've got a particular thing I want people to think about and read at the, at a, that can be taken outside, I'll go someplace where we can be inspired by the place, begin to think about being connected with the place and use whatever reading we have to help reinforce that idea. But not, not in a box like classroom, but in the place where it really counts. So, so I, so I've always found that getting outside of the classroom a little bit is, is an important thing. So field, field trips have been a big piece of this.

I think that sometimes, sometimes giving people the opportunity to engage in a project of some kind is a good, good idea. I've some, sometimes let's see, well, I guess the most interesting example is I had, of course, where I last taught, and it was basically an action project. And I would ask people to go into their community, find some place where they feel like they could make a contribution of some kind, and then spend a period of time engaged with, say, with, with the project. And sometimes it was going to work with an NGO for a little while, sometimes, sometimes it would be, well, mostly there were NGOs, but, but not, not entirely. Some sometimes they were very much environmental projects, sometimes they were social environmental projects, working with people.

But, but in other words, not only are you acting on a sense of, a sense of ethics are making or taking moral actions, but also I think that there's, when you're actually doing something, as opposed to just thinking about it conceptually, this is another kind of learning that takes place. And so I think that's kind of an epistemological thing. You just learn different things when you're actually engaged in actually physically doing things.

So I think that that's an important piece. I think that through all of this, I think it goes back to something I said earlier. I think what we're trying to do is open as broad a possible space as we can for people to have conversations and take part in, in actions. So something else, then I like to do throughout this is to have a little bit of a survey of what's gone on in environmental ethics through time. So I can see, so people can see that, that there's been an evolution in the way people like to think about ethics. New questions come up. So if in, in, in the early days of environmental ethics, it was really about extending human ethics to the more than human world.

So it seems to me that you are just giving a good list of things of how to make the teaching and learning about environmental ethics interesting and meaningful through, and that being, think about field trips, think about real life things through even assumptions and advertisements, think about engaging participants and students into specific projects to experience a sort of hands-on thing. Any other thoughts on, on what can help ways to make environmental ethics more course on environmental ethics more interesting? Well, something else that I would include in courses would be things like workshop activities, where I would actually get them to engage in some little problems.

Sometimes it would be discussing environmental conundrums, where, where there's different points of view at play and get them to explore, explore the depth and range of, of perspectives that people have and begin to struggle with those kinds of things. And another one that I found was really quite interesting, because really your question about

can we teach ethics? You know, I guess we could ask the question, can we teach, really teach anything? And I suppose what it really comes down to is through all these explorations, students will, will absorb and hold the things that they value, the things that they feel has something that will contribute to their own personal development, or they won't. And so I think that doesn't matter what subject that we're, we're teaching.

And so I don't know if we actually teach anything, but I think we create the conditions where people can learn and we call that teaching, really. And one other funny little like workshop activity that I sometimes would do would be to give people a mock pop quiz. And the pop quiz, it would include, let's say 10, 10 corporate logos, and then 10 of the more common local birds, and ask them to identify everything. And depending on where you are, what kind of experience they've had, most of the kids would be excellent at the corporate logos, and relatively poor at the birds. And this isn't so much, so what this is designed to reveal to people, I think, is, is who, who they are, who they've become, and why is it, why have they become, why have they become one type of person rather than the other?

And who do we want? Who do you, when, when this is revealed to you that you know, somehow, you've absorbed the names of all these corporate logos, or the names of the corporations, but you, but you, you can't identify very many of the local birds, then it's, then it's, again, it's a revelation about assumptions. Yeah, and also who we are, who we become, and who we are, has a lot to do with what we see, and exactly, absorb the information around us. So what I just heard from you makes me think, makes me really even almost to cry in the sense of, wow, it shakes me to, just to think that the majority of us would easily identify a logo of a big company, rather than a bird that it's from the place where we come from. Yeah, so ethics, so ethics isn't really just about ideas about, and duties.

It now becomes about who you want to be. And if you're, if you're asking the question, where does the moral impulse come from?

To do the things, the drives of things you choose to do, then in, in this case, it's, it's pointing to the kind of relationships that you have with the world. And if your relationship with the world is more closely attuned to that world that trades in corporate logos, then is, is that, is that a place where you're going to develop a, or exhibit the kind of relationship you have in the kind of relationship that we need to actually care for where we live, care for our planet, care for the landscape, and care ultimately for the earth, you know.

So I like these little workshop kinds of activities which engage people in actually doing something that reveals possibilities and reveals problems. It creates dissonance. So I think that when we can work those things and in, in, I'm moving on to this little book that we've written a little bit when I, that's where my mind is taking me right now. So I think that, well, let's, let's, let's just talk about that because actually it's, it's what is in your mind and, and also I think that's where we should be moving on because it has to do with a, with the implications of this place of teaching and learning environmental ethics. What are the implications? And I know you have been involved with a group putting together for over several years an environment ethics book, a source book for, that could serve educators.

So could you share with us what are the key ideas behind that book? And if you can share the gist of some key ideas that we can find in your latest book. Well, I think the first thing is came in, it came long before this book was a recognition that because people don't encounter any kind of formalized philosophy training or environmental ethics training, typically, not some people do, but typically in their, in their schooling, in their teacher training and, and through their life, then it was without some co-hold, then it becomes a very daunting task to take this on. And so the idea was to create a bunch of workshop type activities that would provide little entry places, teach, hopefully more or less teacher friendly entry places to begin opening up the conversation.

And so that, that was the original idea behind developing a whole collection of little workshop activities. And, and it was also, that was married to the idea that environmental ethics ethics, we actually ultimately should be an everyday activity. It shouldn't be left, it shouldn't be left to heroes, saints, scholars, but it's something that should be taking place out there on the streets in the, in our jobs, in our workplace. In, we should be making these kinds of, these kinds of calculations decisions every day. I fully agree, but we really have to work a lot to dismissify the thinking that ethics is only for theorists and philosophers.

And that's where the place of those kinds of discussions should be. But for that, we need to work on dismissifying that thinking, that worldview and bring it to, as you rightly said, to every other place in society. Right. And so the book is, is, is, is meant to have the, a lot of these little entry points where people can begin. And if they begin one place, and they can look to the left and to the right in this book, or to the back or to the front, so they can, as hopefully it's a science, so people can get hooked, become interested, and then expand into other domains of ethical possibilities. And so it's, it's a, hopefully it's an about opening space to begin. And even, even if an educator finds one or two activities in this book that have become their go-to favorites, it's the beginning.

And hopefully, hopefully, as they begin to introduce it to the students and their colleagues, there, maybe their colleagues will find that same range of activities interesting, maybe one more. And, and, and hopefully it's a way to invite an expansion of ideas and possibilities. That would be their greatest hope. Well, I think for anyone interested in ethics, sustainability, or environmental ethics should really come to know that book and read and use it, because that's how you put together as a source book for environmental ethics. And I actually want to express gratitude for the years of work of you and the whole team of co-authors to put that book together.

And I think the beauty is also that it does not come only from one person, but from the collection of experience and knowledge that all of you bring in putting that incredible and most valuable book and knowledge together and share it with the world, you know, because I think that's what we are so much in need. I would like to say that partly the reason why the world is in such a, we are kind of addressing so many challenges is because we have a lot of unethical leaders or there's a vacuum on ethical literacy of leaders in all levels of our societies. It's just a void. It's like it's not there. So it's the same way as we will have illiterate people in different fields. And in this particular one is having a lot of well, like powerful people making a lot of important decisions that will have a huge impact.

But without a vision of what environmental ethics and ethics for the common good would mean. Yeah. Just a knowledge of that. So I think that's where the importance of this book lies. Really. So there's a chapter in the book in which you articulate the implications of teaching and learning about environmental ethics.

And you not only conceptualize the idea of ethics, but you also share the idea of a heuristic. Can you? Yeah. Can you share with us what does that mean? Well, okay. So first of all, a heuristic is meant to be a catalyst for discovery. A tool for seeing more broadly. It's not meant to be a framework or a set of rules. It's meant to invite people to look at their own practice and discover where they are and where they would like to go. And as you know, the Earth Charter is implicated in this chapter a little bit. I've taken one example of an enormous body of work that's been done in the in the area of environmental ethics. And I've challenged people to have a look at their practice relative to the Earth Charter. And to, I suppose you could say, bring the Earth Charter ever more alive.

So in a little bit of background, I guess, I was starting to read and think about and teach environmental ethics prior to the Earth Charter. So when the Earth Charter came along, I was well into a variety of other aspects of the of environmental ethics.

And when it came came out, it first struck me as a little bit less strike. And I also knew that some of the ideas in there had come from, they don't come from somewhere. It wasn't just a bunch of people sat down and randomly thought up a bunch of ideas. People brought to that process ideas, ideas from whatever they'd been working on. And so I remember in the conference I attended at your institution, I remember one of the one of the other people that had been very involved in in the Earth Charter raised the point, raised this racist concept of it, expanding one's sense of self, so that it became so ourselves became more than just our bodies, but extended to to become a kind of an identification with the places where we live. And I think that's a great, great concept.

But I also happened to know that that had a lot to do with our NINES and deep ecology.

And I thought that and I my thinking was that wouldn't be great if people could find ways to take this Earth Charter that which has elements like that and begin then at some point to start to look at some of the back stories, where did this stuff come from and begin to expand. So to begin to expand their their conception of what ethics might be. So I came to think of it as having been involved in that process before the Earth Charter came into existence. I thought it was a little bit less like and prescriptive in a way. And I thought that didn't really square too much with my idea of education. But then I realized this and in over many conversations and actually seeing people using the Earth Charter that people were doing just that, or a lot of people were doing just that, maybe not everybody.

But I could see a lot of people were using that as a starting point as a stepping stone. And that would be a lot like some of these workshop activities that I had here. So I guess that when developing this little heuristic, in this book we've applied it to the Earth Charter. But it could be equally applied to animal rights, animal liberation, to curricula, to other to other ideas that have been promoted as as beings, things that we should attend to. So the heuristic then is divided is sort of set up for people to analyze where they sit relative

to their own teaching philosophy and with regards to environmental ethics or in fact the Earth Charter. So if we look at this heuristic, it's kind of got four quadrants.

If we look at the most conservative or the most maybe even dogmatic of them, it would just be thought of as a little list of things that you should do. And I think we sometimes call that the big brother approach. But it became apparent. The big brother approach is like here we know what's the recipe to make things happen. That's right. And that's a little bit like professional codes of ethics. This is what you got to do if you're going to be an engineer or a doctor.

But that and that might be all well and good. But first of all, it takes the responsibility for coming up with your own moral stance away from you. That's one thing it does. And the other thing is it can be limiting in terms of the ethical possibilities and the idea that ethics can evolve and so on. So that's one place and some people might cling to that. But the heuristic is there to invite people to spend the horizons a little bit. And so in some places, people are encouraged to be very creative with their work with the Earth Charter and they have been. And there's still this little bounding by your starter, but there's an enormous amount of creativity that goes on in those two quadrants.

Then the last quadrant is more about using seeing the Earth Charter maybe either a stepping stone to new and new and other other kinds of ideas in the future as ethics grow. Or it might be seen where Earth Charter might be a particular tool alongside Earth Charter, deep ecology and ecofeminism and post humanism.

A combination of things that help bring people into conversation and allow them to take their ideas further. So I think in some so the heuristic is to try and place yourself kind of where you work and where you might like to go. But also we like to recognize that all of those quadrants are actually useful in it in a teacher's toolkit. And so it's meant to just partly help people recognize where they've gone, how they've progressed and where they see themselves. But you give them a little taste for something that they might do a little bit more of from time to time. So so it's I guess it's meant as a tool to help personal reflection on what people are doing, but also to challenge people to see if they can find ways to go a little bit farther.

So in this case, I think that it's really about making the Earth Charter more of a process than a product.

And if the way that the heuristic is applied in this instance. And so to keep the thinking about ethics alive well and going forward. Yeah, I think it has a very interesting angle. I have myself used the heuristic and I think it's quite useful, especially to as a way to help people see that sometimes we are functioning in that transmissive of information mode. Yeah. And how much are we doing of that, especially with the from if we come from the education paradigm of student centered activity centered interaction. There's always sometimes a portion of how much is transmissive and focus on on what the teacher is trying to transmit or control. So it's really an issue of controlling, let in letting go and creating a space for questioning.

So I think it's very useful, at least from a nurse charter perspective.

To use the heuristic as a way to help people see that the Earth Charter is not an ending itself. Yes. Is a useful tool tool way for people to to see that they should not enter into an environment with their shadows as a tool to ask people to to learn it by heart and follow it by the food by every word or comma, but rather use it to enter into a conversation and to explore. And I think that's certainly the way in which we have always thought of how the earth can be used as an instrument as a valuable instrument to engage in that dialogue. But the I think the value that I see in the heuristic is that it helps us see that sometimes we are in different moments of those four credit quadrants and trying maybe to explore how more useful or meaningful is when we move it away from the big brother. Yeah, yeah, exactly.

One of the quadrants there.

The vertical rigid and transmit transmissive space of all of that. Right. I appreciate and thank you so much. I think that this source book on environmental ethics is is is a wonderful gift that you offer to the world. And I really want to express gratitude for the years of work that you have put into this for bringing this together. And I hope everybody that is interested that are those who are interested in this field in working with that will certainly have the opportunity to learn from all the various chapters that you addressed that now. Let's see. You have been talking about in working on environmental ethics, how to make that happen in a more meaningful way in an interesting way into education. How does that relate with education for sustainable development?

ESD. Well, first of all, thank you for your very kind comments about this book that's just about to come out. You're very kind and I'm glad that it's it looks useful to you. And I'm looking forward to hearing how well it works and how you're using it. But when it comes to ESD, I think that

I could talk for hours about this, but we don't have that much time. But I think the best way to describe that in this instance is to say that it in many ways, my view would be that it parallels the conversation we've just had about the heuristic and the and the and the Earth Charter. So it seems to me that the sustainable development is one idea in a suite of lots of ideas that we should be we should be exploring as I mean, we're in a tough spot right now. The most recent climate change reports realize that the status quo isn't working.

So if we continue to teach the same way that we've been teaching, if we continue to be the same people that we've been, then then we're not going to bend the climate change issue in a way that's going to be sustainable for and and and have a and have a good future for our future generations or even our own children, never mind grandchildren. So the status quo is just not good enough. And so just like we don't want to think that the Earth Charter is a static document with a lot of rules, we shouldn't be thinking necessarily that the sustainable development is an answer either.

If we can find if we can find ways to start with ideas of sustainable development and open up a conversation, then I think that that is that then becomes a useful a useful conversation in a in a series of conversations. But the idea that it should be an endpoint in itself doesn't strike me as is particularly viable. And we've, I mean, we've had more than 40 years of the concept of sustainable development now. And and it hasn't disrupted the status quo in

a way that needs to be disrupted. So I think that that if some people find some utility and some aspects of the sustainable development and the conversation that's going around it, then that can be useful. But I think there's other ideas out there that warrant our attention as well. And I don't see I don't see it as an endpoint.

It could be part of a process. But I think it would be a mistake to hitch our wagons to that is to that as an end in and of itself. After all, I mean, it was an idea that became it was developed quite a while ago and became popularized with the World Commission report in 1987. Our to what extent are ideas that were conceived at that many years ago necessarily going to be the best ideas going forward, you know, this many years later. I don't know, I put that out there as as a bit of a provocation to think about where we're at where we need to go and what are the ideas you're going to take us there.

And if people can find some ways of stepping from sustainable development, if that helps them to step forward to a new and better place, then then then it becomes useful. But we mustn't let it become a dogma. But you do see environmental ethics and bring environmental ethics into education as something that contributes to the efforts of ESD and vice versa.

Well, I think it contributes to the efforts of anybody who is interested in a more more sustainable future, a planet where we can live at peace with each other and with the more than human world. I think those are the kinds of things that I would see for people who have an interest in the common good. And that common good would extend beyond simply humans to the landscapes and the more than human world to. So I think that environmental ethics has an important contribution to make to anybody who's thinking about those kinds of things. And so I would say that those are the kind of goals I'm interested in. Now you co-authored a book with Stephen Sterling. That is called Post Sustainability and Environmental Education. It's quite interesting that it's post sustainability and environmental education.

Why that word post is there at the beginning of the book? And what's the gist of that or the co-ideas that you're articulating that? Well, first of all, that was in the edited collection. So we gathered a bunch of authors around that topic. Well, there's a couple of things. First of all, sustainability is a pretty low bar. If all we're trying to do is sustain or keep things going continuously, that's a low bar. How about if we wanted to live in a not a sustainable world, but how about a flourishing world? I'm not quite sure why we've allowed ourselves to reduce the bar to something that's bare minimum. There's no margin for error in the bare minimum. So sustainability is a problematic word. It seems to be an adjective that we sometimes use to to let the world know that we don't think things are right or good.

And so it has its utility in that sense. And the other thing is it's a very malleable word. A few years ago, I opened up the national newspaper in Canada, and there was a full page ad in the newspaper for an automobile. And the simple caption, there's a little bit of very small text at the bottom, but it was basically this automobile was in kind of monochromatic colors. And the only thing that was written that was at all large was the slogan sustainable excitement. So here we are using the word. How they use the words in so many different contexts. That's right. So it's a malleable word. And so I, you know, I slipped the word in into my writing from time to time, the word sustainability.

But I think that as I think it, let's just say I'd like that to be the very best stepping stone to thinking about thinking about the common good, mutual flourishing, the flourishing of the more than human world is not this, not the, so I think we need to get beyond this sustainability talk a little bit.

It might be a useful stepping stone for some along the way. But it's, I think it's, I think it might be one of the things that Bennis tends to bend us back more in the direction of the status quo and disrupting the status quo on balance. So, so I can see how it can be useful for some people at some times, but it strikes me as a weekend. Yeah, great. Oh, I really appreciate you sharing these thoughts. And certainly just by the fact of inviting people to think for coming together to think of a flourishing world, a flourishing society, it's, it certainly generates a different energy, I guess. I would hope, I would like to think so. Let's hopeful. Let's, let's go for that, Mirian. Yeah.

Now, in terms of education, I think we are really generally, I think we are living in a paradigm shift of education and in the education practice in what, how we think education should happen in the formal dimensions of education, be it primary secondary school or higher education.

So could you share with us what is your take in the kind of education we need to the current vote? I mean, we are actually living in a huge transformation of how information is shared, and etc. So do you have any thoughts on the futures of education? And what are the various scenarios and challenges in the direction we should be taking, especially maybe even with regards to higher education? That's a big question. Well, the way I have been approaching it lately is, is to be, start with a fairly blunt question that I would put to people who are teaching.

And we begin by foregrounding, as we've done a minute ago, how the status quo isn't sustainable. The status quo is, it's just giving more of us, this more of the same and the same as, and it's, the way the fund that education takes is not disrupted that. We have huge losses in biodiversity, we have the climate change continue unabated. And the, where I'm not seeing very much that is going to alter that course in any, anytime soon. There's, there's little bit, there's a lot of people around doing really interesting, and interesting things. And I think that so there might be some seeds out there, but these little seeds need to gather into, into a movement of some kind to, and as you say, radically shift.

So sometimes I'll ask people at the outset, especially if I don't have a lot of time, ask them to ask themselves, are they doing more to reinforce the status quo? Are they doing more to disrupt the status quo? And if you're not disrupting the status quo, then we're, we're, we're not going to, to a better place. Okay, we are coming to an end of our conversation. And I would like us to have a chance to hear from you, Bob. What does the notion of wild pedagogies mean? Well, that's a, that's a good question. And we don't have a lot of time. So let me, let me say that it, the whole thing turns on control. I think I was at one point interested in why the, the notion of what going to wild places was being the importance of that was being diminished in lots of conversations. That was one thing.

And that I was also at the same time seeing how hard it was to do something actually innovative in, in a, in school systems, both at the university level and in public schools.

And, and in, so that we brought them together. The idea of wild and wilderness can be trivial and trivialized.

And it certainly has been, it's been a colonial, colonialist tool. It's been, it's been the ideas of wild and wilderness have been used as a background to human conquests and all that kind of stuff. But, but I think that that's not how wild has to be thought about. I think if we, in, if we go back to the old English, there's this idea that wild has got something to do with, with will and self will and, and the old English, according to some accounts, the original word for wilderness inherently meant something like self willed land. So when we think about land having a will, we think about it as having intention and, and direction and perhaps even, it's a way to think of the world as having intrinsic value. And, and then, so that, that was part of it.

But then this idea of why is it so hard to be innovative in education? And it seems to come down to ways that we control outcomes. We'd curricula often have very specified specific outcomes. They tend to be things that are easier to get a hold of in terms of evaluation. They can, you can measure things, you can test things. And then things that are more ephemeral, at least in today's society, like effects of relationships with the world, the more the emotional side of things, things that are easily quantifiable, they still exist. But they, it's harder to make a place for them in a curriculum because there's certain kinds of expectations and certain ways that those expectations are controlled. And so it seemed to me that, and that leads us to the difficulty in disrupting status quo back to that idea.

So it seems to me that, that the, the task for wild pedagogies is to problematize the kinds of control that allow it, that can constrict the ability of humans to flourish and have some sense of their, their will at being expressed. And the same with some more than human world. So it's really about mutual flourishing of humans in the more than world, more than human world. And in order to have that mutual for flourishing, we need to somehow find ways to disrupt this status quo status quo in education limits the possibilities. And the ideas of control are, are apparent everywhere.

You look almost, where, whereby the, we take it for granted, they are normal. It's taken for granted, that's something there for us to use the more than human world, it's something basically for us to be managing and control. So, so one of the tenants, for example, that runs through this, these very exploratory notions about wild pedagogies, then is, what would it, what would it be like if, if we included nature as a co-teacher in our lessons? And actually, that's, that's how I always thought and approached the idea of wild pedagogies, bringing people to nature. Sure. Experience nature in nature as our teacher. Exactly. So these, so that is a, that's one just great example of what we might do in our, in our work in, in attempting to disrupt the status quo.

So instead of the nature being a resource, something that we build bicycles from or build houses from or, or eat or use to make profit, it can be something that we can actually hold and live with and love, you know, and, and learn from and be, be a partner and be a partner in this mutual flourishing. So, so there, that's a, those are some of the, in a nutshell, some of the, some of the things that we're trying to do this, but again, it boils down to the question about needing, in this particular area, we need much more radical approaches that really do have a chance of, and by radical, I mean, going to the root. We do need

approaches that will, will be more disruptive of the trajectory that we're currently on educationally at, at all levels.

Well, Bob, thank you so much for joining us today. And again, my, my admiration and to you and my gratitude for so many years of deep work, deep thinking, deep practice, and for the outstanding new books that you have actually been involved in, especially the new one on environmental ethics, a source book for educators. Congratulations, my gratitude and my, my sincere admiration for your work. Well, thanks very much for your kind words, Marion. And you're too, are to be congratulated for all the work you're doing at the Earth Charter Institute and then these podcasts that you're producing and finding ways to help, help broaden the conversation. I appreciate what you're doing, a great deal. And thanks for having me today.

Yeah. Thank you for being part of our Earth Charter podcast series.

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