

Beyond Anthropocentrism: Ecohumanism as an Emerging Paradigm in the Human–Nature Relationship

Carlos Alberto Gómez Cano¹, Libardo Ramón Polania², Verenice Sánchez Castillo³

Abstract

This study analyzes ecohumanism as an emerging paradigm for rethinking the human–nature relationship beyond the limitations of anthropocentrism. A qualitative approach was adopted through an integrative documentary review of peer-reviewed literature indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar, considering publications available up to March 30, 2024. The selected literature was examined through thematic content analysis and organized into five analytical categories: anthropocentrism and its foundations; biocentric and ecocentric alternatives; rights of nature; relational approaches to human–nature interactions; and ecohumanism as an integrative paradigm. The findings show that strong anthropocentrism has historically reinforced a hierarchical separation between humanity and nature, while biocentric, ecocentric, legal, and relational perspectives have progressively expanded moral and legal consideration toward non-human beings and ecosystems. However, these approaches do not fully resolve the question of human agency and responsibility. Ecohumanism emerges as a framework capable of integrating ecological embeddedness, relational responsibility, expanded moral consideration, and plural forms of knowledge. The study concludes that moving beyond anthropocentrism does not require eliminating the human subject, but rather redefining human agency within ecological interdependence, responsibility, reciprocity, and shared flourishing.

Keywords: *Anthropocentrism, Ecohumanism; Human–Nature Relationship, Rights Of Nature, Environmental Ethics, Ecological Interdependence.*

Introduction

The accelerating deterioration of ecological systems has intensified the debate over the place occupied by human beings within the natural world. Climate change, biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation, resource depletion, and the disruption of major Earth-system processes are no longer understood exclusively as technical environmental problems; they increasingly reveal deeper tensions concerning the values, institutions, and cultural assumptions through which societies interpret and regulate their relationship with nature. The contemporary environmental crisis therefore raises a fundamental question about the worldview that has historically positioned humanity as separate from, and hierarchically superior to, the rest of the living world. Evidence showing the unprecedented scale of anthropogenic pressures on planetary systems has reinforced calls for transformative changes not only in production and consumption patterns but also in the ethical and normative foundations that govern human–nature relations (Mace, 2014; Richardson et al., 2023). Within this discussion, anthropocentrism has emerged as one of the central concepts for explaining how environmental degradation is connected to culturally constructed assumptions regarding human exceptionalism and the instrumental value of non-human nature.

Anthropocentrism broadly refers to an ethical and epistemological orientation that places human interests, needs, and values at the center of moral consideration. Although its manifestations are diverse, its strongest formulations tend to understand nature primarily in terms of the services, resources, or benefits it provides to humanity. Such a perspective has significantly influenced political, economic, and legal institutions, including conventional approaches to environmental regulation and conservation (Kopnina et al., 2018). The debate, however, cannot be reduced to a binary opposition between caring for humans and caring for nature. Conservation scholarship has shown that the historical evolution of environmental thinking has moved through multiple understandings of why and for whom nature should be protected (Mace, 2014),

¹ Corporación Unificada Nacional de Educación Superior - CUN, Florencia, Colombia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0425-7201> carlos_gomezca@cun.edu.co.

² Universidad de la Amazonia, Florencia, Colombia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9455-4324> lramon@udla.edu.co

³ Universidad de la Amazonia, Florencia, Colombia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3669-3123> ve.sanchez@udla.edu.co

while discussions concerning intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values have challenged the assumption that ecological protection can be justified exclusively through human utility (Batavia & Nelson, 2017; Chan et al., 2016). Consequently, contemporary environmental thought increasingly examines not only what nature provides to people, but also the moral relationships, reciprocal dependencies, responsibilities, and meanings through which humans constitute themselves in relation to the more-than-human world (Jax et al., 2018).

This conceptual transformation has encouraged attempts to move beyond narrow anthropocentric approaches without necessarily eliminating the human subject from environmental ethics. Research on human–nature connectedness, for instance, suggests that perceiving humans as part of rather than external to natural systems is positively related to pro-environmental orientations and can act as a relevant leverage point for sustainability transformations (Barragan-Jason et al., 2022; Ives et al., 2018). Relational approaches similarly emphasize care, responsibility, reciprocity, identity, and belonging as dimensions that cannot be adequately represented through the conventional opposition between the instrumental value of nature for humans and the intrinsic value of nature independently of humans (Jax et al., 2018). At the same time, critiques of ecosystem-services frameworks have warned that environmental discourse may reproduce the same utilitarian and dualistic assumptions it seeks to overcome when nature continues to be conceptualized primarily through its contributions to human welfare (Muradian & Gómez-Baggethun, 2021). The growing recognition of diverse ways of valuing nature consequently points toward an ontological and ethical transformation in which sustainability requires reconsidering the terms through which humanity defines both its dependence on ecological systems and its responsibilities toward them (Pascual et al., 2023).

These transformations have been particularly visible in law. Classical environmental law has generally protected nature through categories designed by and for human societies, such as property, resources, public goods, environmental services, or the human right to a healthy environment. Nevertheless, the emergence of the rights of nature has challenged this architecture by questioning whether non-human entities can possess legal interests independently of their usefulness to people. The transition from human environmental rights toward legal recognition of nature itself represents one of the clearest manifestations of the tension between anthropocentric and biocentric or ecocentric legal frameworks (Borràs, 2016). Legal innovations in Ecuador, New Zealand, Colombia, the United States, and other jurisdictions have recognized ecosystems, rivers, or nature as subjects or holders of rights, although the content, representation, enforceability, and institutional strength of these rights vary substantially between jurisdictions (Kauffman & Martin, 2018; O'Donnell & Talbot-Jones, 2018). These developments have even been described as part of a potential “rights revolution” capable of expanding legal consideration beyond exclusively human subjects (Chapron et al., 2019).

The Latin American experience is particularly relevant to this transformation because environmental conflicts in the region frequently intersect with Indigenous and local knowledge, territorial identities, extractive activities, rural livelihoods, and constitutional debates. Colombia provides an especially illustrative case. Judicial recognition of rivers and ecosystems as legal subjects has drawn on environmental rights, biocultural rights, Indigenous worldviews, intergenerational justice, and constitutional principles, generating new forms of ecological constitutionalism while simultaneously revealing practical difficulties concerning representation and enforcement (Macpherson et al., 2020; Rendón Osorio, 2024). In broader terms, the rights-of-nature literature demonstrates that overcoming anthropocentrism cannot be achieved solely by changing the formal legal status of ecosystems. It also requires reconsidering underlying assumptions about agency, knowledge, justice, representation, and the relationships between human communities and ecological systems (Gilbert et al., 2023). In this regard, proposals such as Earth system law similarly question whether conventional environmental law possesses the conceptual architecture necessary to respond adequately to the systemic ecological conditions of the Anthropocene (Kotzé & Kim, 2019).

Latin American sustainability research also demonstrates that environmental transformation cannot be separated from territory, culture, development, production, and social organization. Studies published in *Región Científica* have highlighted the need to construct sustainable spaces while respecting cultural diversity and the dignity of both people and living beings (Sanabria Martínez, 2022), as well as the importance of

understanding rural and agrarian development through socially and environmentally sustainable approaches (Higuera Carrillo, 2022). Other research has examined the challenges associated with energy transition in Latin America (Pérez Guedes & Arufe Padrón, 2023), the construction of multidimensional indicators for sustainability management (Tápanes Suárez et al., 2023), and the circular economy as an alternative for reconfiguring productive processes and reducing environmental pressures (Raudales-Garcia et al., 2024). Together, these perspectives reinforce the idea that ecological problems are not autonomous from human institutions but are produced and transformed through specific economic, social, cultural, and territorial arrangements.

This interdisciplinary dimension is equally relevant from an anthropological and humanistic perspective. Environmental problems involve not only physical transformations of ecosystems but also languages, representations, identities, cultural values, collective practices, and ways of imagining humanity's place in the world. González Vallejo (2023) argues for the transversal character of environmental inquiry by connecting ecological anthropology, ecocriticism, ecolinguistics, environmental communication, and other humanistic approaches, thereby highlighting the limitations of disciplinary interpretations of environmental challenges. Similarly, the involvement of social movements and traditional communities in environmental protection demonstrates how ecological action emerges through collective learning, cultural practices, territorial relationships, and dialogue among different systems of knowledge (Moreira & Reis Fonseca, 2024). At the individual level, values and beliefs also influence sustainable behavior, with biospheric and altruistic orientations being associated with stronger dispositions toward sustainability than predominantly egoistic orientations (Martínez Castillo et al., 2024). These findings are especially significant because they locate the environmental crisis simultaneously within ecological systems and within the cultural, ethical, and symbolic structures that shape human action.

It is within this theoretical intersection that ecohumanism acquires particular relevance. Rather than merely replacing anthropocentrism with an absolute ecocentrism, ecohumanism proposes reconsidering humanism from within ecological interdependence. Zapf (2022) describes ecohumanism as an intermediate and dialogical position between narrowly anthropocentric humanism and radically ecocentric forms of posthumanism, preserving the relevance of human agency while radically redefining its relationship with non-human life and ecological systems. From this perspective, the problem is not the existence of human values or human agency itself, but the assumption that humanity can be understood independently of the ecological networks that sustain and constitute it. Ecohumanism thus offers the possibility of reconciling human dignity, responsibility, cultural agency, ecological integrity, and recognition of the more-than-human world without reproducing the hierarchical separation characteristic of strong anthropocentrism.

Despite these developments, the relevant literature remains substantially fragmented. Environmental ethics has concentrated on intrinsic, instrumental, and relational values; sustainability science has examined human–nature connectedness and socio-ecological transformations; legal scholarship has explored environmental rights, ecological constitutionalism, legal personhood, and the rights of nature; while anthropology and the environmental humanities have emphasized ontological diversity, cultural meaning, territory, and alternative forms of relating to non-human beings. Research on the rights of nature itself has called for stronger interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary dialogue because legal recognition alone cannot explain the ecological, cultural, institutional, and normative implications of treating nature differently (Gilbert et al., 2023). This fragmentation creates a conceptual gap: although critiques of anthropocentrism and proposals for more relational human–nature arrangements are increasingly developed across different disciplines, less attention has been devoted to integrating these discussions around ecohumanism as a paradigm capable of articulating human responsibility and ecological interdependence.

Accordingly, this article is guided by the following research question: How is ecohumanism configured as an emerging paradigm for overcoming the limitations of anthropocentrism in the contemporary understanding of the human–nature relationship? Addressing this question is relevant for at least three interconnected reasons. First, at the theoretical level, it contributes to clarifying the relationship between anthropocentrism, biocentrism, ecocentrism, relational approaches, and ecohumanism without reducing these perspectives to mutually exclusive categories. Second, at the interdisciplinary level, it creates a common analytical space between environmental law, anthropology, environmental ethics, and

sustainability studies. Third, at the normative level, it contributes to debates concerning whether contemporary environmental governance requires merely better instruments for protecting nature or a deeper transformation in the ethical and legal assumptions that define humanity's position within ecological communities.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to analyze the configuration of ecohumanism as an emerging paradigm in response to the limitations of anthropocentrism, based on the principal legal, anthropological, ethical, and environmental approaches to the human–nature relationship. Through this analysis, the article seeks to demonstrate that moving beyond anthropocentrism does not necessarily require denying human agency or human dignity. Rather, it requires reframing both within a relational understanding in which human flourishing is inseparable from ecological integrity and in which moral and legal responsibility extends beyond exclusively human interests. In this sense, ecohumanism may offer a conceptual framework capable of replacing the logic of human domination over nature with one of situated agency, reciprocity, responsibility, and interdependence.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative approach through an integrative documentary review, suitable for examining theoretical developments and interdisciplinary debates across environmental ethics, law, anthropology, and sustainability studies. Documentary research enables the systematic interpretation and comparison of previously produced knowledge while identifying conceptual convergences, tensions, and emerging categories (Gómez Cano et al., 2016). Likewise, the integrative approach allows theoretical and empirical contributions from different disciplinary traditions to be combined within a common analytical framework (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005; Snyder, 2019). This strategy is particularly appropriate for examining the transition between anthropocentric, biocentric, ecocentric, and humanistic perspectives, an approach previously applied to discussions linking bioethics and sustainable development (Estrada-Cely et al., 2019).

The literature search considered peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, SciELO, Redalyc, and Google Scholar, with the latter used as a complementary search engine. The descriptors *anthropocentrism*, *ecocentrism*, *biocentrism*, *ecohumanism*, *human–nature relationship*, *rights of nature*, *environmental ethics*, *environmental humanities*, and *ecological justice* were combined using Boolean operators. No initial publication-date restriction was established in order to recover foundational contributions; however, March 30, 2024 was defined as the final temporal cutoff. Articles directly addressing the conceptual, ethical, legal, anthropological, or environmental dimensions of the human–nature relationship were included, while duplicate records, publications without sufficient academic support, and studies unrelated to the research question were excluded.

The selected documents were organized in an analytical matrix containing authorship, year, disciplinary field, theoretical perspective, central arguments, and contributions to the human–nature debate. A thematic content analysis was subsequently conducted through comparative coding and conceptual synthesis. The findings were grouped around five analytical axes: anthropocentrism and its foundations; biocentric and ecocentric alternatives; rights of nature; relational approaches to human–nature interactions; and ecohumanism as an emerging integrative paradigm. This procedure made it possible to identify continuities, theoretical tensions, and conceptual transformations and to construct an interdisciplinary interpretation of ecohumanism beyond the traditional anthropocentrism–ecocentrism dichotomy.

Results

Anthropocentrism and Its Foundations: The Human Being as the Measure of Nature

The documentary analysis shows that anthropocentrism has constituted one of the most persistent frameworks for interpreting the human–nature relationship. In its strongest formulation, it assigns primary or exclusive moral value to human beings and evaluates the non-human world according to its usefulness,

functionality, or capacity to satisfy human interests. This perspective has influenced not only philosophical conceptions of nature but also economic, political, and legal institutions, where ecosystems have historically been treated as resources, property, commodities, or objects of regulation rather than as entities possessing value independently of human purposes (Kopnina et al., 2018).

However, the literature reveals that anthropocentrism is not a homogeneous category. A distinction can be made between strong anthropocentrism, which subordinates ecological interests to human benefit, and more moderate or enlightened forms that justify environmental protection because human well-being ultimately depends on healthy ecosystems. This latter perspective has contributed significantly to environmental governance, particularly through concepts such as ecosystem services, sustainable development, and the human right to a healthy environment. Nevertheless, its limitations become apparent when ecological protection is conditional upon demonstrable human utility. Species, ecosystems, and ecological processes whose benefits are not immediately visible may remain morally and politically undervalued.

The reviewed studies also indicate that anthropocentrism is embedded in broader cultural structures. The separation between society and nature has reinforced the notion that humans exist outside ecological systems and are entitled to manage, transform, and exploit them. From an anthropological perspective, this dualism is neither universal nor inevitable; rather, it reflects particular historical and cultural constructions of the relationship between humans and their environment. González Vallejo (2023) emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of environmental inquiry and the importance of examining the symbolic, cultural, communicative, and anthropological dimensions of environmental problems. This is particularly significant because ecological crises are not generated exclusively by technological deficiencies but also by the systems of meaning through which societies understand nature.

The findings therefore suggest that the principal limitation of anthropocentrism lies not simply in its concern for human welfare, but in the hierarchical separation it establishes between human and non-human life. The environmental crisis exposes the fragility of this separation: human flourishing is materially dependent upon ecological integrity, while human actions increasingly determine the conditions under which other species and ecosystems can persist. Consequently, the transition beyond anthropocentrism requires reconsidering the human subject not as an external administrator of nature but as an ecologically embedded agent whose rights, responsibilities, and possibilities for flourishing are inseparable from the systems that sustain life.

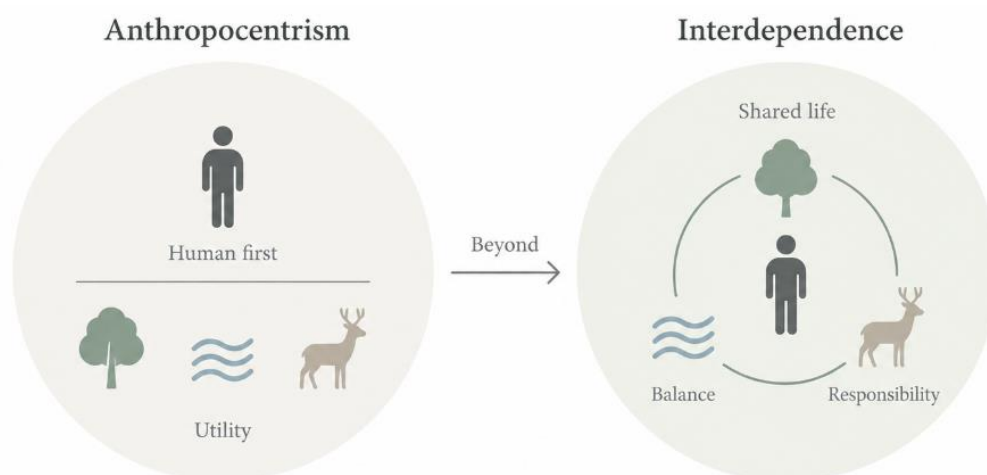


Figure 1. From Anthropocentric Hierarchy to Ecological Interdependence

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the documentary analysis.

Biocentric and Ecocentric Alternatives: Expanding the Sphere of Moral Consideration

The limitations of anthropocentrism have stimulated the development of alternative ethical approaches that expand moral consideration beyond the human species. Biocentrism challenges the assumption that only human beings possess intrinsic value by recognizing living organisms as morally relevant in themselves. Ecocentrism extends this reasoning further by assigning ethical significance not merely to individual organisms but also to species, ecological communities, ecosystems, and the processes that sustain them. These perspectives represent an important conceptual rupture because nature is no longer protected exclusively because of what it provides to humanity, but because non-human life and ecological systems may possess value independently of human preferences.

The literature reviewed demonstrates that the distinction between anthropocentric, biocentric, and ecocentric perspectives has become central to contemporary environmental ethics. Nevertheless, the evidence also indicates that these paradigms should not be understood as completely isolated or mutually exclusive. Environmental decision-making frequently incorporates multiple forms of valuation simultaneously. Chan et al. (2016) and Jax et al. (2018), for example, highlight the growing relevance of relational values, which focus on the meaningful relationships established between people, communities, places, species, and ecosystems. Relational values include care, responsibility, reciprocity, identity, stewardship, and belonging, thereby overcoming the conventional distinction between nature as useful to humans and nature as valuable independently of them.

This relational turn has considerable importance for the present analysis. A strictly polarized interpretation of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism can reproduce another form of dualism: humanity on one side and nature on the other. In contrast, relational perspectives recognize that human beings are simultaneously biological organisms, cultural subjects, moral agents, and members of socio-ecological systems. Environmental protection, therefore, can emerge from relationships of dependence, affection, responsibility, and co-existence rather than exclusively from either utility or intrinsic value.

Empirical research also supports the relevance of value systems in environmental behavior. Martínez Castillo et al. (2024) found that biospheric and altruistic values were positively associated with sustainability-oriented behaviors among engineering students, whereas predominantly egoistic orientations showed weaker relationships with such practices. These findings suggest that ethical frameworks are not merely abstract philosophical constructs; they influence how individuals perceive environmental responsibility and translate values into action.

The analysis consequently indicates that biocentrism and ecocentrism represent necessary corrections to the moral exclusivity of anthropocentrism, but they do not completely resolve the problem of how human agency should be situated within ecological systems. Their greatest contribution lies in expanding the community of moral concern. Their principal unresolved challenge is articulating this expanded moral community with the undeniable capacity of human beings to create institutions, formulate laws, transform ecosystems, and assume responsibility for ecological consequences. This unresolved tension creates the conceptual space in which relational and ecohumanist approaches become particularly relevant.

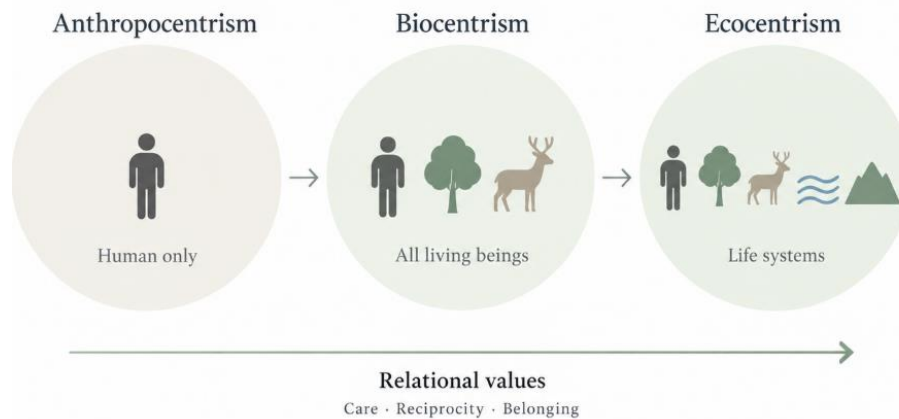


Figure 2. Expanding Moral Consideration: Anthropocentrism, Biocentrism, Ecocentrism and Relational Values

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the documentary analysis.

Rights of Nature: From Environmental Protection to Legal Subjectivity

One of the most significant transformations identified in the reviewed literature concerns the emergence of the rights of nature. Traditional environmental law has generally protected ecological systems indirectly, either because environmental degradation threatens human health, property, economic interests, cultural rights, or future generations. The rights-of-nature approach alters this legal structure by recognizing that ecosystems or natural entities may hold legally protected interests independently of their instrumental usefulness to human beings.

Different legal models have emerged internationally. Ecuador incorporated the rights of nature into its Constitution, while New Zealand developed legal personhood arrangements for specific natural entities. Colombia has produced an especially dynamic body of jurisprudence in which rivers, ecosystems, and territories have been recognized as subjects of rights or as entities requiring special constitutional protection. These developments demonstrate an important shift from treating nature exclusively as a legal object toward recognizing forms of ecological subjectivity (Kauffman & Martin, 2018; O'Donnell & Talbot-Jones, 2018; Macpherson et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the documentary analysis suggests that legal recognition alone does not automatically overcome anthropocentrism. The rights of nature continue to depend on human institutions for their interpretation, representation, enforcement, and protection. Guardians, judges, public agencies, communities, and social organizations must speak and act on behalf of ecosystems. Consequently, a paradox emerges: the attempt to decenter human beings legally still requires human agency to become operational. This does not invalidate the rights-of-nature framework; rather, it demonstrates that the central challenge is not to eliminate human agency but to redefine its normative orientation.

The reviewed scholarship also cautions against presenting legal personhood as a direct translation of Indigenous or traditional worldviews. Tănăsescu (2020) argues that the relationship between Indigenous philosophies and rights-of-nature frameworks is complex and cannot be reduced to a simple equivalence between ancestral cosmologies and Western legal categories. This observation is particularly relevant in Latin America, where legal innovations frequently intersect with Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and local forms of territorial knowledge.

The findings from *Región Científica* reinforce this socio-territorial dimension. Moreira and Reis Fonseca (2024) demonstrate how social movements and traditional communities participate in environmental protection through collective practices, territorial identities, and processes of learning. Such evidence shows

that ecological governance is not exclusively a matter of formal legal institutions; it also depends on cultural practices, community organization, and situated knowledge.

Therefore, the rights of nature constitute a major transition beyond classical anthropocentric law, but their transformative potential depends on the relational model that supports them. When rights are treated merely as another technical legal instrument, anthropocentric institutional structures may persist beneath new terminology. When they are connected to ecological interdependence, community participation, cultural plurality, and human responsibility, they become part of a deeper transformation in how legal systems conceptualize the human–nature relationship.

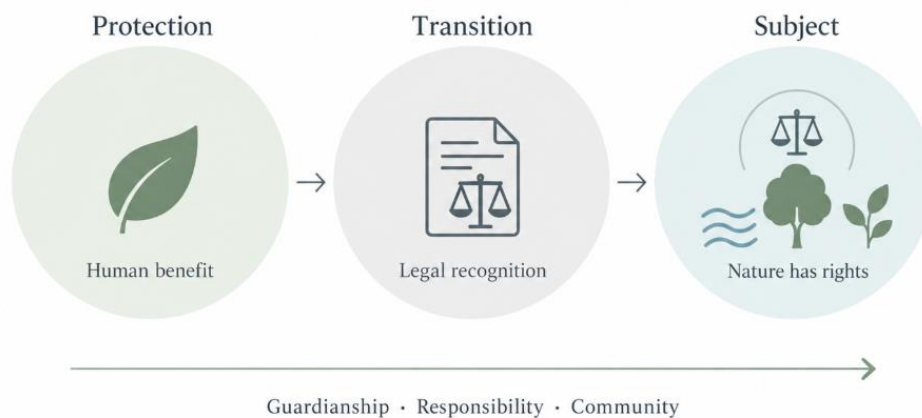


Figure 3. The Legal Transition: Nature as Object, Protected Interest and Rights-Bearing Subject

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the documentary analysis.

Relational Approaches to the Human–Nature Relationship: From Separation to Interdependence

A fourth category emerging from the documentary analysis concerns the growing importance of relational approaches. These perspectives shift attention from the question of whether nature possesses value “for humans” or “in itself” toward the relationships through which humans and non-humans coexist, depend on one another, and construct shared ecological realities. This approach is especially relevant for interdisciplinary dialogue because it connects environmental ethics with anthropology, psychology, sustainability science, environmental humanities, and socio-ecological research.

Ives et al. (2018) conceptualize human–nature connectedness as a multidimensional phenomenon involving material, experiential, cognitive, emotional, and philosophical dimensions. This framework demonstrates that the human–nature relationship cannot be reduced to physical resource dependence. People relate to ecological systems through knowledge, memory, identity, emotions, worldviews, livelihoods, cultural practices, and experiences of place. Consequently, environmental disconnection is not simply a lack of physical contact with nature but may involve deeper transformations in values, institutions, and social imaginaries.

The reviewed evidence indicates that stronger human–nature connectedness can contribute to sustainability-oriented behavior, although individual attitudes alone are insufficient to transform structural drivers of environmental degradation. This distinction is important. A relational paradigm cannot be reduced to encouraging individuals to “love nature”; it must also address economic systems, institutional arrangements, legal frameworks, patterns of consumption, technological infrastructures, and political decisions that shape the possibilities of ecological action.

Anthropological approaches add another layer to this interpretation. Human–nature relationships are culturally situated, meaning that different societies construct distinct boundaries between human and non-human worlds. Some cultural systems emphasize separation and domination, while others foreground kinship, reciprocity, spiritual relationships, territorial belonging, or collective stewardship. González Vallejo (2023) highlights how ecological anthropology and other environmental humanities disciplines contribute to understanding this multidimensional interaction between individuals, cultures, and environments.

Similarly, Moreira and Reis Fonseca (2024) show that environmental protection can emerge through community practices and collective learning rather than exclusively through top-down policy. These findings suggest that environmental sustainability is strengthened when ecological knowledge is embedded in lived relationships with territory and community.

Relational approaches therefore provide an essential bridge between ecocentric ethics and human agency. They avoid reducing nature either to a human resource or to an entirely separate moral entity. Instead, they emphasize that humans are constituted through ecological relationships and that ecological systems are increasingly shaped by human decisions. The analytical implication is significant: the challenge is no longer merely to determine whether humanity or nature should occupy the center of ethical concern, but to understand the quality, responsibility, reciprocity, and sustainability of the relationships that connect them.

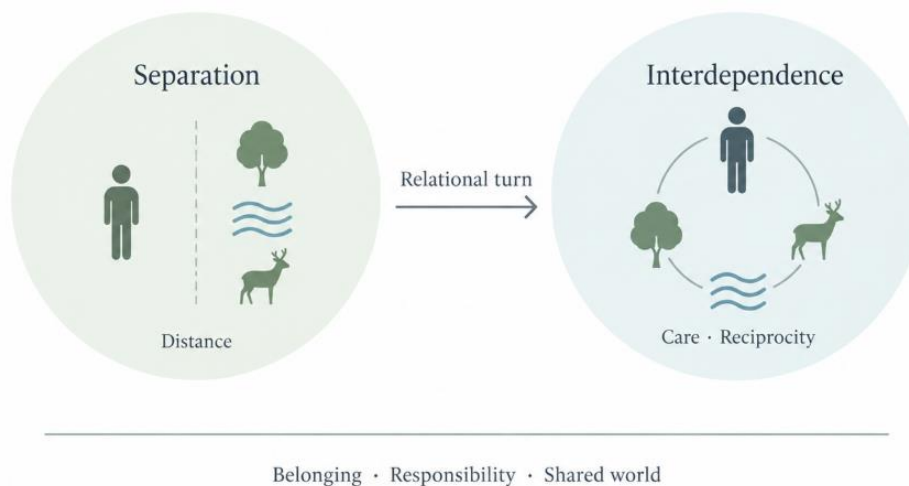


Figure 4. Human–Nature Relationality: Dimensions of Ecological Interdependence

Source: Authors' elaboration based on the documentary analysis.

Ecohumanism as an Emerging Integrative Paradigm

The final and central category identified in the documentary analysis is ecohumanism. The reviewed literature suggests that the contemporary environmental debate has reached a point at which neither traditional anthropocentrism nor a simple inversion toward radical ecocentrism fully resolves the theoretical and normative challenges posed by ecological crises. Ecohumanism emerges within this tension as an attempt to redefine humanism through ecological embeddedness rather than abandon the human subject altogether.

Zapf (2022) positions ecohumanism between narrowly anthropocentric humanism and radically ecocentric posthumanism. This intermediate position should not be interpreted as a compromise that weakens ecological concern. Rather, it represents a reconstruction of human agency. The human being remains ethically and politically relevant because humans possess an exceptional capacity to transform ecosystems, create legal systems, develop technologies, transmit cultural values, and intentionally modify collective

behavior. However, this agency is no longer interpreted as a justification for domination; it becomes a basis for responsibility.

The documentary synthesis indicates that ecohumanism can be understood through four interconnected principles. The first is **ecological embeddedness**, according to which humanity is part of rather than external to ecological systems. The second is **relational responsibility**, which recognizes that human rights and well-being generate corresponding duties toward the ecological conditions that make life possible. The third is **expanded moral consideration**, which acknowledges the value of non-human beings, species, ecosystems, and ecological processes. The fourth is **plural knowledge**, which recognizes that scientific, legal, anthropological, Indigenous, local, and experiential forms of knowledge can contribute to understanding socio-ecological relationships.

From this perspective, ecohumanism provides a potential conceptual convergence between environmental law and anthropology. Law contributes institutional mechanisms through which ecological responsibility can acquire normative force, as illustrated by environmental rights and rights-of-nature developments. Anthropology contributes understanding of the plurality of human–nature relationships and challenges the assumption that Western dualistic models are universal. Environmental sciences demonstrate the material interdependence between ecological integrity and human survival, while environmental ethics provides the normative vocabulary required to reconsider moral responsibility.

This synthesis also helps reinterpret the findings from sustainability research. Biospheric values and sustainability-oriented behaviors (Martínez Castillo et al., 2024), community participation in environmental protection (Moreira & Reis Fonseca, 2024), and interdisciplinary environmental perspectives (González Vallejo, 2023) can be understood not as isolated phenomena but as manifestations of a broader transition toward relational ecological thinking.

The principal result of this review is therefore the identification of ecohumanism as an emerging integrative paradigm rather than merely another environmental philosophy. Its distinctive contribution lies in rejecting two extremes: the assumption that nature matters only insofar as it serves humanity, and the assumption that ecological ethics requires the disappearance of the human subject from moral and political analysis. Ecohumanism instead proposes a **decentered but responsible human agency**. Humanity ceases to be the sovereign center of nature while remaining accountable for the ecological consequences of its actions.

In this sense, moving beyond anthropocentrism does not imply moving beyond humanity. It implies transforming the meaning of being human within an interconnected living world. The ecohumanist paradigm therefore reframes the human–nature relationship around interdependence, responsibility, reciprocity, ecological limits, and shared flourishing. This conceptual synthesis constitutes the central contribution of the study and provides a framework for subsequent discussions concerning environmental law, sustainability, cultural transformation, and ecological justice.

Conclusions

The analysis shows that the contemporary human–nature debate has progressively moved beyond strong anthropocentrism. While anthropocentric frameworks historically shaped legal, political, and economic institutions by treating nature primarily as a resource or object of protection for human benefit, biocentric and ecocentric perspectives expanded moral consideration toward living beings, ecosystems, and ecological processes. However, the review also indicates that neither human centrality nor a simple shift toward radical ecocentrism fully resolves the problem of human agency. The key challenge is to redefine humanity's position within ecological systems rather than eliminate the human subject from ethical and political analysis.

The emergence of the rights of nature and relational approaches reinforces this transformation. Legal recognition of ecosystems as rights-bearing subjects questions conventional anthropocentric law, while concepts such as interdependence, reciprocity, care, belonging, and shared responsibility help overcome the separation between society and nature. These perspectives reveal that ecological protection depends

not only on formal legal mechanisms but also on cultural interpretations, community participation, institutional arrangements, and plural forms of knowledge.

In this context, ecohumanism emerges as an integrative paradigm capable of articulating human dignity, ecological integrity, moral expansion, and relational responsibility. Its main contribution lies in proposing a decentered but responsible human agency in which human flourishing is understood as inseparable from the well-being of the more-than-human world. Thus, ecohumanism can be understood not merely as another environmental philosophy, but as an interdisciplinary framework with potential relevance for environmental law, sustainability, ecological justice, cultural transformation, and future socio-environmental governance.

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